

Oh to be changed – how can God change me?

Do you and I need to be changed, totally or in some key areas of our lives? Do you and I want to be changed? Changed - from the kind of people we were before we came to Christ – to people that increasingly are actually becoming more like Christ in our nature and then in our behavior. How can this change possibly happen, first of all in me and then in the people I know? If we have tried, genuinely, to change ourselves we will know just how impossible it is – I may make some modest outward behavioral changes but what I can't change is on the inside of me, the real me, my very nature.

This is why the following scripture is perhaps one of the most pivotal and significant scriptures in the whole Bible, because it summarizes just exactly how God changes a person's inner nature and literally makes their nature, progressively, identical to the nature of Jesus Christ – something no human being can do on their own. This truth is the very heart of the gospel the very essence of the New Covenant:

2 Cor 3:18 NKJV

18 **But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed (changed) into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

In order to allow the Holy Spirit to give us a full understanding of this verse there are some biblical terms and expressions the verse uses that need to be explained. First of all what does the expression “unveiled face” mean? Does it have anything to do with my natural human face? No it doesn't. The meaning of the expression is revealed in two of the preceding verses from the same chapter:

2 cor. 3:15-16

15 **But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.**
16 **Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.**

The face referred to is our spiritual face, not our natural face, which of course is our regenerated human spirit otherwise known in scripture as our heart. When we came to Christ we received a new Heart or spirit and the barrier or veil that prevented us from seeing and hearing the things of God was taken away. An unveiled face therefore is a soft, tender heart that is able to see, hear and receive the ongoing revelation of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. What then does the term “beholding as

in a mirror” mean? The answer to this question is given in the Amplified Bible’s translation of the same verse:

2 Cor 3:18 AMP

18 **And all of us, as with unveiled face, because we continued to behold in the Word of God as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured (changed) into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit.**

The mirror that reflects the nature of Christ is the Bible, that is, the word of God. When we begin to look earnestly into the word of God, not with our intellects but with an open and unveiled heart, we shall see the glory of the Lord. What is the glory of the Lord? What is this glory by which and to which the Holy Spirit will change us, such that we become more and more like Christ? Again this question is answered by reference to a section of five verses earlier in the same chapter that compares the glory of the Old Covenant with the glory of the New Covenant:

2 cor 3:7-11

- 7 **But if the ministry of death (the Old Covenant of Law), written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away,**
- 8 **How will the ministry of the Spirit (the New Covenant of Grace) not be more glorious?**
- 9 **For if the ministry of condemnation (the Old Covenant) had glory, the ministry of righteousness (the New Covenant) exceeds much more in glory.**
- 10 **For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.**
- 11 **For if what is passing away (the Old Covenant) was glorious, what remains (the New Covenant) is much more glorious.**

So, the Old Covenant had glory, the glory of the Lord, but the New Covenant has much more glory, the glory of the Lord. What primarily distinguishes the words of the Bible viewed on the one hand as a book of laws (rules that I must endeavor to comply with) or on the other hand the words of the Bible viewed as a book of Grace (living words by which God conforms me to Christ) – since both of these two fundamentally different understandings of the Bible include all the words of the Bible, and not just their respective Old and New Testament sections. What then is the

principal difference between my approaching the whole of the Bible on the basis of Law or on the basis of Grace? Verse eight of the above scripture section gives us the answer “the ministry of the Spirit”. In other words when we allow the words of the Bible to be brought to us and made alive to us by the Holy Spirit as opposed to our trying to apprehend them with our human faculties, then we are operating under the New Covenant and not the Old Covenant.

When the Holy Spirit breathes life into a morsel of scripture from the Bible (the mirror) which we see and hear with our hearts (unveiled face) that scripture, now living, is “the glory of the Lord” and contains the very nature of Jesus Christ. As we receive day by day more of these living words from the Spirit we are progressively changed from glory to glory, from one aspect of Christ’s nature to an ever deepening likeness to His nature. This ministry of the Holy Spirit taking and revealing to our hearts the word of God, so that they can be made alive in us, is what Jesus was referring to in the following verses:

John 16:13-14

- 13 **However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**
- 14 **He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.**

The Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus (the word of God) by taking what is His and declaring it to every Christian’s heart that can hear. And what exactly is it that the Spirit takes and declares to us – He takes of what is the word of God and speaks it to our hearts. He will do it either directly from the Bible, or through a book, tract or paper about the Bible that someone allowed the Spirit to inspire or through the mouth of another Christian, live or by recording, if that Christian submitted to the Spirit’s anointing.

From this it becomes so clear that if I want God to continue to change me and make me in all areas of my life like Christ and then use me as an instrument of His change in the lives of others – initially through salvation and then through discipleship – it can only happen if increasingly I allow His Spirit to declare His words to my heart by:

- Attending meetings where Christians know how to let the Spirit bring the word of God.
- Listening to tapes, CD’s and broadcasts of anointed Bible teaching including scripture based music and songs but only those inspired by the Spirit.
- Reading books, tracts and papers that contain the word of God which are alive because their authors were led by the Holy Spirit – possibly including a morning devotional and an evening inspirational.

- The sole object of all of these is to constantly and ever increasingly expose my heart (unveiled face) to the Bible (the mirror) so that the Spirit can declare God's living words to me and so glorify Jesus in me and so change me into his likeness. To truly love Jesus is to have an ever deepening love affair with the word of God as brought by the Spirit – for they are one and the same.

Psalm 1:1 **Blessed (and happy) is the person who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

2 **But his delight is in the law (the word) of the LORD, And in His law (His word) he meditates day and night.**

Ps 119:165 **Great peace have those who love Your law (love your word), **And nothing causes them to stumble.****

Ps 103:5 (God) **who satisfies your mouth (spiritual mouth) with good things (His living words), So that your youth (inner man or spirit or heart) is renewed like the eagle's.**

Jer 15:16 **Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts.**

This is the way the New Covenant works. This is the way, the only way, by which God changes the nature of a person, step by step, verse by verse and makes them more like Christ – and so equips them, by the Holy Spirit, to minister more of Christ to other people so that they too can be changed also into His likeness.

Do I want to be changed, grow, be set free and become a true disciple? Do I want to bear fruit, the fruit of God's words anointed by the Spirit coming forth out of my mouth, words that others can taste and then eat with their hearts so that they too may increasingly be partakers of Christ, to the glory of my Father? Do I want to?

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