

Changed from Glory into Glory

2 Corinthians 3:18

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Our text in this hour is a single sentence from 2 Corinthians 3:18: "**We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.**" John MacArthur says that is his favorite verse in all of Scripture. Years ago, he wrote a little booklet for a series some publisher was doing called "My Favorite Verse," and I edited it for him. That sparked a keen interest in me with regard to this verse, and I have had a special love for it ever since. You hear me quote it or refer to it all the time. Let's take an in-depth look at that text this morning.

Now the context (as always) is crucial. In the early part of 2 Corinthians 3, Paul has been contrasting the New Covenant with the Old Covenant under Moses, showing why the New Covenant is better. This was one of Paul's constant themes. It is also one of the major themes of the book of Hebrews. (That, by the way, is why I have some sympathy with those who believe the apostle Paul wrote Hebrews. Hebrews is all about the superiority of Christ and the superiority of the New Covenant.)

And that is exactly what *Paul* is talking about here. He first comes to this subject in verse 6. There he is answering a question he raised back in chapter 2, verse 16: "**Who is sufficient for these things?**" And he gives an explicit answer to that question in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 3: *We, the apostles of Christ, are sufficient for these things. "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant."*

Now one of the distinctives of the apostle Paul's writing style is the way he often broke off his main subject and followed a different theme that was suggested by a word or a phrase. So you have to read Paul's writings with very careful attention to the context. Here he goes from the truth that it was God who made the disciples adequate as ministers of the New Covenant, immediately into a short discussion about the superiority of the New Covenant.

And he contrasts the two covenants by these words: "[we are] ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

"The letter" is Paul's expression for the Mosaic law considered by itself, as a set of written commandments, without any inherent efficacy or power to enable us to obey. The law alone, apart from the Holy Spirit's application, is a dead letter, he says. And since it is dead, it cannot itself be a source of life. "The letter" can condemn, but it is incapable

of bringing salvation or giving life. Only the Spirit of God can give life.

So "**the Spirit**" refers to the Holy Spirit—the true giver of life and the administrator of the New Covenant. Paul repeatedly makes this contrast between "letter" and "Spirit" throughout his epistles. Romans 7:6, for example: "**Now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the [letter].**" In Romans 2:29, he says that *true* circumcision "**is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.**" Here in 2 Corinthians 3:6 he says, "**the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**"

Now, Paul is *not* teaching that the letter of the law or the Old Covenant are bad—only that they are incapable of giving life. The law is holy, just, and good, as Paul himself says in Romans 7, but it cannot give life to sinners. Quite the contrary; it condemns those who sin. The law pronounces doom. That's how it kills. It's not that the law is bad, but that we are bad, and therefore the law is our judge and executioner, not a source of life for us. And, as Paul teaches throughout his epistles, it is therefore the worst kind of heresy and the most dangerous kind of false hope to think you can earn life for yourself by your own legal obedience. You can't.

But the Spirit does what the law cannot do, by granting life to sinners. Romans 8:2-4:

the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

**3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,
4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

And so as ministers of the New Covenant, we have a *better* message than the Old Covenant. It's a message of life and salvation. The law was a message of death and condemnation.

Now please, understand; Paul is not teaching that people living under the Old Covenant could not be saved. Much less is he teaching that people under the Old Covenant were saved in a different way than people living under the New Covenant. Abraham, and Moses, and David were saved by grace through faith, just like Christians are today. And Paul says so explicitly in Romans 4.

But what he is saying *here* is simply this: The New Covenant makes clear what the Old Covenant kept veiled. The New Covenant explains what was left mysterious under the Old Covenant. That is why it is a better covenant. It makes the way of salvation absolutely clear, because it brings us face to face with Christ and reveals Him to us clearly.

The Old Covenant law brought people face to face with their sin and kept a veil between them and the glory of God. In the New Covenant, the veil is removed.

And that is the theme of this passage. Look at it, beginning in verse 7. Paul is describing an event in the life of Moses that is familiar to you from our study of the Ten Commandments a couple of years ago. Remember that when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the law, he wanted to see the glory of God. Exodus 33 describes what happened. In verse 18, Moses says to God, **"Please show me your glory."** And the Lord was *eager* to show Moses His goodness, and mercy, and grace. So He said, **"I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."**

But there was one problem. Exodus 33:20: **"'But,' [the Lord] said, 'you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.'" So as an act of mercy to Moses, God hid him in a cave, or a cleft in the rock, where Moses was shielded as the Lord passed by. Verse 21: "And the LORD said, 'Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.'"**

And you remember what happened? Exodus 34:30 says that when Moses came down from the mountain, "**behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.**" That one, brief glimpse of the Lord's back made a visible change in Moses' face. And because the people were afraid, Moses put a veil on his face to hide the reflection of divine glory until it faded away.

Now Paul uses that incident to teach us a great truth about sanctification here in 2 Corinthians 3. Look at verse 7:

if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end,

8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?

9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must *far exceed* it in glory

10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it.

11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

12 Since we have such a hope, we are very bold,

13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.

14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

Here's what he is saying: The Old Covenant was glorious, even though it kept so much behind a veil. The New Covenant is much more glorious, and nothing is veiled. The truth of the New Covenant is explicit, and open, and unclouded by any symbols or anything hidden. The glory of the New Covenant is on full display for all to see in the Person of Christ.

How much more glorious is the glory of the New Covenant? Look forward one chapter at 2 Corinthians 4:6: It says that "**God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**"

Moses saw God's back. We get to look at His face, in a spiritual sense, because we have the knowledge of Christ, and (Colossians 2:9) "**For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.**"

And here is what our verse is saying: We get to look at the glory of God in the person of Christ face to face and with completely unveiled faces. And as we do that, we are gradually conformed more and more into a close likeness of Him. It's not like Moses (who only got a brief glimpse one time, and so His reflected glory gradually faded). We get to

look and look, so that the glory gradually transforms us. That is precisely how sanctification works.

Now, let's unpack this. I used to teach English to junior high-school kids, and one of the things I taught them to do was diagram sentences. Kids these days don't learn to diagram sentences any more; I sometimes wonder if I was the last English teacher in America to teach diagramming. My work of editing forces me to pay close attention to sentence structure—grammar, and phrasing, and the relationships of subjects and verbs. And one of my secret vices is that I actually *like* to diagram sentences. Because by doing that, you lay bare what the sentence is saying.

And if you diagram this sentence, you'll see that the heart of the sentence—the main subject and verb—consists of these words: "**we all . . . are being transformed.**" And if you put some of the meat back on those bones, you get this expression as the main sense of this text: "**We all . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed . . . from one degree of glory to another.**" *We all, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from one degree of glory to another.*

And what I want to do this morning is take that abbreviated phrase, which is the very heart of our text, and break it into its constituent parts. There are four key elements in that phrase: the main subject; a participle that works like

an adverb; the main verb; and a prepositional phrase that modifies the verb. So (even if those grammatical terms mean nothing to you) you have these four phrases that we're going to look at closely: 1. "**We all**" (the subject); 2. "**beholding the glory of the Lord**" (that's the participial phrase modifying the verb); 3. "**are being transformed**" (that's the main verb of the sentence); and 4. "**from one degree of glory to another**" (that's a phrase that describes *how* we are changed). So let's look at those one at a time, starting with the subject of the sentence:

1. "WE ALL"

Now remember, he is making a contrast between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. When the Old Covenant was given, one man—Moses—acted as a mediator between God and the people. He alone got a partial glimpse of the Lord's glory, and he was the *only* one who reflected that glory. Moses alone, the lawgiver, beheld God, while all the people waited below to hear about it secondhand. All they got to see was a fading reflection of God's glory. And even that terrified them, so it was hidden under a veil.

Under the New Covenant, you have a new principle in force, and it is the priesthood of the believer. All earthly mediators are done away with. The priesthood is abolished. "**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**" (Hebrews 4:16). We get to see the glory firsthand. All of us. Every true believer.

Now let me say at the very beginning that this is all very practical and applicable to each and every Christian. I'm going to give you the practical application of all this right now, at the beginning, and not at the end, like I sometimes do. Here's what this is teaching: It is explaining the process by which all Christians become more and more like Christ. If you are looking for power to overcome some persistent sin in your life; if you are seeking the means to grow spiritually, to have your mind and heart and desires transformed, and to allow the glory of God to be reflected in you—here is how that happens: You don't need a priest to mediate for you or a counselor to hold your hand and walk you through the steps of sanctification. What you really need is to come face to face with the glory of Christ, to know Him as He is revealed in the Word of God. And the inevitable effect will be utterly and completely transforming. You will begin to reflect the light of Christ's own glory, and it will change you into the likeness of Christ.

That's the very thing Paul is talking about in Philippians 3:10: **"that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."** That unveiled knowledge of Christ, and the privilege of gazing at His glory firsthand is the birthright of every Christian. It's a better privilege than Moses had, seeing the backside of God after He passed by the cleft in the rock.

"We all, with open face [behold] . . . the glory of the Lord, [and] are changed into the same image."

When the Old Covenant was given, Moses was alone on the mountain. That is the way the people wanted it. They were rightfully afraid of seeing the brightness of a glory that would have killed them. So Moses spoke to God alone. And even he did not get to look directly into the face of God.

The hiding of Moses in the cleft of the rock, as well as the veil he wore afterward, both illustrate the clouded and incomplete revelation of the Old Covenant. So much was veiled in mystery. So much was left unexplained. The truth was revealed, but only in pictures and symbols, in typology and obscure prophecies, in rites and rituals and ceremonies administered through an earthly priesthood, and kept obscured in numerous ways that made the full truth hard to comprehend.

But the New Covenant is different in precisely this way: Christ "**brought life and immortality to light through the gospel**" (2 Timothy 1:10). The truth we have is so much more full and clear. Unless your mind is veiled by your own unbelief, the glory of Christ is there for you to behold. "**the light of the knowledge of the glory of God [is there for you to see] in the face of Jesus Christ**" (that's 2 Corinthians 4:6 again). The full light of God's glory is revealed for us in a new way in Christ. It's not the shining brightness that can kill you, but a manifestation of God that you can look at directly, because

it's in the face of Jesus Christ who is not only God, but also man—the perfect mediator between God and men.

Even the apostles didn't always understand this. Remember that on the night of Jesus' betrayal, in the upper room, Philip said to Jesus (John 14:8), "**Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.**" Jesus answered, "**Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?**" According to Hebrews 1:3, Jesus *is* "**is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.**" Colossians 1:15 says, "**He is the image of the invisible God.**" Colossians 2:9 says, "**in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.**" First John 5:20 says, "**Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.**"

So in Christ is revealed more glory than Moses ever saw, and *every Christian* has the inexpressible privilege of seeing that glory in all its fulness, without a veil, without the hand of God to shield us from the view—face to face and close up. We all get to see it, not just Moses; not just the apostles; but every individual believer.

And that brings us to the second phrase we want to look at:

2. "BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD"

"We all, with unveiled face, [behold] the glory of the Lord."

We all get to look at the glory. True, it is revealed in a different way than Moses saw it. It's not a physical manifestation of glory. It's not a literal radiance you can see with your natural eyes. It's not something that will make your skin glow. But it's something even better. It's the glory of truth in the fullness of the New Testament revelation. It's the *same* glory, although we see it differently from how Moses saw it.

We actually see it in a *better* way. The glory of God in the Old Testament was manifest as a literal shining radiance so bright that no one could look directly at and live. In Christ, that glory is manifest in human form. It is a better manifestation of glory, because it takes into account our human weaknesses, and reveals the fullness of God's glory to us in a way that is accommodated to the limitations of our humanness.

That is one of the great benefits of the incarnation. In the person of Christ, we can look at the glory of God without any kind of veil on our face.

In other words, the glory we behold is not that totally incomprehensible, ultimately incommunicable radiance of the full divine perfection manifest in a raw physical luminescence. It is the glory we behold in Christ. It's the same glory John describes at the very beginning of his

gospel (John 1:14): "**We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**"

Now, John himself had personally witnessed the physical manifestation of Christ's glory, first on the Mount of transfiguration and then in his vision of Christ in Revelation 1. But notice how he describes Christ's glory in that verse I just quoted. He says nothing about physical radiance or a visible glow. What he emphasizes is the glory that is "**full of grace and truth.**"

The glory *we* behold is not a bodily perception. We don't see it with our physical eyes, of course. It's not a physical manifestation at all. But it is the same the glory of His grace and truth that John was talking about. It is a glory that is visible only to those who have eyes of faith. However, it is *real* glory, and its effects are also real.

Paul says we behold that glory with "**with unveiled face**"—without any kind of veil or interference. And if you are reading any version other than the ESV, he says we see it "**as in a mirror**"—as the brightest possible reflection. (Why the ESV leaves that idea out, I don't know. It's clearly in the Greek. We see as if in a mirror.) The apostle Paul uses a similar expression in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "**Now we see in a mirror dimly.**" There his emphasis is on the dimness of the vision. Mirrors in the first century were usually made of polished metal. They didn't give a perfect reflection. And in 1 Corinthians 13, that's the point he is trying to make. But

here in our text the sense seems to be different. He's remarking about how *clearly* we see, compared to what Old Testament saints could see. He's emphasizing the fact that we see without a veil.

Here the imagery of the mirror seems to be on the intimacy of it. James 1:23 speaks of "**a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.**" That's the idea—like looking closely into a hand mirror. It is personal. It is individual. It is unimpeded. It is direct. You can bring a mirror right up to your face in order to look as closely as possible.

And that's what he's saying here in 2 Corinthians 3. He is contrasting the secondhand reflection of glory the Old Testament saints saw. *That* was indirect. It was covered up by a veil. It was mysterious and frightening.

By contrast, New Testament Christianity is open and explicit. It is more comfortable, and more personal, and more intelligible. Under the New Covenant, truth is not overlaid by types and ceremonies and symbols that are hard to understand. It is not mediated through priests and rituals. Its distinguishing mark is its frank openness to everyone. It is direct, and intelligible, and it comes to us in words and deeds that we can easily understand. It is manifest for each one of us to see and handle and study intently and personally, the way you look into a mirror.

The mirror in which we see that glory reflected is Scripture. James compares the Word of God to a mirror in

James 1:23-25. And he says the one who is a doer of the word and not a hearer only "**looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres.**" That's where we see the glory of Christ, because it is Scripture that reveals Christ to us. We see Him directly, and get to know Him intimately, individually. And thus we become partakers of His glory, because that clear vision of His glory transforms us.

Now listen carefully, because this is the whole point: Paul is describing the true character of the Christian life: it is about contemplating and reflecting Christ. This is what sanctification is all about. This is how sanctification occurs. This is the power that drives our progress as Christians. It is not through a mechanical, legal obedience, where we try by raw human effort and our own free-will ability to reform ourselves. But what conforms us to the image of Christ is seeing Him and receiving Him as He is revealed to us in Scripture.

And that brings us to the third key phrase of this text. Number 1. "We All"; number 2. "Beholding the Glory of the Lord"; and now, number 3:

3. "ARE BEING TRANSFORMED"

We all, by beholding the Lord, are utterly transformed. All of us, individually, as we behold the glory of the Lord by faith "**are being transformed into the same image**"—into the exact likeness of the Lord Himself.

Moses' experience left him ultimately unchanged, as far as the reflection of God's glory on his face was concerned. It was a *receding, fading* glory, Paul says. In verse 7 he says the reflection of God's glory on Moses' face "**was being brought to an end.**" It finally faded away completely and ultimately left no trace.

But the glory of the New Covenant is a better glory, because instead of receding, the reflection grows stronger and brighter. The luster that made Moses' face glow was external and only skin deep. The light we see in Christ is inward and completely transforming. It is permanent, and ever-increasing. It totally and completely changes us in the most thorough way.

Look at this expression "**we all . . . are being transformed**" Paul uses the Greek word *metamorphoo*. It's a complete metamorphosis—a change that occurs from the inside out. This is the same word used to describe what happened to the physical appearance of Jesus at His Transfiguration. Matthew 17:2: "**he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.**" This is totally different from what happened to Moses at Sinai. Moses' shining face was a dim and fading reflection of a glory that did not belong to Him. Christ's shining wasn't just a skin-deep reflection; it represented the unveiling of His true nature. The brightness came from within and totally

transfigured Him. It was a metamorphosis, not a cosmetic makeover.

In the same way, Paul says, *we* are completely transfigured by the vision of Christ's glory—changed from glory into glory—a real and lasting glory.

By the way, Paul employs this same Greek word (*metamorphoo*) in Romans 12:2: "**be transformed [transfigured from the inside out] by the renewal of your mind.**" And you renew your mind by filling it with an understanding of Christ's glory. Romans 12:2 uses two contrasting expressions: "**conformed to this world**" and "**transformed by the renewal of your mind.**" The word "**conformed**" is the Greek word *suschematizo*—which speaks of a cosmetic change brought about by external pressure, like being forced into a mold. "**Transformed**" describes a transfiguration that works from the inside out and brings a real and lasting change, not a superficial or cosmetic permutation.

Now, there are two principles at work here, and I want to show them to you. The first one is this: you reflect what you see. That's what happened to Moses. That is why his face glowed.

And it's true in a limited way even in the physical realm. I see a reminder of this truth every time I look closely into Darlene's eyes. Husbands, try this: look intently into your wife's eyes, just for a moment. (Try it; don't be afraid.) Now if you look right into the retina of your wife's eyes, you'll see

a tiny image of your own face reflected back. (Do you see it?) Let that be a reminder to you of why husbands ought to be pure and godly examples to their wives. Our wives reflect what they see. And that's true not just in the physical sense of that reflection in the retina; it's true spiritually as well. Your wife will begin to reflect your character as well. It is your duty as her spiritual head to be a godly leader, and as head of your household, you will give account to God for how faithfully you fulfill that duty. Your whole family will reflect what they see in you.

But there's a second, even more important principle at work here. Not only do you reflect what you see; you become like what you worship. You take on the characteristics of whatever you worship. This is a principle taught everywhere in Scripture, but nowhere more clearly than in Psalm 115:4-8. Listen to that psalm. It describes the folly of being an idol worshiper:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.

5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see.

6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell.

7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.

8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.

If you want to become spiritually deaf and dumb and blind and lifeless, there is no more efficient way to get in that situation than worshiping a stone idol. Or any kind of idol, for that matter. Worship money, and you will become materialistic. Worship entertainment, and you will become trivial and worldly. Worship power and prestige, and you will become cold and calloused. Worship yourself and you become hopelessly selfish.

But if you truly worship Christ, you will be transformed into His likeness. Study Him *intently*, and the process is accelerated. In fact, did you realize that the process of glorification will not be finally complete until you come face to face with Christ in his glory—and just one look at Him in heaven will finally change you into the perfect reflection of his character and glory? That's what the apostle John describes in 1 John 3:2 "**Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.**" That is the same thing David wrote about in Psalm 17:15: "**As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.**"

The vision of Christ's glory is what changes us from what we are into what we will be. It's not by might or by power. It's not through the sheer force of human willpower. It's not a work we can do for ourselves, by self-reformation. But as we see Christ's glory, it has a powerful transfiguring influence,

and it changes us so that we *become* a reflection of the image of Christ. We **"are being transformed into the same image,"** taking on the character and moral likeness of the One we worship. That's the *only* kind of sanctification Scripture knows anything about.

And this theme resonates through the entire New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:49, Paul writes, **"Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [that's Adam], we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven [that's Christ]."** Romans 8:29: Believers are chosen and **"predestined [by God] to be conformed to the image of his Son."** Ephesians 1:4: **"he chose us . . . before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless."** How are we brought to that state? By a process of sanctification that entails the pursuit of Christlikeness. Romans 13:14: **"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."** We are clothed with Christ—robed in His righteousness and adorned with His glory. In His high-priestly prayer (John 17:22) Jesus prayed, **"The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one."** The transformation will be utterly comprehensive. According to Philippians 3:21, Christ **"will transform [even] our lowly body to be like his glorious body."** First John 3:2 again: **"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet**

appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

Now there's a fourth key phrase that rounds this out. "**We all . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed.**" And here's the fourth key phrase:

4. "FROM ONE DEGREE OF GLORY TO ANOTHER"

The King James Version uses an expression that used to mystify me: "**From glory to glory.**" You could paraphrase it this way: "From one level of glory to greater and greater glory." Paul's emphasis here is on the ever-increasing permanence of the New Covenant glory. Moses' temporary radiance was a skin-deep reflection of glory that faded; ours is a glory that permeates and transfigures us forever—and it keeps lifting us to higher and higher levels of glory.

It is a glory that grows. It comes in transitions and degrees. It may sometimes seem slow and halting. In fact, a lifetime is not enough for the transforming work to be fully completed. But it progresses steadily—despite whatever spiritual setbacks or failures we may *feel*.

God is conforming us to the image of His Son. That is His eternal purpose for us. Again, according to Romans 8:29, that is the purpose and the ultimate end to which He has predestinated those who believe: "**For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of**

his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

And if you back up just one verse, this is what the familiar promise of Romans 8:28 is all about: **"we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son."** This is *why* we know all things work together for our good: because we know what His purpose is for us, and *all things* work together to that end. Even the trials and setbacks of life are employed by God for this purpose: they conform us to the image of Christ. When you sin, and are disgraced and shamed by your sin—the ultimate result is that God uses *even that* to purge from your life whatever is not Christlike. Hebrews 12:10: **"he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness."** Verses 12-13: **"Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet."** And verses 5-6: **"Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.."** Its all part of the process of conforming you to the image of Christ. Submit to it, by taking the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the glory of Christ, and you *will* be changed from glory into glory. Nothing can stop the progress. Romans 8:30 goes on to say

that all who are chosen by God and called and justified *will* be glorified. It is a certainty.

God made us to share His glory—to reflect His glory; to be adorned and graced with a glory that mirrors His own glory. That is exactly why he created Adam in His own image. But Adam sinned, and forfeited the glory for himself and all his offspring. Sin has marred the image of God in man, and ruined the glory that originally belonged to humanity.

I think most people feel that deficiency in their souls. We know instinctively that we are devoid of glory. We've lost the glory we were created with, we feel the shame of it, and we sense the utter futility of regaining that glory for ourselves. That's probably the main reason why people are so obsessed with self-esteem.

But self-esteem isn't the answer; Christ is. He is the perfect embodiment of divine glory in human form—God Himself in human flesh. Therefore He represents an even greater glory than the glory that was lost by Adam. He transforms us by that glory, so that the glory is revealed in us. As Paul says in Romans 8:18: "**I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.**"

Now, I want to close with this: I'm always conscious of the fact that there are probably people in our midst who do

not have a saving knowledge of Christ. If you're here and have never embraced Christ as your Lord and Savior, notice what the context of this passage says about you: Describing the unbelieving Israelites in verse 14, Paul says, **"Their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts."**

That same thing is true of *every* unbeliever. Their hearts are blind to the glory of Christ. They can't even comprehend the glory of Christ, much less be transformed by it. Look down at chapter 4, verses 3-4: **"Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."**

What's the solution? Chapter 3, verse 16: **"But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed."** You must come to Christ in faith, or you will never see His glory.

Now you might think, *Let me see the glory, and then I'll believe*. Scripture says when you believe, you'll see clearly. You might think seeing is believing; Scripture teaches that believing is seeing.

Again, we're not talking about a glory that is visible to the physical eye. The visible, shining brightness you can see even with the carnal eye is actually an inferior manifestation

of glory, for all the reasons we have been talking about: It's external, and therefore its effects are temporary.

But notice what Paul says down in chapter 4, verse 18, **"We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."**

That's why it is so important to see the glory of Christ with the eyes of faith. It's actually a more clear and more eternal kind of vision. Hebrews 11:1 **"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."** We endure by **"seeing him who is invisible."**

So if you have never trusted Christ, I urge you to turn to Him in faith. Christ Himself makes this promise in John 6:37: **"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."** If you are weary from the weight of sin and sensing your own utter spiritual poverty, call on the name of the Lord, in your heart right now. Romans 10:13 says, **"For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'" And that process will begin by which you will be ultimately transformed into the perfect likeness of His great glory.**