

The first point in our text today is not to be deceived. Based on the previous text we have looked at sin cannot be blamed on others or rationalized to fit your fleshly desire. The word deceived means "to go astray, to wander." One could also say, "To wander from the truth of God's Word." Another way to describe this is to "wander over to what satan tells." To be deceived is to wander over to the rationalization of sin. Not to be deceived is a valid warning every pastor, leader and Christian should warn of others who are straying in their thinking of sin.

We can address this by taking the blame for ourselves. Do not blame God. Do not blame others. Acknowledge the wickedness of your own heart. Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else. And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" Remember we are to seek God and avoid the very act of temptation. Stay away from people, places and things that will lead you into sin. We know that God doesn't tempt man with sin or evil, and we know this because of vs. 18.

Every good and perfect gift comes from God. Therefore, He cannot give evil or wicked things. The perfect, flawless, holy goodness of God results in His doing and giving only what reflects His perfect holiness and truth.

God does not change. And for one we should rejoice that He doesn't. God doesn't change His character based upon man or does He change to fit man's needs. Dr. A.W. Pink once said, "God doesn't need you nor your opinion of His doings." Malachi 3:6 "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed." In the text of Malachi, we see that contrary to God's having become unjust it was God's mercy and grace, in their state of rebellion, that He didn't consume them. It was a result of God not changing in His promise to them.

Of His own will He brought us forth. He ransomed us. He rescued us. He redeemed us. Clearly we were brought forth from a lost and doomed way. Cf. Romans 3:10-18; John 3:19-20; Ephesians 2:1-3

Regeneration is an act of God. Only God and God alone washes away sin, grants forgiveness and implants a new life in us. The natural man cannot understand this alone, 2 Corinthians 2:14 "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Ezekiel 36:27-28 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

Not only theologically but logically, that is the only way life could be given to those who are dead is by a living God. The dead have no awareness or understanding of sin, no desire to turn from it and no power or resources to change it. John 3:19-20 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." Therefore, regeneration can only happen by "His own will He brought us forth."

This brings me to another point, He brought us forth. Cf. John 3:3-8; Ephesians 2:4-11, 1 Peter 1:23 "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God."

How does this happen? It happened by the Word of truth. It can also be rendered "*the truth of the Word*" and it is the words of God that change a man, not the words of wise men or humanism. Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1-10, Colossians 1:5 "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel." 2 Timothy 2:15 "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Ephesians 1:13 "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" 1 Thessalonians 2:13 "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not as the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."

It is the word of truth that brings forth life. 1 Peter 1:23,25 "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God... And this is the word which was preached to you."

Why is it done? I want to look at the importance of why God redeems us. Not for our purpose but His. Let's see where the term "first fruits" come from and apply that to us today. Leviticus 23:10-11 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.'" Exodus 23:19 "You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God." The first fruits were the best of the crop and showed what the rest would be like. Farmers were inclined to put the best away in case of calamity that might strike and ruin the crops. But the Lord required the best and the first to be given to Him.

These early believers are the first fruits of many believers to come. Revelation 14:4 "These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These *are* the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb."