

The Deception of Goodness

1. This study is in no way intended to discourage the pursuit of goodness. But it is designed to show that many justify a rejection of truth on the ground of their own goodness. Such persons reason that they are too good to be so wrong. This study is designed to teach believers to see that beyond the veneer of an impressive goodness often lurks proud rebellion against God.
2. This study is extremely important because we can be tempted to lessen our estimation of the importance of truth when we see someone who is so apparently good, rejecting truth.
3. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (**JOH 7:24**).
 - A. What appears good to us is not necessarily so to God. **ISA 55:7-9**.
 - B. One can think himself good, but God sees what he really is. **PRO 16:2; 21:2; 30:12**.
 - C. God is looking for men of faith, men who believe His commandments and obey them **PRO 20:6 c/w PSA 119:66; HEB 11**.
4. Recall that Eve was deceived by that which looked good. **1TI 2:14 c/w GEN 3:6**.
5. Satan knows that many can be deceived by the appearance of goodness. Hence, his ministers are *transformed as the ministers of righteousness*. **2CO 11:13-15**.
6. Our Lord exposed the outward goodness of the Pharisees likening it to “...whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward...” (**MAT 23:27-28**).
7. Trusting “...in themselves that they were righteous” (**LUK 18:9**) the chief priests and Pharisees rejected the preaching of John the Baptist and missed the kingdom of God. **MAT 21:31-32**.
8. Those who do not see themselves as sinners do not see their need to repent. **MAT 9:10-13**.
9. When men rely on their goodness as a justification for disobeying a commandment of God, God forgets that person’s goodness. **EZE 33:12-13**.
10. There are those who claim a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and do good works and yet reject some of the commandments of the Lord Jesus.
 - A. They will readily call Jesus *Lord* and yet will not do what He says. **LUK 6:46**.
 - B. Such souls are going to be surprised to find themselves rejected of Christ in the day of judgment (**MAT 7:21-23**). All their goodness will not enter into God’s account of them.
 - C. They lie who claim to know Christ, but do not keep His commandments. **1JO 2:3-4**.
11. They do not love the Lord who do not keep His sayings, no matter how much they may *say* they love Him. **JOH 14:23-24; 1JO 3:18**.
12. Disobedience to a known commandment of God is stubbornness and rebellion no matter how devoutly religious and well-intended one’s actions are. **1SAM 15:16-23**.
13. One’s goodness can be most deceiving when one has a reputation among others for goodness.
 - A. “Nothing fortifies men’s corrupt hearts more against the convictions of the word, nor more

effectually repels them, than the good opinion, especially if it be a high opinion, which others have of them; as if all that had gained applause with men must needs obtain acceptance with God, than which nothing is more false and deceitful, for God sees not as man sees.” (Matthew Henry Commentary, John 9:39-41)

B. (JOH 5:44) How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

14. There are none so blind as those who think they see and are, therefore, unaware of their blindness. **JOH 9:39-41.**

A. This was the condition of the Pharisees who were proud of their religious learning and achievements and, therefore, would not be taught. **JOH 9:34.**

B. Had these Pharisees been aware of their ignorance, their guilt would not have been so great. They might have been open to learning, being converted and thus forgiven their sin. **MAR 4:12.**

C. Because of their vaunted knowledge, the Pharisees were turned over to blindness while those who had not seen, as was the case with the Gentiles, were brought to the knowledge of the truth.

D. Conversion begins with the recognition that there is truth one does not know and needs to learn.

E. (1CO 3:18) Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

15. Paul counted as loss all of his religious achievements in order to win Christ. **PHIL 3:3-8.**

A. Paul affirmed *without doubt* that he *continued* to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus His Lord.

B. Not only did he count his former religious gains as loss for Christ, but he counted all things loss for Him.

C. He shifted from the past tense, *counted*, to the present tense, *count*.

1. Paul not only counted things loss for Christ in the past, but he continued to do so.

2. Beware of living the rest of your life on the merit of a past experience.

3. “We are never more in peril than when we are trusting to a past experience....It is only as we can express the decision of the past in terms of the present, the 'I counted,' as 'I count,' that there is any real value in the past” (G. Campbell Morgan).

4. Past righteousness does not exempt one from future responsibility to do righteousness.

5. As a true disciple of Christ, Paul denied himself and took up his cross daily.

LUK 9:23.

D. Paul did not allow any level of spiritual attainment keep him from further learning and growth. **PHIL 3:12-14.**

16. Paul warns believers against becoming highminded and wise in their own conceits with respect to their spiritual attainments. **ROM 11:19-25; 12:16.**

A. highminded: Having or characterized by a haughty, proud, or arrogant spirit.

B. To be “wise in your own conceits” is to be wise in your own private opinion, estimation, or judgment. It is to have an overweening opinion of yourself; an overestimation of your own qualities; personal vanity or pride.

C. Being highminded and wise in your own conceits sets you up for a downfall. **PRO 16:18.**

- D. A highminded man, wise in his own conceits, is not open to being taught the truth. **PRO 26:12 c/w PRO 1:7 & PRO 27:22.**
- E. It is one thing to know the truth and to know that you know the truth. It is another thing to think yourself superior to others and beyond ever falling because you know the truth.
1. A wise man knows truth or he would not be wise. But he does not think he knows everything. He is open to correction and learning more. **PRO 1:5; 9:8-9.**
 2. We must never let the truth we know cause us to think too highly of ourselves. **1CO 8:1.**
 - a. This will happen if knowledge is not tempered with charity.
 - b. Without charity our knowledge and religious achievements will do us no good. **1CO 13:1-3.**
 - c. Charity "...vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (**1CO 13:4**).
 - (1) vaunt: v. To boast or brag; to use boastful, bragging, or vainglorious language.
 - (2) vainglory: Glory that is vain, empty, or worthless; inordinate or unwarranted pride in one's accomplishments or qualities; disposition or tendency to exalt oneself unduly; idle boasting or vaunting.
 - (3) puff: v. *fig.* To 'inflate' or cause to 'swell' with vanity, pride, ambition, or the like; to make vain, proud, or arrogant; to elate, exalt in mind; rarely, to cause to swell with anger, to enrage. Usually with up; most commonly in *pa. pple.* puffed up.
- F. No matter what our spiritual achievements may be, we are all in danger of falling if we allow pride to take over.
- G. (**1CO 10:12**) Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.
17. We must never think we are the only ones that can know and follow truth.
- A. If we become highminded, God can take away what we have and give it to someone else, just as He took the church away from the Jews and gave it to the Gentiles.
 - B. God can use men we would not expect Him to use.
 1. Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire, an enemy nation to the Jews, repented at the preaching of Jonah. **JON 3.**
 2. Saul of Tarsus, a great persecutor of the faith, became a great preacher of the faith. **GAL 1:23.**
 3. The Samaritans, looked down upon by the Jews, were converted to the faith of Christ. **JOH 4:9; ACT 8:5-17.**
 4. The Gentiles, with whom the Jews would not eat, received the gospel and the Holy Ghost as did the Jews. **ACT 10.**
 - C. No matter how much truth we know, we do not have a monopoly on God's favors. **MAR 9:38-40.**
 - D. We must never allow ourselves to think ourselves a superior breed of mankind because we know and follow the truth.
 1. Such an attitude is abominable to God. **ISA 65:5.**
 2. It was the *good* son who would not go into the celebration for the return of the prodigal son. **LUK 15:25-32.**
 3. It is the Pharisees who "...trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (**LUK 18:9-14**). These are scorners who will not be taught. **PRO 9:8; 15:12.**
 4. By nature, we are no better than our worst enemy. **ROM 3:8-9.**

19. In conclusion, consider what spiritual pride is not and what it is.
- A. It is not pride to admit that we know and practice the truth.
PSA 26:1-3; 119:30-31; 1JO 2:21; 5:19.
 - B. It is not pride to acknowledge when others do not know and practice the truth.
ROM 16:17; EPH 5:11; 2TI 2:16-18; REV 2:2, 6.
 - C. It is spiritual pride to think that we have a monopoly on truth and on the church of God, that we deserve them, that we know all the truth there is to know, and that we can never be wrong.
20. We must ever maintain the mindset of Jacob expressed in **GEN 32:10**, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.”
21. We must ever maintain the mindset of Paul expressed in **1CO 15:10**, “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”