



22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 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: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 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." (James 1:22-25)

WE have often spoken of the Word of God to be very much like a mirror, or Looking Glass. There are two things that we must see, if we have faith to see clearly:

1. The complete righteousness of God displayed in the whole of the Bible;
2. The sinfulness and depravity of ourselves and mankind at large.

We see ourselves in the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden at Eden; and we see the unmerited mercy of God in promising them a Redeemer. We see ourselves in the compromising nature of Lot who "*pitched his tent toward Sodom*" and became a foremost citizen of that wicked city. Then, too, we see the grace of God in offering Lot and his family a means of escape.

Looking straight on into the mirror of God's Word, we see our own treachery in that of the sons of Leah in selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt – and we see God's providential care in raising Joseph up to be a ruler in Egypt and the savior of Israel in time of famine. Our own adulterous and murderous urges are witnessed in those of King David when he took Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, and committed adultery in the palace. That sin led to a greater – murder of Uriah. Please do not believe that your own ugly heart is not mirrored here, for it surely is. Hate is murder, and lust is adultery. We have a perfect example of God's Word being used as a mirror in this sin of David. God sent the prophet Nathan to admonish King David. The admonishment came in the form of a mirrored image which enraged David for its wanton wickedness:

¹ And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. ² The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: ³ But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. ⁴ And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. ⁵ And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: ⁶ And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. ⁷ And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." (2 Sam 12:1-7)

Just as in the case of David, we are condemned by the words of our own mouths. Perhaps we did not intend to point our condemnations inward, but outward to some other soul; however, most often the single finger we point at others has three pointing back to us!

Many read the Scriptures in a nearly complete disregard of the words having any personal application – they must refer only to those sinful people of ages past. WRONG! They apply to us at least as much as they applied to Adam, Lot, David, and others. When God's Word tells of some sinful person, you will be more often correct as not to simply substitute your own name in the place of the one mentioned in Scripture. Yes, there was a woman taken in adultery, in the VERY act, and brought to Christ to render a verdict of stoning; but Christ showed the tenderest of grace and mercy to the woman. What was that woman's name? It was Jerry, Betty, Cinder, Charles, Jack, Roy, and a million other names of sinners. You and I are as much a part of that event as the woman herself. We were the ones who came at the noonday hour to Jacob's Well. We were the ones who denied Christ three times the night of His betrayal. We were the ones who followed afar off as He was tried and crucified. Look into the glass, my friend, and see!

We may be fine Bible scholars and yet be as lost as ten penny nail. We may attend worship every time the doors are opened, and never miss a weekday Bible study; but unless we see ourselves and our own unworthiness in Scripture, we are lost. The Bible is not written for us to condemn the sins of others (though we must judge those sins), it is written so that we may realize our great need of a Savior. Our fruits will identify our faith just as surely as an apple will identify its tree as an apple tree.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor 3:18) My father was an avid reader, and he encouraged me to read as well. He told me, at a very young age, that I could explore many strange lands, and meet the most interesting of historical characters through the medium of print. After reading a particularly engrossing book on the life of some great figure, I went about for many days trying to make the high character of that person part of my own. I even copied their vocabulary and other habits revealed in the book. One week I would become King Alfred; the next, Sir Francis Drake, General Robert E. Lee, or Douglas MacArthur.

Should not this same principle be even more pertinent to the reading of the Holy Bible? Yes, we clearly see our own unworthiness in that great book, but we also see Someone altogether different – the Lord Jesus Christ who loved us beyond any measure of our understanding. He was a perfect Gentleman. He was kind and self-sacrificing. Though perfectly righteous, He condescended to speak to the sinner with

tokens of love and grace. When we read of that greatest of Heroes of all of the centuries, should we not desire to emulate that righteousness that he owned? Should we not desire to forsake our baggage of sin, and cast our burdens upon His broad shoulders? Should we not desire to become His friend at all cost?

I had occasion to visit the Louvre in Paris many years ago when in the spring of life.

I observed aspiring young artist lined up along exhibit halls of great works of art. They were emulating the works of the great masters. They would be seated a few feet to the front of some notable masterpiece and would be working with great patience and meticulous concentration. Studying the original for many minutes from behind their canvasses, they would return to their copy and often only make a single stroke. Then, they would again study the masterpiece of a Raphael, or a DaVinci, for a very long time and finally make another single stroke on their canvas. Is this not what the Christian should be doing in the study of the Great Master, Christ? Though we are imperfect, we can never come close to a righteous faith unless we are imitating the great Master of our Souls. We, too, can be His master pieces if our canvas is scrubbed and our brushes clean.

Naturally, we have no talent for the great Art of which Christ is Master, for we lack perfection. We shall always lack perfection until we awake with His likeness. As David the Psalmist says: *"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."* (Psalms 17:15) We may yet behold His Face in righteousness while we still lack that perfection that Christ imparts. We are sanctified and washed daily by the study of His Word. We see with veiled eyes in this life, but the time shall come when we will see clearly. *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."* (1 Cor 13:12)

My friends, do you see your face in the Glass? Do you see that face darkly and contrasted against the brilliant light of Christ?