

## THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD #9

### The Mirror of God's Word

#### Part 2

There are 2 places in the New Testament where God's word is compared to a mirror or looking glass.

The 1<sup>st</sup> place is in Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Church at Corinth

#### 2 Corinthians 3:18 NKJV

**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

God's word has the power to supernaturally transform us into the image of Christ!

As the English poet said...

**"You become what you behold."**

**William Blake**

**1757-1827**

Now are looking at the 2<sup>nd</sup> place the Word of God is compared to a mirror; it's found in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Book of James, which begins with a warning about...

### I. The Danger of Religious Self-Deception

#### James 1:22

**But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

#### A. There is a Cosmic Connection of Hearing and Doing

1. In the OT Book of Deuteronomy there is a lengthy list of blessings and curses:

a. Notice the condition for receiving the blessing:

**Deuteronomy 28:1-2**

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: 2 And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

b. Now notice the condition that brings the curse:

**Deuteronomy 28:15**

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

c. Those who hear and do receive the blessings; those who hear and do not do come under the curse; self-deception is a curse.

2. **Jesus said the same thing in the parable of the wise and foolish builders** Matthew 7: one built on a rock the other on sand. The difference was one heard his word and kept it and the other only heard the word.

a. In another place, a woman cried, “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which nursed you; but Jesus said We find the same thing here...

**"More than that, blessed are they who hear God's word and obey it."  
Luke 11:28**

3. We find the same thing here in the Book of James; the Word of God is a mirror to 2 kinds of people.

a. The 1<sup>st</sup> man hears the Word but it doesn't affect him; he is self-deceived:

**James 1:23** (1<sup>st</sup> man)

**For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.**

- If I glance in the mirror and walk away without acting on what I saw, I will quickly forget what I looked like.

**Craig S. Keener**

**“This refers to the ease with which one loses the memory of the word, if one does not work hard to put it into practice.”**

b. The 2<sup>nd</sup> man is different:

**James 1:24** (2<sup>nd</sup> man)

**But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, not forgetting what he has heard but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.**

4. How we handle the mirror of God’s Word determines whether we are self-deceived or blessed!

## **I. God’s Word is the Mirror That Shows Us Who We Really Are**

### **A. Where Would We Be Without a Mirror?**

1. Most of us use a mirror several times a day without a 2<sup>nd</sup> thought; we need mirrors because we don’t know what we look like without them.

2. But physical mirrors can only show us our physical condition.

**Derek Prince**

**“James here compares the operation of God’s word to a mirror; but it does not reveal our external physical features but our inward spiritual nature and condition. It reveals to us things about ourselves which no material mirror and no work of merely human wisdom can reveal; things which we can never come to know in any other way or by any other means.”**

3. A physical mirror only gives me a picture of myself; but the Word of God is more like an X-ray; it reveals my spiritual condition on the inside:

4. A physical mirror is inanimate; it’s a “dead” thing. But...

**Hebrews 4:12**

**The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

a. The next verse tells us the Word of God is more than words on paper; the Word of God is a Person; the Word of God is Jesus Christ Himself!

**Hebrews 4:13**

**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

5. When I open the Word of God, 2 things happen; it reveals God to me but it also reveals me to myself!

**Derek Prince**

**“Remember that when you read your Bible your Bible is also reading you.”**

6. God’s word is the mirror that reveals whether we are a sinner or a saint; there is a negative and positive side.

**B. The Negative Side: The Mirror of God’s Word Shows Us Our Sin**

1. The most obvious use of a mirror is to show us what’s wrong.

**Adam Clarke**

**“This metaphor is very simple, but very expressive. A man wishes to see his own face, and how, in its natural state, it appears; for this purpose he looks into a mirror, by which his real face, with all its blemishes and imperfections, is exhibited. He is affected with his own appearance; he sees deformities that might be remedied; he sees spots, superfluities, and impurities, which might be removed.”**

2. Without the Word of God, how would we know our sins? How would we know what we look like to the Lord?

**Matthew Henry**

**As a looking-glass shows us the spots and defilements upon our faces, that they may be remedied and washed off, so the word of God shows us our sins, that we may repent of them and get them pardoned; it shows us what is amiss, that it may be amended.**

3. Mirrors show us what's wrong so we can fix it. But if we look in the mirror and walk away without fixing what's wrong, we soon forget what's wrong!

#### **Matthew Henry**

**This is the true description of one who hears the word of God and does it not.**

**How many are there who, when they sit under the word, are affected with their own sinfulness, misery, and danger, acknowledge the evil of sin, and their need of Christ; but, when their hearing is over, all is forgotten, convictions are lost, good affections vanish, and pass away like the waters of a land-flood: he immediately forgets.**

4. I have had experience with many 1000's of church-goers and preached many 1000's of sermons; but I know I know I didn't help any who only heard but did not do.

#### **Matthew Henry**

**Hearing is in order to doing; the most attentive and the most frequent hearing of the word of God will not help us, unless we be also doers of it. If we were to hear a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested just in the hearing, it would never bring us to heaven.**

a. I am always thankful to hear someone enjoyed my sermon; we all need encouragement; but I found this in...

#### **The Pulpit Commentary**

**The highest praise that can be bestowed upon a Christian minister is not to tell him how much his preaching is enjoyed on Sundays, but to let him see how well it is being translated into the life on the other days of the week.**

5. Jesus preached great sermons to great crowds and had many followers; but at the end of His greatest sermon He said this:

**“Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you?”**

**Luke 6:46**

6. So the negative side of the mirror of God's word is it shows us our sins; but there is a positive side!

**C. The Positive Side: The Mirror Shows Us Our Real Identity in Christ**

1. Take another look at our text:

**James 1:23**

**For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.**

a. The word “natural” in Greek is “genesis”; it literally means “the face of his birth”.

**John Gill**

**“His natural face is his genesis face, the face of the generation with which he was born; his true, genuine, native face; in distinction from any counterfeit one.”**

2. Why is this important? Because the Bible shows us our true identity according to our birth!

a. All of us are born into this world as sinners! We are the sons and daughters of Adam; so when a sinner looks into the mirror of God’s word it shows him his “natural” condition; lost; without God. It shows his need of a Savior.

3. But when we are “born again”, the mirror of God’s Word shows us who we are in Christ!

**2 Corinthians 5:17-18**

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.**

a. We are the sons of God; we are new creations; we are justified in His sight.

4. It is only by the mirror of God’s word that I can know the difference between my “old man” in Adam and my “new man” in Christ!

**Derek Prince**

**“A natural mirror shows us what we look like in our natural self. But the Bible is like a spiritual mirror. It shows us who we are in Christ; it reveals the**

**old nature and the new nature; it shows us the thoughts and intents of our heart.”**

a. The mirror of God’s word shows me whether I am in the flesh or in the Spirit; what I need to put off and what I need to put on.

**Ephesians 4:20-24**

**20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man (self) which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man (self) which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

5. Let me be clear:

- The Word of God is the mirror that shows the sinner who he really is; how far short he has fallen from God and his need of a Savior
- On the other hand, that same Word of God has the power to show the saint who he really is; and is the mirror by which he discerns the difference between what he was and who he is now
- But in either case, the Word is the mirror that shows us what we are to do: put off the old man who is growing corrupt; put on the new man, created by God in righteousness and true holiness!

### **III. Conclusion**

#### **A. It Matters How We Handle the Mirror!**

**Warren Wiersbe**

**“If we are to use God's mirror profitably, then we must gaze into it carefully and with serious intent. No quick glances will do. We must examine our own hearts and lives in the light of God's Word. This requires time, attention, and sincere devotion. Five minutes with God each day will never accomplish a deep spiritual examination.**

1. I spend 5 minutes in front of a mirror before I leave the house; Elizabeth spends a lot more than that; I glance; she really looks!

The word for "looks intently into" (parakypsas) literally means "to stoop down" in order to have a good close look.

**Bible Knowledge Commentary**

**2. Elizabeth has a special mirror she uses to put on her makeup;** it's lighted and magnified; one day I decided to use it to locate a speck in my eye; when I got in front of it, it was scary! My face was lighted and magnified; and it wasn't pretty. I couldn't get away fast enough.

3. Then I realized how she looks at it for a long time; she really looks; and she acts on what she sees! That's how we should handle the mirror of God's word

4. When we continually look into the mirror of God's word and do what it shows us to do, we will be blessed!

**James 1:25 NKJV**

**But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

a. The Word is the perfect law of liberty and freedom; a mirror...

**Matthew Henry**

**"After seeing ourselves (in the mirror of God's word), we must remember what we are and what God says, and we must do the Word. The blessing comes in the doing, not in the reading of the Word."**

**Closing Prayer and Ministry**

**Title**