

*UNEDITED DRAFT*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

How would you like to have your life complete transformed? A question like that really piques interest, doesn't it? Can any of us say we are completely satisfied with who we are and with every aspect of our lives? Here are four actual headlines that I bet you would really be interested in reading: 20 Simple Life Hacks; 10 Waist-Trimming Foods You Need in Your Fridge; 5 Secrets for a Happier Marriage; How to get 40 hours of work done in 16.7.

It's partially our culture, but it's also human nature, that we want to improve our lives. We recognize there are plenty of problems in our lives that need hacking, tweaking, reworking, transforming or fixing.

Today in our sermon text, we are going to learn how our life can be transformed. The tips and tricks you read in the media for changing your life are all things that are ultimately applied to your life from the outside that when put into place will effect changes on the inside. But what we learn from our God is that he makes a change to us on the inside that then starts to become evident on the outside.

We are looking today at a few verses from 2 Corinthians 3. As usual, we don't have nearly enough time to look at these verse as few as they may be. In fact, one pastor preached a series of EIGHT sermons on these verses that we're going to cover in about 20 minutes. So I'm going to encourage you as I usually do... if you really want to get the whole story and you really want this truth of God to sink in, you're going to have to invest some additional time this week with these verses. If you will read from the second half of chapter 2 through the end of chapter 4 you'll get a much better understanding of today's verses.

So let's jump right in and we'll do the best we can.

What Paul is describing in these verses is the way God relates with man and man to God. Many believers in the town of Corinth misunderstood how God relates to man and man to God. And many people today do too.

So the question was this: does God deal with man according to the laws given on Mt. Sinai? Or is there something else? So many insisted that if you want to be right with God, then it depends on you. You have to keep the right laws, perform the correct rites, observe the right holy days, etc. If you do this right enough, God will consider you right with him, and he will be pleased with you and he will take you to heaven.

Now, this is not really what the Old Testament law was all about. But it's what people believed and taught. In fact, it is the natural inclination of human beings to believe that this is the fundamental way that God interacts with man. A majority of the people on our planet today, believe the very same thing. And you can understand why they would. If you want a promotion at **work**, it all depends on your performance. If want a **good grade** in a class, it depends on your performance. If you want to win in **sports**, it depends on your performance. So obviously, if you want to be in good standing with God, it will depend on your performance. This is what we human beings naturally fall back to and assume about our relationship with God. It all depends on your works, your performance, your efforts, your improvements.

*The power for change must come from you and your will power and your works.* Some people aren't overly concerned about the God part of this equation. They don't want to improve themselves for his sake because they don't believe in him or don't give much thought to him.

They want to improve themselves for their own benefit, their own happiness, their own improvement.

Now, this mindset is essentially what Paul is talking about in reference to the old covenant which you'll hear in this text. Certainly, strictly in context it's narrower than that. He's talking about the Jewish people's belief that their keeping of the specific laws given to them through Moses would make them right with God. But it also applies in the broader sense that I just described as well.

Now, again, we're looking at some verses apart from the rest of the context which makes it especially difficult. The reading begins: **Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.** What hope?! He's talking about the hope we have with the NEW covenant. It is the covenant of grace. It is the covenant established by Christ Jesus. With Jesus Christ, God made a promise to us... a covenant. A covenant is a one-sided agreement. God promises to do something for us and his promise is not contingent on getting anything first from us. It's not a contract where two parties promise to provide something. It's a covenant. And the covenant is this: God promises us that Jesus, his Son, was born into our world a couple thousand years ago. He lived under God's law... God's requirement of perfection and holiness. He kept God's requirement of perfection and holiness.

[So in a sense that innate feeling we have that we must earn God's favor through our efforts and performance is accurate. But what we always miscalculate is the level of performance that is required. God requires absolute perfection because he is perfect... absolute holiness because he is holy. How can a perfect and holy God say, "You know, I'm okay with *some* level of crime, rebellion and disobedience. Really, it's okay." No! He cannot say that. And this is why a relationship with God cannot be based on our performance, because we will never, could never, reach his standard.]

So God sent a substitute – Jesus. He was under the same standard we are. But he actually did it! He was perfect. He was holy. His track record is recorded in detail in the four Gospels. Check it out and you'll see! So Jesus has the perfection we so desperately need. And we have sins which so horrible condemn. **So God did this amazing swap.** He took your crime, rebellion and disobedience and applied to Jesus' record. He took Jesus' faultless record and applied it to you. SO your record could not ever come back to haunt you again, Jesus took the full punishment it deserved which was death. He went to the cross and there he died for you, paying the full wages of your sin through his death on the cross.

God promise that whoever believes in Jesus will not perish, but will have eternal life. This amazing swap is the way God has provided for you to get to heaven! Or, as the apostle Paul calls it, this is the New Covenant.

Now, I hope this makes more sense: **Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.** The old covenant brought uncertainty and ultimately condemnation and death. The new covenant gives sure, eternal hope. You are right with God because of the amazing swap! And that gave Paul great boldness. Boldness in his standing with God. Boldness to proclaim this message of the new covenant to others.

**<sup>13</sup>We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.**

We need to recall some Old Testament here. Moses would go into the presence of God. God would speak his Word to Moses. Moses would come out with his face shining brightly. He

spoke the Words of God with head uncovered, face shining. It was the commands and requirements of God which the people must follow. Old covenant. But after he told the people what God said, he immediately covered his face which was shining with the glory of God. While his face was veiled, the people didn't see that the glory, the shining was gradually fading away. They didn't see the brightness dissipate. It was a temporary thing. No lasting glory. After a while, Moses didn't need to wear the veil because the shining has stopped.

This was symbolic. The commands, the laws... they were not permanent. They were not forever. It was a temporary covenant. It was certainly God's Word, but it was not God's final word. It was God's temporary Word. It was a testament put in place because of sin to keep it in check. It was to remind the people of their sinfulness and rebellious nature. It was a restraint and a hedge to keep God's people as God's people. It kept them separate from their heathen, idol worshipping neighbors. It was a constant reminder of God's holiness.

You see, they were like little school children who needed a guardian placed over them until they came of age. The guardian was the a law and the coming of age would not happen until the Lord Jesus Christ appeared – the fulfillment of God's lasting and eternal covenant.

**<sup>14</sup> But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read.**

That is, to this day they believe the Old Covenant is lasting and eternal. They failed to understand it's real purpose. They failed to see to whom it was pointing. They failed to get that a greater, more glorious covenant was coming.

**It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. <sup>15</sup> Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. <sup>16</sup> But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**

The law given through Moses was to induce terror into their consciences. They were to fully understand and realize the holiness of God, his disgust over sin, the consequences which are eternal death. It was needed because the people failed to appreciate the holiness and majesty of God and were peacefully sinning against him as if it were no big deal. This Word of God served a purpose and it does for us as well. We need the Law of God to each us the same thing.

But ultimately the Law does not give hope, **it terrifies**. It cannot give life, only **death**. It cannot give righteousness, it only **condemns**. Yet many even in our world today cannot see the fading glory of this law and they think it is the final word of God and the way of salvation. "Follow God's rules and you will live!" they think. This is not true.

The glory of the new covenant does not fade and it is eternal. There is no veil needed because the glory does not dissipate.

In our Gospel lesson today, we heard about the transfiguration of our Lord on that holy mountain. Oh the contrast to the glory of the old covenant! Moses face shown 1500 years earlier because he had been in the presence of God. It wasn't Moses own glory, it was a fading reflection of God's glory. But Jesus himself was shining on that mountain. The glory came from himself. His glory did not continue at that time. But neither did it fade. Jesus gave a glimpse of the hidden glory that was always there. It had been there from eternity and will be there to eternity. It was a hidden glory because he set aside his divine majesty and glory to become true man and live among us. He lived under the law in our place. He went to cross as our perfect substitute and Savior. Nowhere was his glory more hidden then when he was on the cross. Not only did he not shine in his glory, but even the sun itself stopped shining as he hung in darkness suffering for the sins of the world. When his glorious mission was complete, he bowed his head

and he died. Then on the third day, the glory broke forth! Christ was risen. Ascended. He is glorified. And will be glorified when he comes again to judge the world!

Only in Christ is the veil removed and we see the glory of the eternal covenant of God with man.

<sup>17</sup> **Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.** The old covenant brought something with it: death. The new covenant also brings something with it: the Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in all who believe. That spirit gives life. That Spirit gives FREEDOM. We are no longer slaves to **Law**, no longer slaves to **Satan**, no longer slaves to **fear**, no longer slaves to **corruption**, no longer slaves to **sin**, no longer slaves to **death**. The Spirit sets people free from all that bondage. He gave the Law in order to lead men to the fact that they needed a Savior, so that they could come to His provision in the new covenant. In Christ Jesus true and lasting freedom!

Now, here is the powerful final verse of our text that brings us back to the important question we started with today. Do you want a truly transformed life? Listen: <sup>18</sup> **And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

Now what does this mean? God has brought us into a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ – that same Christ who was transfigured and showed his glory on that mountain. That same Lord Jesus now dwells in your heart by faith. And his glory lives in you. And his glory works in you. He is changing you from the inside out. As you grow in your faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ – as you contemplate his glory – you are being transformed by him into his image. You are starting to look more and more like him. Not that you're growing a beard and starting to look like a first century Jewish man. You're transforming in your character to look more and more like him.

A son who admires his father often bears a resemblance to his father. I have a classmate from Seminary whose father was a professor at the seminary. This classmate, though, was adopted. He was no blood relation to his father, but grew up in that house as an adopted son. In his speech, in his mannerisms, and especially when he would preach – I got glimpses of his father (his adopted father.) He copied him because he loved him and respected him.

Jesus is transforming us – but it's from the inside out and even more intimate than simply copying him. He is changing our heart to be like his heart. He's changing our mind to be like his mind. He's changing our will; attitude; mindset; desires. All like Jesus!

Friends, this is the key to a transformed life. You can't make the changes needed upon yourself any more than you can pick yourself up by your own bootstraps. You can't leverage yourself against yourself because that's now leverage. But the Lord Jesus in you – he can make incredible changes. He can totally transform your life.

The key is to know and grow in your faith and knowledge of his glory, his love, his sacrifice. We daily need to go back to the mount of transfiguration and behold the glory of the one and only Son of God. That same glory now lives in you and will change you so you look more and more like Jesus in your daily living. In Christ Jesus, BE TRANSFORMED! Amen.