

a ministry within Christ's body for each one to perform. Christian work is not the responsibility of some special clergy or select few. There is no room for spectators among God's people. It is incumbent upon every believer to discover God's assignment for their lives and then, through His power, labour to accomplish it. His will is for us to bring forth much fruit - fruit which remains (Jn 15:16).

Of course Jesus is not asking something which we can accomplish with our own strength. Simply doing "church work" or engaging in some kind of Christian ministry may not fulfil God's desires. It is quite possible to be very active, doing many "things," and still not be meeting God's standard. On Judgment day, when we stand before His throne, all our works will be tested by fire. Only certain kinds of works will endure that test. These are the deeds which were initiated by the Lord Himself. These are the activities which Jesus Christ has actually done through us. Since as Christians we now have the Spirit of God living within us, it is entirely possible, and in fact essential, to let Him become the source of all that we do. As we grow in this experience, our lives will become increasingly fruitful. We will then be the channels through which Jesus is accomplishing His purposes in this world. These are the sort of works which will be approved when we stand before Him. These are the activities which were truly "wrought in God (Jn 3:21)."

What God is requiring of you and me is a life which is led by His Spirit. It is a life of total obedience to His will. It is a life which will be filled with reaching out and serving others in Jesus' name, imparting to them what God is pouring into us. Jesus Christ was our supreme example. He was always led by the Spirit. He was continually working the works of God (Jn 10:32). He was daily doing what He saw the Father doing (Jn 5:19). Jesus was not living for Himself. Not one minute of His life was spent in self-serving activities. His entire existence was focused upon one objective - doing the will of the Father. If we are to be real Christians, fulfilling the commandments of God, this also must be our experience.

The kind of life-style I am advocating here may be quite different from the one you are now living. You may be realizing that the foregoing description is quite different from the life you now lead. If this is your situation, the solution is repentance. You must humble yourself before God and admit that you have allowed yourself to be deceived. You must confess your sin of disobedience and present yourself to God afresh, telling Him that you are now completely His and that you are willing to follow Him anywhere. Once you come to this position, you will certainly begin to experience God in a new and exciting way. He is continually looking for men and women who will do His will and so when He finds your heart genuinely open to Him, He will pour Himself out to you. Then you will be empowered to work the works of God on this earth. Then you will begin to experience genuine New Testament Christianity.

## AWAKE, AWAKE

God is speaking to His people today. "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Eph 5:14). The kind of lives which we read about in the Bible and also in many Christian biographies were lives which were totally given to Jesus. They were lives whose only priority was God. Now to get there from where you are today may demand a major restructuring of your priorities. It might possibly mean a change of occupation, employment or living situation. It no doubt will require abandoning many self-centred pleasures which now fill your life. It may necessitate leaving the safety and security of your own country, family and friends. It may even mean facing dangers of which you have never dreamed or which you have secretly feared in your heart. But if your faith is genuine as opposed to simply a mental deception, then it demands action. I cannot tell you what God might require you to do. Only He can reveal this to you. I am simply saying this: If you are doing nothing, you are not right with God. He is calling you today to repentance and this repentance is no doubt going to involve some radical changes in your life.

I want to make it very clear here that I am speaking about a life of service, not success. The kind of life God requires of you and me is not an easy one. It is not composed of luxury, earthly power and self-gratification as so many preachers today would like us to believe. Instead it is a life of self-denial, sacrifice and difficulty. We are discussing here a life which is poured out upon the Body of Jesus Christ - a kind of spiritual offering to the Father. However, such an existence is also supremely satisfying. Nothing in this world can fill your inner emptiness like God. When you dedicate your life to Him and fill your moments with His service, He in turn will fill you with Himself. Jesus' desire is to express Himself to the world. And so, when He finds your heart open and ready, He will give Himself to you without reserve. Do you desire this kind of experience? Does this strike some chord within your heart? Would [you] enjoy living this way? If so, please know that it is entirely possible. God is the same today as He has always been. He can do things in you and through you that you never dreamed possible.

Are you deceived? Only you and God can ultimately know. But as a friend and a brother, I warn you that it is especially easy to be enticed by the seducing spirits of this age and to be lulled to sleep by an easy Christianity. The New Testament gives us abundant examples of men and women who got up and left all to follow Jesus. These were people who sacrificed everything for the sake of His name. They were doers of the word. They are the ones which were praised by God. They were the kind of people which God commands [us] to be.

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# Are You Deceived?

If asked the foregoing question, I believe that almost every Christian would answer negatively. However, some of these confident people may be in for a real surprise. The reason for this is that no one who is deceived realizes it. The very nature of deception is such that the person involved in it is unaware of his or her condition. Once someone comes to the realization that they have been misled, deception disappears. Such a person may willingly remain in error or continue adhering to some falsehood, but he is no longer deceived.

Since the individual involved in deception is totally unaware of his plight, there is a very great danger in believing that we are not or that we cannot be deceived. No one should become overconfident concerning his present condition. The frailty of man's nature combined with the subtlety of God's enemy results in the astonishing fact that almost every professing Christian is in some measure - however small or large it may be - deceived. While this may sound strange, it is nevertheless true. I can imagine that there are very few believers walking the earth today who are so saturated with Divine truth, whose relationship with God is so intimate and whose lives are so completely free of darkness that they have escaped deception entirely.

All this is being said to point out a simple fact. It is easy to be deceived. Furthermore, when you are a victim of deception you are completely unaware of it. Consequently, it might be healthy for every reader of this tract to take a moment and ask themselves the following questions: "Is it possible that I might in some measure be deceived?" "Could there be some hidden evil working in my life of which I am totally unaware?" Is it conceivable that the devil has some strongholds in my heart about which I know nothing?" And, "If there are such undesirable influences present, how can I become free from them?"

Ultimately, the only thing which can expose our deception and liberate us from it is the light of God. Jesus promised His followers that they would not walk in darkness but have the "light of life" (Jn 8:12). God's truth will set us free (Jn 8:32). If we are deceived it is because we are still living in darkness; there are some areas of our heart which have not been illuminated by God. It is here that the devil and his agents work without our knowledge. However, once the light of Jesus dawns within us and exposes the darkness, its power is removed. Once we see how we have been misled, we are no longer under the dominion of it. In Jesus Christ, we have the power to overcome the enemy. The only reason that so many believers are still in his grasp is that they have not yielded their life wholly to God and thereby received enough of His light to show them where they are ensnared.

This light which will liberate us from bondage is of supernatural origin. It comes from God alone. Therefore, in order to have such light, we must also have an ever deepening relationship with Him. He is the One who saves and liberates us. We cannot find true joy and freedom in any other way. Consequently, every believer's greatest need is to cultivate an unreserved intimacy with his creator. Here is the secret of the Christian life. Here is the answer to your every need. God Himself will supply you with all that you require to live a pure, holy life in this world. As we grow to know Him through the Holy Spirit, our lives will be changed. As we are daily filled with this Spirit, His light will be continually shining within us, bringing us out of darkness and into the "light of life (Jn 8:12)."

Our Lord has also given us one physical item to aid us in our pursuit of Himself - the Bible. In it we have an accurate record of God's speaking. As we spend time in His presence reading His word, He will speak to our hearts through it. The more such illumination we have, the greater our freedom from deception will be. Naturally this implies that every believer should spend as much time as possible meditating on the word of God. I do not mean that we can escape deception simply by studying the Bible. God's light comes only from Himself. So when we open the Bible, we must also open our hearts to Him and allow Him to speak to us through it. Unless we come into the presence of God when we read, we cannot obtain supernatural light. On the other hand, when we allow Him to speak to us, when we permit His word to penetrate our inner parts and expose our areas of darkness, then we are on our way to true liberty.

## A GREAT DECEPTION

With all this in mind, I would like to take a look at a scripture verse which speaks about what I think could possibly be one of the greatest deceptions currently afflicting the Christian church. James 1:22 reads: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Here we encounter an all too common delusion. It is a kind of self-deception which has as its victims many who consider themselves to be upstanding, "Bible-believing" Christians. This folly has in its grasp children of

God from all kinds of denominational persuasions, from many diverse schools of doctrinal opinion and from a great variety of religious experience. It has lulled to sleep multitudes who would probably vehemently insist that they are intimately acquainted with the truth and have no room in their life for deception. Perhaps the worst cases of this condition occur among those who have been Christians for many years.

This deception works in the following way: we say we believe in Jesus but we do not follow Him. When we hear the word of the Lord, agree with it in our minds, and do nothing, it is in full operation. It is very common today to meet Christians who are well acquainted with the Scripture, who appear to concur completely with what God is saying to them through it - but whose lives are affected very little by it! How we love to hear messages from the preachers we really admire. How enjoyable it is to read books by those authors who express the facts exactly as we believe them. How often we have been excited about the "new things" which God is showing us. And how deceived we are if we continue to live the same way we always have. I am afraid that this is a very prevalent form of deception in modern Christianity.

This is not to say that understanding God's word is not important or that we do not need to hear it. But the error so frequently made today is that we often feel justified merely by the fact that we have heard the truth and agreed with it. This attitude is easily substituted for the activity of both hearing and then obeying. If we are to escape deception, we must be responding to what we hear from the Lord! We must be doing what God speaks to us! We are to be fulfilling the word by moving out in the direction in which God is leading.

A similar form of delusion can also arise from reading many Christian books. For example, there are so many good biographies available which tell of the mighty things God has done through believers down through the centuries. The stories of Hudson Taylor with the China Inland Mission, George Muller and his orphanage in England, Brother Andrew the Bible smuggler, David Wilkerson on the streets of New York City and many others have been published. These are valuable books. Reading them can be extremely worthwhile. As we learn of what God has done through others, it can really stimulate our faith. However, I fear that far too many Christians are doing their works for God vicariously. This means that they are living their lives through books rather than actually getting out there and doing something themselves.

Herein lies the deception: We can read about what men and women of God have done. We get excited by the works of faith which they have accomplished. We thrill at the dangers through which they pass and marvel at seeing how the hand of God protected and guided them. Then, somehow we imagine that, because we are stirred by this and can identify with what they have done, our lives measure up to God's standard. Somehow we feel that our works are similar to theirs. The sad truth of the matter is that for most believers this is not the case. Far too many Christians are simply hearers of the word and actually serve God very little. Oh, they may go to Christian meetings, they may

watch Christian television programs and listen to Christian music. They may even be "involved" in their church, but in some measure they are deceived. The evidence of this problem can be clearly seen by the inactivity in their everyday lives.

The Bible teaches us that faith without works is dead (Jas 2:20). When we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, we are going to be judged according to our works. Why are our works so important? For this simple reason: What we do is a sure indication of what we are. The things which we accomplish are the evidence of what is really going on within our hearts. There is actually no conflict between faith and works. If we have faith - genuine faith - it will produce works. True faith will stimulate us to reach out in Jesus' name, facing the dangers, resistances and our own fears - overcoming the things which hinder us - and working the works of God while there is still time (Jn 9:4).

Therefore, if you are not daily serving Jesus Christ in some real, practical way - following the leading of God's Holy Spirit - then you are in some measure deceived. Anyone who is spending their time in spiritual idleness is badly deceived. They have been lulled to sleep by a subtle deception - a lie that whispers something like this in their ear: "If you go to the 'best' place and do what is expected of you, if you believe the 'right way,' if you read your Bible and pray occasionally, if you don't do anything really sinful . . . you are right with God." However, we can only be counted righteous before God if we have a relationship with Him which produces fruit in our lives.

Now I know that there are some who will insist that works and obedience are good but that they are not essential. They argue that God's favour can only be gained through faith. While it is certainly true that a right relationship with God comes only through faith, it does not come through the kind of faith which is barren. Genuine faith stimulates those who possess it to obedience. If yours does not, it is thereby called into serious question. Far too often what Christians call "faith" is nothing more than a mental agreement with some Bible doctrine. True faith, on the other hand is something which brings you into such an intimate relationship with God Himself that it changes your life. The evidence of such faith is the bearing of fruit. If this does not describe your life, then it is safe to conclude that you are a victim of deception. Somehow, you have been deluded into thinking that what you are experiencing is real Christianity.

## MUCH FRUIT

When God made you and subsequently called you out of darkness into His light, He did so with a specific plan in mind. He has begotten each individual with the intention that they would accomplish certain things for Him while they are on this earth. The Bible says that we were "created in Christ Jesus for [good works], which God prepared beforehand [that we should walk in them]" (Eph 2:10). God has called us to be neither "barren nor unfruitful" (II Pet 1:8). There is a job for everyone to do. There is