***James 1:16-17Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.***

One of my favorite authors, AW Tozer, says - Of all the deceptions in this world, self-deception is the hardest for us to detect. It’s true. When we have allowed our mind to roam and wander, be led astray from what is true, who is there, other than the Holy Spirit, to lead us home again? When we take our focus off of what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praise worthy, to place our hearts upon the opposite, we will inevitably fall into deception and believe what is untrue, ignoble, wrong, impure, ugly, shameful, and not worthy of praise. Therefore, James and Paul warn us quite strongly, do not be self-deceived, thereby tainting or distorting our view of God.

Verse 16 says - *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.* The Apostle Paul uses this phrase three times, twice in 1 Corinthians, and once in Galatians. James uses the same term here. Do not err. Do not roam and wander into what is untrue. James is addressing the people of the church. My beloved brethren. What does this tell us? That we are not immune to being deceived and developing a wrong understanding of God. Earlier, in verse 13, James says - *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.* In verse 16, he’s saying *Do not be deceived.* God does not bring temptations and works of the flesh. Yet, there are times, and I’ll only speak for myself here, that I deceive myself. Self-deception is fertile soil for a root of bitterness.

How do we make sure we are not deceived? We stay in the Word. John 8:31-32 we read - *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.****32****And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

In verse 17 we read - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* God is the Gift Giver. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. We know that any gift of this world is imperfect and passing away, just as this world is passing away. But good and perfect gifts are from the Father of lights. 1 John 1:5says*- This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*. James says - there is no variation or shadow of turning. There’s not good gifts one day and bad gifts the next. There’s no gag gifts where God gives and then says gotcha! No, His gifts are perfect, His gifts are good, and they are designed to equip us to accomplish His purpose.

My friends, gifts are wonderful. To have food to eat, money to spend, health, loved ones, good jobs, possessions – all wonderful. But remember, the gifts are not the One we worship. Never ever be deceived. We do not worship the gifts. We worship the Gift Giver. Listen to Job, who lost people he loved, possessions he’d accumulated, and his position in the community all in ONE day. Job 1:20-21 *Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped.* ***21****And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.”* Blessed be the name of the Lord! He gave it all. It’s now all gone. The gifts were nice, but my faith is in the Gift Giver. My hope is not in the earthly things, but in my Heavenly Father. If you suddenly lost it all in one day, everything you owned and everyone you loved… will worship end because the gifts ended? Or will worship continue because we are adoring the Source of the Gifts? It’s critical how we answer! We must not be deceived.

So I ask this morning, where is our trust, where are we anchored, as storms threaten and society crumbles? Is our trust in the gifts? Or is our trust in the Gift Giver, knowing that, even if everything should suddenly pass away, we have a perfect Gift Giver in our Father God? When we place our faith in the gifts, it’s not hard to become deceived and begin to depend upon earthly things. Our foundation must be the Gift Giver. Though this world ebbs and flows, fortunes come in and fortunes go out, God is our Rock of Ages. Psalm 62:1-2 says - *Truly my soul waits upon God: from Him comes my salvation.* *He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.* My friends, let us trust in the Gift Giver, no darkness, no variation, no shadow of turning, regardless of what troubles knock upon our door. Trust in Him, Anchor in Him, and, come what may, we shall not be greatly moved.