

# The Perfect Mirror

## Introduction:

1. Holding a couples' marriage retreat last week, they and the whole church should reflect on making changes.
2. Read Isaiah 58 for a minister's duty to expose men's sins and the great blessing from making holy changes.
3. The human heart often deceives men to trust in hearing or reading God's word, when only obedience counts.
4. We may go further to sing about scripture or in the case of ministers to preach it, but only obedience counts.
5. Scripture addresses every part of your life – it is ignorance of scripture that keeps you from its true answers.
6. Jas 1:21-25 identifies the perfect mirror of God's word and presses our duty to examine our lives and change.
7. There are only two options in response – deceive yourself by only hearing OR be blessed by making changes.

## ***21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.***

- A. *Wherefore* expects more results from regeneration (1:18) and seeking God's righteousness (1:20).
1. Those addressed in this verse are those already born again as God's creatures by His will (1:18).
  2. The exhortation to salvation in this verse must be a consequence to the salvation already defined.
  3. By begetting, God creates us and motivates us to walk in good works (Eph 2:10; Phil 2:13).
  4. In this new state we are to work out what God has worked in (Phil 2:12-13 cp James 1:20).
  5. Those exhorted to salvation here are baptized believers and brethren (James 1:2,9,16,19; 2:1-2).
- B. To work the righteousness of God, you must live a holy life and receive God's word with meekness.
- C. There are things we must lay apart – or get rid of by putting distance between ourselves and them.
1. We set apart things to avoid – menstruating women under Moses (Lev 15:19; 18:19; Eze 22:10).
  2. We set apart things that are to be treated differently – as the animals for sacrifice (Exodus 13:12).
  3. If we carefully analyze words, this is stronger than putting off our sins (Eph 4:22; Col 3:8-9).
  4. Peter used similar wording in a similar context of holiness as necessary to learning (I Pet 2:1-3).
  5. To run the Christian race we must lay aside every weight and our most tempting sins (Heb 12:1).
  6. Only a pure mind is suitable and ready to receive the gospel of Jesus and delight in it (II Pet 3:1).
  7. How thoroughly have you laid apart all filthiness and naughtiness of the world i.e. music, friends, television, reading, thoughts, speech, hobbies, and so forth (II Cor 7:1)?
- D. We have three words we need to define to properly understand this first verse in our chosen passage.
1. **Filthiness.** Moral corruption or pollution; obscenity, vileness, wickedness.
  2. We must cleanse, or wash, our flesh and spirit, of all filthiness, for God to receive us (II Cor 7:1).
  3. **Superfluity.** More than is needed, excessive; extravagance or immoderate indulgence.
  4. We had our fill of sin in the past, when we went to excess; now we are different (I Pet 4:3-5).
  5. Let us consider wisely here: is there some naughtiness not superfluous? No, it is all superfluous!
  6. **Naughtiness.** Moral badness or wickedness; bad, wrong, blameworthy, improper; waywardness.
  7. The transgressions of the wicked will take and destroy them in their own naughtiness (Pro 11:6).
  8. Clearly stated here is the necessary prerequisite of holiness for fruitful hearing (John 7:17).
- E. There is something we are to receive with meekness – or accept in a humble way of submission.
1. The action of receiving is reaching forth to take something that is available or offered for taking.
  2. Doing it with meekness is rejecting any self-protection or resentment of negative consequences.
  3. **Meekness.** Free from haughtiness and self-will; piously humble and submissive.
  4. Here is the fulfillment of a precious proverb describing the beauty of an obedient ear (Pr 25:12).

- F. The engrafted word must be received with meekness as a corollary and extension of laying apart sin.
  - a. **Engrafted.** To graft in; to insert. *transferred.* To set firmly in. *figurative.* To implant in the mind.
  - b. Which word is engrafted in us? The written word, the law of God, not the living Word of 1:18.
  - c. Paul told the Romans it was in them; he told the Hebrews it was in them (Rom 10:8; Heb 8:10).
  - d. The Old Testament addressed the ears; the New Testament is in the heart (II Corinthians 3:3-6).
  - e. This word is obviously the Scriptures, as written and preached by looking and hearing (1:22-25).
- G. This engrafted word can save our souls, if we receive it with meekness and do it, as our verses teach.
  - f. The holy brethren addressed were already born again by the living Word of God (1:2,16,18,19).
  - g. We are born again here to work out our salvation that He worked in (Eph 2:10; Phil 2:12-13).
  - h. This salvation is strictly from error and sin, as James plainly tells us later in his epistle (5:19-20).
  - i. The salvation under consideration is the righteous manifestation of God's regenerate creatures.
  - j. And salvation from error and sin is most surely a salvation from death (Luke 15:24; I Tim 5:6).
  - k. Receiving is hearing and doing, and it reveals us as children of God (Luke 6:35 cp I John 3:10).

**22 *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.***

- A. There is no profit in hearing only, as Paul blasted the Jews for pride by hearing (Romans 2:1 – 3:19).
- B. Having spent several verses preparing them to receive God's words, now he stresses obedience to it.
  - 1. Jesus corrected the Jews' false idea of salvation by the mere possession of Scripture (John 5:39).
  - 2. The devil will give a man confidence in hearing, to keep him from doing and neuter his religion.
  - 3. The deception is assuming that hearing is evidence of life and will save a man from error and sin.
  - 4. Note the parable of the sower: three types of ground heard and rejoiced, but they were fruitless.
  - 5. It is nothing to receive God or His Word by faith without works, as James will prove (2:14-26).
- C. Your lack of doing, lack of fruit, and lack of works does not deceive God or good men, just yourself.
  - 1. Hearing without doing is deception as to evidence of salvation (1:22,26 cp 2:14-26; Rom 2:13).
  - 2. It is a lie that you can attend church, hear preaching, and even be convicted, without obeying.
  - 3. The Jews took confidence in the lying words that God's temple would save them (Jer 7:1-15).

**23 *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:***

- A. Those who hear the Word of God without obeying are like a man beholding his face in a mirror.
  - 1. While they may not have had glass mirrors as we today, they polished metals to reflect like glass.
  - 2. Being in the presence of the preaching of God's word is like looking at your face in a mirror.
  - 3. The first part of improving appearance is done – you see the blemishes and things needing repair.
- B. Bible preaching is to identify and expose error and sin of any sort in the lives of every single hearer.
  - 1. Paul made war – to cast down all imaginations and thoughts contrary to God (II Cor 10:3-6).
  - 2. Showing God's people their sins is work of the ministry (Is 58:1). It is a game to some (Is 58:2).
- C. Nine times each week, not counting personal exhortations and correspondence, you are shown spots.
- D. Consider for illustration the blemishes (errors and sins) identified this past week on your gospel face.

**24 *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.***

- A. The man who hears without doing is like a man seeing his blemishes but who goes away and forgets.
  - 1. Rather than washing his face, combing his hair, brushing his teeth, etc., he goes on out the door!

2. He rushes off to an important interview or sales calls in his pajamas and his unruly hair on end!
3. With a booger hanging from his nose, he confidently goes through his day as if nothing is wrong.
- B. The three grounds of our Lord's parable of the sower ascribed fruitlessness to lack of attention and preparation, little strength to withstand opposition, and seducing worldly attractions (Luke 8:4-18).
- C. Though he heard and saw his sins identified and exposed by preaching, he leaves with false security.
  1. This is self-deception: that though he comes far short of God's word, he will somehow survive.
  2. He forgets he has some serious problems, which will cause him disgrace and shame eventually.
  3. The mirror showed him to be different than what he thought of himself, but he ignores the facts.

**25 *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.***

- A. Continuing his practical analogy of looking in a mirror, James described a blessed doer of the Word.
  1. He used the word *looketh* as part of the analogy, but it refers to reading and hearing the gospel.
  2. He used *continueth* as remaining at the mirror of God's word long enough to correct faults, which is the opposite of leaving the mirror and forgetting what disaster you saw in the glass.
  3. *Continuing* in this place is opposite forgetting – being convicted for a moment but without fruit.
  4. It is *continuing* – a theme we must raise again – that marks true disciples (John 8:31; Heb 12:1).
- B. The perfect law of liberty is none other than the inspired Scriptures, conveying the glorious gospel.
  1. The better the quality of a mirror – the more blemishes you will easily and clearly be able to see.
  2. The better the light in the room – the more blemishes you will easily and clearly be able to see.
  3. Excellent mirrors and lighting are not pleasant experiences for average men – many blemishes.
  4. The word of God is the ultimate combination of both perfect mirror and light, to which we should take heed (Prov 4:18; [6:23](#); Psalm 19:8; 119:105; Isaiah 8:20; II Peter 1:19).
- C. The New Testament is a law, but in contrast to the Old Testament, it is a law of liberty (Gal 5:1).
- D. This man shall be blessed in his deed – this godly approach of obeying preaching will be blessed, just as the man who delights and meditates in God's law will prosper in everything (Psalm 1:1-6).
- E. The man will have God's blessings of strength, assurance, salvation, and the peaceful life of saints, and He will know that He is accepted and approved by God His Father.

**Conclusion:**

1. What will you do with the truth that you have heard this past week (retreat) or this day (two assemblies)?
2. We deceive ourselves if we think that hearing truthful preaching has any residual value – we must obey it.
3. Even if we were to read it ourselves, sing about it, and even preach it – it is only obedience that counts.
4. There are only two options in response – deceive yourself by only hearing OR be blessed by making changes.

**For Further Study:**

1. The sermon outline, "The Parable of the Sower," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/parable-of-the-sower.pdf>.
2. The sermon outline, "Belly Worshipers," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/belly-worshippers.pdf>.
3. The sermon outline, "Playing with Sin," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/playing-with-sin.pdf>.
4. The sermon outline, "Running Scared," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/running-scared.pdf>.
5. The sermon outline, "Carnal Christians," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/carnal-christians.pdf>.
6. The sermon outline, "Remember Lot's Wife," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/remember-lots-wife.pdf>.
7. The sermon outline, "God Hates Compromise," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/compromise.pdf>.
8. The sermon outline, "Sojourning Here in Fear," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/sojourning-here-in-fear.pdf>.
9. The sermon outline, "Lip Service," ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/sermons/pdf/lip-service.pdf>.
10. The website FAQ, "Why Do You Sweat the Small Stuff?" ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/introduction/faq/small-stuff.htm>.