

# SELF-DECEPTION

By J.A. James

Let us consider what means are necessary and proper for you to adopt, to avoid self-deception. Dwell upon the subject. Ponder it deeply. Let it take hold upon your mind, and your mind take hold upon it. Let it not be dismissed from you with the same ease as you send into oblivion many other subjects of a religious nature. It is unusually momentous, and has an awfulness about it far beyond the usual topics of reflection. The very idea is terrific — a professor going to perdition! A self-deceived professor!

You should dread the thought of being deluded. Its fearful consequences should be solemnly meditated upon, seriously and piously resolved. It should be often said with holy trembling, “Oh, if I should be at last deceived!”

You should examine your state, frequently, deliberately, solemnly, and impartially. Time should be set apart occasionally, for the special purpose of prayer and self-scrutiny. You should have times and opportunities of more than usual length and earnestness for self-examination, when you should look again, and with more intenseness, upon your evidences of personal religion.

Nor is it enough to trust to your own examination. You should beseech God to make known to you your real condition. You should carry to Him the prayer of David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24). You should deal honestly with God, and tell Him that you wish to know your state, and that you deprecate as the heaviest judgment that could befall you, being deceived.

If you have reason, upon examination, to think you have taken up a false opinion of your case, do not blind yourselves to your condition; do not conclude against evidence that you are safe; do not attempt to silence the voice of conscience or corrupt its testimony; this is worse than useless, it is most alarmingly dangerous, as is the last stage of the delusion. Instead of this, begin afresh. What is to hinder you? If you are not converted, you may be. Let not the idea of a false profession throw you into despondency. God is as willing to forgive the sin of a false profession as the sin of no profession. The blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from this sin. Now repent, now believe, now hope, now love. God waits to be gracious even yet. It is not too late to be renewed yet. The door of mercy is not closed yet. Sincerity of profession is not beyond your reach yet. Begin to be in earnest. Determine to trifle no longer. Set apart time for private prayer, reading the Scriptures and holy meditation. Be diligent in attendance upon the public means of grace. Make a fresh and entire surrender of yourself to God. But especially look by faith to Jesus Christ for the pardon of your past insincerity, lukewarmness, and worldliness. Be humble, very humble in your own eyes, and before God; but still do not despair. Exercise dependence upon the Spirit of all grace, confide in His power, and rely upon His mercy. Be thankful that since you were in error you have discovered it, and have not been permitted to go on in darkness till you had stumbled over the precipice into the yawning pit of destruction.

If, upon examination, you have good reason to think all is right, rejoice in Christ Jesus. Let the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, rule in your hearts, to which ye are called, and be ye thankful (Phil. 4:7). “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem” (Isa. 40:1-2).