

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE: BEHOLD & BECOME

2 Corinthians 3:18 • Pastor Luke Herche

Turn with me, if you would, in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. So I have down as our sermon text 2 Corinthians 3:18, but I'm actually going to read the entire chapter, and we're going to walk through the entire chapter and land on 2 Corinthians 3:18, but we're really going to move through the whole chapter together. I should say what we're doing over the next four Sundays, so you know, we've been going through the Book of Genesis. We're taking a break through of our study in the book of Genesis. For the next 4 weeks, we're going to talk about how God changes us, and that's in conjunction with the Sunday school class to start next week. So we talk about biblical counseling and again, the way God works to change us through His word by His people. So, these four Sundays go along with that Sunday school class. So, if you want to join us for the Sunday school class, that will start next week, and we'll have more information about time and place of that then. Before we read 2 Corinthians chapter 3, let's pray together.

Our Father, we need to hear your voice this morning. We need to have our eyes opened and our ears unstopped and our minds open to who you are, our hearts softened to you and to your grace. So we pray, Father, that you would pour out your Spirit on us, that we would see Jesus in the Scriptures, that we would see you in all of your glory, and that by the power and work of your Spirit, we would be transformed into His image. We pray that you would do that work by your word and by your Spirit and according to your mercy and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

2 Corinthians Chapter 3:

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now 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, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 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. 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. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And 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. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit

People want change. They even want to change themselves. Not everyone, of course, but the proliferation of self-help books that are out there shows that people are not satisfied with who they are. Maybe we feel guilty or lazy or ugly or busy. Maybe we feel like failures. Maybe we want more money or more friends or more free time. Whatever it is, we want change. Now, there are some pretty significant differences between the self-help industry of our day and the transformation that Christ brings, and you'll see some of those as we look at this passage this morning. But I think what that industry shows is that we know that things are not as they were meant to be. Some kind of change is necessary. We're going to look at 2 Corinthians Chapter 3 and we're going to see four things when it comes to change. We're going to look at what we try, why we fail, who can succeed, and how He works. What we try, why we fail, who can succeed, and how He works.

So first, what we try.

When something in our lives needs to change, the first thing we do is try to change it. And that makes sense, of course. God made us as agents of change in the world. He created us in His image with the ability to affect change in the world around us. God created man and woman, and commanded them to fill and form and rule His good world. So if something is wrong in my life and my heart and my mind and my thoughts and my feelings and my relationships, I try to change it and make it better. If it's difficult, I may give up, I may despair, or I may double down and try harder. If things still don't work, I may look for advice. I may peruse self-help books, listen to self-help podcasts, read self-help blogs, trying to find the advice that speaks to me and points me in the right direction. I want to know what can I do to change some behavior. Maybe it's eating too much or drinking too much or looking at porn. Maybe you are fearful and that fear stops you from living your life. Maybe you're sleeping with your boyfriend and you know what's wrong, but you keep doing it anyway. Maybe you're lazy; you know you could be doing more with your life, but day after day, and week after week, and year after year, you just spend away the hours doing nothing. Maybe you feel addicted to social media or you just keep checking your phone or your e-mail or your Twitter feed. Maybe you have homosexual desires, and you believe they're wrong, as the Bible teaches, but you just don't know what to do with them. Whatever it is you just keep asking "What can I do to stop? What can I do to change?" You're looking for the right formula; the right 12-step program. Now, I don't want to belittle the good advice that is out there. There is a lot of advice, a lot of it is bad, but some of it is good as well. But it all shares one big flaw. All of that advice is powerless to change me. All of that advice, on its own, has no ability to change my heart.

Now if any piece of advice, if any set of rules could change you, you would think it would be God's rules. If any new law could make you a new person/could turn you into a better person, it should be God's law. Not only, however, is God's law unable to change you, it actually kills you. Paul, in this section of 2 Corinthians is defending his ministry. It's not because Paul is insecure, not because he feels the need to be admired or loved by the Corinthians. No, his concern is for them. If they reject Paul's ministry, they will reject Paul's message. By rejecting Paul, they show that they're misunderstanding the Gospel, which is on display in Paul's life. So Paul begins this chapter by saying in verses one through three, that the real evidence of the validity of his ministry is the Corinthians themselves, whose conversion took place under his preaching by the power of the Spirit. He doesn't see himself as sufficient; it's not about him (quite the contrary), his sufficiency he says **is from God** (verse five), who made him **sufficient as a minister of the New Covenant** (verse six). **Not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For**, he says **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life**. That phrase "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" begins an explanation of the impotence and what's more, the death dealing nature of the Law. Now Paul has a pretty high view of God's law. He says in Romans 7 it is good. It is even spiritual and for Paul, keeping the law matters; obeying God's rules is important. He says in 1 Corinthians 7:19, **For**

neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God; it's important. So God's law is good and spiritual and important, but it's also impotent. The law tells us what to do, but it cannot enable you to do it. As a result, the law on its own not only doesn't bring life, doesn't lead to the change that you want, it actually brings death. Paul says **the letter kills**.

And he calls the Mosaic Covenant the **ministry of death**. Why so? Well, again, what does the law do? The law tells us right from wrong: "Do this, don't do that." And that sounds good, but what's the problem? The problem is we don't always do right, and we often do wrong, and so Romans 3:20 Paul says, **through the law comes knowledge of sin**. That is, the law tells us, right from wrong, and so it shows us where we fall short, which means the law condemns us. Hence Paul calls at verse 9 the **ministry of condemnation**.

Now again, the law is good. In fact, it shows us what goodness is. It reveals to us the character of God. It's a description of what love does. But by itself, it cannot bring about that love, so it can only kill and condemn. Now every self-help book, every 12-step program is essentially a new set of rules, another law. "Here is what you must do: step 1, step 2, step 3 and so on." But guess what? Those rules, those steps, that advice cannot bring about real and lasting change. Oh there can be superficial change, there can be surface change, there can be relational change at times, but the problem is no rule, no steps, no advice can of itself change our hearts. Did you notice that's the contrast that Paul began back in verse three. In verse three, he was talking about the Corinthians, he said, **And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts**. We need something more than tablets of stone. We need something more than a new law, a new rule, a new set of principles. We need something done to our hearts, the core of who we are. See, what we try is whatever we can accomplish. "I'll keep the rules. I'll follow the steps. I'll listen to every piece of advice that's out there." But these things cannot change us. The law is impotent, and so ultimately death-dealing because it is powerless to affect the heart, the core of who we are.

And yet, it's not the law's fault. Which brings us to our next point: Why we fail.

You know, we tend to think of ourselves as pretty good people. Regardless of our philosophy about people in general, we ourselves, we think, are not that bad. We have our moments, of course ("who doesn't?"), but in the end, we're pretty good. Now, if that were true, then the law would be enough. If we were all good at heart, then a little education will solve our problems. If we all really want to do the right thing, we just need to know what it is. All the world's problems would really be sincere misunderstandings. We're all trying to do the right things, our intentions are good, and so on. But Scripture's view is not quite so positive. We were made up,

that's true, created in the image of God, created with hearts soft to God's word, ready to receive and respond, but something has gone terribly wrong.

Which brings us to the condition of our hearts. Look again at verses 12 through 15. Paul says this, **Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, 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. 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. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.** Now we'll come back in a minute to pause "boldness" in verse 12, but first let's take a look at Moses. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai in the Book of Exodus, his face shined. He had been in the presence of God, and somehow, that physically altered the appearance of Moses' face like the brightness of a full moon reflecting the light of the sun, or like a face that's been tanned by the rays of the sun, or like the that blinding light that sometimes happens when the sun is reflected off some metal object, and you're not even sure where it's coming from and you're trying to avoid it. The glory of God had left its impression on Moses, and his face reflected the brilliance of God's glory. Verse 13 tells us that Moses put a veil over his face. It's a little unclear why, verse 13 says, **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.** There are questions about what the outcome is, what was being brought to an end, and so on. The word "outcome" here is the Greek word *palos*, which is often translated "end," the ESV has "outcome." It can mean the termination of something or the trajectory of something or the destination of something or its result or purpose. So the question is, what did Moses not want the people to see here and what did he not want them to gaze at? Again, there are a number of possibilities. Some think Moses didn't want people to see that the glory of his face was fading and coming to an end, and he didn't want them to notice that the glory wasn't permanent. Others think Moses was actually protecting the people because if they gazed at God's glory they would die. Like Isaiah entering into the presence of God, they were afraid after all, as you read the Book of Exodus, they're fearful of gazing on God's glory reflected on Moses' face. I'm actually not really sure why Moses covers his face, but whatever the case, two things are clear. One is the veil covers the glory of God, the glory of God reflected on Moses' face. Two is it does so because of Israel's hardness of heart. Just look at the logic of verses 12 through 14. Paul says, "We are bold, unlike Moses, because their hearts were hardened," Israel's hardness of heart. Paul says, "We are bold unlike Moses," but excusing Moses' behavior, he is saying, "their minds were hardened." That is, Moses had a reason to veil things. That reason was Israel's hardness of heart. Then Paul says even today the veil remains, the veil which literally veiled the glory of God on the face of Moses, has come to stand for something more in Paul's understanding of things verses 14 and 15. He says, **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. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. Do you see what Paul is saying? He's saying the Old Testament, the teaching of Moses, the Scripture, does Israel no good because their hearts are hard. There is a veil covering the eyes of their hearts, as it were.

So Jesus would say to his contemporaries in John Chapter 5, **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life** (John 5:39-40). They're blinded to Christ, their hearts are hard, the veil remains, they read the Scriptures, but it does them no good because they don't see Jesus. At one point, Jesus tells a story of a rich man who dies, and he is in torment and wants Abraham to send someone to his brothers to warn them of what is to come. This is in Luke Chapter 16: **Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he [the rich man] said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'** (Luke 16:29-31). What the story is getting at, what it implies is this: that the problem with the rich man's brothers is not that they don't have enough information. They have Moses and the prophets, they have all the information that they need. The problem is their hearts are hard. More information won't cure that. What people need is not simply more information, they don't simply need better education. They need the veil removed. They need transformed hearts. Now, don't misunderstand, Paul does have a message. 2 Corinthians Chapter 4, verse five he says, **For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.** There is a message that must be communicated, but if all we do is give people more information, we solve nothing. Turning on more lights in a room won't help a blind man see. We can try all kinds of tips and tricks, steps and strategies, principles and programs, but these will have no ultimate effect because our hearts need to be changed. The veil must be removed. Our minds must be softened. Again, we might produce some outward change, people change all the time, but the change we really need is a change we cannot produce. We need a change in our hearts.

So that's what we try and why we fail. Third, we come to who can succeed.

There is this pulse, this drum beat in the passage that just gets louder and louder as the chapter moves forward. That drum beat is the person of the Holy Spirit. He's mentioned almost offhand in verse 3, but it quickly becomes apparent that the Spirit is the distinct mark of Paul's new covenant ministry. Look at verses 5 and 6. Paul says, **Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** Paul says he is a minister, not of the outward word only, not of the law by itself,

but he is a minister of the Spirit, and the Spirit gives life. Paul contrasts that the real glory of Moses' ministry with the greater glory of the new covenant ministry. The ministry of death, carved on stones, comes with glory (verse 7). The Ministry of the Spirit, which according to verse three is on the tablet of human hearts, has greater glory (verse eight). The ministry of condemnation has glory (verse 9) but the ministry of righteousness has greater glory. The Spirit didn't come to condemn, unlike the law, but to justify. Later, Paul will say of Jesus in 2 Corinthians 5:21, **For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** In Christ, we are declared righteous. The Spirit's role is to bring us to Christ. So the ministry of the Spirit is a ministry of righteousness or of justification. The Moses ministry, Paul says, is being brought to an end (verse 11), but the new covenant ministry of the Spirit is permanent and so has much greater glory. And here's the point, here's why Paul makes all of these contrasts in verse 12, he says, **Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.** What is the hope that Paul is talking about? It's the hope of the ministry of the Spirit in human hearts bringing righteousness and abiding glory. His hope is that the Spirit is at work. Here's Paul's hope: that when Paul preaches his gospel, someone more than Paul is at work. He says of the Thessalonians and 1 Thessalonians, 1:5 **our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.** Again, he said in 1 Corinthians 2:4, **my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.** Even Jesus said in John 6:63, **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.** You see, if the Spirit is not at work, we have no hope and so no boldness. We have no freedom to speak, no confidence to proclaim the message if the Spirit is not at work. You may know as Charles Spurgeon ascended the stairs into his pulpit, it is said that on each step he reminded himself, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." Those words were not idle, they weren't superstitious, nor did they show some kind of a lack of self-confidence in Spurgeon, no. Rather, they show his own recognition that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, his words would do nothing. But his words did quite a bit because of his confidence not in himself, but in the work of the Spirit.

So Paul is confident. He is bold in his preaching because he believes that the Spirit is at work. And as he goes on to say, through Christ, the veil is taken away. That when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed, and the Lord, he says, is the Spirit, that is, the Christ who is at work by His Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, probably meaning Paul's freedom, Paul's freedom to speak, Paul's boldness to proclaim the message of Jesus because the Spirit is there at work. Here's the contrast that Paul is making: his fellow Israelites had hard hearts, so that when they heard the Old Testament, they didn't understand it. They didn't see Jesus in the Scriptures. John 5:39. **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.** They hear the Old Testament, they

don't understand it, they cannot understand it because a veil lies over their hearts. And they were sinful, of course, so they could not dwell in the presence of the glory of God without the old covenant becoming a ministry of death, and so they have this blindness on the one hand, and their hard hearts, their sinfulness on the other. So why is Paul then so bold? In contrast, he knows that Christ has died for our sins, risen from the dead, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and poured out the Spirit on the church. So that when Paul preaches the gospel, the Spirit is at work to unite us to Christ, to make us righteous in the presence of the Father, to remove the veil, to soften our hearts, to enlighten our minds, to give the knowledge of Jesus so that we are able to see the glory of Christ because the Spirit has removed the veil and we are able to see it without condemnation because the Spirit has united us to Christ, the Righteous One. So Paul is bold because the Spirit has come in fullness, bringing righteousness and glory. We can try to change things all we like, but we frequently fail. Who can change us? The person of the Holy Spirit because He alone can remove the veil. He alone can soften our hearts. You cannot change yourself. Right the preacher cannot change you. The counselor cannot change you. Your friend or your spouse or your pastor cannot change you. The only one who can change you is the Holy Spirit working through the Word, so that when Moses is read, we see Jesus.

So that's what we try, and why we fail, and who can succeed (the person of the Holy Spirit), which brings us to finally how He works.

What does this look like? What is the process of change? We see the process of change in verse 18. And we can really summarize that process in two words, "behold" and "become." Verse 18, **And 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. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.** Behold, and become. Now, I realize that seems simplistic, but I hope to show you that process in Scripture and break it down in its details and then spell it out in practice. First, that process in Scripture. Again, just look at verse 18, we behold and as we behold, we are transformed. Yet Paul is saying nothing new. We can go back to the Book of Exodus, what happened to Moses on the mountain. In Exodus 34:29 says that, **the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.** As Moses basked in the glory of God's presence, he was changed. This is that the spiritual equivalent of a suntan, the glory of God changes us. We see this also in the apostles. Early in Acts, Peter and John are brought before the Jewish council. Acts Chapter 4, verse 13, we read **Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.** See, the afterglow of Jesus was still there. The smell of Jesus was in their boldness. Being with Jesus had changed these men. We hear of the completion of this process in first John 3:2 and which says, **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 process

will one day be complete when we behold Jesus face to face. We behold, and then we become.

Now there's more to it than that, you might say, and of course, this whole sermon series and the Sunday school class that begins next week is all about this process, so we're going to go into details of it. But for now, let's just look at the details that are here in 2 Corinthians 3:18, so let's look at the process in detail. Change happens as we behold. How do we behold? Well, we behold with unveiled face, that is because the Spirit has softened our hearts and removed the veil, so we can only even begin to behold because the Spirit has done His work in our hearts. What do we behold? We behold the glory of the Lord. Now Paul will go on to expand on this a few verses later. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 4, he talks about **the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**, and then in verse six, he says, **For 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**. What is it that we must behold? We must behold, Christ, who Himself is the glory of God. If you would change, you must see Jesus in all of His glory.

Where do we do that? Where do we behold? Where do we see Jesus? Well, in the logic of this passage. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we see Jesus in the Scriptures. Verse 15 says, **whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts**. The veil stops them from seeing the glory of God. They don't see Jesus in the Scriptures. But in Christ, by the Spirit, the veil is removed, which means that with Paul, we can now see Jesus in the Scriptures. We can read the Scriptures and see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That's what Jesus spoke about after His resurrection. You may remember in Luke chapter 24, He says to His disciples, **everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures** [Luke 24:44-45]. And that's what they needed: Jesus to open their minds to understand the scripture so that they could see Him in the Scriptures. All of the Scripture points us to Jesus, this is who we need to see, Jesus in the Scriptures with unveiled face. And as we behold Christ there, we become like Him. We are being transformed, Paul says. And of course, what that means is the actor in this transformation is not us. We are passive. We are being transformed. God is the one doing the transformation. I'm not made new by my effort or by my ingenuity, or by my grit, or by my determination. And as we work through these things over the next several weeks, we'll see that doesn't mean there's nothing for us to do, but the transformation itself is all of God. He must transform me; I cannot change my own heart.

What's the goal of this transformation? The goal of this transformation is the image of Christ. When people think about the changes they want to take place in their lives, it's often so that they feel better about themselves or so their lives are more comfortable, or so that people like them more, so they can make more money, or

get a better job, or have better friends or whatever. When people go to counseling in our culture, they themselves set the agenda. But not so here. We are being transformed into the same image. What is that image? We've already seen it. It's the image of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God wants to make us like His Son. That's God's agenda for us, to make us like Jesus. Romans 8:29 says this was his agenda from before the foundation of the world. **For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.** This is our *telos*, this is our end, this is our goal, this is our destination: conformity to the image of Jesus who is the Image of God.

So the actor in this transformation is God. The goal is conformity to the image of Jesus. What about the timeline? We're told that this takes place from degree of glory to another. That is, it's a process, it's by degrees. It doesn't happen all at once. It won't happen on our timeline. It will probably not happen as quickly as you would like. Change takes time. God wants you to become like Him, but He has stuff to teach you along the way. It's a process. Paul says in Philippians 1:6, **And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.** That is, God will finish His work, but you can't rush it. Trust Him. Rest in Him. Look to Him. Wait on Him. So the actor is God, the goal is the image of Christ, the timeline is gradually until Christ's return. The agent is the Spirit. We've seen this already, but Paul puts it in one more time at the end of verse 18, **For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.** Again, change is the Spirit's work, not ours, not the ministers, not the counselors, but the Spirit's. We behold Christ in the Scriptures with unveiled face, and then we become as God transforms us into the image of Christ day by day until Christ returns by the power of His Spirit.

So that's the process in detail. What about the process in practice? What does this actually look like, day by day? Again, we'll talk about this more as we go into the Sunday school class and through these next couple sermons, but there are two things worth mentioning at this point. One is what this means for us is we must repent. Here's what I mean by this. Here's what I mean by repentance at this point, we must repent of whatever is blinding us to see Jesus. In Ezekiel, God talks about the idols of our hearts being before our eyes. Our idols blind us, which is to say that whatever we love more than Jesus, is what stops us from seeing Jesus. Repentance is like cataract surgery. I was with someone who had cataract surgery recently, and he said that afterwards, the whole world was a more colorful place. He hadn't realized what he was missing. Repentance is like that. It removes the veil and the blurry vision that sin brings, and allows us to see life more clearly. So as the Spirit moves in your heart to bring repentance, your vision is increasingly cleared, and you see Jesus in all His glory. Second, we must set aside time to see Jesus, to gaze at Jesus. We are so busy that we spend little time just thinking about Jesus, meditating on His love, His work, His beauty. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and was judged by our sister for it. "How impractical," right? "What a waste of time." But this is what lovers do, they

stare into one another's eyes, and if we would be like Jesus, we might stare into His eyes, behold, and become. We do this not with icons, not with images, but in the Scriptures. The Word preached, Paul says, is the placarding of Jesus before our eyes. And so we read the Bible, we listen to sermons, we study the Scriptures, we gaze, and we become more and more like Jesus.

Let me say just one final thing about the outcome of this process. It's not here in our text, but it's important to note that when people seek self-improvement again, the goal is normally for themselves. "I want to be a better person so I can feel better about myself," and so on. Perhaps there are more noble reasons as well, but as we've said, the goal here is conformity to the image of Jesus. There's another goal as well. In Psalm 67, verses one and two we read this, **May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.** God calls His face on us. Why? That He might be known among the nations. God wants His glory to be seen, not just by us but through us. This is what Jesus is getting at in Matthew Chapter 5 where He says these startling words, **You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven** [Matthew 5:14-16]. You see, as you behold Jesus, you become like Him, not for your sake, but so that your light might shine and others might see so that God would be glorified. We behold, and we become, so that others would behold and become, so that we all would give glory to our Father, who is in heaven.

Let's pray,

Our Father, help us to see Jesus in all of His glory. Help us to become like Him by the power of your Spirit. Help us to let your light shine in the world that others would come to see Him and know Him as well that you would be glorified in us and through us. In Jesus name we pray, amen.