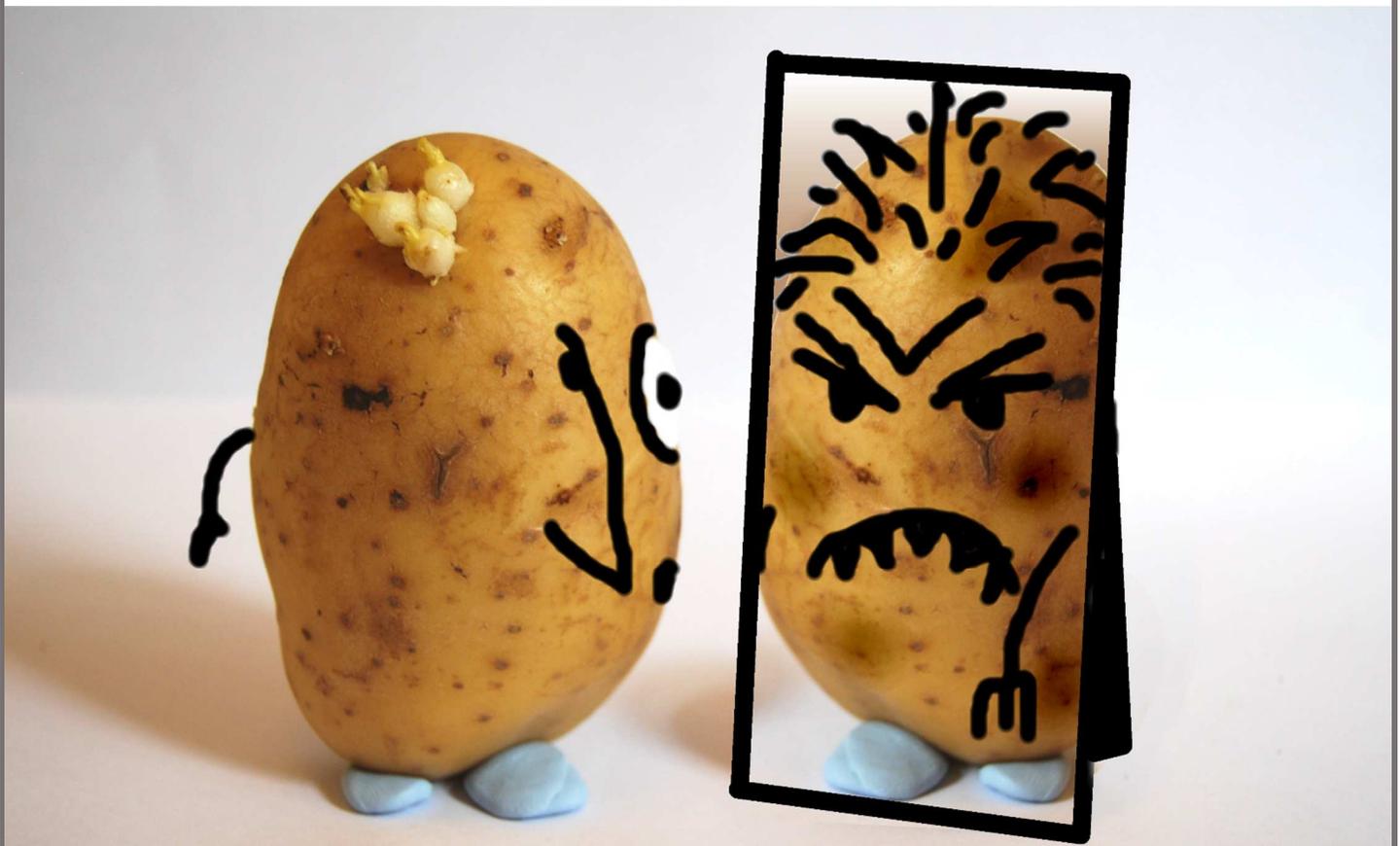


LOOKING INTO GOD'S MIRROR



James 1:21-25

*21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 **Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.** 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

Why does James associate hearing the word and not doing it with looking at yourself in the mirror and walk away and forget what you look like?

What this passage is saying is that you hear God’s word, either reading it, it being preached or taught to you, and it convicts you of the things you see in your life that is needed to be fixed, straightened out, changed, worked out, let go of, worked on or surrendered; yet, you do nothing about it. The Holy Scriptures is one of the ways God reveals our sins that ensnare us, and the weights that so easily hinders us **Heb. 12:1b**: *“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”*. It is not enough to hear the Word; we must do it. Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon or Bible study is what makes them grow. It is not the hearing but the doing that brings the blessing and growth. Too many Christians mark and highlight their Bibles, but their Bibles never highlight or mark them! Looking in the Holy Scriptures is like looking in a mirror. It reveals to us as God sees us inwardly, the way a mirror reveals how we appear to ourselves on the outside. The Word of God reveals to us our true nature, not how we think we appear to ourselves.

James compares the Word of God to a mirror because you look into a mirror to be able to see yourself and make yourself look as clean and neat as possible. As we look into the mirror of God’s Word, we see ourselves as we really are. Always know: **Heb. 4:12**- *“The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edge sword, dividing asunder bone from marrow, soul from spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”*. And, **2 Tim. 3:16-17**- *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man (woman) of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”*.

When you look into God’s mirror and do nothing about what you see, God calls this vs. 22 to “deceiving yourselves”. The word “deceive” is *παρalogίζομαι paralogizomai*; which means *beguile, reason falsely, mislead; reason contrary to truth – yourselves*. In other words, you make excuses to yourself, you beguile; meaning you delude, persuade, charm, divert yourself by using false reasoning to mislead yourself from changing.

If we are to use God’s mirror profitably, as **Heb. 4:12** and **2 Tim. 3:16** says, then we must truly behold ourselves with truth of ourselves to see; “I’m a gossip; I’m lazy; I’m a procrastinator; I lie to myself; I have a bad attitude; I lack faith; I have vices not pleasing to God; I’m selfish; I’m still holding on to old sin; I have spite in my heart; I don’t pray like I should, I’m holding on to sinfulness; I lust and covet; I’m an idolatrous in my heart; I have adultery in my heart; I have hypocrisy in my heart; I live to the outward appearance and not the spirit; etc., etc., etc.

Most Christians think it's the big sins God is only concerned with; i.e., stealing, killing, fornication, adultery, lying, using drugs, etc. However, if this be so, then we would not have any of the great men and women of faith; e.g., Abraham was a liar, Moses was a murderer, David was an adulterer and murderer, Isaiah was a cursing man, Paul was responsible for the persecution and deaths of many Christians, Rahab was a prostitute and ran a brothel, need I say more. Jesus told the religious zealots of the day, the observers of the law, the Pharisees and Sadducees, **Matt. 21:31**: "*Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*" Remember Jesus parable of two men that went up and prayed, **Luke 18:10-14**:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

Here's the thing, it does not say that the second man didn't do the same things the first man proclaimed to do. However, the second man humbled himself before an all righteous God, weighting himself against the righteousness of God, saw the corrupt inward self and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." The first man only concerned himself with his outward appearance rather than what was in his heart.

James 1:25 then goes on to say, "*But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do*". What law is James talking about? Is it the Ten Commandments, God's law of do and don't, the Old Testament Laws?

He is talking about the Law of Grace by Faith...the Law of the Spirit.

John 1:16-17

"And out of His fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

To many of us focus on the sin and not the Savior. Sin is but the by-product of inward displaying itself outwardly. If you change the inside, the outside changes. It's not the sin I commit; it's harboring the sinfulness in my heart. **Matt. 15:18-20**:

18 But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."

Matt. 23:24-29

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they

are full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. **28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.** 29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous”.

People go about trying to change the outward appearance of themselves to look and seem more religious, but they are still filthy and dirty inwardly, just hiding it outwardly. It is not the sin, because with each sin, there is a reason, a motive, an intent inwardly that causes us to produce our sin outwardly. Jesus explains to us, **Matt. 13:15b** “lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted....” Again, the focus should not be on the sin but the Savior. The Savior came to deliver me from the sin; so if, I look to Him and believe Him, **Matt. 13:15b**: “and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” The word “heal” is *ἰάομαι* *iaomai*; meaning *make free from errors and sins; to bring about one’s salvation.*

Aw! You didn’t get that did you? What Jesus is saying is, “if you would see your errors and sins the way God sees them, and hear what He has to say to you about them, and you understand in your heart- come to God’s truth, not your own rationalization of the truth, and convert your heart to God, asking Him for forgiveness and cleansing of your sinfulness, then Jesus will show you how to be free from errors and sins. Focus on the Savior not the sin. The Savior will heal you, while the sin will keep you bound. Look at what Paul says about his sinfulness.

Rom 7:24-25

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul recognizes that he is a sinful man, but instead of focusing his attention on his sin, he chooses to focus on the deliverer of his sin. It is the law of living by Grace in the Spirit, not the law of the Old Testament law, Paul sees, and by faith, he knows that Jesus does “heal” him of his sin. Paul goes on in the proceeding passage **Rom. 8:1-4**:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

It is not the outward law of do and do not, James is talking about, that law only ministered death (Spiritual). The Old Testament law is death because it made known to us sin, and the wrath and curse of God; it showed us a God above us, and a God against us sinners. *The “letter (law by Moses) killeth:” (2 Cor. 3:6).* The Law James is talking about is the Law of Grace, Emmanuel –

“God with us”, not above or against us. The Law of Grace shows us the righteousness of God being revealed to those who live by faith. Our faith makes known to us the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for obtaining the forgiveness of sins to eternal life. **Rom. 7:6:** *“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”*

This is not to condone sin in any way or the continuation of committing sin, absolutely not! What we’re saying, is God is most concerned with our heart than our actions. A perfect example of the Law of Sin vs. the Law of Grace can be seen **John 8:1-11:**

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” 11“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

What we see here is the law of the Grace vs. the Law of sin given through Moses. The law of Moses says, "that one caught in adultery should be stoned – put to death." (**Lev. 20:10**); (**Deut. 22:22**). It was a moral law of the sentence of death upon the violator - this was the Old Testament law of dealing with sin and the sinner – “death to the sinner”.

The Law of Grace, says, I will forgive and heal the sinner: **John 8:10-11:** *Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” 11“No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

People will say within themselves, “well we don’t know if she actually stopped sinning?” But, what we do know is this, Jesus forgave her of her adultery and gave her a clean slate of her adulterous ways and the opportunity not to turn back to adultery. I for one believe she never did return to her adulterous ways. Why? Because I know the healing and delivering power of the Lord Jesus, and if He just breathed on her while speaking to her, I believe she was delivered from adultery. Think on it however you so choose. But I know Jesus!

Jesus knowing the outward sins of the woman were detected, revealed and seen by many. He knew her sin was the big “A” adultery, and it’s obvious she didn’t just do it that one time, because they people knew about her lifestyle of adultery. That’s only how they knew to catch her in the act. Now, the Law of Moses (do’s and don’t’s) condemns you to death for adultery. The people wanted the Law of Moses imposed upon the woman, but Jesus first told them, “o.k., it’s the law, but I tell you what, if there is anyone, who has not violated the Law of Moses (sinned), then you can execute the Law against the woman.” They all left, one by one, all being violators of the Law

of Moses. The only one standing before the woman was Jesus, who had not violated the Law of Moses (sin). He alone had the right to judge the woman, pass sentence on her. He alone had the right to condemn her to death. However, Jesus declined pronouncing the judicial condemnation of the law of Moses upon her, He says, "***Neither do I condemn thee.***" This does not mean He did not disapprove of her conduct or condemn her morally violation of God and God's law. He simply offered her a choice to turn abandon, turn away and change her ways of sin. He came into this world to offer man the choice to turn from darkness to light, from satan to God, not to condemn man but to give us the choice to live in spirit of inner righteousness before God - Grace. Jesus basically tells her, I forgive your great sin and wipe your slate clean and give you a very simple direction to you – "Go now and leave your life of sin." He wanted her to now live to knowing God's Grace and Mercies, and live honoring Him with gratitude. Amen! Jesus shows us this also in **John 7:36-50**:

*When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "***Your faith has saved you; go in peace.***"*

What we see from these two testimonies **John 8:1-11** and **John 7:36-50** is the Law of God's Dispensation of Grace to man. In **John 8:11**: "*Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin;"* **John 7:36-50** "*Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*" Though they had greatly sinned, terribly moral sins, He forgave them; and having received grace and mercies of God absolving them of their sinful lifestyle, is to cause in them a heartfelt gratefulness that leads to turning from their sinful ways and a future that should be given to fleeing sin and living for God - "Sin no more;" "go in peace." This is the Law James is talking about, the Law of Grace through the Spirit.

Nothing is more delightful and pleasing to God, than for us to live our Christian lives by faith in His Grace and Mercy, which is the law of Christ written in our hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts. The law of Christ was not written on tablets of stone, as the law of God given through Moses, but the law of Christ was written on fleshy (not fleshly sensuality) but the tablets

of our heart to the love of God. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** prophesies of God's New laws written on mans' heart:

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

What we are to understand is that Jesus wants us to fulfill the law by us living in the spirit, for God has now wrote His laws upon our hearts and minds, to live unto Him (**Heb. 10:16**). Trying to live to some outward code of the law, entangles, curses and condemns, but faith you Grace brings a change of character, as it did with the two women in **John 8:1-11**, and **John 7:36-50**, and before you start thinking, how do you know Jesus forgiving them brought about change of character in them. Well, because we know the woman in John 7:36-50 was Mary Magdalene because scripture only speaks of three Mary's, Mary the mother of Jesus; Mary the mother of James and wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, who seven demons had been cast out of, who lived a sinful life - **John 11:1-2** tells us: *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*. This was the woman who anointed Jesus feet with oil in **John 7:36-50**. And, Mary become one of Jesus' staunch follows (disciples)... **Mark 16:9** *"When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons."*

And, as I said earlier, I believe the woman caught in adultery also had a spirit filled Grace encounter with Jesus and turned her life also around. This is the Law James is telling us to look, we have received "grace," a gift so great, so rich, so invaluable; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us, no human works can be ascribed to it – *"not of works, lest any man should boast, it is a gift of God."* (**Eph. 2:8-9**). Through the gift of God's grace and mercy our hearts are to be humbled and softened to receive God's lovekindness, grace and mercies to the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, to the changing our inward person, being healed; i.e., delivered from errors and sin.

Living to Grace in the Spirit is not to be confused with abandoning or ignoring laws and decrees of what violates God, as Jesus said Matt. 5:17-18, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. 18 For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished;" but is to causes us to seek the Lord to change our sinful ways inwardly.

So the perfect law that gives freedom is believing God's word.

Ps. 19:7-13

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. 10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. 11 By

them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. 13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

John 8:31

Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

The perfect law of liberty is believing God's word and wanting to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – That's the Law of Grace Dispensation we are under.

Look in the mirror of God's word and let the truth shine back at you. His Word does cut through all your B.S., to your motives and intent of all reasons and the things you do, why you do them, what you don't do, and why you don't do them. Don't make an excuses, just clean yourself up, praying and asking God to help you change inwardly. Amen!