Renewing the Inward Man

(The Transformed Life)
An Overview of 2 Corinthians - Chapters 3-4

Introduction:

No matter who you are, if you are saved, this verse applies to you:

> 2 Corinthians 4:16
> *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet* ***our inner man is being renewed day by day.***

Every day, our spiritual lives (our inward man) should be getting better & better

How do we daily renew the inward man?

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

I. **Spend Time in God's Glorious Presence** (2 Cor. 3:18)

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

II. **Perform Service in God's Excellent Power** (2 Cor. 4:7)

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

III. **Overcome Trials with God's Eternal Perspective** (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

Renewing the Inward Man

An Overview of 2 Corinthians - Chapters 3-4

See:
2 Corinthians 4:16
For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

Introduction: Resolutions for the new year & improvements over last year occupy the attention of many people as a new year is begun.

Today, many have resolved to become more physically fit (diets, gym, giving up some vise or harmful habit); Nothing is wrong with bodily exercise. It's good when kept in a right perspective. For God said:

1Tim. 4:8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

The profit of exercise does profit. But it only profits "little." It profits little in reference to time and priority. It will aid us while we are on earth, but is not as valuable as Godliness which has a temporal & eternal value.

<u>Improvements</u>:
--Health improvement
--Home improvements
--Car improvements
--Computer improvements
--Financial improvements

But do we upgrade our spiritual lives?

As you look back over last year, can you say that you (by God's grace and power) ...

- have made strides forward?
- have grown in maturity?
- have impacted others? (among your family, friends, and the lost & dying world)

Nothing was so feared by seamen in the days when ocean vessels were driven by wind and sail as the doldrums. Occurring usually in the part of the ocean near the equator, the doldrums abound in calms, squalls, and light, baffling winds. There, the weather is hot and extremely irritating. The old sailing ships, when caught in the doldrums, would lie helpless for days and weeks, waiting for the wind to blow again.

Have you been caught in spiritual doldrums? Has your Christian life become stagnant? Nothing happening; nothing changing; nothing improving?

Before we put our head on our pillow at night, we need to ask ourselves these questions?

- Am I a better person today than yesterday? (Did I allow God to improve my character? Am I more like Christ?)
- Is the world an improved place because of my life and testimony today?
- Did I make any eternal impact on my friends, neighbors & associates?

Everyone in this room is on one of three tiers:

3. Saved & Growing and Helping Others to become Saved & Growing
2. Saved & Growing
1. Saved

God's will for us is growth; full maturity; perfection or completeness

- *Heb 6:1 - "Let us go on unto perfection (maturity)"*
- *Mt 5:48 - Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*
- *Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*
- *2Th 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*
- *1Pe 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*
- *2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

2 Cor. 4:16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

"For which cause" - For the cause of the believer and the future resurrection, Paul never lost heart or became discouraged in ministry.

So that others might have grace and end up glorifying God, Paul did not **"faint"** (**"we faint not"** – a phrase repeated in 4:1).

"Our outward man perish" - The physical body experiences gradual destruction (in Paul's case, some of this physical affliction came at the hands of his persecutors (4:8-10); he would be "troubled. . . distressed. . . perplexed. . . and persecuted." (v. 8-9).

Paul's stoning, beatings, and other stresses would take their toll on his body; his outward man would "take a beating."

Despite our efforts to sustain health, the fact remains—due to sin—that our bodies do begin to wear out.

Stresses, illnesses, aches and pains, etc., are part of mortal life. The outward "you" will with time, age, and circumstance perish.

However, the good news is that the inward "you" can be renewed (refreshed and made new again) day by day.

The Word "Renewed" is <u>passive</u>, indicating that the renewal is not self-induced.

> Just as you have no control over you speed and rate of growth physically (you simply eat, sleep, and exercise, and somehow the growth process occurs irrespective of your desire to grow [Mt. 6:27]), so, if you consume God's Word, the Word will cause you to grow.
>
> You cannot independently manufacture your own spiritual growth. God causes you to grow as you receive the needed nutrients of His Word and strength He has to offer.

Peter exhorted Christian women to pay attention to the inner spiritual you.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

"The hidden man of the heart" = the inner, unseen person of the heart.

****Every day, our spiritual lives (our inward man) should be getting better & better***

How do we daily renew the inward man?

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

I. <u>Spend Time</u> in God's Glorious <u>Presence</u> (2 Cor. 3:18)

"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: Distractions

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 devises, 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

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

II. Perform Service in God's Excellent Power (2 Cor. 4:7)

Transformation occurs not only when we look at (spend time with Him), but as we rely on Him.

2 Cor. 4:7 – But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

"This treasure" – This treasure is the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (i.e. the Gospel message – cp. 4:3).

"Earthen vessels" - Clay jars (our fragile human bodies).

God puts a glorious treasure inside of a weak container and pours out that treasure into the lives of others, so that in the end it is the treasure that is glorified and not the vessel.

The extraordinary power is from God and not our flesh.

God is not desperately "looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen" as if He needed their money, fame, fortune, or talent to get His work done!

The Lord specializes in converting simple folk, common people, the under-privileged, the down-and-outers, the project kids, and other looked-down-upon groups.

Some might say: "That's because they are the only ones dumb enough to believe the Bible."

No, actually, they are the only ones humble enough to believe!

Jesus said, "*I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.*" (Mt. 11:25).

God delights in taking a Sarah who could not bear children and making her the mother of one of the largest races on earth (Gen. 18:14, 32:12)

God delights in taking a humble slave like Joseph and elevating him second to Pharaoh over Egypt (Gen. 41:38-44).

God delights in enlisting 300 soldiers of Gideon to fight and conquer 120,000 Mideanites (Jud. 7:2, 7, 12; 8:10) (NOTE: 400 to 1 odds).

God delights in utilizing a Samson to destroy 1,000 wicked Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:16).

God delights in using a red-headed, freckle-faced, baby-faced (I Sam. 17:42) shepherd boy named David to wipe out a 9'9" fully armored Philistine named Goliath (I Sam. 17).

God delights in providing adequate food for a poor widow of Zarephath who only had a few drops of oil and a handful of grain (I Ki. 17:9ff).

God delights in using three Hebrew youths to show up King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3).

God delights in using as His mouthpiece a John the Baptist, "who had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no impressive appearance (or diet!)" (MacArthur, p. 51). Yet Jesus said, "*Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist*" (Mt. 11:11).

God delights in taking a boy's lunch consisting of two sardines and five bite-size biscuits to feed 5,000 men besides women and children (Mt. 14:17-19).

"Little is much when God is in it." -- Conversely, much is little, if God is not in it!

God delights in taking unlearned, ignorant, dumb fishermen from Galilee and turning them into the most bold and influential mortals ever to spread the Gospel message (Acts 4:13).

"All is vain unless the Spirit (power)1 "Not by might…but by my Spirit…" of the Holy One comes down"

Work performed in the flesh will wear us down to the bone. But work done by His power will never diminish.

ILLUS: Moses while with God went without food and water for 40 days – a miracle.

To become better than yesterday, we must ask God for His power and strength everyday. As Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Beware of pride: I can do it all by myself attitude. "God resists the proud…."

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

III. <u>Overcome Trials</u> with God's Eternal <u>Perspective</u> (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

Transformation occurs when we look at life with His perspective.

Note the context of 4:8-15 & 5:1-9

How is the inward man renewed day by day? How can we grow spiritually and not lose heart?

This occurs when we look at life from God's perspective, from heaven's perspective.

Romans 8:28 – "All things work together for good…"

v. 17

Keep your eyes on the <u>future hope</u>, and the present afflictions that you endure for Christ will seem as momentary light weights. Compared to the eternal and heavy glory to be experienced in Heaven.

When we have God's perspective we will focus on the spiritual rather than the physical, the eternal rather than the temporal.

Read 5:1-9

Henry Morrison's wife "You are not home yet!"

Henry C. Morrison was a great missionary who served the Lord in Africa for over 40 years. On the way back to United States, he began to wonder "will anyone remember us?" Unknown to Henry Morrison and his wife, Teddy Roosevelt, President of U.S., was also on board that ship. He had gone to Africa for a hunting trip. When ship pulled into New York harbor he looked to see if anyone had come to welcome them back home. Thousands of people were there cheering. Bands were playing. There were signs, banners, and billboards everywhere saying, "Welcome Home". Henry and his wife were so excited about the crowds of people that were there to welcome them home. When they went to get off they realized that the people were already gone. They had come to welcome Teddy Roosevelt. Henry Morrison went to his hotel room with a heavy heart. As he sat there on the bed, he asked his wife, "Honey, I just don't get it...for 40 years we poured our lives into ministry and service. And yet we come back to America and not a single soul comes to welcome us home!" His wife came and sat down next to her husband, she put her hand on his shoulder, and comforted him with words that he would never forget, "Henry, you have forgotten something, you're not home yet!" (*Source Unknown, Lou Nicholes - Missionary/Author*).

CONCLUSION:

Daily improvement is God's will for His children.

At the conclusion of each day, we should ask ourselves:

--Did I become more like my Lord today? (did I place myself in the circumstances where such could take place?)

--Did my character improve today?

--Did I grow in love?

--Did I grow in grace?

--Did I grow in patience?

--Did I grow in service?

Am I a better Christian today than yesterday?
Am I a better parent today than yesterday?
Am I a better husband/wife today than yesterday?
Am I a better church member today than yesterday?