

## **Broken Mirrors and Marred Images**

James 1:19-25; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Cor. 13:12

### Introduction:

1. Have you ever looked in a mirror and been dissatisfied with what you saw?
2. Carl Hurley, the Kentucky comedian, says his mother always said, "Carl eat everything on your plate. There are people starving in China."
3. He said, "I was in a hotel once that had one of those full length mirrors. I had just gotten out of the shower and there I was in front of that full length mirror and I asked myself, 'How is this helping people in China?'"
4. Sometimes mirrors reveal things we do not want to see, but they do give us the opportunity to modify what we have seen.
5. There are three N.T. passages that speak of the word of God as a mirror. One of those is found in James 1:19-25. Read it with me.
6. This passage describes the word or the law of God, as perfect. But sometimes we look into other mirrors, mirrors that are broken and reflect marred and distorted images. Such images are unhealthy, defeating, and growth inhibiting.
7. Are you looking in a distorted mirror? Is the reflection you are seeing what God wants you to see? Are you blessed by what you see?

### Discussion:

I. In James 1:20, 25 blessing is the objective that God has for you looking in His mirror.

- A. When we look into the law of God we should see the glory of the Lord and be transformed into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18).
  1. This passage assumes that the glory of the Lord is the ideal and that we have to be changed in order to be like Him.
  2. Rom. 12:2 speaks of our not being conformed to the world but being transformed.
- B. As we look into the mirror we see a contrast between the glory of the Lord and our likeness.

1. Like the world, to use James' language we tend to be slow to hear, quick to speak

and

quick to anger. James says, "this does not achieve the righteousness of God" (1:19).

2. There are so many ways that we tend to be like the world.
  - a. We tend to evaluate "with an attitude of personal favoritism" (James 2:2ff).
  - b. The glory of the Lord says, "Love your neighbor." This instead of showing partiality (James 2:8-9).
  - c. When we look into the broken and distorted mirror of the world the tongue is used as a tool of destruction (James 3:6-12).
  - d. When we look into the broken and distorted mirror, jealousy, selfish ambition, arrogance, lies, quarrels, conflict, pleasure seeking are all part of the distorted image reflected from the world. James says these result in "disorder and every

evil

thing" (3:16).

- e. These stand in contrast to the reflection of the glory of God and the transforming effect that that reflection has on those who hear and do. James describe it as coming from the wisdom above (3:17). It results in peace, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, good fruits, stability, peace (3:17-18).
- 3. A similar contrast is evident elsewhere in Scripture (ex. Titus 3:1-3).
- C. God wants blessing for us. His mirror reflects that we are important, valuable, honorable, wanted, intelligent, desirable, attractive, powerful.

II. The distorted reflections that we get from the broken mirror of the world do not lead to blessing but a curse.

- A. The message that you receive from the mirror of the world is negative.
  - 1. You are unimportant, of no value, not honorable, not wanted, unintelligent, undesirable, unattractive, and powerless.
  - 2. This negative message injures us and for some of us it becomes a cascade of negativeness.
  - 3. We become bitter and resentful.
- B. The cascade of darkness affects our relationships with others.
  - 1. Feeling injured we become cold. Feeling deprived we become covetous, holding on desperately to what we think we have.
  - 2. Because we feel injured we think we are totally justified in retaliation.
  - 3. Because we feel less, taken for granted, disrespected we perceive the worst in others. So we project blame. We put them down.
  - 4. Feeling powerless we put others down. We intimidate. We use physical force to dominate.
- C. These distorted reflections develop into vicious cycles.
  - 1. When we put others down they feel powerless and attempt to put us down.
  - 2. When we injure others they feel injured and feel totally justified in retaliation.
  - 3. All of this because this is what we see mirrored in the world.
  - 4. When the world calls us a coward we rise up to prove otherwise. Must brave men prove they are brave? Do brave men say, "Look how brave I am?"
  - 5. When the world calls us weak we rise up to prove our strength. Must the strong prove their strength? Do strong men say, "Look how strong I am?"

III. What is the solution? First, we must look in the perfect mirror. Second, we must be transformed by what we see so that we act differently than what we see reflected in the worldly mirror (James 1:21-22; Rom. 12:2).

- A. What we see reflected in the perfect law of God is the glory of God Himself (2 Cor. 3:18).
  - 1. The law is not a mere list of rules.
  - 2. It is the reflection of who God is. "When the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared . . ." (Titus 3:4).
  - 3. The transition point in Titus 3 is the "But . . ." in verse 4.
    - a. On one side of this but there is foolishness, disobedience, deception, slavery to various lusts and pleasures, malice, envy, hatefulness and hatred (v. 3).

- b. On the other side there is peacefulness, gentleness, consideration, and engagement in good deeds (v. 2, 8).
- 4. Understanding who God is and what He has done transforms our hearts, if we are willing to allow it to.
- B. The resulting blessing of this transformation.
  - 1. Did you ever wonder why a persecutor like Saul of Tarsus could be so radically transformed that he actually preached the gospel and voluntarily enduring suffering for the cause of Christ?
    - a. He began to see things differently once he began looking in a different mirror.
    - b. "I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).
  - 2. Looking in a different mirror allows us to see things differently.
    - a. Trials are considered with joy (James 1:2).
    - b. Humble circumstances are occasions for glorying in high position (James 1:9).
    - c. The possession of riches is occasion for glorying in humiliation (James 1:10).
    - d. Perseverance under trial is seen as the way to the crown of life (James 1:12).

#### Conclusion:

- 1. What mirror are you looking in?
- 2. If you are looking in the mirror of the world you are reflecting the world's image.
- 3. Look in the mirror of the word of God and you will come to reflect the image of God.