



Church of Christ

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Heart to Heart...

One of the greatest dangers we face is to deceive our own selves. It can happen easily. People can believe they are right and doing right, while they whole time, they are out of fellowship with the Lord. The very ones who crucified Jesus thought they were right! We can see that when we hear the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:33) Paul warned the Corinthians not to deceive themselves (I Cor. 3:18). Paul warned the Galatian congregations not to be deceived (Gal. 6:7). Paul explains to Timothy the preacher that there will be brethren who deceive and are self-deceived (II Tim. 3:13). James speaks of those who claim they are religious, but they can't bridle their tongues, they are a deceived person, and their belief is worthless (Jam. 1:26). Titus speaks of those in sin as being deceived (Titus 3:3). With so much taught about deception and deceiving ourselves, it can happen easily, which is the scary part.

How do we keep from deceiving ourselves? It's really very simple. How do you respond to the Word when it's read or taught? Do you manipulate it to say what you want it to say or do you accept it by faith?

God's word is expected to be preached and taught. The reception of His word will be what determines if one is self-deceived or not. In Acts 2, when Peter and the apostles preached to that large crowd, several responded by faith to the word, and found the truth of salvation. In Acts 5, the apostles stood before the Sanhedrin council and preached God's word of truth to them. "But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them." (Acts 5:33) Their response determined everything. Stephen preached to a large crowd of listeners only to get the same response of turning away and avoiding the message (Acts 7:54). In both instances, the people returned to their worship of God, praying and reading, but could not recognize that God didn't recognize them! Our response determines everything. To be upset when we hear the Word of truth and not want to change where change needs to take place will only lead one into the world of self-deception. To close our eyes and ears to anything from God that calls for us to change is the road to being deceived by yourself. I knew of a place where each week, when the preacher got up to speak God's word, one of the members would get up and walk the parking lot until the end, not wanting to hear anything said. I wonder what the Lord thinks about that? They are self-deceived.

Deception is all around us in the world. People can mislead and take advantage of us but the worst of all is to deceive yourself. To think you are right, only to find out you are wrong, will be a horrible awakening in the end. It's better to be humble and listen to every word of the Lord, responding from our hearts, which is the safest road. He may be calling us to repentance. Think about it!!!

Brent