Spiritual Renewal

An Overview of 2 Corinthians - Chapters 3-4
6-7-2025

Introduction:



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

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

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

How do we daily renew the inward man; How can we experience spiritual renewal?

Spiritual Renewal takes place when we...

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

Spiritual Renewal takes place when we...

II. **<u>Rely</u> on God's <u>Power</u>** (2 Cor. 4:7)

Spiritual Renewal takes place when we...

III. **<u>See Life</u> through God's <u>Perspective</u>** (2 Cor. 4:17-18)

Renewing the Inward Man

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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.

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>.

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

--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.

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 <u>progressive daily improvement</u>.

“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 <u>accomplished by God’s Holy Spirit</u>.

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 <u>richly</u> 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)!

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

II. <u>Rely</u> on God's <u>Power</u> (2 Cor. 4:7)
(Perform Service in God's Excellent Power)

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.

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

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."

Renewing the inward man takes place when we...

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

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

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?

NOT HOME YET (3 versions)

Author Anne Graham Lotz told a story in her book, "Heaven, My Father's House". It is the story of an old missionary named Samuel Morrison who had spent twenty five years doing ministry in Africa. He returned to America on the same ocean liner that brought President Teddy Roosevelt back from a hunting expedition in Africa. Upon docking, President Roosevelt was bombarded with scores of people welcoming him home from his hunting expedition. Barriers and police escorts were needed to keep the masses of people from rushing on the President and mobbing him or crushing him as he was welcomed with cheering, ticker tape and confetti. Morrison walked off the ship alone; no one noticed, no one even knew he was there. He couldn't even hail a cab for a ride.
In his heart Morrison complained to God. "The president was in Africa hunting for three weeks, killing animals for sport and the whole world turns out to welcome him home. I've given twenty-five years of my life in Africa, serving You and no one has greeted me or even knows I'm here."
In his questioning heart he heard the gentle, loving voice of God whisper to his spirit, "My child, you are not home yet!"

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*).

(told by Joe Stowell)

One of my favorite missionary stories is of a couple who, after decades of faithful service overseas, was returning back to the States. Their heart's desire was to stay on the field, but their age and failing health concerned their mission board and after packing up their belongings they boarded a steamship bound for New York.

Also traveling on the same ocean liner was a popular, well-known government official and his wife. Over the weeks at sea this elderly couple observed the official's drunkenness, womanizing, and foul language. It was a marked contrast to the lifestyle to which they'd become accustomed. They grew even more disheartened, when, upon their arrival in New York, the official and his wife were greeted with great fanfare—a brass band, reporters and photographers, roses for his wife—the works!

And so this aged missionary couple, health broken and spent in their service for Christ, walked off the gangplank and through the crowd, unmet and seemingly unknown. As they walked, a tear trickled down the husband's cheek. "What's wrong?" his wife asked.

"My whole life I've given to serving Christ. We've spent ourselves for Jesus and nobody is here to greet us. There's no bouquet of flowers for you."

His dear wife thought for a minute and then said, "Honey, we're not home yet. We're not home yet."