

'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall'
James 1:22-25

January 20, 2013

A. Introduction

1. The First Delusion

2. Text: ²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.'

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^A Psalm 119:11

^B 1 Corinthians 9:21, Jeremiah 31:33, Acts 20:27

^C 1 Corinthians 10:31, John 13:17, Philippians 2:13, 4:13

A. Introduction

1. last week, the first delusion ... having the wrong view of the word of God
 - a. disregarding the fact that it applies to our lives
 - b. ignoring its instruction
 - c. by various means, even theological argument, in one way or another, causing ourselves to think, ‘well, this does not apply to me’
 - d. it is brought to our attention by

2. Today’s Text – 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

3. the second delusion is subtler and more insidious
 - a. when we think that by hearing, or reading, God’s word
 - b. even studying and understanding its message
 - c. we have somehow completed our responsibilities as Christians
 - d. Ken was a bit like that
 - (A) he was fascinated with prophecy, spent much time studying it
 - (B) read the Bible a great deal; had a library on the subject
 - (C) but the spiritual responsibility in the family was all left to his wife
 - (D) it was she who trained and taught the children
 - (E) it was she who taught and served in the church
 - (F) his Christian walk was harmless; but it was also lifeless
 - e. to overcome this delusion means our paying attention to the word of God as a mirror the shows to us our true nature and needs

4. all of you probably know the fairy tale, 'Snow White'
 - a. it was published in the first half of the 19th century by the brothers Grimm, but its origin was probably much older
 - b. At the beginning of the story, a queen sits sewing at an open window during a winter snowfall when she pricks her finger with her needle, causing three drops of blood fall onto the snow on the ebony window frame. Admiring the beauty of the resulting color combination, she says to herself: 'Oh, how I wish that I had a daughter that is as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as that wood of the window frame'. Soon after, the queen indeed gives birth to a baby girl as white as snow, as red as blood, and with hair as black as ebony. They name her Snow White, and not long after, the queen dies.
 - c. After a year has passed, the King takes a new wife, who is beautiful but also unutterably supercilious and proud. The new Queen possesses a magical mirror, which she asks every morning: 'Magic mirror in my hand, who is the fairest in that land?'. The mirror always replies: 'My Queen, you are the fairest in that land.' The Queen is always pleased with that, because the magic mirror never lies. But, when Snow White reaches the age of seven, she becomes as beautiful as the day and even more beautiful than the Queen and when the Queen asks her mirror, it responds: 'My Queen, you are the fairest here so true. But Snow White is a thousand time more beautiful than you.' ^{-{2}}.
 - d. and with that begins her evil plots to destroy Snow White
 - e. in a sense the new Queen acts like many when confronted by the mirror of God's word ... if the mirror doesn't show what they want to know, then they ignore it or they seek to prove it wrong

B. Hearers but Not Doers. James 1:22

1. 'But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.'
2. The Five Responses to Hearing
 - a. Pastor Abraham ("Abe") Kudra, who about 85 years old, an active pastor of a PAOC church in Victoria, B.C., and who 'plans to die with his boots on' has pointed out in one of his messages that there are five kinds of people you will find in any church ^{-{3}}. – Wishers, Talkers, Dreamers, Dabblers and Doers; you can guess which he favours!

- b. the first four of these may be avid hearers ... but
 - (A) wishers sigh and cry but never try
 - (B) talkers blab and gab about what they have done or will do
 - (C) dreamers plan and prepare but never dare
 - (D) dabblers start but never finish; dabble in ministry; dabble in service

3. Prove Yourself

- a. Christians need to be that fifth kind of person ... a doer
- b. otherwise, he is simply a ...

C. Looker but 'Forgetter' James 1:23-24

- 1. 'For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.'

2. The Nature of the Look

- a. how does he look?
 - (A) when I was in my teens, I well remember the various ways that the other boys would look in the mirror after showering after gym
 - (B) some it was just a quick wipe and swipe with a comb
 - (C) but others, it was a performance – those were the days of the duck-tail haircuts – and how they would stand there, get their hair properly greased, seeking to get every strand of hair in place
 - (D) how concerned they were to be as handsome as could be!
- b. James' way of describing this look should capture our attention
 - (A) he uses a word that would normally mean to observe well, to look at closely ... now that sounds good ...
 - (B) but then uses that word in a way suggesting it took but an instant
 - (C) so what should have been an attentive look in the mirror – or in the word of God – turns out, despite any appearance to the contrary, to have the same effect as a mere, passing glance

- (D) so that immediately upon leaving the mirror – or the word of God – the lasting and ongoing result is forgetfulness of what was seen
- c. it is so easy for any of us to become a ...

3. 'Forgetter' by Nature

- a. it is very easy to fall into a habit of forgetting
- b. I worked for a number of years before learning this lesson
 - (A) it was always easy for me to remember facts or figures
 - (B) but peoples' names seemed to escape me in a moment
 - (C) but then I worked for a man, he'd been a very successful salesman at IBM, who taught me the importance of remembering names
 - (D) as it is a matter of discipline, of politeness, and of care and respect for the person involved, I learned and practised doing it
 - (E) so, the excuse, 'Oh, I can't remember,' is really not valid
- c. but with God's word, as a lover treasuring up the words of their beloved, should we not be able to say with truth, 'Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.' (Psalms 119:11)?
- d. for this we need to be a ...

D. Searcher and Performer James 1:25

- 1. 'But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.'
- 2. The Character of the Search
 - a. we talked about the look in the mirror
 - (A) it should have had the quality of attentive observation
 - (B) but in reality, it was little better than a quick glance
 - b. here the kind of look is a searching look – be it into the mirror, or the spiritual mirror which is the word of God
 - c. this is not casual look, but that intense look as when

- (A) one peers down through a microscope at some tiny object
 - (B) or peers up through a telescope at some distant star
 - (C) straining to relax the eye so as to perceive and note every detail
- d. because the motivation behind this is not simply the keeping up of appearances, but rather the ...

3. Performing The Perfect Law

a. what is this perfect law?

- (A) I would like to try and condense – hopefully without losing too much of the meaning – what Pastor Geoff Thomas has to say^{4}.
- (B) among His other gifts, the Creator has revealed to man His will in the ten commandments – not the ten suggestions as some treat them today – given to Moses at Sinai
- (C) both James and Paul cite these as expressing God's moral will
- (D) additionally, God gave to His OT people a body of legislation to govern them as a nation, His theocratic law as their King
- (E) and as Psalm 119 goes beyond the Torah to define God's word by all that He has said in revelation, so the word 'law' should be viewed as encompassing all Scripture as expressing God's will

b. But 'the perfect law of liberty'

- (A) is James' special expression for something differing from those other uses
- (B) it transcends specifying the law as God's will to achieving it
- (C) the temporary aspects of God's people under the OT covenant were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus as the Messiah
- (D) the focus of Scripture moved away from His people in one nation at the eastern end of the Mediterranean to His people throughout the nations of the world – and 'the perfect law of liberty' is the expression of His governing that people, the church of Christ

c. it is perfect as being practicable

- (A) it is perfect because first of all, Christ has fulfilled it on our behalf so that we can be clothed in His righteousness
- (B) so it is the same moral will of God, made new in Jesus Christ: Paul says he was 'to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ,

- so that I might win those who are without law.’ (1 Corinthians 9:21)
- (C) but beyond that, it is perfect, because through regeneration and the power of the Holy Spirit it is made effectual in our lives
 - (D) ‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ (Jeremiah 31:33) – implanted law; empowerment
- d. it is perfect in being final
- (A) Paul in speaking to the elders from the church at Ephesus said, ‘For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.’ (Acts 20:27 AV)
 - (B) with the words of Jesus the Christ, the words of His apostles – Matthew, John, Paul, James, Peter – the Scriptures are complete
 - (C) until Jesus returns to reign visibly, not one word need be added
 - (D) Geoff Thomas goes on to say: The Word of God is perfect because it is final and complete. It cannot be improved upon. Nothing can be added to it to make it more effectual: no extra stories, interpretations or duties will improve this perfect law at all. Don't gild this lily.
 - (E) The Bible cannot be bettered because all by itself it makes men of God perfect. It tells us everything we need. What we are to believe, and what our duties are we will find here. It describes our state, opens up our responsibilities and unfolds our destiny. It speaks to us as sinners, but it reveals salvation and shows us how we may obtain it. It doesn't shun the subject of death, but it opens a path to heaven. It shines the light of immortality into the grave. It makes our hearts burn within us, and illuminates our minds. It stoops to very plain language, and it soars to sublime theology. It refreshes us when we are weary, and cheers us when we our hearts are broken. It gives us peace on earth, and joy in heaven. It gives us strength to bear every burden; it hallows every relationship, purifies and intensifies every pleasure; it keeps us from pride in prosperity and bitterness in poverty. When we are dispirited it excites us; when we are perverse it sweetens us; when we are under attack it keeps us from retaliation. It is perfect because it comes from God; its spirit is love; its theme is Christ; its effect is life more abundant, and its end is glory. —^{5}.

4. The Blessed Result

- a. now did you notice this? 'This man,' whose life has been radically changed by God through the word of truth, 'will be blessed in what he does.' In these words James is telling us how to know infallibly God's blessing on our life.
- b. Geoff Thomas continues, 'The blueprint for blessing is laid out for us in this passage by James, and if anyone at all follows these counsels there stretches out before him, to the distant horizon, a blessed life. The alternative to this decision is unthinkable. Doing what James says is certain to result in true blessedness: it is divinely guaranteed.'^{6}.

E. Conclusion

1. Abe Kudra pointed out to his congregation these truths about doers:
 - a. be a doer in order to glorify God: 'Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.' (1 Corinthians 10:31)
 - b. doers are happy Christians: Jesus said, talking of serving others, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' (John 13:17 AV)
 - c. doers of His will give God pleasure: 'for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.' (Philippians 2:13)
 - d. doers get their strength from God: 'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.' (Philippians 4:13)
2. no church has ever grown without a healthy number of doers; we have more than enough of the others, let us become doers and not hearers only.^{7}
 - a. use that mirror and use it well!

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
- EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
- Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament, *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
- TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snow_White quoting Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm: *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*; Band 1, 7. Ausgabe (children's and households fairy tales, volume 1, 7th edition). Dietrich, Göttingen 1857, page 264–273.
3. 'Doers' by Rev. Abraham Kudra – Kerux sermons #18702; further information from the church web-site <http://www.northdouglaschurch.org/welcome/pastors-and-staff/pastor-abe-kudra/>
4. Extracts and thoughts from 'The Way of Blessing,' by Rev. Geoff Thomas – Kerux sermons #2376
5. Geoff Thomas, *ibid*
6. Geoff Thomas, *ibid*
7. Abe Kudra, *ibid*