

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOOKING-GLASS.

A Sermon

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“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”—James i. 23—25.

LAST Sabbath-day I tried to show the right way of hearing the Word of God. We spoke of how to behave before sermon, at sermon, and after sermon. May God grant that the word which I then spoke may continue in your minds, and bring forth good fruit! At this time I shall draw a distinction between the true and blessed hearer of the Word, and the person who misses the blessing because he hears to forget. You will forgive my coming back to this subject when I confess that I groan in my own heart with unutterable longings to be a channel of blessing to all who hear or read my discourses. To what purpose do I stand here so often, and pour out my soul before you, if you are not the better for it? I am an unhappy sower, if all the handfuls of seed which I scatter must needs fall upon unbroken soil, to be devoured of birds, and never take root. Blessed be God, it is not altogether so; we have reaped many harvests in this place; but still, our hearts ache for larger results! There remain among us still those who are impervious to the truth, in whom the divine Word has taken no lodging-place: will these never be saved? They still continue to listen, and to listen with kindly respect, but they are not yet doers of the Word. Our lament is that of Paul “They have not all obeyed the gospel”; they have heard it, and in a measure appreciated it, but they have not obeyed it; it has not come to them with power constraining them to yield to its commands. It will be a sad thing if, when I give in my account, it shall be with grief and not with joy; for this will be as unprofitable for you as it will be grievous for me. That I shall meet my hearers at the judgment day I know, and I know also that then an account will be demanded of me, much more searching than any through which my conscience can put me even when it is most awake. How will you stand in that account? It will be read in the seven-fold light of that great day for which all other days were made, and what will the record be? I earnestly desire to

present you all as a chaste virgin unto Christ, but I fear it will not be so. Concerning some of you I fear that I shall have run in vain, and laboured in vain. I am bowed with grief at such a prospect. O my hearers, do not kill me by destroying your own souls! Oh, that you may now turn to our Lord Jesus, and in him find acceptance with the Lord in that day! The Lord grant it for his infinite mercy's sake!

Two things are very obvious in the text: the first is the hearer of the Word who does not profit by it, and is represented as *looking into a glass*; and then, secondly, we see the man who does profit by the Word, for he is represented as *looking into the perfect law*. May the Holy Spirit help us to see these clearly!

I. First, then, here is LOOKING INTO A GLASS.

Looking into a glass is a trivial business. In all ages men, not to say women, have been fond of seeing themselves. In the earlier days they had no reflecting glasses as we now have, but they used mirrors made of brass and kindred metals, highly polished. These mirrors yielded a sufficiently clear image of the beholder. Albeit, the children of Israel came out of Egypt in a great hurry, yet we find that the women carried their looking-glasses with them into the wilderness. (See Ex. xxxviii. 8.) It was according to their womanly nature: whatever else they forgot they must have the indispensable looking-glass, for the purpose of their toilet. It is to their praise, however, that in the desert their devotion overcame their vanity; for when the brazen laver was to be made in which the priests should wash, it was made of the looking-glasses of the serving-women who were accustomed to meet at the door of the tabernacle. Still, the use of the mirror must be ranked among the trifles of life: I see that you are half-smiling at the playfulness which glitters around a glass. Is not this a hint at the light in which many regard the hearing of the gospel? They crowd to hear a preacher if he has some sort of name; not that they desire to get a blessing thereby, but merely that they may say that they have heard him, or that they may gratify their curiosity by seeing what he is like. Truly the burden of our lives is a pastime to some of you. Sirs, this reminds me of the fable of the frogs. When the boys stoned them, the poor creatures said, "It may be sport to you, but it is death to us." You may hear me this day with the idlest curiosity, and judge my message with the coldest criticism; but if you do not receive the blessings of the gospel, it strikes a chill at my heart. Your unspiritual hearing is sport to you, but it is death to me. A deadly shadow as of a hell-mist hovers over my spirit while I suppose it possible that I am, with all my earnestness, ministering to your condemnation. Can it be that I am laboriously doing nothing? Worse than that, are my instructions, persuasions, and entreaties to be so treated as to increase your responsibility, and bury you under a heavier load of sin? As God's servant, I tremble at so dreadful a prospect. We live if you live unto God; and if you do not turn to God we wish that we had never been born. It were better for us to plough the thankless sea, than to utter truth which will be a savour of death to you. O sirs, to hear the gospel will one day appear to be the most solemn of exercises! Indeed, it is not the trivial matter that many make of it; it is infinitely more than gazing into a mirror. How long will it be ere ye know this?

Upon my first head of looking into a glass let me say, that *to every hearer the true Word of God is as a mirror*. Certain preachers dream that it is their business to paint pretty pictures : but it is not so. We are not to design and sketch, but simply to give the reflection of truth. We are to hold up the mirror to nature in a moral and spiritual sense, and let men see themselves therein. We have not even to make the mirror, but only to hold it up. The thoughts of God, and not our own thoughts, are to be set before our hearers' minds ; and these discover a man to himself. The Word of the Lord is a revealer of secrets : it shows a man his life, his thoughts, his heart, his inmost self.

A large proportion of hearers only look upon the surface of the gospel, and upon their minds the surface alone is operative. Yet, even that surface is sufficiently effectual to reflect the natural face which looks upon it, and this may be of lasting service if rightly followed up. Brethren, the chief blessing cannot come to us by surface-work ; he that would be enriched by the gospel must dig for it, and must dig deep. He must sink shafts into its fathomless mines, that he may bring up "the much fine gold." Let not our thoughts glide over the surface of the Word like swift birds that touch the crests of the waves ; but let us plunge into the depths of Scripture like pearl-fishers who seek for hid treasures.

The Scripture gives a truthful reflection of man's nature : it lets the man see himself, not as others see him, for others make mistakes, nor as he would see himself, for he is very apt to be partial to his own soul ; but the Scripture makes him see himself as God sees him. Look at the scriptural portrait of a sinner. That art thou, O man ! Look at the depraved heart, the rebellious will, the darkened understanding : that heart, will, and understanding are thine, O my brother ! What a sight it is which meets the sinner's eye when he is hearing the faithful Word ! "I thought," saith he, as he looks into the Word, "that I was much more comely than this. I had never dreamed of these freckles and spots. I was not aware that I suffered from such a twist of features, such an exaggeration of one and such a deficiency in another." The holy Book does not flatter human nature, neither does the true preacher attempt so base a work ; but in plain and downright honesty of truth the witness is given, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." When conscience is aroused, and the man sees himself as the revelation of God declares him to be, he can hardly think that this can be the same self with which he was upon such excellent terms. If God blesses the sight, he is led to abhor himself, and to seek for cleansing and renewal ; but if not, the man has at least seen himself, and has had the opportunity of knowing his true state.

The reflection of self in the Word is very like life. You have, perhaps, seen a dog so astonished at his image in the glass that he has barked fiercely at himself. A parrot will mistake its reflection for a rival. Well may the creature wonder, since every one of its movements is so accurately copied ; it thinks itself to be mocked. Under a true preacher men are often so thoroughly unearthed and laid bare that even the details of their lives are reported. Not only is the portrait drawn to the life, but it is an actually living portrait which is given in the mirror

of the Word. There is little need to point with the finger, and say, "Thou art the man," for the hearer perceives of his own accord that he is spoken of. As the image in the glass moves, and alters its countenance, and changes its appearance, so doth the Word of the Lord set forth man in his many phases, and moods, and conditions. The Scripture of truth knows all about him, and it tells him what it knows. Many a time the hearer has said, "Somebody has told the preacher." Yes, somebody has told him: that which thou doest in thy bedchamber the Lord hath revealed unto his servant. The Holy Spirit guides our hands wittingly, so that we lay them upon the right heads. I have sometimes said to you that people frequently wish that the preacher knew their experience, in order that he could preach to it; but it is not necessary to tell God's sent servant anything about it, for he will speak to you with all the more power because he does *not* know. You may go in to hear the sermon, and be wearing a disguise, but even a blind prophet will find you out, and say, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, wherefore feignest thou thyself to be another woman? I have heavy tidings from the Lord for thee." The Chaldean soothsayers said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation"; but Daniel knew the dream and the interpretation also, and that marked him out as being sent of God. When the preacher's description of the man's heart is true to the life, and yet no human mouth has whispered it into his ears, then the man cries, "This is the finger of God." A great part of the self-evidencing power of the gospel lies in the way in which it discovers to our minds that which aforesaid lay within our bosoms, hidden even from ourselves.

The glass of the Word is not like our ordinary looking-glass, which merely shows us our external features; but, according to the Greek of our text, the man sees in it "the face of his birth"; that is, the face of his nature. He that reads and hears the Word may see not only his actions there, but his motives, his desires, his inward condition. As the butcher cuts down the carcass, and reveals all the inwards, which never could have been seen but for his knife, so is the Word of God "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The secrets of the man are opened up to himself, and he is astonished to see his inward depravity, his carnal tendencies, and his corrupt inclinations. As a man sees his outward self in the looking-glass, so may he see his inward self in the Word; but if this be all, to what purpose is it?

Secondly, *many a hearer does see himself in the mirror of the Word.* We are told so twice in the text: "He is like a man *beholding* his natural face in a glass, for he *beholdeth* himself." He really does see himself, for he cannot help doing so. He is not such a careless hearer as to be utterly blind to the revelation of God: he beholds, he beholds himself, he beholds the face of his birth. He is thoughtful during the discourse, he spies out the application of the truth to himself, and marks his own spots and blemishes.

Oftentimes he sees himself so plainly that he grows astonished at what he sees. He cries, like the woman of Samaria,—“Come, see a man that told

me all things that ever I did." Barbarous people, when they first of all see looking-glasses, are quite taken aback. "How can these things be?" is their first question. Now, have not you, dear hearers, who are unconverted, been often staggered at the home-thrusts of the Word? You have seen yourselves so unmistakably that you have been unable to escape from the truth, but have been filled with wonder at it. But what is the use of this, if it goes no further?

Such observers have been known to praise the excellence of the mirror, and speak well of its faithfulness. You may hear them say, "The man is a true servant of God, and preaches in all honesty and courage." So far so good. Alas! there are many preachers who will win no such praise. As I have seen glasses which have elongated my face or broadened it, so that it was by no means my true image, so have I known ministers whose description of human nature is flattering and false. But after all, if the face is not to be washed, to what purpose is it that the mirror faithfully shows the smuts and stains which are upon it? O my hearers, I desire to be always faithful to you, but how will my faithfulness benefit you if you are not faithful to yourselves? Why should I show you your blots if you do not seek to the Lord Jesus to have them removed?

Many of our hearers go somewhat further, for they are driven to make solemn resolves after looking at themselves. Yes, they will break off their sins by righteousness; they will repent; they will believe on the Lord Jesus; and yet their fine resolves are blown away like smoke, and come to nothing. The sight of their natural face leads to a natural resolve; but the strength of nature suffices not to carry the resolution into practice. O sirs, ye must be born again; and for lack of that new birth your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew; both of these vanish soon, and so do your fine feelings and resolvings. What a multitude of dead resolves fall in this house of prayer! The blossoms upon our fruit-trees give great promise of a heavy crop of fruit, but, alas! the most of them do not knit, but drop from the tree and powder the ground as with snow; so the flowers of promise are upon our hearers, but they come not to real soul-fruit. O Spirit of God, make it otherwise with my congregation! Save them from their own inconstancy! Let them not resolve and re-resolve, and yet die in their sins!

But what follows? Observe, "He beholdeth himself, and goeth his way." *Many hearers go away from what they have seen in the Word.* There are two "ands" in the text, following quickly one after the other, and they have a force which I cannot very well convey to you. They show that the man looks at himself hurriedly, and as it were in passing, and so goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was, because his glance was hasty, casual, and soon over. He heard the Word, and there was an end of it; no echoes lingered in his soul. The sermon was over when it was over. Many a man, having seen himself in the glass of the Word, has no time for any further thought about himself. To-morrow morning he will be over head and ears in business; the shutters will be down from his shop-windows, but they will be put up to the windows of his soul. His office needs him, and therefore his prayer-closet cannot have him; his ledger falls like an

avalanche over his Bible. The man has no time to seek the true riches ; passing trifles monopolize his mind. Sirs, ye call earthly things "business"; but the salvation or the damnation of your souls is such a trifling matter that any stray hour will suffice for it. Is it not so ? Do you not propose to put off the Lord till your last gasp ? The Lord deliver you from this madness ! Oh, that you would no more allow your earthly business to crush your souls !

Others have no particular business to engross them, but having seen themselves in the glass of the Word with some degree of interest, they go their way to their amusements. Their principal difficulty is how to kill time, and spin the weary hours away. What will become of some of you who are going down to perdition with all your time to spare ? You will not be able to say that you went your way to your farm, and to your merchandise, for you have neither farm nor merchandise, and do not know what to do with your time ; and yet for all that you cannot spare an hour to think upon your souls and upon your God. Oh, that it were not so ! May infinite mercy make men wiser than to go their way while their souls are going down to hell !

Alas ! there are some who go their way to sin. It is not mere pleasure, or business, but it is an overt act of transgression to which they go. It is an awful thing to my mind that men go from hearing the Word of God to speaking the word of the devil ; they go from God's house to the house of sin ; they go straight away from the holy to the profane, from the pure to the foul. They go from the mercy-seat to the seat of the scorner. I do not wonder that no good comes of such hearing as this. When a man seeth his face in the glass, and then goeth his way to defile that face more and more, of what use is the glass to him ? If you return to sin, to procrastinate, to live in wilful neglect of God and eternity, you would derive no benefit from such hearing, though all the apostles should in turn preach to you, or even their Master himself.

This going away is followed by forgetting all they have seen. This forgetfulness is indeed very mischievous. How different is this from that word of David, "I will never forget thy precepts" ! The wicked forget God ; but the favoured of the Lord "remember his commandments to do them." Forget the words of man, but be zealous to remember the Word of the Lord ; for forgetfulness leads to inaction. Those who forget, forget to do. They follow not the Lord's command in the Book of Numbers : "Remember to do all my commandments." In Purchas's Pilgrim we read of certain Spaniards of the olden time who were often pinched with hunger, and yet immense shoals of fish passed along their shores. They saw the fish, but were too idle to take them. Are there not many hearers of that kind ? The truth passes by them unappropriated, unused, unpractised, and all because they take no earnest heed to make it their own by personal obedience to it. They say, "I go, sir," but they forget to go. They see the pearl of great price, but forget to buy it. They are mere players with the Lord's message, and never come to honest dealing with it.

Forgetfulness of the Word leads to self-satisfaction. Looking in the glass the man felt a little startled that he was such an ugly fellow, but he went his way and mingled with the crowd, and forgot what manner

of man he was, and therefore he felt quite easy again. The sweep thinks he is as clean as his neighbours, for he has forgotten the soot upon his face. By the force of sheer ignorance a man can climb to a desperately false assurance of his own excellence. He can cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, till at length a blast of trumpets will not alarm him. What can be more fatal than this? One may as well not know, as only learn and straightway forget.

This forgetfulness leads to a growing carelessness. A man who has once looked in the glass, and afterwards has not washed, is very apt to go and look in the glass again, and continue in his filthiness. He who thinks his conscience has cried "wolf" in mere sport, will think the same till he takes no heed when it cries in earnest. When men get to play with the Word of God they are near to destruction. Beware of hearing the gospel as a pastime: it is the next stage to eternal ruin. When that which God designs to be to our salvation becomes a pastime to us, then all likelihood that it will save us is gone. He who sports with heaven and hell will soon lose all hope of the one, and be hurried downward to the other.

Yes, but let me remark that this forgetfulness of the Word leads to increased sin; for we do not hear the Word of God without some result coming of it. As I am responsible for preaching, so are you for hearing. O unconverted hearers, you to whom the gospel has come as a revealer of yourselves, but not as a renewer of your hearts, you have grown harder in sin, and you have sinned against more light and against more knowledge, and thus your sin grows blacker!

Thus have I sketched the hearer of the Word who is not a doer of it. I do not wish personally to apply this to any one here, but I beg that every person who does not know the Lord will make a personal application of it to his own conscience, and I pray God the Holy Ghost himself now to come and press these truths upon each conscience. O, my dear friends, will you not invite his sacred operations? You have seen your faces in the mirror of the Word; do you not desire to have them cleansed and beautified? You know your impurity; do you not wish to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus from all sin? Will you go your ways as if there were no law to accuse you, no gospel to invite you, no Christ to forgive you? Will you live and die as if there were no heaven, no hell, no eternity, no God? May the Lord deliver you from being triflers with the Word, and forgetters of it, lest at the end your religion should turn out to be vain, and you should find yourselves accursed by that which might have been a blessing to you!

II. May I have your further attention while I speak upon the true and blessed hearer? He does not look into the glass, but he is represented as **LOOKING INTO THE LAW**:—"Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

The picture I have in my mind's eye at this moment is that of the cherubim upon the mercy-seat: these are models for us. Their standing is upon the golden mercy-seat, and our standing-place is the propitiation of our Lord: there is the resting-place of our feet, and, like the cherubs, we are joined thereto, and therefore continue therein. They stand with their eyes looking downward upon the mercy-seat, as if they desired

to look into the perfect law of God which was treasured within the ark: even so do we look through the atonement of our Lord Jesus, which is to us as pure gold like unto transparent glass, and we behold the law, as a perfect law of liberty, in the person of our Mediator. Like the cherubim, we are in happy company; and like them, we look towards each other, by mutual love. Our common standing is the atonement; our common study is the law in the person of Christ; and our common posture is that of angels with outstretched wings prepared to fly at the Master's bidding. Oh, that we might in this sense be as the cherubim, and like them abide in the secret-place of the Most High, where the light is the light of God, and the glory is the Divine Presence! We are not to look casually at the Word as though it were a mere looking-glass; but we are to gaze earnestly upon it as our law under the new covenant. As the apostles stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, so are we to search diligently into the blessed law of the Lord, and delight in it after the inner man.

Note well that *the law of God is worth looking into*. I understand by the "law" here not merely the law of ten commandments, but the law as it is condensed, fulfilled, and exhibited in Christ Jesus. The Gospel law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that gospel which we are called upon to obey, is worthy of deep meditation; I mean that holy law which the Lord has promised to put into our inward parts and write upon our hearts: the law of faith and not of self-righteousness, even the command of grace which bids us believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and obey his commands. A law is always worth considering, for we may break the law unwittingly, and involve ourselves in penalties which we might have avoided. An unknown law is a pit-fall, into which a man may fall without knowing it. It is the duty of all loyal subjects to learn the law, that they may obey it.

Better still, it is a perfect law. All human laws are imperfect, but the law of the Lord is perfect. The law in the hand of Christ is perfect in itself, having no excess and no deficiency; and it is a law which makes those perfect who obey it. It is a law which is set forth in the person of the perfect Christ, and wrought in us by the perfect Spirit. It is a law which touches our whole nature, and works it unto perfect beauty. Who would not wish to look into a law which, like its Author, is love and purity itself?

It is called the "perfect law of liberty." Now, the law under the old covenant gendereth bondage, but the law in the hand of Christ is liberty. We never walk in liberty till we walk in the Lord's commands. He that wears the yoke of Christ is the Lord's free man. Oh, brothers, I do trust our eyes will be turned to the "perfect law of liberty;" for freedom is a jewel, and none have it but those who are conformed to the mind and will of our God!

The true hearer looks into this perfect law of liberty with all his soul, heart, and understanding, till he knows it, and feels the force of it in his own character. He is the prince of hearers, who delights to know what God's will is, and finds his joy in acting out the same. He sees the law in its height of purity, breadth of comprehensiveness, and depth of spirituality, and the more he sees the more he admires. He cannot have too much of it, but meditates in it both day and night,

and hence he cries, "Oh, how I love thy law ! it is my meditation all the day." His most frequent prayer is that he may be conformed unto that perfect law in all respects ; and in proportion as his prayer is heard he enters into perfect rest. I pause and ask you whether you belong to the blessed company, who look into the crystal glass of the law. If you can answer that you are such, then please follow me for a minute or two. As I stand here I look into the mirror of the Word and see myself. But this is not enough for me : I will look till I see more. I continue looking into the mystic glass until, to my great surprise, I see another form appearing. Evidently some mysterious Personage is reflected in this mirror. How beautiful and majestic is the Stranger's visage ! I look till the image of my countenance melts into the reflection of his countenance, and he alone is seen. I only appear in him. Is he not lovely ? Indeed he is the Chief among ten thousand. Now I see the meaning of that word, " We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

" This is the thankful glass,
That mends the looker's eyes ; this is the well
That washes what it shows."

Surely this is the mirror that Mercy, in " The Pilgrim's Progress," longed for. Does not Master Bunyan say of it, " Now the glass was one of a thousand. It would present a man one way, with his own features exactly ; and turning it another way it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of Pilgrims himself. Yea, I have talked with them that can tell, and they have said that they have seen the very crown of thorns upon his head, by looking in that glass. They have therein also seen the holes in his hands, in his feet, and his side " ?

A man looks into the law of liberty, and he sees all perfection in Christ : he looks and looks till, by a strange miracle of grace, his own image dissolves into the image of Jesus. Surely this is a thing worth looking into, and infinitely superior to any looking into a glass merely to see yourselves. We are compelled to say, " Come, see a Word which tells me all things that ever I did : did not this come from God ? " Nay, more ; we said this at first, but now we see Jesus, and we cry, " Come, see a *Man* that told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ? "

He that looks into the perfect law of liberty will not only see Christ, but he will begin to see the Eternal Spirit of God bearing witness with that law of liberty, and operating by that witness upon his own soul. " Oh," saith he, " this is a blessed law indeed now, for I have it written upon the prepared tablets of my heart ! " What a sight is that which lets us see the Holy Spirit working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure, and making us conformable to the law of his own declaring !

Ay, and he that looks into that perfect law will, by-and-by, see God the Father ; for the pure in heart shall see God. Those who love and live the law of God become like unto God, they are " imitators of God as dear children." They that are familiar with God's will, and love it,

and study it, gradually receive the likeness of God their Father till they are called the children of God. Thus the sacred Trinity are seen and known by those who do the will of the Father in heaven. Is not this a joy, to have our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? Oh, to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!

Dear friends, I cannot speak to you as I should like this morning; my theme masters me. I cannot make you see all that I see myself; but you must look into it for yourselves in the light of God. Look, and look again, till what you see in the Word is also to be seen in yourself. Transformation of character will follow upon meditation upon the truth of God, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost.

Note carefully that our text says, "*he continues*,"—"whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth." Our translators insert the word "therein"; but it is not in the Greek text. "And continueth"; that is, he continues to meditate in the law, and he continues to own his allegiance to it. The law of the Lord is always law to him. He also continues to practise it: he does not begin and then turn aside, but he continues to make advances in holy living and gracious conformity to the Lord's statutes, and he continues by a final perseverance to follow on. This is the hearer that shall win the blessing: not you who make a profession one day, and then disgrace it the next; not you who are all hot for Christ to-day and lukewarm to-morrow. The man who obtains the blessing of the Lord is by God's grace made to continue in it. I have heard of a famous King of Poland, who did brave deeds in his day, and confessed that he owed his excellent character to a secret habit which he had formed. He was the son of a noble father, and he carried with him a miniature portrait of this father, and often looked upon it. Whenever he went to battle he would look upon the picture of his father, and nerve himself to valour. When he sat in the council-chamber he would secretly look upon the image of his father, and behave himself right royally; for he said, "I will do nothing that can dishonour my father's name." Now, this is the grand thing for a Christian to do: to carry about with him the will of God in his heart, and then in every action to consult that will. We ought to ask:—What shall I do, as a child of God? What course shall I follow as a man of God, bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ? It is thought by some that you cannot continue always in the will of God: they dream that you are to hear a sermon, and then be very pious: or go to a prayer-meeting, and then be very devout; but they think that this piety and devotion cannot remain with us all day. Brethren, we must continue in the law of the Lord, or we have no true religion. Living godliness is for the shop, and for the kitchen, and for the parlour, and for the street; it is a continuous struggle for holiness. Looking at the perfect will of God is for every day, and all the day. We are to believe for holiness; looking to the Lord to become like the Lord. I would fain have my Saviour's image painted on my eye-balls, so that I could not see except I saw everything through him. It is well to have Christ's portrait hung up in every chamber of your soul; I do not say of your house—that might lead to idolatry; but in every chamber of your mind and heart. I

once saw a room so covered with mirrors, that when I looked I saw myself some fifteen times, certainly to my taste fourteen times too often. But oh, I would have my whole being to be such, that whenever Jesus comes into it, he may see himself everywhere—above, below, to the right, to the left, and on all sides ! Oh, to have him shining even into the innermost closet of our nature, so as to have no part dark ! Oh, to become new editions of the life of Christ ! We would not only look into the mirror, but we would be ourselves mirrors, reflecting the beauties of the holy Lord Jesus. But remember, this must not be occasional, but continual ; for the true heart continues looking into the perfect law of liberty.

To conclude : you notice how it says, "*this man shall be blessed in his deed.*" Mark : "this man," "this man." These demonstrative pronouns act like fingers. A man has gone up to the temple to pray. What a fine gentleman he is ! He wears a striking phylactery between his eyes, and he boasts a broad blue hem to his garment. He is a very superior person ; you can see that at a glance. He stands in a prominent place in the temple, and he most pompously cries, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." Curious that the Book does not make much account of him. But yonder is a poor weeping creature who does not dare to come into a prominent position, nor even to lift up his eyes towards heaven. Every now and then he beats upon his breast as if very much depressed. At last he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner !" See, the Saviour points out the publican and says, "*this man,—this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*" He lays his hand on him as one near to him, and says, "*this man.*" In my text there is a person who has seen himself in the glass, and he has gone his way ; but we need not mind about him, he is of no account. But here is a man who has been looking into the law, and has continued to look into it, and the Holy Spirit has selected him from all others, and marked him as "*this man.*" *This man is blessed.* Perhaps he does not wear the best broad-cloth, perhaps he is arrayed in a fustian jacket ; but he is selected and distinguished as "*this man.*" Perhaps he has received no elaborate education : you will not see him at the Athenæum, or hear him discussing Evolution with the learned ; yet he is "*this man.*" "*This man,*" says the text, "is blessed." Where is this man ? Where is this woman ? Judge whether you are the persons thus called and chosen ; whether you are abiding in love to that law, which has won your heart.

"This man shall be blessed in his deed." "Oh," saith one, "I do not see the blessedness of true religion !" No, my friend, you are not likely to see it, because you do not *do* it. This man is blessed "*in his deed.*" "*In keeping his commandments there is great reward.*" Much of the blessedness of godliness lies in the practice of godliness. Not in consideration of doctrine, but in obedience to precept the blessing lies. "*This man shall be blessed in his deed.*" In the very act of serving his Lord and Master he shall be blessed ; not *for* it but *in* it. The doing of the obedient deed is the evidence that God has blessed the doer from before the foundation of the world. His practical godliness is the evidence of his election ; his actual holiness is the evidence of his redemption ; his keeping close to the will of God is the evidence of his

adoption. Holiness is the witness that its possessor shall be blessed in the day when Christ shall glorify his people.

You who do not get a blessing by hearing the gospel may now see why it is so. You glance into a looking-glass, and that is all. Much good may it do you! After having seen your pretty selves you go your ways into the world to live as you lived before, and therefore you get no blessing. If you had gone to the divine law, that heavenly mirror of the will and mind of the Most High, it had been better for you. If, instead of making the Word a mirror to look at, you had made it a window to look through, and you had seen God in Christ, and perfect holiness in him, and had put your trust in Jesus, he would have given you a higher and better life, so that you would have become like to Jesus. Then you would have been blessed in your deed. Behold I set before you this morning, as they did of old upon Ebal and Gerizim, blessing and curse—the curse for those who peep into the looking-glass, but do no more; the blessing for those who attentively look into the perfect law of liberty, and continue so to do, till they are transformed into the image of the Lord! Which shall it be? May God the Eternal Spirit decide that question by leading you now solemnly, seriously, earnestly, to close in with Christ and his perfect law of liberty, and to him be glory for ever and ever! Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Matthew vii. 13—29.

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