

Self-Deception: Unbridled Speech

Joe Slater

You know it's sinful to tell lies, and the vast majority of the time you know when you are lying. But what about lying to yourself? Yes, it is possible to deceive yourself!

*"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but **deceives his own heart**, this one's religion is useless"* (James 1:26). Ouch! That smarts, doesn't it?

Just as a rider uses a bridle to control a horse, God expects us to control our speech. Does that strike a disagreeable chord? We Americans have Constitutionally-protected freedom of speech! But even that liberty has limits (you know, the "yelling 'FIRE' in a crowded theater thing). And God has a greater right than civil government to regulate our speech!

James went to considerable lengths to expound on the use and misuse of the tongue in chapter three. *"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by Hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so"* (3:6-10).

Coming to church, praying, singing, giving, etc., avails nothing unless we bridle that tongue! To think otherwise is to be self-deceived.

Empty!

This past week, a friend of mine (who shall remain nameless) had some car trouble more than 500 miles from his home. If you've ever been in that situation, it is certainly disconcerting to say the least. What do you do? Who do you call? How much will it cost? All these questions rush through your mind. In my friend's case, after paying a tow truck, it was just a matter of putting gas in the gas tank (now do you see why he will remain nameless?)

But in his defense, while he ran out of gas, his gas gauge was showing that he still had a quarter of a tank of gas remaining. Of course, I couldn't help but see a spiritual application in this event.

How many people do you suppose are trusting in a "fallible gauge?" How many people do you think are being told they're alright, but their "tank is empty?" I do know that on the day of judgment, there will be some who stand before Christ, surprised that they are not saved (Matthew 7:21-23).

To avoid such a fate, we must trust in the only "gauge" that will never fail and never mislead us...the word of God. Friends, spend time in God's word so that you can make your calling and election sure.

--Steve Higginbotham (via *Bulletin Gold*)

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"Where you are on the road is not as important as which way you're headed"

--R.L. Whiteside ("Anvil Sparks")

Will It Last?

"For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18, ESV)

I used to say that I would never buy a Ford from a Chevy dealer, nor a Chevy from a Ford dealer. I figured that if a person had received good service from a car, he would get another one like it. But, as a coworker pointed out, I was assuming that people look for quality. In truth most are buying style, not quality. That statement holds true for far more than cars.

When it comes to religion, many are more interested in style than in truth.

What are we seeking when we assemble for worship -- a feeling, an emotional experience, or truth?

If you seek experiences -- something you can touch, taste, or see, you can get that in lots of places. But, as the above quoted text points out, the empirically tangible is doomed from the start. The great and lasting realities are not the ones we experience with our senses. It is not the message delivered with a pyrotechnic show that lasts. Do not look for the church with music that makes your ears ring. Look for the church that teaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

About thirty years ago, the wife of a certain televangelist was quoted as having said, "It feels so good, I don't care if it is true." She died about a dozen years ago. Shall I put it plainly? I think I should. Unless she repented of it, she will have an eternity in which to regret that ungodly attitude.

Jesus was about truth, not style. He wants us to feel strongly about the truth, once we know it is truth. He does not want us to believe or to proclaim something because it feels good to us.

The true faith (like many truths) will hurt at first, but feel good, eventually and eternally. A feel-good faith will leave you empty for eternity.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6-8, ESV).

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)