

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Spiritual Vampires

"22 But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, **he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror**; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." **James 1:23-25 (NKJV)**

In this passage, James is discussing people who hear the Word but do not do what it says. He compares hearing the Word to looking into a mirror. Those who do not do the Word, are like those who forget what kind of a man they are after looking into the mirror of God's Word. There are a few lessons for us in this thought.

First, the Word of God tells us about ourselves.

It is a mirror that accurately reflects who and what we are. God's Word tells us why we are here, what our nature is, and what our purpose is. It shows us where our flaws are in that it makes us aware of our sins and weaknesses. It tells us that we are something much more than animals and yet much less than God. It informs us that we are made in the image of God but that we have marred that image with sin. It shows

us that we are spiritual beings designed to live forever either with God in Heaven or without Him in hell. It does more than just reflect our flaws; it tells us about the solution to our sin which is offered through the blood of Christ.

There are, however, other mirrors that people look at to learn about themselves. There is the mirror of society and its expectations, family, culture, religion, philosophy, education, psychology, literature, etc. I once read a book about understanding literature that said there is really only one story. That story is all about what it means to be human. While there are many ways to go about this, the author claimed that all literature boils down to an attempt at answering that fundamental question.

Unfortunately, many of these other "mirrors" do not give us a true reflection of ourselves. They are like the funhouse mirrors that distort our image. Some give us an inflated image of ourselves, making us look much better or significant than we really are.

Others give us a diminished image of ourselves, making us seem much worse or insignificant than we are in fact. Some of these mirrors hide our flaws or minimize them creating pride and an enlarged sense of self-esteem. Others exaggerate those flaws and leave us with nothing but despair. Some accurately show us our flaws without offering any solution to our sin problem.

Too many people have a warped sense of who they are because they have spent too much time looking into the wrong mirrors instead of the "perfect law of liberty".

Second, if we want to be blessed, we need to do more than merely hear the Word.

That is of no more value than looking into the mirror without making any effort to correct what we saw there. If we want to be blessed in what we do, we need to be doers of the Word, not just hearers only.

If we hear the Word without doing it, we are deceiving ourselves. We probably all know people who look into the mirror but have deceived themselves about what they see there. The person suffering from anorexia sees a person who is overweight while everyone around them understands that they are too thin to be healthy. In contrast to that, a bodybuilder may look in the mirror and see someone who is skinny or underdeveloped while everyone else sees that they are overdeveloped.

Too many people hear God's Word without doing it and deceive themselves into thinking that everything is alright with their spiritual life. They make no changes to their conduct or character. They do not adjust their attitudes or thinking. It's like watching other people working out and convincing yourself that you are in shape as a result. Or they are like "the Fonz" who looked into the mirror and saw

nothing but perfection there, so he put his comb back into his pocket without it being used.

Finally, there are spiritual vampires.

As everybody knows, a vampire doesn't cast a reflection. When they look in the mirror, they can see everything except themselves. They see the world around them clearly. They see the people around them, but they do not see themselves. When they hear the Word, they see all the shortcomings and flaws of those around them while being completely oblivious to their own.



They are the ones who are self-righteous and judgmental. They have no humility, rather they are full of pride and arrogance. They often see themselves as the ones appointed by God to point out and correct all the flaws of those around them. They end up being critical of everyone except themselves. Remember, they can't see themselves, so they are completely unaware of any flaws of their own. They certainly don't spend any time examining themselves - they are too busy examining everyone else.

They may appear to be alive, but they are really dead. Sometimes whole congregations are in this pitiful state.

"These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. **They are clouds without water**, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, **twice dead, pulled up by the roots;**" **Jude 12 (NKJV)**

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that **you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.**"' **Revelation 3:1 (NKJV)**

What keeps them going is sucking the blood and life out of the healthy people around them. They cannot live without controversy and complaints. Everyone else lives in fear of how and when they may be attacked by these vampires. They cause people to lose sleep. They suck the joy out of living for those who were once healthy. They keep the congregations where they attend emaciated because whenever there are signs of growth, they drain the life out of everything.

They know that if they kill their victims, they are no longer of any use to them, so they try to avoid doing too much damage at one time. They prefer to keep coming back for more. Still, they are constantly on the prowl for new victims in case their current ones should falter or find ways to protect themselves from the attacks.

Sometimes they turn others into spiritual vampires too. These poor unfortunate souls become like the ones who bit them. They also begin sucking the life out of others. Pretty soon everybody is biting each other ignoring Paul's warning:

"But if you bite and devour one another, **beware lest you be consumed by one another!**" **Galatians 5:15 (NKJV)**

Sometimes they recruit what is called a "familiar" or even several of them. These "familiars" are not vampires themselves. They can still see their reflection in the mirror. However, they do the bidding of the spiritual vampires. They become their servants, really their slaves.

The spiritual vampire "casts a spell on them" or "hypnotizes them". They can manipulate these "familiars" to aid them in their work of destruction.

Many of these "familiars" are unaware that they are serving as pawns in an evil scheme.

It is difficult to cure these spiritual vampires because they cannot see themselves in the mirror of God's Word. They can hear a wonderfully convicting sermon or lesson and comment that, "A lot of people really needed to hear that". However, it never occurs to them that they needed to hear it, too. Sometimes it takes a "Nathan" to point the finger at them and say, "You are the man".

"Then Nathan said to David, "**You are the man!**" Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.'" **II Samuel 12:7 (NKJV)**

Maybe this article can serve as a wakeup call for some, or even one, spiritual vampire that is terrorizing a community of Christians. If you are constantly pointing out the flaws in the Christians around you, maybe you should look in the mirror of God's Word. When you do that, check to see whether you cast a reflection.

- ▶ Do you see yourself and your own shortcomings, or just the ones in other people?
- ▶ Are you a hearer of the Word and not a doer of it?
- ▶ Have you forgotten what manner of man you are?
- ▶ Does God's Word still cut you to the heart, or is your conscience seared?

Maybe it's time to stop examining everyone else and look at yourself. Or as Jesus put it...

"3 "And **why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?** 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 "Hypocrite! **First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.**" **Matthew 7:3-5 (NKJV)**