

# “Metamorphous — Transformation — The Way to Holiness”

## 2 Cor. 3:15-18

**2 Cor. 5:21.** Salvation is in Jesus Christ. We are not saved by the work of God in us (Col 2:12) but by the work of God for us. Justification is what **God did for us** while Sanctification is what **God is doing in us**. **We are not co-redeemers**. The new birth produces change (2 Cor. 5:17), but that change is not salvation. To be saved is to be forgiven, not changed. (Roger Chambers)

The Greek word (*meta-mor-fa-o*) used here is the one from which we get our English word "*metamorphous*." A typically marked or more or less abrupt change in the form or structure of an animal (e.g., a butterfly or a frog), occurring subsequent to birth or hatching" (MERRIAM-WEBSTER).

### (Introduction) MAJOR PROBLEMS WITHIN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

- \* Rather than changing upward, they were in a state of moral and spiritual decline.
- \* Fornication — Lawsuits — Marriage abuse — Stumbling blocks — Denying Apostleship of Paul — No edification in the assemblies — Abuse of Lord's table — Abuse of Spiritual gifts — Disbelief in resurrection marred the church.
- \* This is a fair representation of the "church" culture of our day. In fact, the church at Corinth has, for all practical purposes, been "restored."
- \* It was shameful for Corinth to have such traits (1 Cor 6:5; 15:34), and it is shameful for them to exist today as well!

### I. THE WAY OF HOLINESS BEGINS BY TAKING THE BLINDERS OFF.

- \* The veil lies over their heart. Vs. 15b
- \* This refers to the veil of obscurity, not the veil that was over Moses' face.
- \* The real cause of a lack of understanding is not the book, but the heart.
- \* But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil IS taken away. Vs. 16
- \* Person by person, it is very personal/ generation. Remember, 'transformation' cannot be transferred.
- \* God will not allow a person to know the depth of His Word who fails to see His Son in it.
- \* It is "taken away," deliberately "removed," or "withdrawn," by the Lord Himself.
- \* If the veil remains, the person has not turned to the Lord.
- \* A veiled heart is one that cannot comprehend the things of God. 2 Cor. 4:3-4
- \* It is a heart that has not been turned to the Lord, regardless of its profession
- \* To put it another way, we will grasp the message being sent to us from heaven in His word. It will dawn upon us what the Lord is doing through Christ Jesus.
- \* In the process, we ourselves will be changed by the glory of what we see.

### II. THE WAY OF HOLINESS IS A SPIRITUAL MATTER THAT SETS US FREE.

- \* Now the Lord is the Spirit. Vs. 17a
- \* Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Vs. 17b
- \* **Heb. 10:22** let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
- \* The freedom realized in Christ Jesus involves release from servitude to sin, and free access to God.
- \* All spiritual advance requires that these two factors be present.
  1. We are free to resist the devil (James 4:7).
  2. We are free to put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11).
  3. We are free to put to death our members that are upon the earth (Col 3:5).

4. We are free to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul (1 Pet 2:11).
5. We are free to obtain grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16).
6. We are free to draw nigh unto God (James 4:8).
7. We are free to perfect holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor 7:1).

### III. THE WAY OF HOLINESS IS AN ALL INCLUSIVE EVENT. VS. 18a - BUT WE ALL

- \* The mirror is certainly the Gospel while the glory is “Who God is and what His is like,” manifested.
- \* This is not one of the ways this happens, but is the exclusive and appointed means of being “changed.”
- \* If the New Covenant does not produce a better people, then how can it possibly be a “better covenant?”
- \* If you are going to receive from God, you must look with an “open,” or unveiled, face or heart.
- \* There must be full and unhindered exposure to Divine glory, steadfast focus!
- \* Absolutely no holiness can be appropriated by fleeting glances and momentary considerations
- \* We are speaking of “beholding” the reflected glory of Christ resident in the Gospel. Righteousness, love, grace, Kingdom, peace, blessing, salvation, hope and immortality are just some of Christ’s glory.

### IV. THE WAY OF HOLINESS IS TO SEE ALL THE GLORY OF GOD AS GATHERED TOGETHER IN CHRIST. VS. 18b

- \* Jesus reveals the Father. Matt. 11:27 —Jesus declares the Father. John 1:18 —The Father is seen in Jesus. John 14:9 —Jesus manifests God’s name, or person. John 17:6 —Jesus declares God’s name, or person. John 17:26 —Jesus gives us an understanding of God. 1 John 1:20
- \* Our thinking is changed, so that God’s thoughts are now our thoughts – His ways become our ways.
- \* It is a time when our thoughts are gathered and focused on Jesus – beholding the glory of the Lord!

### V. THE WAY OF HOLINESS IS TO BE CONSTANTLY CHANGED INTO IMAGE OF CHRIST. Vs. 18d

- \* We are constantly being changed into the reflected character or glory of Christ. The process ends at death.
- \* It is the initiation of a process in which continual moral and spiritual change is experienced.
- \* A static religion – where there is no fundamental progression – is one in which Jesus is not resident.
- \* In such a case, the people are not focused upon Him, and have become distracted to other things.
- \* Our text is not speaking of mere possibilities or ideals.
- \* This is what happens when our attention is focused.  
1 John 5:10-11 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. (11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [KJV]
- \* There simply is no possibility that an individual's attention can be focused on the Subject of the Gospel without that person being "changed."
- \* This is because that Person, Jesus Christ, is "alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18).
- \* A religion that leaves a person unchanged should be immediately abandoned – cast away as the rubbish that it is! It must be regarded as "dung," just as Paul considered his own past – steeped in Jewish tradition (Phil 3:8).
- \* When a church – any church – must resort to canned procedures to try and awaken the people to righteousness, there is something that is fundamentally wrong.

## AN EXAMPLE

An example of the marvelous transformation that is realized by beholding "the glory of the Lord" is seen in the early disciples. **Act 4:13** Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

And how is it that they concluded these men had been with Jesus?

It was because they preached like Him.

They spoke like Jesus did.

They conducted themselves as Jesus did.

Their manners were the same as His.

They had, in fact, been transformed.

Once they had attempted to have Jesus send away a woman who was pleading for His help (Matt 15:23).

But they were not doing that anymore. They had been "changed."

Once they rebuked Bartimaeus for crying out for mercy, telling him to "hold his peace" (Luke 18:38). They did not do this again. They had been "changed."

Once, when Jesus' enemies came to arrest Him, all of His disciples ran away, forsaking Him (Matt 26:56).

That certainly occurred no more! They had been "changed."

## SUMMARY THOUGHTS

- \* Why is it that the modern church is so much like the world?
- \* Why is so much sin found within its ranks?
- \* Why are their spiritual appetites so small?
- \* Why is there so little difference between those who profess Christ and those who do not?
- \* Why do we hear of fallen Christian leaders?
- \* It is because such people have not been "changed!"
- \* And why is it that they have not been changed?
- \* Does not this very text inform us that this is the manner of the New Covenant?

The declaration is forthright, and there is no ambiguity in it:

**2 Cor 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Where appropriate change is not being realized, the people are simply NOT beholding "the glory of the Lord. The people are not "looking unto Jesus." That is why they are NOT being changed! Something or someone else has captured their attention. Their heart is, as Jesus said, where their treasure is (Matt 6:21). It simply is not possible to focus and concentrate on the Jesus of Scripture – as revealed in the Gospel – and remain unchanged!

If the Gospel is the appointed means by which the glory of the Lord is perceived, and if it is the means by which we are changed into the same image, how then can anyone defend the postulate that the Gospel is preached "only to sinners!" Who is it that will dare to champion a position that states the Gospel is not to be preached to the church? Is it not God's "power unto salvation?" It is NOT possible to be "changed" if the people are NOT exposed to "the glory of the Lord," which glory is seen in the Gospel. This is not the glory that is seen in God's children, but the glory that is seen in His Son! That glory must be seen directly, not through the veil of human flesh namely our flesh. While we are exhorted to let our light shine, that light has no transforming power! Souls are not changed by what they see in us! They can glorify God, turn their eyes toward Him, and inquire because of our light, but they cannot be changed by the light that emanates from us!