

THE TEACHING LEGACY

OF DEREK PRINCE

What God's Word Will Do For You, Part 6

In our recent Teaching Legacy letter, we focused on the subject of how God's Word cleanses and sanctifies us—that is, how it makes us holy. We saw that God's ultimate purpose goes beyond simply making us pure and separating us from sin. His ultimate purpose is to enable us to share in His own holiness. In this letter, we will explore an aspect of God's Word that is unfamiliar to many people: God's Word as our mirror.

Two Important Reasons

In James 1:21–25, we read about the work of God's Word in us and how we are to receive it:

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. [So we have to receive the Word as something implanted in our souls, which is able to bring us salvation. But then James warns us that we have to act on what the Word says.] But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 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. 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 shall be blessed in what he does.

We see two mandates in the passage. Clearly, when God's Word comes to us, there are two obligations we must fulfill: we must receive it with humility, and we must act on what it says. In emphasizing these two important steps, James uses the example of a mirror. He says that when we read the Word of God and are confronted by its truths, the Word is like a mirror held up in front of our eyes. It shows us what we are really like. The mirror of God's Word does not show us our external features, but rather it shows us our inward nature and character.



I found this to be true in my own experience many years ago. At the time I was a professor of philosophy at Cambridge University. I felt it was my duty to study the Bible as a work of philosophy, although I did not believe in its authority nor did I make any distinction between it and the many other books that I read. Nevertheless, as I began reading the Bible, it gradually changed me completely. As a confirmation of this fact, I would like to quote a passage now from my book, *Foundation for Faith*. In this excerpt, I describe the change that took place in me as I studied the Bible—especially this passage in James 1.

James here compares the operation of God's Word to a mirror. The only difference is that a normal, material mirror shows us only what James calls our "natural face"—that is, our external, physical features and appearance. On the other hand, the mirror of God's Word, as we look into it, reveals not our external, physical features, but our inward spiritual nature and condition. It reveals to us those 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 through any other means.

Someone has summed this up by saying: "Remember that while you are reading your Bible, your Bible is also reading you."

I can still recall, after the lapse of many years, how definitely and how vividly I first proved this in my own experience. I commenced to study the Bible as a skeptic and an unbeliever—with the background of a student and a teacher of philosophy. I approached it as being merely one among many systems of philosophy in the world. However, as I continued to study it, I became conscious, even against my own will, of certain strange and deep-seated changes taking place within myself. My attitude of intellectual superiority, my sense of self-confidence and self-sufficiency began to crumble.

I had adopted the attitude of the ancient Greek philosopher, who said: "Man is the measure of all things." I had assumed that by my own intellectual and critical faculties I was capable of measuring any book or system of wisdom that I cared to study. But now, to my own surprise, as I studied

the Bible, even though I could not fully understand it, I became conscious that I was being measured by some standard that was not my own, nor that of any human being. Like Belshazzar, in the hour of his feast, there seemed to open up before my unwilling eyes the words: "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

Without any special change of outward circumstance, I became inwardly restless and dissatisfied. Pleasures and activities of various kinds, which had previously attracted and occupied me, lost their power to divert or to entertain. I became increasingly conscious of some deep need within my own being which I could neither define nor satisfy. I did not clearly understand it, but through the mirror of His Word, God was showing me the truth concerning my own inner need and emptiness.

After several months, this revelation of my need caused me, even in my spiritual ignorance and blindness, to seek God with humility and sincerity. Finding Him in this way, I discovered that He who had thus revealed my need through His written Word was able also to satisfy it completely through the Person of His Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

How Should We Respond?

That was my personal testimony. The Bible served as a mirror in my life to show me traits that no human work of wisdom, philosophy or intellectualism could ever reveal to me. However, we must bear in mind that a mirror only helps us if we act on what we see. If we look in the mirror and see that our face is dirty, we should go and wash it. If we see that our clothes or our hair are in disarray, we should go and make the necessary adjustments. The same is true when we look in the mirror of God's Word. The Bible shows us the aspects of our lives that are unclean and that are out of order. But it can only help us if, after we see these things, we make the necessary adjustments and bring our lives into line with God's requirements.

What, then, should be our response when the mirror of God's Word shows us our inner condition?

What should we do when the Bible shows us that which is wrong in our lives, that which needs cleansing, adjusting or setting in order? I would suggest to you there are three actions we need to take. First, we must receive God's revelation and not argue with it. We must say, "That is right. That is what I am really like." Second, we must believe in God's promises—promises which always come with His revelations. And third, by faith, we appropriate God's provision.

What Do You See?

If we are willing to take these three simple steps, a wonderful change will come about in us. We will not merely see in the mirror of God's Word what we are like in our sinful condition without Christ. Rather, we will begin to see what we are in Christ. The Word will show us the wonderful inner transformation that has taken place within us. When that happens, we will begin to experience the truth expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! NIV

What we will begin to see in the mirror is the new person we truly are in Christ. As a continuation of this truth, we read further on in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

God made Him who knew no sin [that's Jesus] to be sin for us, so that in Him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God. NIV

Here is the significance of these two verses. Once we are in Christ, when we look in the mirror, we no longer see ourselves in our sinful condition. Instead, we see ourselves with the righteousness of God through faith in Christ imputed to us. As Isaiah 61:10 expresses this truth:

I delight greatly in the LORD: my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. NIV

What Isaiah describes here is what the mirror shows us when we are in Christ. No longer do we see the dirty rags of our own self-righteousness, from even the best of our own achievements, cleverness or intellectual ability. Instead, we see ourselves attired in completely different clothing. We see ourselves wearing a garment of salvation and a robe of righteousness. We see ourselves clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and we begin to see God imparting to us spiritual grace and spiritual beauty.

Beholding His Glory

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we see another beautiful passage about the mirror of the Word.

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 from the Lord, the Spirit.

This passage describes an ongoing transformation that is taking place in our lives. All the time that we are looking into the mirror of God's Word in an attitude of openness to the Holy Spirit, that same Holy Spirit is transforming us into the likeness of what we are looking at.

We glimpse Jesus, and as the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts, we become like Jesus in that particular respect. We then look back into the mirror; get a new glimpse of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit changes us in that respect also.

The more we gaze into the mirror of God's Word, the more we behold the glory of the Lord revealed in that mirror. The more we behold the glory of Jesus, the more we are transformed into it by the Holy Spirit.

However, we must bear in mind one important fact. It is only while we are looking in the mirror of God's Word that the Spirit transforms us. When we take our eyes away from the mirror—when we turn to human wisdom, human theories or even human theology—the Holy Spirit can no longer work in us.

The Holy Spirit operates when we look at the Word of God in faith. He operates in us as we allow

the Word to reveal to us what God wants us to be and what we can become in Christ. When we do this, we are continually transformed from glory to glory. The Spirit of God moves and works upon our hearts and in our lives, making us into the likeness of what we have seen in the mirror of the Word.

Do You Want to Look?

It is very likely as you have been reading the truths of this teaching that a longing is starting to grow in your heart. Something inside of you is saying, "That's what I want to happen to me! I want a different image of myself."

Would you like to ask the Lord right now to help you make a change in your approach? If that is your

desire, please pray the following words with me.

"Lord, I want to put Your mirror—the Word of God—to work in my life. I commit myself now to examine Your Word and to allow Your Word to examine me. As I see what needs to be changed and adjusted, I will receive Your assessment and take the appropriate actions. I will receive it, and not argue—agreeing with what You show me. I will receive Your promises, and appropriate Your provision for me.

Thank You, Lord—that Your plan is to change me by Your Word and through the power of Your Holy Spirit. As I see who I truly am through Jesus, I long to be transformed into His glorious image. Thank You, Lord—for making this possible in my life through the mirror of Your Word, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen." 

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