**THE DECEPTION OF THE HEARER**

Sunday School Lesson 4

*Deceptions of the Devil*

James 1:22

9/12/2021

**Introduction:** Through the first three weeks in our study on the deceptions of the Devil, we have considered the deception of other gods, reaping, and wisdom. For our fourth lesson, we are going to look at the deception of the hearer. Similar to the deception of wisdom, those who are deceived as hearers are under dual deception. They have been deceived both by the Devil and by themselves. As we observed last week, self-deception is especially difficult to overcome. There are many today of both believers and unbelievers who have fallen into the self-deception of being a hearer. To clarify the deception of being a hearer, we must note that the issue is not really with being a hearer. The issue is with only being a hearer and not a doer also. In truth, we are all commanded to be hearers. There are many in this world who are not even willing to be hearers. They are intentionally deaf to the Word of the Lord. They do not want to know what the Lord has to say. This shows us how commendable it is to be a hearer of the Word. Yet, therein lies the danger and a big part of the deception of being a hearer. The fact that we are willing to listen when others are not places us in a position of self-validation. This also tells us that the religious are likely the most vulnerable to this deception. Let’s spend some time this morning further understanding how to avoid such a dangerous deception.

1. **THE DECEPTION OF THE HEARER STARTS WITH HIS PERCEIVED SINCERITY.**
2. **Notice that the hearer is convinced of his own sincerity (Matthew 7:21; Mark 10:17-22).** The Bible provides us with a terrifying example of ones who are hearers only but not doers. The example is given of those who will be cast into Hell because they did not do the will of the Lord, which is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. They will even plead their case before the Lord, as those who went about proclaiming the name of the Lord to themselves and to others. It seems evident that these folks will be convinced of their own sincerity in the same way that the Pharisees and Sadducees were. We are provided with another example of a hearer of the Word and not a doer. This example is of the rich young ruler. He wanted to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. He thought that the way was through obedience to the Law. He came to the Lord in what appears to be sincerity. Yet, as the Lord showed him his shortcoming, it became obvious that his sincerity was truly lacking. He left the Lord in sorrow, as he was not willing to give up his riches to follow the Lord. The deception of the hearer relies upon great conviction that the hearer is sincere before the Lord.
3. **Notice that sincerity ought to be proved through service (Joshua 24:14; 2 Cor. 8:8; Philippians 1:10; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:7).** What is the most effective and Scriptural way to prove out our sincerity? The obvious answer is that our actions should prove our sincerity. This does not mean that our actions always validate that we are being sincere, as there are those who do works without sincerity of heart. The thought here is that one who truly loves the Lord will obey Him. The Bible teaches that we are known by our fruits. This is the eye-opening exercise that we must engage in to validate whether we are being just a hearer of the Word or a doer also. Do our fruits show that we are doing? Many hearers will speak more of their feelings than of their doings. That’s because their feelings are all they have to validate themselves. Sadly, there are even those who feign salvation because of a feeling or a so-called experience that they have had. Salvation is through doing what the Bible commands. That command is to receive Jesus Christ in faith. There is no other way outside of that. There is absolutely nothing else that can or needs to be done. Let’s make sure our sincerity matches with our actions.
4. **THE DECEPTION OF THE HEARER SUSTAINS ITSELF BY HIS KNOWLEDGE.**
5. **Notice that the hearer is one who has definitively acknowledged the truth (James 1:23; Matthew 22:16; Romans 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:4).** Is there any greater deception than that of one who acknowledges the Truth but does not actually continue in it? The book of James shows us that the danger of the deception of the hearer is that he acknowledges the Truth. The illustration is given of one who beholds his natural face in a glass. This is speaking to the awareness of the hearer. He is able to momentarily see the Truth for what It is. This knowledge is what sustains him in his error. It is not because the knowledge is wrong; it is what he has done with that knowledge. Even the Pharisees had some knowledge of the Truth of the Lord. Their knowledge kept them in their pernicious and evil ways. Some of the most difficult people to lead to Christ are those who are filled with Bible knowledge. They know everything that you tell them about the Gospel. Yet, they will not believe on Jesus Christ. The Christian in the pew who has acknowledged the Truth but does not act upon it is very difficult to stir to repentance and action.
6. **Notice that the hearer truly only has a glimpse of what he needs to see (John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:7).** As Jesus taught on one occasion, there were some Jews there who believed what He had spoken. He could see that they believed. His challenge to them was to continue in His Word. If they continued in the Word, then they would know the Truth, and the Truth would make them free. As He continued teaching them, they began to reject His Word. They would not listen any further, and they even accused Him of having a devil. How quickly they turned away from what they had previously heard! How did this happen? It happened because they were hearers, but they were doers. They had listened and believed the words spoken, but they would not act upon what they had heard. As a result, their knowledge of the Truth was just a glimpse. After that, they fell back into their blindness. This is the deceit of the hearer. He believes that his knowledge is sufficient. He believes that it will sustain him as he moves forward. Yet, that knowledge is incomplete without doing. How do we grow as believers? We grow by continuing to act upon that which we have heard. If we do not, our awareness is only truly a glimpse of the sum.
7. **THE DECEPTION OF THE HEARER SILENCES CONVICTION BY ITS FORGETFULNESS.**
8. **Notice that the hearer goes on his way because he is able to forget (James 1:24; Jeremiah 3:21).** The deception of the hearer is strong because it quenches the conviction. For the believer, it quenches the work of the Holy Spirit in reproving that person in the error of his way. For the unbeliever, it quenches the work of the Holy Spirit in showing him the need of salvation. How is the hearer able to silence the conviction that comes with hearing the Truth? This occurs because he does not respond to that truth. He looks only for a moment, and then he goes on his way and forgets. This may not even be that he forgets what is spoken. It may be that he forgets the conviction that went along with it. He might still remember the Word, but he does not remember how he looks. He no longer sees his reflection in light of the Word of God. For just a moment, he saw his need and his imperfection. Yet, he looked away so quickly that the memory vanishes as he goes on his way. This makes sure that he is able to continue in his deception. He can now claim that he has heard it all before, and at the same time, he won’t actually look in again.
9. **Notice that the hearer’s forgetfulness makes hearing more difficult (Romans 1:18-26; 10:17-19).** This is the natural result of hearing but not doing. In order to continue, you must forget the things that you have heard. You must silence the conviction of the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, the end result is that it becomes even more difficult to hear. The hearer who is not a doer will not long stay a hearer. He cannot continue to hear, as his conscience will not allow it. This further expands the deception. He may have been a hearer at one point, but now he is so deceived that he no longer can even hear. He has become dull of hearing. The Bible lays out a path for this person that ends with them being totally given over to their own carnal mind. This should show us how terrifying this deception is. This is exactly what happened with the nation of Israel. They were hearers and not doers. Ultimately, they got to the point that they were not even hearers anymore. We must hear and do to avoid becoming deaf ourselves.
10. **THE DECEPTION OF THE HEARER STRENGTHENS ITSELF BY DOING.**
11. **Notice that although the hearer does not do what he has been instructed to do, he will do something (Luke 6:46-49).** This point may seem a bit confusing, but it is really rather straightforward. Ultimately, every person is a doer of some sort. They may be a doer of righteousness, or they may be a doer of unrighteousness. The question is not whether we will do or not. The question is whether we will do what we have been told to do. The deception of the hearer strengthens itself with the idea that the hearer is ultimately doing something. The Lord gives us a lesson on the hearer and the doer. He shows that each of them will go out and build a house. The doer will build his house with the Lord as his foundation. The hearer will build his house without the Lord as his foundation. Both have done a work. Both are expecting their work to prevail. The hearer somehow convinces himself that he will be successful in his doing. Sadly, when the storm comes, it is proven out that the works of the doer were superficial and insufficient.
12. **Notice that the hearer may rely upon what he has already done (Luke 14:25-33).** The Lord gives another parable of the man who has plans to build a tower. However, he does not count the cost, so he is not able to finish it. This person is one who is a hearer. For a period of time perhaps, he may have acted upon a few of the things that he had heard. Yet, he did not fully grasp what it was that he was supposed to do. The disciples themselves were in danger of being only hearers and not doers. They had heard more of Christ’s teachings than anyone else. Following the resurrection, though, we find them not doing. They had done some things beforehand, but they had not really counted the cost. Thankfully, the Lord upbraided them, and they became doers again. The final deception of hearing is that is convinces the hearer that he is okay because of what he has done before. Doing is an ongoing task. We are to continue doing until the Lord returns, or we meet Him in death. He ought to find us laboring for Him.