

## Mirror, Mirror

by Tricia Berg

I've been thinking about how unnecessary, and often even harmful, mirrors can be. They encourage us to focus on the outward appearance rather than the inner condition. They enable us to make comparisons with others, feeling prideful if we think our appearance is more desirable than others. (Why? Did any of us choose our looks or do something to deserve them?) Or we feel disappointed if we think we fall short of the world's standard (which, as we know, is often entirely fake).

The advertising industry capitalizes on this by offering products promising to remedy the situation. People are lured by the deception (often unspoken, but presented visually to the subconscious mind) that if they purchase certain products or services, they will look better and be happier, more popular, more successful, etc. So we first buy into the world's definition of "beauty" and "need," and then we seek the world's remedy for our "problem" (which for the most part only exists in the eye of the beholder). These things they convince us to buy rarely live up to our expectations—for the most part we simply find ourselves with less money, still unsatisfied. All of this detracts from what is truly valuable and pleasing to God. (1John 2:15-17)

*Therefore **be imitators of God**, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But **sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.** For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is **covetous (that is, an idolater)**, has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. **Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.** Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and **try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.** But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for everything that is illuminated becomes a light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of***

***the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:1-21***

God didn't design us in such a way that we can see what we look like to someone else without a man-made mirror (at least not conveniently—unless we want to continually stand near a calm lake, for example). He certainly could have done so if He had wanted to, but instead, the mirror He wants us to use is His Word. The appearance He is concerned with is the inner one, which for believers, was meant to be conformed to the image of Jesus. This means loving God and loving our neighbors and brothers in the Lord. (John 15:9-10, John 8:31-34, Rom. 13:8-10, 1John 4:19-21) He also wants us to tell others the Good News about Jesus our Savior, with both words and our lives, not only one or the other, or worse yet, neither. (Matt. 28:19-20, John 4:10-15, Rev. 22:17)

*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2*

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving yourselves**. For **if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like**. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and **perseveres**, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, **he will be blessed in his doing**. James 1:22-25*

Mirrors are good if they reflect light to brighten up a space. We can see by the moon that it "becomes a light" when the sun shines on it. Believers do that very thing by reflecting the goodness of God on the world by displaying the fruits of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them. We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. If we blend in with the world by appearing exactly to them as they

are in order to fit in (hide our light under a basket), or if we dumb down the truth of God's word (remove the salt) in order to make it more palatable to people who want to be assured of eternal life while they keep doing their favorite sins until Jesus returns, then we have not done what we're supposed to do. (Jer. 23:16-32, Ezek. 33:7-9, Mark 8:38, Isa. 5:20-21, Matt. 18:7-9, Rom. 1:28-32)

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted **for righteousness' sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others **revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account**. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. **You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. 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. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**"***  
Matthew 5:10-20

Note: The scribes and Pharisees liked to enforce the letter of the law and enjoyed their power to place additional burdens on the people beyond Scripture (such as how many steps you could take on the Sabbath). They didn't obey the entire law themselves (as no one could, but more than anyone they should have been trying to be obedient as members of the priesthood), yet they judged everyone else for failing to keep it perfectly. They neglected the spirit of the law and nitpicked little sins of others while doing worse things themselves. They obeyed tiny details to be seen by others while ignoring more important things. (See Matt. 23, Matt. 6:1-7.) The point of the last verse in the passage above is not that believers should disregard God's values and instructions, but rather it warns us not to be hypocrites. (Matt. 7:1-5, Rom. 2:1-10) Our motive is love of God and our neighbor, not to impress others, work for salvation or worship by rote and ritual. (John 4:23, Rom. 13:8-14)

Also note that in this age, the church (made up of believing Jews and Gentiles alike, grafted into the blessings of Israel - Eph. 2:11-22, Eph. 3:6, Col. 1:15-23, Rom. 11) is a royal priesthood, and so like the priesthood during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, we of all people should be concerned with pleasing Him by obeying His commands. He is the head of the church, our Lord and Redeemer, after all. (Eph. 1:22-23, Eph. 5:23, Rom. 10:9-10) People looking at us should get an accurate picture of what a child of God "looks like." (John 1:12-13, Rom. 8:16-17, 1John 3:1-10, 2Pet. 1:8-9)

*But you are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own **possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy**. Beloved, I urge you as **sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation**. 1 Peter 2:9-12*

*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands **without anger or quarrel**; likewise also that women should **adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works**. 1 Timothy 2:8-10*

*Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather **train yourself for godliness**; for while bodily training is of some value, **godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come**. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. **Command and teach these things**. Let no one despise you for your youth, but **set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity**. 1 Timothy 4:7-12*

So the point of this little devotional is that our beauty is within. Not because we're "good" people or have "inner strength," but because the Spirit of God dwells in us if we're believers. HE is good and strong, and HE produces fruit, which are traits in us that reflect God's nature—traits that we cultivate and act upon, resulting in good deeds done for the love of God. (John 14-15, Rom.

3:23, Philip. 4:13) When we "walk in the Spirit," we listen to His prompting and are useful to Him in accomplishing the works He prepared in advance for us to do. (Rom. 8:11, 2Cor. 1:22, 1John 4:4-13, 1John 2:1-6, Rom. 8:5-23, Eph. 2:10, 2Tim. 2:19-26, Philip. 2:12-16)

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be **strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being**, so that Christ may **dwelt in your hearts** through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, **according to the power at work within us**, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21*

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age**, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to **redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works**. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:11-15 (also see Mal. 3:13-4:3)*

*Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching **that accords with godliness**, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. **Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which***

**you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.** I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment **unstained and free from reproach** until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and **only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords**, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:4-16

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the **flesh** are evident: **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** But the fruit of the **Spirit** is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. And **those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** If we live by the Spirit, let us also **keep in step with the Spirit.** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:13-26

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed** into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 4:1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have **renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word**, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are **perishing.** In their case **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as

*Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has **shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.** But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. **For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For **this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.** 4:1 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has **given us the Spirit as a guarantee.** So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, **we make it our aim to please him.** For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.** 2 Corinthians 3:17-5:10*

*His divine power has granted to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness,** through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.** For this very reason, **make every effort to supplement your faith***

*with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. **For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to **pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,** until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.***

2 Peter 1:3-21

*This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am **stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,** knowing this first of all, that **scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.** They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For **they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.** But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are **stored up for fire,***

**being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, **be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.** And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which **the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.** You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are **not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.** But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:1-18

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