

What Kind Of Image Do You Reflect?

Many fairgrounds feature a “*hall of mirrors*” containing various configurations of mirrors that reflect distorted images.

When we look into a mirror at home we expect to see a faithful reproduction of ourselves. But does your outward appearance reflect the true picture of you? Could there be, lurking in your life, a person you do not really see?

When we as Christians spiritually reflect ourselves, is what we see really us? Or is it rather an image we have created of ourselves, an image we also project to others, that gives both us and them a distorted view of our Christian condition?

The Pharisees in Jesus Christ’s day presented a distorted picture of their own righteousness.

They considered they were pretty good people, but Jesus Christ saw through the façade and condemned them.

Luke 18:9-12 [New King James] *“Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’”*”

Here was a representative group who trusted in their own actions to prove their righteousness, Jesus Christ though knew otherwise.

Matthew 23:27-28 [New King James] *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*

The Pharisees had a certain aura of religiosity, but Jesus Christ was able to look beyond this and see their inner thoughts. What Jesus Christ saw showed the two did not match.

What we must individually ask ourselves is, ‘Do my outward actions reflect the true feelings that are within me, or am I deceiving myself as well as others about the real me?’

We need to see through and reject false images of ourselves and reflect the true spiritual image God wants us to have.

Our minds, deceptive as they are, [Jeremiah 17:9] can easily cause us to think we are bearing spiritual fruit when all we have is an external adornment, an acceptable outward appearance that can even deceive others at first glance.

James 1:23-25 [New King James] *“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; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 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.”*

The Word of God, the Christian Bible, is that special mirror.

In addition to telling us about the observance of God’s Law, it also reveals how our minds, with their deceiving nature, are inclined.

With the aid of God's mirror let us examine aspects of human makeup.

And while doing so, ask ourselves how far have we come in overcoming the carnal, natural proclivities that God's Word shows are wrong, and how much we are masking our real selves from ourselves and others.

We are all inclined to self-justification –

Jeremiah 10:23 [New King James] *“O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.”*

First, we have to appreciate that, by ourselves, we do not know the right way to conduct our lives.

Even though humanity can come up with seemingly plausible ways to live our lives, unless the overall direction is based on God's Word, the Christian Bible, then failure is certain, [**Proverbs 14:12**].

How many times do we find ourselves saying, *“Now here is the way I look at this situation,”* then give a view that is **not** substantiated by God's Word.

We have an example of Saul using his human reasoning, inspite of having been given clear instructions from one of God's servants, [**1 Samuel 10:8**].

But Saul became impatient and decided to rely on his own thinking, [**1 Samuel 13:8-10**]. Saul knew it was wrong for him to offer sacrifices yet he went ahead and reasoned that it would be acceptable on this urgent occasion.

The consequences were he lost his position, along with his family, in the kingdom would be removed, [**1 Samuel 13:13-14**]. What a tragic consequence of relying on the human mind when God's instructions were explicit!

We are all inclined to evil by nature –

Closely related to the first point we have to admit that we are inclined to do evil, [Jeremiah 17:9]. This is prompted by Satan who seeks to blind us to the Word of God, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15; Revelation 12:9].

Isaiah 64:6 [New King James] *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”*

Actions based on the human mind are not acceptable to our Eternal Creator God.

Romans 7:18-19 [New King James] *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”*

Paul also saw this evil direction in his life.

The question is – do we?

It is very easy to read these statements and agree with their intent, but a true Christian's reaction must go beyond casual agreement.

We can only overcome the deceptive traits in our nature through really desiring to see ourselves, asking God to open our eyes spiritually and then looking into God's spiritual mirror, His Word, the Christian Bible, to find the true image we should be reflecting.

We are inclined to compare ourselves with other human beings –

Thousands of years ago, a man named Job was deeply concerned with his public image.

Job was one of the wealthiest people of his day, which gave him a high public profile, and he was meticulous in his observance of the physical aspects of God's Law, [**Job 1:8**].

No doubt, from time to time Job's righteousness made him think how unique he was, in a different class to anyone else, this was Job's potentially fatal mistake.

Job failed to see the real Job. The record of Job's life shows that God allowed several trials to befall Job, yet these did **not** cause Job to sin.

The dialogue that occupies most of the Book of Job was the fact that Job's three friends could **not** point to the reason of Job's problem, because their natural human minds could **not** grasp the truth, for it was a spiritual problem.

Job and his friends finally came to see how inconsequential Job's actions were, when compared not with other human beings but with the true yardstick for life, the Eternal Creator God, [Job 42:2].

This is the same conclusion we all must arrive at.

2 Corinthians 10:12 [New King James] *“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

God inspired Paul to come to the same conclusion.

We have to take on God's likeness –

Having considered these areas of human weakness we should now have a clearer picture of the real you, as God sees us.

Seeing our real selves and our flaws need not be discouraging, though it should spur us to overcome them and achieve the goal that God has set for every human being, before the first human being was created.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*

The Hebrew word translated “image” is “*tselem*” meaning resemblance, shadow, outward form. In total contrast the Hebrew word used for “likeness” is “*demûwth*” meaning manner, attributes or character.

Character takes time to develop by being in the presence of the One whose character we wish to reflect.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

Here the character of God is expanded and we can only take on this perfect character [Matthew 5:48] by following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who is given only to those who obey God, [**Acts 5:32**] will lead us into all truth, [**John 16:13**] bring to remembrance God's Word when needed to make wise decisions, [**John 14:26**] the guarantee of our future, [**Ephesians 1:13-14**].

Do **not** delay asking for the active presence of the Holy Spirit, [**Luke 11:9-13**], so that we can fulfil our reason for existence to change from "*image*" of God into the "*likeness*" character of God.