

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TRUTH



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

The self-improvement market size is expected to reach \$14 billion by 2025, with millennials and women being the most dedicated to personal change. Millennials are willing to spend \$300 per month on personal development and women make up 75% of self-development book readers. Self-help book sales have doubled since 2013 and are still growing at 11% year-on-year.

People want to change? Do Christians? I would hope that we can outdo the world in our desire to change and our hope of change. And yet, we are often disappointed by our lack of desire for change and our lack of success in changing, leading us to ask **How can I increase my desire for and rate of change?**

BACKGROUND

Paul was being attacked and undermined by Judaizing false teachers in the church of Corinth. In verses 1-4, Paul argued that his letter of recommendation (the Corinthians' lives) was far superior to his opponents' recommendations (from the Jerusalem religious elite).

In verses 5-11, he proved that his New Covenant ministry is far more glorious than the Judaizers' Old Covenant ministry.

In verses 12-18 he demonstrates how his New Covenant ministry is far more transformative than the Judaizers old Covenant ministry.

Paul draws a contrast between the minimal kind of change Moses could offer with the maximal kind of change Jesus offers. Contrast language is found in verses 13, 14, 16.



1. LESS CHRIST MEANS LESS CHANGE (12-15)

Less Confidence

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses (12-13a)

The Old Covenant was characterized by fear, hesitancy, caution, and reserve. It's the timid toddler retreating to the merry-go-round instead of riding the rollercoaster.

Less Sight

...not like Moses who would put a veil over his face that the Israelites might not gaze... (13). *For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted...* (14). *Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts* (15)

God revealed enough to the Israelites to enable saving faith in the coming Messiah. They could see enough of Jesus to be saved. However, by wearing a veil to cover his shining face after seeing God's glory, Moses was also communicating that while they saw enough truth to save them, they could not see enough to satisfy them. They could see the shadowy outline of Christ's glorious salvation but not its full glory. Paul is astonished at anyone who would choose such limited sight when unlimited sight was now on offer. Why choose veiled over unveiled, obscurity over clarity, vague over specific, indirect over direct?

Less Time

That the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end [nullified] (13).

However glorious Moses' face was after seeing God's glory, it faded. Initially impressive and inspiring, it gradually dulled, disappeared, and died. Just as Old Covenant religion, however initially impressive, had an expiry date, so Old Covenant change gradually blanched and evaporated

Less Results

But their minds were hardened (14).

The heart-veil resulted in mind-stone. Not only did the good change pale but bad change deepened when the Israelites did not see Christ and even refused to see him for who he was when physically among them. However outwardly moral, their minds were hardened like epoxy and numbed like local anesthetic. Spiritual hardening can result from rebellion, legalism, or self-sufficiency.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

If less Christ means less change, no Christ means no change. No spiritual confidence, no spiritual sight, no spiritual durability, no spiritual change. We can spend multiple dollars, endless time, and all our effort on change but without Christ any change is ultimately for the worse.

CHRIST-LESS CHANGE
MEANS LESS CHANGE



What difference does more Christ make?



2. MORE CHRIST MEANS MORE CHANGE (16-18)

More Confidence

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold (12).

Christ gives boldness to approach God (Heb. 4:16), boldness to ask God for change, boldness to live a changed life, boldness to offer Christ-centered change to others. We have tremendous confidence in Christ as our change-maker. We've taken off the training wheels and we're riding an electric bike up hills.

More Clarity

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed (16). *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (17). *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord* (18).

When Moses turned to the Lord, he removed his veil, but when he turned away from the Lord he put his veil on. He was teaching that turning to God removes the veil, but turning away from the Lord puts a veil on our hearts. Paul's echoing Moses' message: Turning to the Lord Jesus jettisons the veil and jet-fuels change. More sight of Christ means more Spirit, more truth, more freedom, and more glory. A clear Christ means clear truth which means clear change. 'Beholding' means seeing as in a mirror. The mirror changes more than the veil but there's still something between us and Jesus. Not until we enjoy the beatific vision, the direct sight of Christ, will we be like him (1 John 3:2).

More Lasting

...are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (18)

Transformation through truth does not dull but brightens, doesn't fade in glory but increases in glory, doesn't regress but progresses, is not temporary but permanent. Christ-sight produces Christ-like. I cannot change into Brad Pitt by looking at Brad Pitt, but I can change into Christ-likeness by looking at Christ. From seeing glory we become glory. It's caused by seeing glory and results in glory being seen.

More Extensive

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (18)

The Old Covenant majored more on outside change than inside change. Less or little sight of Christ also meant change was largely outward and often accompanied by inner hardening. But this change is wrought by the Spirit of the Lord on our spirits. It's therefore not just outside but inside.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

John Piper said: "**This text is one of the most important in the Bible in shaping how I understand both personal sanctification and personal evangelism.**" The only way to increase our desire for change and our rate of change is to increase the sight of Christ's glory in our lives. That will not only change us faster but evangelize better too as others see the glory of Christ in us and through us. Let's outdo the world in our desire for change and rate of change so that they want to change like this too.

MORE PERSONAL CHANGE MEANS
MORE PERSONAL EVANGELISM



Hear God's Story > Change our story > Tell the Story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



PRAYER: Change-maker, make me Christ-like through Christ-sight.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What ways do people try to change?
2. How/what have you tried to change in the past and failed?
3. Why should we expect to change as Christians?
4. How has God changed you more through seeing more of Jesus?
5. What are you asking God to change in your life? What role does Christ have in that?
6. How will you help others to change with this message?

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