

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

¹²Therefore, since we have this kind of hope, we act with great boldness. ¹³We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the Israelites could not continue to look at the end of the radiance, as it was fading away. ¹⁴In spite of this, their minds were hardened. Yes, up to the present day, the same veil remains when the Old Testament is read. It has not been removed because it is taken away only in Christ. ¹⁵Instead, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸But all of us who reflect the Lord's glory with an unveiled face are being transformed into his own image, from one degree of glory to another. This too is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

^{4:1}Therefore, since we have this ministry as a result of the mercy shown us, we are not discouraged. ²On the contrary, we have renounced shameful, underhanded methods. We do not operate in a deceitful way, and we do not distort the word of God. Instead, by proclaiming the truth clearly, we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

Transformed

I.

Do you remember when you were little and some little Auntie caught sight of you for the first time in several years? "Look how you have grown!" was the exclamation. The transformation from a crawling baby to a toddler to a pre-school student, to someone in middle- or high-school can be quite dramatic. "Look how you have grown!" quickly transitions into "Time has passed so quickly!" or "You have become so talented!" or any one of a hundred other things.

Today we witnessed a transformation, too. It wasn't so dramatic that there will be shocked statements of disbelief, perhaps, but it was a transformation, nonetheless. Several children were transformed in Holy Baptism today. They were transformed into Children of God—adopted into his family. It wasn't as dramatic as Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit didn't descend on these children in the form of a dove. The Heavenly Father didn't speak from the heavens in a voice that all of us could hear. But the change was profound.

Epiphany is the season of the Church Year in which Jesus is shown to be God and the Savior of the World. The First Sunday after the Epiphany is the Baptism of the Lord Jesus. It is appropriate that on this Transfiguration Sunday—the day on which Jesus' glory as God and Savior was revealed to three of the disciples in such a special way—is a day on which our Savior-God so wondrously transformed these children.

II.

Have you noticed any changes—any transformations—in yourself lately? Perhaps the changes aren't quite so flattering.

Paul writes: "Moses...put a veil over his face, so that the Israelites could not continue to look at the end of the radiance, as it was fading away. ¹⁴In spite of this, their minds were hardened. Yes, up to the present day, the same veil remains when the Old Testament is read" (2 Corinthians 3:13-14, EHV). Originally, the veil Moses wore was to keep the people from seeing the glory fade from Moses' face. Paul uses the concept as a metaphor to speak

about the blindness of the Jewish people who failed to see or understand that the Old Testament was pointing ahead to Christ.

Perhaps sometimes it is as though a veil covers our own hearts, too. We hear what God has to say. It is not a foreign concept that he wants us to hear his Word gladly and regularly. But a veil covers our hearts. There is so much to do and so many other things get in the way that worship of the Lord who has transformed us takes a backseat.

Paul says that Christians “Have renounced shameful, underhanded methods” (2 Corinthians 4:2, EHV). But all too often we have not. We live lifestyles the Bible describes as shameful, but since the world has adopted those lifestyles as acceptable—and even commendable—we have no shame, but even take on an attitude of insolent pride about the enlightened state of our understanding.

Paul says that Christians “Do not operate in a deceitful way, and we do not distort the word of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2, EHV). But we often *do* operate deceitfully, don’t we? Isn’t this actually the norm for us as sinful human beings? If we aren’t busy glorying in the evils of the world, we try to deceive fellow Christians into thinking that our faith is so pure and our lives are so holy, when in reality there is so much still to learn—so much growing remains to be done. And how about that phrase “distort the word of God”? It is easy to take the words of the Bible and twist them around until it sounds as though your own debauchery is not sin at all, but instead is something God gives his stamp of approval.

III.

The changes you find evident in yourself, if you are honest, aren’t flattering at all. What to do? How can you transform? How can you change?

God in his grace knew you couldn’t. Notice the passive nature of the gospel in the words Paul speaks to us today. “Yes, up to the present day, the same veil remains when the Old Testament is read. It has not been removed because it is taken away only in Christ. ¹⁵Instead, to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (2 Corinthians 3:14-16, EHV). Something shrouds the heart. That something is unbelief. *You* can’t wipe unbelief away on your own. That shroud—that veil—must be taken away for you. It is the Holy Spirit working in you through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ that removes the veil and lets you see all that he has done for your salvation.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17, EHV). The natural self thinks that freedom is to be found in doing whatever you want—living in whatever way pleases you—doing things that *seem* to be fun. *Real* freedom isn’t found in sin. *Real* freedom is found in Christ. In Jesus you find that you are no longer held captive by that old way of life that was filled with sin.

“But all of us who reflect the Lord’s glory with an unveiled face are being transformed into his own image, from one degree of glory to another. This too is from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18, EHV). You have seen the light of the gospel. Having been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, you cannot help but reflect the glory of your salvation in Christ Jesus to the world. The truth of what Christ has done for you shines for others to see.

IV.

That’s quite a transformation. While the transformation to Child of God is immediate when the Holy Spirit works faith in your heart, your old sinful human nature hasn’t been removed.

Have you ever said: “I could never do that task,” but then after some practice and a little effort you were able to do it? Maybe after a while it even became easy.

I heard some of the Philadelphia Eagles players speaking about the fact that nobody really gave them a chance all throughout the 2017 season. Challenge after challenge came their way, but each one was overcome and they finished the season with the Superbowl trophy. Maybe you have faced a challenge that seemed impossible to overcome, but with perseverance you overcame the odds and achieved your own personal victory.

Christians take hope and courage from the account of Jesus’ transfiguration which we heard on this Sunday. Jesus revealed himself in all his glory up on that mountaintop. God is able to transform our lives through the transforming power of Jesus.

Perhaps when you witnessed the baptisms earlier in the service this morning your mind slipped back to your own baptism. Most of us were babies or young children when we were baptized, but parents and sponsors and others told us about that event. We are reminded that *God* made that transformation in us. At every baptism we think about the internal changes that happen in us through the work of the Holy Spirit and think: “Be patient with me; God isn’t finished with me yet.”

Throughout your life of faith the transformation will continue. Your attitudes change as you become more and more in tune with what God’s good and perfect will is, and what he wants for you. Your actions change so that day by day you better reflect what God has done for you in the way you live your life. The way you talk about your faith changes as your faith grows stronger and stronger when you immerse yourself in the Word of God and in a life of prayer.

Each day the transformation will continue until the Lord Jesus decides the time is right to take you to your eternal home in heaven with him. Until that day, be sure to express the joy of your salvation to those who still wallow in the sadness and uncertainty of sin. Invite them to hear the Word regularly, that the Holy Spirit may transform them yet again. Amen.