

Becoming a Mirror Image of Christ  
2 Corinthians 3:18  
(a sermon in the making)

INTRO

Some say we are what we eat . . .

(Pizza, hamburger, sushi, tofu)

Some say we are what we read . . .

(comic books, cook books, novels, text books)

Others say we are what we think . . .

(“Attitude of Gratitude” “Stop your stinkin’ thinkin’)

However, our text suggests we are what we behold . . .

“But we all,

with unveiled face,

beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,

are being transformed into the same image

from glory to glory

just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NASB)

There are some verses in the Bible whose meanings are plain and simple. This is not one. Almost every phrase here needs refers to something else and needs to be explained. So, we’ll take a few minutes to do that.

MOVE #1

The first thing we need to know about our text is that the simple sentence in the verse is this:

“we all . . . are being transformed.”

## I. We all . . .

When Paul begins this thought he has certain people in mind. By “we all” he doesn’t mean everyone. It is possible for all to belong to Christ, for all to proclaim Him as Lord, but that’s not what he’s saying here.

The phrase “we all . . .” refers to anyone who is turned toward the Lord, whose focus is on Him. Paul says as much in verse 16: “but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

- Open to anyone, but the turning is necessary
- Able to see the Lord clearly after we’ve turned to Him

## II. . . . are being transformed . . .

The result of our turning and beholding is that we’re changed, we’re transformed, we’re not who we were but who we were meant to be.

Not the kind of change that we hear about so often: “After going through that, I’ll never be the same again.” While that’s true of special times, traumatic times, even ordinary times. Truth is, every moment we’re “never the same” as we were the moment before.

No, the transforming that Paul is describing means that there is something, or rather someone who is effecting the change in us. Not a result of our circumstances. Not a result of our efforts. Someone is transforming, is changing the very essence of who we are.

One writer put it this way:

*Only the grace of God is kind enough  
and the power of God strong enough  
to achieve this transformation*

*in our broken and darkened lives. (Barrett)*

Paul would agree and says as much at the end of verse 18: “This is the work of the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

So, “we all . . . are being transformed” but into what? The text says, “. . . into the same image.”

III. . . . into the same image

Now which image is that? The one we’re “beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord.”

- “The Lord” refers to Yahweh - LORD of Lords
- We see Yahweh’s glory in Jesus Christ
- He’s the one we’re beholding if turned toward the Lord

“And the Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son . . .”  
(John 1:14, The Message)

We are being transformed into the image of Christ. We’re becoming more and more like Jesus. We’re reflecting Him more and more the longer we are beholding Him. People see a bit more of Him in us today than they did yesterday, but not as much as they will tomorrow.

Reminds me of the old testimony: “I’m not what I want to be and I’m not what I’m going to be. But, thank God, I’m not what I used to be!”

So the simple sentence in the passage is: “We all . . . are being transformed.” We are being changed into Christ-likeness.

This is what’s possible. This is what can be. But the passage implies that there are alternatives, that not everyone is beholding Christ in this way.

## MOVE #2

### I. Who we’re beholding makes a difference

There are some who know about Christ, but choose to focus on something or someone else. They are what they are beholding, but it’s not the Lord.

There’s an old gospel song that says:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in His wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace

The text says that just the opposite is true if we turn our eyes elsewhere. If we behold something/someone other than Christ, then the things of earth will grow more and more brighter, more and more appealing, more and more beckoning, all the while dimming the light of His glory and grace.

And we do want to be careful here that we don’t make the Christ we’re beholding into a Jesus shaped in our own image.

I read somewhere that some students were asked to describe Jesus, to say what He is like. They wrote down their answers and turned them in. Then the students were asked to describe themselves. So they wrote down their responses and turned

those in. You can guess what happened, can't you? The Jesus the students described looked a lot like the students themselves.

Those who were kind saw Jesus as kind. Those who were bold saw Jesus as bold. Those who were rowdy thought Him to be likewise. Those who were peace-loving saw Him the same.

What we're beholding makes a difference. If we settle for "my Jesus" we may miss the fullness of "the Christ" in all his glory.

## II. Who we're beholding offers us hope

Fully beholding Christ makes it possible for us to fully realize what it means to be made in the image of God. A commentator put it this way: *Realizing the meaning or their original status as creatures in God's image* (Hughes).

He goes on to say that, "*The most wonderful changes are not only possible but natural . . .*" because it's what God had in mind for us all along. God has always intended for us to be "conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29)

Hope for those who are stuck. And it's also hope for those who think they've arrived.

## III. Who we're beholding is transforming us now and will be transforming us until He comes again.

Jesus does not intend for us to wait until the end of our days, or the end of time, to get things right. He intends for us to be fully engaged in the transformation process now - here and now.

(Furnish) *The beholding and the transformation into Christ's image are both going on in the present and in the future.*

*The transformation of which Paul writes here is . . . an event in which one's transformation begins already in this age and transforms all of one's relationships within history now - and in the age to come.*

And in his book *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus*, Peter Gomes reminds us that this transformation is not “*revival but renewal.*” It is not a return to what was, because it never was. But it is an embracing of what can be today and tomorrow and tomorrow.

### MOVE #3

So, the question we need to ask ourselves is this:

Are we fully turned toward the Lord, or are we just looking in his general direction?

If we're fully turned toward Him, it will result in us becoming a mirror image of him – Christ-likeness. If we're just looking in his general direction, it will result in us being a caricature of him, like the odd-shaped images we see in the funhouse mirrors at the county fair.

If we're fully beholding the Christ, the transformation that takes place will be the work of the Holy Spirit, and it will last for eternity.

If we're only glancing at Jesus occasionally, the transformation will be the work of self-determination, self-actualization. It will make a difference, but in the end won't get us where we want to be.

What will we be like when the transformation is complete? How will we know? We'll know when we're mirror images of Him because we're seeing Him face to face.

So, where are we in the transformation process? Are we where Christ wants us to be? Or have we settled for something less?

“But we all,  
    with unveiled face,  
        beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,  
are being transformed into the same image  
    from glory to glory  
        just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

Let it be so.