Spiritual Heart Transformation

2 Corinthians 3:1-18

11-15-2026

***We should appreciate the changes the Holy Spirit has produced in our hearts.**

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

I. He produces a <u>Living Epistle</u> (v. 2-3)

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

II. He produces an <u>Enabled Minister</u> (v. 4-6)

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

III. He produces an <u>Enduring Ministry</u> (v. 7-11)

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

IV. He produces an <u>Enlightened Mind</u> (v. 12-17)

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V. He produces a <u>Christ-like Glory</u> (v. 18)

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Moses receives the Law with Face aglow: See: Exodus 33:17-23; 34:28-35

People did not keep God's Law: Isaiah 29:13-15

> Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near [me] with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:
>
> 14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, [even] a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hid.
>
> 15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

A NEW COVENANT is promised:

> Jeremiah 31:33
> But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
>
> Ezekiel 11:19
> And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:
>
> Ezekiel 36:26
> A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.
>
> Hebrews 8:10
> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

***We should appreciate the changes the Holy Spirit has produced in our hearts.**

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

I. He produces a <u>Living Epistle</u> (v. 2-3)

v. 2

The changes produced in the Corinthians lives were evidence that God's Spirit worked through Paul and his fellow ministers.

Paul says in effect. . . you are written in our hearts (v. 2) because God has written in your hearts (v. 3).

3:2

Paul says in effect: You are our letter of commendation.

3:3

"The work of the Spirit in the changed lives of the Corinthians was sufficient recommendation of Paul's ministry" (Ryrie note).

Isn't it amazing how the very person God used to lead them to Christ was the one they stood in suspicion of? This is "biting the hand that fed them."

All believers are an "open book," or as stated her, "an open letter." People whose lives have been re-written by the direct working of God.

God does <u>not</u> use ink to mark the change in us (not some sort of tattoo), but He employs His Holy Spirit. The Spirit did not write on stone (as the Decalogue was written by God to Moses at Sinai – cp. V. 7), but He wrote the changes in our hearts.

Does your life bear God's writing?

Has your heart been transformed?

v. 3

"Not in tables of stone" – as the Law of Moses (Exod. 24:12; 34:1).

"In fleshy tables of the heart" – This describes the work of the Spirit, just as God promised in the Old Testament

Psalms 40:8
I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

II. He produces an <u>Enabled Minister</u> (v. 4-6)

v. 4
Paul did not know the heart of everyone at Corinth who professed faith in Christ. So he says that he has such "trust" that a real work was truly done through Christ.

v. 5
This work of heart transformation is <u>not</u> something that we can produce. It is something only God can do.

The Lord showed me a long time ago that I cannot effect change in anyone's life. But the Spirit can, and He uses frail earthen vessels (4:7).

SEE: 2 Cor. 4:3-<u>7</u>

We are not **"sufficient"** (competent). Paul knew that within himself dwelt no good thing (Rom. 7:18).

Anything of any spiritual and eternal value must be God's work.

If the work of heart transformation is God's sovereign work:

1) I can <u>take no credit</u> for it

2) I should <u>never be jealous</u> of God using someone else to lead a soul to Christ.

3) I <u>don't need to be discouraged</u> when the harvest is slow

4) I <u>must depend upon the Lord</u> for the fruit of souls won

"God is not looking for gifted people or people who are self-sufficient. He is looking for inadequate people who will give their weakness to him and open themselves to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the transforming grace of the new covenant as it is ministered by Christ Jesus himself. . . . And if you are feeling terrifying stirrings within your soul as he nudges you outside your comfort zone, where you will be out of your depth (but you know that he is calling you), give your weakness to him and accept his sufficiency." (Hughes, p. 74)

v. 6
"Able ministers" – sufficient servants, competent servants; we have all that we need in Him when it comes to ministry.

"The new testament" – New covenant.

A new order of ministry which comes with better promises provided by a better sacrifice than that of the Old Testament (SEE: Hebrews 8 – 9)

Salvation comes not by the letter of the Old Testament Law but by the Spirit of Christ (hence all must be born of the Spirit – Jn. 3:1-8)

"The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" – The "letter" represents the Old Testament Mosaic Law which could not save but rather condemned.

The Law made one conscious of sin –
Romans 3:20
Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

No one will be justified in God's sight by keeping the Law because no one has ever kept the Law!

Ps. 143:2 - "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Why can't an unsaved person keep God's commandments? He doesn't have the nature to do so. No inner ability.

ILLUS: of a lemon tree only producing sour lemons. You can pull off all the lemons and stick sweet, juicy oranges in their place; you may fool some into thinking you have an orange tree, but in reality all you have is a lemon tree with dead oranges on it. You have not changed the nature of the tree ("...a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" - Mt. 7:17).

Our human nature is sour. Often we don't like it, but nothing we try (such as getting rid of bad habits) can change our nature. Only Christ can (II Cor. 5:17).

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23).

The Law was never intended to justify. Rather, God gave man His Law for 2 purposes:

1) To restrain sin - I Tim. 1:9-10

2) To demonstrate depravity

The O.T. Law gives man a "knowledge" (lit. "full knowledge" - direct awareness or deep consciousness) of his sin.

The Law was given to show us our transgressions (Ga. 3:19). The Law wasn't given to show you how good you are, but how bad you are.

It was an instructor or "schoolmaster" to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Ga. 3:24).

The Law taught man his inability to be self-righteous. Therefore, man must throw himself upon the mercy and grace of God.

Galatians 3:21-25
Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.
But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.
But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.
Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

1 Timothy 1:9
Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

All the Law could do was reveal the curse of sin (Gal. 3:10).

But God's Spirit of grace brings a soul to faith in Christ and produces life.

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

III. He produces an <u>Enduring Ministry</u> (v. 7-11)

v. 7-8
When Moses received the Law, his face glowed because of time spent in God's presence

Exodus 34:29-30
And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.
And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

However, this glow was only temporary, as it would (like the Law Moses received) fade away.

v. 8
The ministry of the Spirit is more glorious because the Spirit's work of grace on a heart does not fade with time.

v. 9
If the Law that condemned was glorious, how much more does the Spirit's work of imputing righteousness exceed in glory.

v. 10
The glory of God's gift of righteousness so much outshines the glory of the Law that the Law's glory basically vanishes by comparison. The Law's glory is extinguished by the Spirit's glory which will endure forever!

v. 11
Temporary glory is outshined by eternal glory.

"For sake of illustration, think of glory as light. There is a certain glory of the moon and stars that shine at night. But when the sun comes up in the morning, these stellar luminaries pale. Why Because the glory of the sun outshines that of the moon and stars. Similarly, the Old Covenant, with all its glory, pales with the dawn of Christ. Consequently, this age ushered in a fresh and radiant confidence." (Swindoll, p. 46).

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

IV. He produces an <u>Enlightened Mind</u> (v. 12-17)

v. 12
We can be boldly confident in the Spirit's work of giving us eternal righteousness.

Never be ashamed of being a New Testament Christian! Boldly proclaim the good news!

v. 13
The Israelites at Mt. Sinai could not even behold fading glory.

v. 14
"Their minds were blinded" – By who?

SEE: 2 Cor. 4:4

Most Israelites even unto this day can't see God's glory because of a veil that is upon their hearts.

When the Old Testament is read, they don't see Christ, therefore they don't understand it. For Christ can be found in Genesis in Malachi.

v. 16
"When it (the heart) shall turn to the Lord (Jesus Christ), the veil shall be taken away.

v. 17
"The Lord (Jesus) is that Spirit" – A proof of the deity of the Spirit and of His oneness in essence with Christ.

Wherever God's Spirit dwells, there is true liberty or freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom from spiritual blindness.

When the Spirit transforms a heart . . .

V. He produces a <u>Christ-like Glory</u> (v. 18)

"Beholding as in a glass" – We don't see the Lord's glory face to face (as Moses did – Exod. 34:29-35), but we see a <u>reflection</u> of His glory (looking as it were in a mirror – cp. 1 Cor. 13:12). Every time we look into God's Word and see God's glory, we are changed by the glory we see.

2 Cor. 4:6 – For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

When you read your Bible, go looking to find <u>God's glory</u>.

Attributes of God = the best study (omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, Omnisapience, love, grace, mercy, holy, right, just, patience, and faithfulness).

As you see His splendor, His radiant glow, His weighty glory, you will be like what you behold.

"But 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."

"But we <u>all</u>" – This life transformation is <u>available to everyone</u> of God's children (none excluded).

"Are changed" - Transformed

ILLUS: How flowers and foliage receive sunlight and grow and are transformed by it.

--This transformation is a <u>continual process</u> (not all at once – overnight – but a progressive sanctification)

--This transformation is a <u>passive process</u> (we don't produce it, but God does, as we simply see His glory in His Word)

--This transformation is a change into <u>God-likeness</u>.

"Same image" - The image of Christ in His character and conduct.

You become like Him to the degree that you spend time beholding Him.

You become like the ones you spend time with. Spend time with God and you will become like God. You will <u>look like</u> that which you <u>look at</u>. (true of TV – the more we view of the world, the more we will resemble the world).

When Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai in God's presence, He beheld God's glory (Moses said, "Show me Your glory"). When Moses came down from the Mount, his face radiated with God's glory.

--This transformation is a progressive daily improvement.

“From glory to glory” - From one level of glory to another. From a lower level of glory into a higher level of glory.

The image of God in man that was marred by the Fall is renewed as we see His glory.

--This transformation is accomplished by God’s Holy Spirit.

Just as the new birth was the Spirit’s sovereign work in our hearts, so is His life transformation.

Col. 3:16 says, however, that you should *"let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"*

How strong is your appetite for God's Word? You answer is "an index of your Christian health" (Hiebert, p. 124).

Do you want to know why you feel "weak" spiritually? Why you have no power over your fleshly impulses? Why you struggle to do what is right? etc. The reason is because you have neglected your “daily bread” (Mt.4:4)!

Note: In God’s presence is fullness of joy.

--Spending time with Christ and abiding in Him is the surest way to have victory over sin.

Excursus: <u>Distractions</u>

Now, more than any time in human history, there are more distractions to capture the attention of God's people so as to divert them and render them unfruitful for God.

Since the industrial revolution and picking up steam every day, today there exist more

- gadgets,
- consumer products (computers, electronic gismos for all ages)
- entertainments, amusements, & sports
- communication devices, such as telephones, cell phones, email, instant messaging,
- toys for all ages,
- recreational opportunities,
- motion pictures (movies, videos, DVD's),
- audio devises (radios, CD players),
- printed materials (newspapers, magazines, & books),
- mind altering substances (drugs & various forms of alcohol),
- various mediums for pornography,
- hobbies galore
- Transportation devises (the time spent on the Car)
- Home improvement resources
- Financial opportunities (more places to earn it, spend it, invest it etc.)

(not all of which are necessarily sinful, but can be weights

Today there is more to catch the eye
more to pull on the heart
more to tease the lust
more to take up our brief time on earth
than ever before in human history

Basically the pursuit of other things, pleasures, & relationships take the heart away from God; Not to mention the maintenance of the "stuff"

We are BUSY, BUSY, BUSY with no time for God!

No wonder John the Baptist chose a simple life (both in clothing & dining)
No wonder Jesus traveled light (without even a pillow to lay his head)
No wonder Paul said it is advantageous to remain single (if one was so gifted)
No wonder the Monks chose the secluded monasteries
No wonder the Amish chose the isolated lifestyle (though they often lack the true knowledge of God, Grace and basically have zero impact on the World at large)

Who got distracted in the Bible?

- Samson with his lust for pleasure & women
- David with his spare time (leading to an adulterous affair)
- Solomon with his multiple marriages
- Judas with his lust for money
- Peter (momentarily) with his return to his former Career (Fishing)
- Demas with his appetite for the world
- Martha with her business with good things