

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Text James 1:23-24; read vs. 22-25

Introduction

I. The Bible is like a mirror

1. It is a divine reflector

A. It reflects the sinful condition of man

(1). The image of what man really is.

(2). The ideal of what he ought to be.

B. It reflects the will of God

2. It is a true and exact reflection,

not dark and uncertain, (1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 3:18)

II. What we see when we look in this mirror

1. We see ourselves

A. "His natural face", lit: "The face of his birth"

The features with which he was born.

(1). Ps. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
and in sin did my mother conceive me."

(2). 1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man receiveth not the
things of the Spirit of God: for they are
foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,
because they are spiritually discerned."

B. Heb. 4:12, "The word of God...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

"Eye of God's Word, where'er we turn

Ever upon us! thy keen gaze

Can all the depths of sin discern,

Unravel every bosom's maze." (Keeble)

C. We see our temptations and weaknesses

D. We see our failures and sins

E. We see the influence of God's gracious Spirit on us. (vs. 18)

2. We See Christ Our Savior.

A. He is "the engrafted word which is able to save your souls," vs. 21; "The implanted Word";
(Compare the parable of the sower.)

"Our mirror is a blessed book,
Where out from each illumined page
We see one glorious image look,
All eyes to dazzle and engage.

"The Son of God; and that indeed
We see Him as He is we know,
Since in the same bright glass we read
The very life of things below." (Keeble)

B. He is the Incarnate Word who has declared the Father to us. (Jn. 1:1, 2, 14, 18)

3. Some refuse to look at all in this mirror of God's Word They, of course, get no impression from it.

There are some who have not forgotten what manner of men they are, simply because they have never known. From childhood they have been brought up with utterly false notions of themselves.

III. The Look that Serves God's Purpose

1. Not a superficial glance, but a serious gaze.

A. One with a superficial glance looks but does not really "see."

B. The word James used for "looking into" indicates "bending forward to examine earnestly."

It is used of Peter and Mary Magdalene looking into the sepulchre (Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:11), and of angels desiring to look into the heavenly mysteries (1 Peter 1:12).

It is a near, minute, searching inspection.

2. Not a temporary exercise, but a continuous practice.

A. Some look carelessly and then go on about their regular business as usual and pleasure as usual.

B. ~~This~~ This bodily departure from the church and the gospel is accompanied by a mental and spiritual one which is far greater.

C. The look that begets a new creature in Christ is followed by a changed life that practices the will of God.

"Am I a stone and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ,
 beneath thy Cross,
So number, drop by drop,
 thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?"

Not so thou women loved,
who with exceeding grief lamented thee;
not so fallen Peter, weeping bitterly;
not so the thief was moved;

Not so the sun and moon,
which hid their faces in a starless sky,
a horror of great darkness at broad noon—
I, only I!

Yet give not o'er,
But seek thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock
Greater than Moses, turn + look once more,
And smite a rock!"

— Christina Rossetti

(2). We remember that in which we are interested, because we give our attention to it.

We weaken the memory by inattention, which results from the absence of deep interest.

Therefore, "Take an interest in anything, and you will attend to it; Attend to it, and you will remember it."

B. This going away is followed by forgetting all they have seen.

(1). The truth passes by them unappropriated and unpracticed.

(2). They play with the Lord's message and never consider it seriously.

(3). The danger against which James warns the Xtns of his day is as pressing now as it was then. Never was there a time when interest in the Bible was more keen or more widespread. New translations, commentaries, expositions, introductions, helps of all kind --- exegetical, homiletical, historical, & textual--- multiply year by year.

But we fear that many are much more eager to know all about God's Word than they are to do God's will as revealed in that Word.

They study lives of Christ, but do not follow the Life of Christ.

They pay Him the empty homage of an intellectual interest in His Words and works,

but they do not the things which He says.

They throng and press Him in curiosity

but obtain no blessing, because in all their hearing and learning there is no true wisdom,

no fear of the Lord,

and no doing of His Word.

They are all like Solomon's friends the Tyrians, who helped to build the temple

and yet went on worshipping their idols.

C. What this attitude leads to

(1). Self-satisfaction. (2). Growing carelessness