

# Transforming Grace

With Bishop Ronald K. Powell

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Romans 12: 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

## conform

To give the same shape, outline, or contour to: bring into harmony or accord

## transform

a: to change in composition or structure

b: to change the outward form or appearance of

c: to change in character or condition: convert

The Greek word for “transformation” is at the root of our word “metamorphosis” – the word we might use to describe a caterpillar’s progression into a butterfly. Think of the key points we just considered in scripture that describe the spiritual transformation in the life of the Christian.

1. (Our transformation(sanctification) begins at the time of our conversion)
  - 1 Corinthians 1:30, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Ezekiel 36:26-27
2. (It is progressive; will not be like Christ totally until we are with Him in glory)
  - 1 John 3:2, 1 Cor 13:12, Psalm 84:7, 2 Cor 3:18
3. (It is God’s Holy Spirit Who changes us to be like Christ)
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Philippians 1:6, 2:13, Hebrews 13:21, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2
4. (We are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit and at the same time we are responsible to cooperate with the Holy Spirit)

- Philippians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 3:10; 15:10, Colossians 1:29, Psalm 127:1, 1 Cor 3:7

**Philippians 4:13 King James Version** <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

**1 Corinthians 3:10 King James Version** <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

**1 Corinthians 15:10 King James Version**

<sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

**Colossians 1:29 King James Version**

<sup>29</sup> Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

**Psalm 127:1 King James Version**

**127** Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

**1 Corinthians 3:7 King James Version**

<sup>7</sup> So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

**QUESTION: WHAT IS A KEY POINT OF GOD'S TRANSFORMING GRACE WHICH YOU FOUND IN SCRIPTURE?**

The Greek word for "transformation" is at the root of our word "metamorphosis" – the word we might use to describe a caterpillar's progression into a butterfly. Think of the four key points we just considered in scripture that describe the spiritual transformation in the life of the Christian.

**GOAL OF TRANSFORMATION IS TO BE CONFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST**

Jesus is our pattern. Let's consider some descriptions of Christ's character:

1. Hebrews 1:9-" He loved righteousness and hated wickedness."

Christ didn't just uphold the idea of being righteous because it is a good thing. He **LOVED** righteousness. In Jesus' own words He says in Matt "Blessed are those who

hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.” It means if we love God’s righteousness like Christ loved righteousness, we will sacrifice to lay hold of it. At the same time, He hated wickedness. Prov 8:13 says to “fear the Lord is to hate evil.” Jesus hated sin as sin because it is rebellion against God.

So, let’s ask ourselves: Do we truly love righteousness? And do we truly hate sin when it we see it in our own lives because of the awful nature of it? To the extent we do, we are being transformed into his likeness.

2. John 6:38-” For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me.”

- Jesus entire goal in His earthly life was to do the will of His Father, even though that culminated in Jesus laying down His life for His sheep.
- Let’s ask ourselves: Do we desire to do our own will, or do we desire to do God’s will, however sacrificial it may seem? If we are going to become more and more like Jesus, we must grow toward that same goal of seeking God’s will.

3. John 8:29-” For I always do what pleases Him (the Father).” Everything Jesus did was done with the aim of pleasing the Father. And of course, He realized that aim.

- Let’s ask ourselves: How often do we think, speak and act with the aim of pleasing the Father? If we are to become more and more like Jesus, our aim will be to please the Father more and more, and to live our lives centered around us...less and less.

Now I think at this point, I need to remind us that because our transformation in conforming to the likeness of Christ is a lifetime process, I want to encourage you that it is normal to feel the tension and conflict between our sinful nature/flesh and the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks of it clearly in Romans 7 and Galatians 5.

What honest Christian would not admit to the frequent gap between her spiritual desires and actual performance? But our Lord even uses this for our good. For as we grow in holiness, the more the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the more subtle, “acceptable” sins of which we may not be aware. I have come to realize in my own life that the more I grow in maturity in Christ, the more I realize what a wretched sinner I am apart from His redeeming love and grace!

SO: the goal of transformation is to become like Christ – but how does His grace enable this to happen? A key passage:

## 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 NLT

7The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away. 8Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? 9If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! 10In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. 11So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever!

12Since this new way gives us such confidence; we can be very bold. 13We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. 14But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. 15Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

16But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Paul is reminding the Corinthians that they are New Covenant people of God. Paul then gives a comparison of the Old Covenant and New Covenant. The Old covenant was between God and the Israelites and mediated by Moses. The New Covenant is between God and the Corinthians (AND US) and mediated by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The OC was made at Mount Sinai where God gave Moses the ten commandments. It was truly glorious. It made Moses himself shine with God's glory. But it eventually faded. Although the law reveals the glory of God in His righteousness, it was ineffective at truly transforming them. It showed them how to live, but didn't give them the power to obey and be changed.

Paul goes on to exclaim that the NC through our Lord Jesus Christ is even more glorious! Because the resurrected Jesus is the very glory of God and He lives forever and it's His Spirit that's now transforming people into the likeness of Jesus Himself!

**Key Verse 18:**

"So, all of us who have had that veil removed "→God's gospel grace reveals His salvation through Jesus.

**“Can see and reflect the glory of the Lord” → As it is displayed in the gospel: where we behold His beauty through Jesus Christ. The glory of God is His essential being – and that’s what we behold in Jesus.**

**“And the Lord- who is the Spirit- makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” → The Holy Spirit does the transforming/sanctifying. But it is a work that involves us. We have a responsibility to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us a specific means which Paul mentions in this passage: to behold/reflect the glory of Christ, especially as it is revealed in the gospel. In other words, FIRST we need to fix our eyes on Jesus, meditate on Him, and feast our hearts on Him (do we take time to do this? Ever? Occasionally? Or as a way of life?). THEN we’ll reflect Him more and more, because what FILLS our hearts is what will SPILL OUT of our hearts.**

**QUESTION: WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO PRACTICALLY BEHOLD AND REFLECT THE GLORY OF CHRIST AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL?**

**(preach the gospel to yourself every day, reveal His attributes and character in the course of our daily lives i.e.: share the hope of Jesus, exercise patience and compassion in a difficult conversation, offer an encouraging word, the list goes on and on.)**

**CONCLUSION**

- **First, we looked at the key points of God’s transforming grace from Scripture.**
- **Second, we reflected on the character of our Lord Jesus as the pattern to which God is working by His grace to restore us.**
- **Last, we considered our key verse in 2 Corinthians 3:18. It teaches us that it’s as we feast ourselves on Christ that the Holy Spirit causes us to reflect His beauty.**