

**Intro:** It is a battle we all fight. There is something in our life that we don't like...attitude, action, behavior, thought pattern And we KNOW it isn't right...not pleasing to God...and we fight it! Battle it all the time...yet we can't seem to win That is what Paul is writing about this morning in the passage of scripture we are looking at.

Series: (Finding God's Strength In Our Weakness)

Today: Strength To Change

2 Cor 3:7-18 Pg 818

In order to understand what Paul is saying in this passage you have to understand the illustration he is using: OT Ex 34:29-35

- *When you spend time with God...it shows!*
- *What Moses had was external—a REFLECTED Glory (Moon)*
- *God's glory, even when reflected and mediated by another...frightened people vs 30 "afraid to come near him"*
- *What Moses had was temporary...it faded away with time*

**WITH THAT AS BACKGROUND**

Finding Strength To Change: 2 Cor 3:7-18 Pg 818

**1. Change Is Possible Because Of The Powerful Message We Embrace (GLORY) 3:7-11**

Paul says to the Corinthians, and to you and I, "*Listen, It isn't hopeless...the ministry we share has the potential to change us!*"

Then, he begins to write about WHY that is true:

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| • OT ministry was temporary:        | NT ministry we are a part of is permanent |
| • OT Letter of Law condemns         | NT Blood of Christ to Forgive             |
| • OT COMMANDED us to do good        | NT EMPOWERS us to do good!                |
| • OT Looked at face of God: Justice | NT looks at face of Jesus: Sees Grace!    |
| • OT written on tablets of stone    | NT written on human hearts                |
| • OT saw through servant: Moses     | NT sees through Son, Jesus                |
| • OT Moses reflected God's glory    | NT Jesus (and US) RADIATE God's Glory     |
| • OT brought awareness of sin       | NT brings Relationship with God           |
| • Law can bring us TO Christ        | NT/Grace can make us LIKE Christ          |

Here is Paul's point: The message we embrace in Jesus is so much better than the OT message..the OT message has faded

Vs 11: "*And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*"

"The Glory of the Law in the Face of Moses has faded before the Glory of the Gospel in the Face of Jesus"  
Just like when the Sun comes us....the Moon fades...so the OT Law fades before the Glory of the Son of God

**2. Change Is Possible Because The Message We Share Brings Freedom! (VEIL) 3:12-7**

In the first section he talked about the fading glory of the OT, in this section he focuses on the veil Moses uses

His point is in vs 14: *Just as the veil that covered the face of Moses hid the glory, so a veil on the hearts of people hides message*

- OT Veil was: UNBELIEF: Refusing to trust in the work and word of God kept the people of Israel from His blessing  
The hearts of the people were blinded by their unbelief in God: That unbelief, lack of faith kept them from God  
~Saw it in the grumbling about no water: God brought water from rock  
~Saw it in Grumbling about no food: God brought them manna  
~Saw it in grumbling about no meat: God brought them quail  
~Saw it refusing to go into Promised Land: God brought them judgment

The entire Exodus story revolves around the people not trusting God...over and over refusing to believe, even in face of His incredible faithfulness. Keep in mind...the journey in desert started with the Plagues, and with Parting of Red Sea, continued with Pillar of fire at night and the cloud during the day! They SAW, over and over, God's faithfulness, would not believe

Heb 3:19 "*So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*"

- NT Veil: UNBELIEF: The specifics of the Veil may be a bit different, but the spiritual blindness remains  
To this day the veil remains...not gone away! Still blinding people keeping them from God  
~Some blinded by Self Serving, Self sufficiency: I don't need God  
~Some blinded by Prosperity: What I have  
~Some blinded by Ambition: What I want to get  
~Some blinded by Possessions: What is important to me  
~Some blinded by own righteousness: "Im no so bad...others are worse!"

That same unbelief KEEPS people today from having a relationship with God today.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Heb 11:6

We can find strength to change when we understand, freedom comes through faith! VS 17, sets us free to believe!

### 3. We Find Strength To Change When We Work WITH God In The Process That Brings Transformation. Vs 18

This is the heart of the passage, and what I want you to focus on with me

WHEN and IF the process of transformation isn't working...When we aren't changing...It's because we aren't in the right process. The process of change is effective...when we follow it the way God intended:

#### 1. We "turn" to Him! Vs 16 *"Whenever anyone turns to the Lord"*

**Turns:** Lit = compound word: *To go + around, or reverse, or to turn around! To convert, reverse or to twist around*

Whenever anyone turns back to God and says, "I can't do this alone, I need YOU!"

When we surrender to Him, and turn back to Him, and depend on Him

When we TURN TO HIM IN FAITH....and NOT OURSELVES (REPENTANCE)

Question: Have you ever turned to Him? Ever come to Him on your knees and said, I cannot do it alone: Need You

Has there been a time in your life where you turned to Jesus, His work on the cross and said, Help Me

Has there been a time where you threw yourself on His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness...

If not...then do it today: Quit Unbelieving...Start Believing: God wants to Change you!

#### 2. We "reflect" (behold) His Glory! Vs 18 *"we all with unveiled faces"* Faces that aren't blocked by ANYTHING!

**Reflect:** Lit = we Mirror His glory: (Contemplate) we behold and see: When we look at him...he shines through us!

The more time we spend with him...looking at him, the more we reflect him

If we don't spend that time...then we don't reflect Him!

Truth: If you aren't being changed...then it's because you aren't spending time with Him!

If all you do is a passing glance at his face in the morning when you read one verse...don't absorb much!

If all you have is an hour on Sunday...then you are only going to take in so much!

**KEY:** *The more you are WITH Him...the more you are LIKE Him!*

*The more we Behold Him, the more we Become Like Him!*

*The more time we spend WITH Him, the More We Reflect Him in our daily lives!*

1John 3:2 *"But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."*

Acts 4:13: *"They took note that these men had been with Jesus!"*

Our lack of change usually comes from the fact that we aren't with Him enough...so we don't become Like Him enough"

When you are WITH Him...You will be LIKE Him!

#### 3. We are "transformed" into His likeness

**Transformed:** Lit = *to change, to transfigure, to transform: Metamorphosis: (Caterpillar to Butterfly)*

~Starts with the heart: Ez 36:26 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you (Salvation) your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

~Transforms your mind: Rom 12:2 *"Be transformed by the renewing of your minds"*  
(Study) Eph 5:26 *"Washing of the water of the word" (of God)*

~Comes from the Lord! Vs 18: We don't do this work in ourselves. Jesus Does it, HS does it, as we are WITH Him!  
(Spend time) The more we are WITH Him, The more we become LIKE Him!

Acts 4:13: *"They took note that these men had been with Jesus!"*

**CONCL:** Many of us have it all wrong: We think God wants to make us better. God doesn't want to make you Better

Listen...You can't BE better enough to earn your way to Him. He doesn't want to make you Better: NEW!

2Cor 5:17: *If anyone is in Christ...he is a NEW creation...the old has passed and the new has come!*

We mistakenly think, I'm going to go to church, have God clean me up, polish me up, stand me up, make me up

You might as well GIVE UP! God is NOT in the business of making you better...He wants to make you NEW!

God isn't interested in a BETTER YOU...He wants a NEW YOU!!!

Its and ENTIRELY different thing. You need to give up on the idea that says, Pray God, make me better

Instead...come and get on your knees and pray...GOD MAKE ME NEW! New Heart, New Mind, New Spirit!

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|-------------------|---|
| 1. New direction: | Turn  |
| 2. New Focus:     | On Him  |
| 3. New Heart:     | Flesh, tender toward him                              |
| 4. New Mind:      | Reformed by word                                      |
| 5. New Spirit:    | His Effort, His spirit at work within you, not yours! |

Have you done that?

Turned? Do it today

Are you spending time?

In word, In fellowship, W/ people, In study, In worship: (SMALL GROUPS NEXT WEEK)

Are you focused on Him?

Where is your time spent? Your focus: With Him, You Will be LIKE Him!

## *Of wretches and worms*

**It is hard to sing some songs the way they were written.** They just go against our grain. Few folk today want to sing John Newton's *Amazing Grace* the way he wrote it: God "**saved a wretch like me.**" Or, how about Isaac Watts' hymn, *Alas! and did my savior bleed* "**for such a worm as I.**" It isn't nice to call people wretches or worms. It's not good for their self esteem.

**This is why we change the lyrics to make songs more palatable in our culture of self-esteem.** We substitute "*that saved and set me free*" or "*for such a one as I*" for the outdated wretch-and-worm references. We have removed the wretches and worms from our theology. While we might agree that the slaver, John Newton was a wretch, none of us will volunteer for wretchedness ourselves, and we know for sure we're better than worms. To be quite honest we don't believe we were *ever* wretches—even before getting saved. Basically we think of ourselves as fairly nice people who became Christians and added meaning to our lives. We were told "God has a wonderful plan for your life." So we signed up for this wonderful plan. Sure, we had sinned, but we had done no sins that God didn't "understand" or that are not done by church folk now. Our sins were mostly sins of ignorance or immaturity—nothing that deserves the label *wretch* or *worm*.

**We Christians believe we were basically fairly good when we found God.** And we're even better now. Salvation is "all about me." We like to say, "If I were the only person on earth, Christ would have come to die for just me." This beefs up our self-esteem. To be quite frank, we actually think God *needs* us, and is actually quite lucky to have us. That's how we see our devotions, for instance. We imagine a lonely God who is hungry for our company. When we don't show up for devotions some day, God mournfully walks away singing Larnelle Harris' song, "I miss my time with you." If we were totally honest we'd change the lyrics of another song to, "*He needs me every hour, evr'y hour He needs me.*"