**THE DECEPTION OF GOOD WORDS**

Sunday School Lesson 11

*Deceptions of the Devil*

Romans 16:18

10/31/2021

**Introduction:** For our lesson this morning, we are going to be looking at the deception of good words. The Bible refers to this deception in several different ways. We may also find it as the deception of fair speech or vain words.

All three references speak to a similar thought overall. That thought is that the Devil uses people who speak favorable words to us as a means by which to deceive us. Previously, we looked at the deception of the tongue and how it deceives the speaker, but the deception of good words focuses its deception on the recipient of the words. Of course, the issue is not with the good words themselves. As believers, we ought to speak the good word of the Gospel. The issue then is how good words are often used to manipulate and deceive someone into believing that which is not true. When you read the Word of God, you find that the Devil personally employs this tactic when seeking to deceive mankind. He speaks pleasant words to man. We don’t find harsh and hostile words to be his preferred mode of communication with people. It is much easier to sway and lead people with good words. We’ve looked at the deception of other gods, reaping, wisdom, hearing, pride, the last days, unrighteousness, the tongue, alcohol, and riches; but let’s turn our attention now to the dangers we find with the deception of good words.

1. **THE DECEPTION OF GOOD WORDS PROMOTES ITSELF AS ENCOURAGEMENT.**
2. **Notice that the deception of good words focuses on the need to encourage, but it does not consider the dangers awaiting your path (Proverbs 29:5; 26:28; 12:5; Ephesians 5:6).** The Bible tells us that a good word makes the heaviness in the heart of man to be glad instead. This is referring to what we usually call encouragement. Good words are certainly helpful medicine to the person struggling with sadness, distress, discouragement, or depression. We all like to hear good words. We like to hear pleasant words. We like to hear words of encouragement that make us glad. The book of Proverbs warns us, though, that people can and will take advantage of us with good words. This is regarded as flattery in the Bible. It is the selfish use of encouragement and praise to intentionally lift up another. Flattery does not have any regard for the dangers that one may face. A flattering mouth worketh ruin. This happens because it deceives the flattered individual into thinking his way is safe and good. The Bible says that a man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet. We must understand that not all encouragement is good and Godly. It may be used to encourage us down a path of destruction.
3. **Notice that the Christian is never commanded to encourage. We are to exhort, edify, and admonish one another (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25 Acts 2:40; 14:22; 1 Corinthians 14:3; 1 Thess. 5:11; Col. 3:16).** As I was searching throughout the Bible, I was amazed to find that there is not a single command in all of Scripture for us to encourage each other. The word is never even used in the New Testament! Instead, we find commands to exhort, edify, and admonish one another. What is the difference between these words and encouragement? You’ll find that each of these words is instructional in nature. To exhort is to give advice or warning: make urgent appeal. To edify is to instruct and improve. To admonish is to warn or notify of a fault; to reprove with mildness. As you can see, all of these words speak to a need to build up through teaching. They are active in nature. To encourage, on the other hand, is to inspire or give confidence or courage. It does not rely upon the instruction of the Truth. In fact, the Bible speaks of the wicked encouraging themselves in an evil matter (Psalm 64:5). As believers, we have probably all been guilty of focusing more on encouragement than on exhortation, edification, and admonishment.
4. **THE DECEPTION OF GOOD WORDS POSITIONS THE MARKER AS THE DIVIDER.**
5. **Notice that those who deceive with good words cause divisions in the church (Romans 16:17-18).** We typically think of those who cause divisions as those who speak unpleasant words. Yet, the Bible speaks of those who cause divisions and offences as the same ones who deceive through fair speeches and good words. How do these deceivers cause these divisions in the church? The division takes place because their good words put them at odds with those who speak the Truth. Some (those who are simple) are deceived by these good words, and it causes them to reject the truth given to them through the admonishment, exhortation, and edification of other saints. People are not typically led astray from sound doctrine by unpleasant words. Deceivers know that they must speak good words to entice men away from the truth; thus, they sow discord and division by speaking a pleasant message that appeals to others, despite its conflict with the Word of God. This worked in the church of Corinth. There was division among the church because men had crept in and spoke good words to the people.
6. **Notice that the believer is commanded to mark those who cause division in the church (Romans 16:17-18; Phil. 3:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:10).** What does the Bible mean when it tells us to mark these people? To mark means to note or to indicate. It is generally understood to be a public notation. We are called to point out those who cause divisions with the hopes that such marking will warn other believers to be on guard. Let’s consider how such situations often unfold though. You have someone who is speaking good words, and people are drawn to them and like them. They appear as encouragers. It is overlooked that they are not doctrinally sound because they are nice people. Their words cause a natural division, though, because they are inconsistent with the Word of God. The believer of the Bible is required then to mark this person and warn others. How does the deceiver respond to this? He makes himself out to be the victim. He accuses the believer of being a discord sower. He’s likely to speak of how mean-spirited that Bible believer is. Thus, the deceiver presents the marker as the one who is causing division.
7. **THE DECEPTION OF GOOD WORDS PLACES US IN A SPOILED POSITION.**
8. **Notice that there are workers of Satan who seek to spoil us through philosophy and vain deceit (Colossians 2:4-8).** Earlier in the lesson, we observed how the good words cause us trouble by letting us continue in the wrong path. This leads to our destruction. Yet, the Bible also speaks of these good words as spoiling some. This means that it causes some who were spiritually healthy to turn aside. Those deceivers who use good words rely upon the worldly philosophies of their words to spoil us. They change the thinking of the believer to carnal thinking. We know that to be carnally minded is death. All of us are influenced by the things that we hear. We can either be strengthened by what we hear, or we can be spoiled by what we hear. It is just so easy to be spoiled by good words. After all, they sound good. They may seem to come from those who are Godly. The Devil is very crafty. He is able to package words in such a way to make them seem good and healthy for us. Let us be extremely vigilant to those good words and ensure that we are not spoiled by them. It can happen quickly!
9. **Notice that the deception of good words leads to vanity, while the good Word of the Lord leads to Christ exalted (Jeremiah 23:16; Ephesians 5:6; Isaiah 36:5; Hebrews 6:5; Zechariah 1:13).** The Bible refers to vain words. These are words that are not profitable. They only produce vanity in the heart of the hearer. They serve to puff one up. On the other hand, the good Word of the Lord points toward Christ. He is exalted. This is a good differentiator between Biblical preaching and worldly preaching. Worldly preaching puffs up the hearer to vanity and pride. Biblical preaching ought to bring us low. It ought to humble us at the feet of Jesus. So much of the preaching we see today in our country revolves more around on us than on Christ. We need a revival of Christ-centered preaching that humbles all who hear it. I must decrease! If any man’s words serve only to lift us up to pride, we must ask how those words are profitable for us. While they might make us feel better, they are actually spoiling us and bringing us into vanity. Let’s resist these vain words and hear His Word instead.
10. **THE DECEPTION OF GOOD WORDS PRESENTS THE SPEAKER IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT.**
11. **Notice that good words can hide improper motives (Jeremiah 12:6; Psalm 5:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; Proverbs 28:23).** Our judgment is easily skewed when it comes to the character assessment of those who speak good words to us. Not surprisingly, we tend to like people who speak good words. Yet, good words are not a good indicator by themselves. The Bible warns us about those who speak one way while having some other motive at the same time. It may be the enemy seeking to find a way to attack us. Perhaps, we think that these people are easy to spot. If it was that easy to spot them, then the Bible would not give express warning concerning them. How exactly do we discover the motivations of those who are speaking good words to us? We discover it by discovering the Truth. We then can compare their good words against the Truth. If those words are not consistent, then we can see that those good words do not come from good motives. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us in the way of Truth.
12. **Notice that those who speak good words are selfish. They do not really care for us (Romans 16:18).** They serve their own belly. They are only interested in their own well-being. If they truly cared for us, they would tell us the Truth. Instead, they choose to speak good words because it is in their best interest. They know that there are always people out there with itching ears waiting to hear a good word. Don’t you think every prophet in the Bible would have preferred to be a prophet that spoke only good words to the nation of Israel? Do you think Jeremiah and Isaiah were eager to condemn the people? Do you think Elijah was excited to stand up to the king and queen and all of the people? Everyone wants to be able to give a good message – a message of peace. Thankfully, we do have that message with the Gospel. Yet, many choose to take an even easier message to the people. They’d rather preach a message of acceptance. No one ever gets mad at that message! Let us be people who speak and receive the Truth.