

RENOVATE

21 DAYS OF
PRAYER AND
REFLECTION
GUIDE

2 CORINTHIANS
2:14-3:18, 5:14-21

LETTER FROM PASTOR JEREMY

An evangelist from Ireland was leading a discussion among pastors when he said the following. “What if I told you that there is person so beautiful, so glorious, so amazing, that if you ever truly saw him you would weep in awe? What would you say?” The room answered, “It would be Jesus.” The evangelist responded, “That’s true, but I was talking about you.”

It was a shocking thought. Our human experience is so full of sin, shame, selfishness, pride; it’s hard to image that we fit that description. We all have dark secrets, secrets we barely share with our family let alone share with people we think are more “spiritual” than we are. How is that “beautiful, glorious, or amazing?” I mean it might make us weep at times, but not with joy and awe.

The evangelist then went on to discuss the reality of being made in the image of God. His likeness, carved out into our very being. He also discussed how God’s likeness would have been seen in Jesus. Our humanity glorified, looks like Jesus (minus Jesus’ obvious divinity).

Of course, the problem is we are nowhere near that glory; the full glory of the image of God. We do a lot to pursue it, but our will, sin, desires, histories, etc. keep us from obtaining it. That is why we are never really in “awe” of ourselves.

This is where Jesus comes in.

Paul says, ***“I became a minister... to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”***¹

Faith in Jesus creates a “hope” that we can be more like Him, more like the person we are supposed to be, the hope of glory! But this hope in Jesus is not just a random wish. It is part of the purposes of God. Paul also says it this way:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed

¹ Colossians 1:25-27: Note all verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.²

God destined those who love Him to conform to the image and glory of His son. True, the Scriptures says that we will not fully experience this glory until we see Jesus face to face in Heaven.³ But from the first moments we come to know Jesus we are on a journey of ever-increasing glory. Paul, again says,

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.⁴

Essentially, Paul is saying our lives are a constant renovation project by Jesus. He walks into the shambles of our fixer-upper lives and sees the hope of a brand-new creation. All we have to do is stare into the amazing glory of our Carpenter Christ and submit to the directions of the Holy Spirit, general contractor, and allow the transformation to take place.

During the next 21 days I am inviting you to enjoy a renovation process with God. As our physical building is being demolished, reshaped, resurfaced, and repurposed to allow us to welcome people into the glory of Jesus, let's allow the Holy Spirit to do the same in our actual lives. Make us more like Jesus, make us more loving, make us more forgiving, make us more aware of the people around us who need Him. Let's let Him transform us into a new degree of glory!

We will be studying selected passages from the first few chapters of 2 Corinthians. While we all need renovations, the Corinthian church was almost a total demolition job. They were resisting the Holy Spirit's work and their lives were a mess. At the same time, Paul was in a vulnerable place in his life as he was writing this letter and experiencing his own renovation process with Jesus. These passages serve as a wonderful model on how to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us.

2 Romans 1:29

3 1 John 3:2-3

4 2 Corinthians 3:18

I want to encourage all of you to engage this study, spend time praying and seeking God for your life as 2023 begins. I would also encourage you to attend some of our 21-days-of-prayer meetings during the week, as well as our Encounter prayer and worship nights on January 22-24th. Let's press in and allow the Holy Spirit to do something awesome in our lives.

Many blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy M. Gwaltney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeremy M. Gwaltney

Lead Pastor

Harvest Community Church

CHURCH AT CORINTH: MAJOR RENOVATION NEEDED

Before we jump into the reflections on our passages in 2 Corinthians, we might want to know what was going on between Paul, the author, and the church he was writing in the Greek city of Corinth. You can read about the founding of the church in Acts 18.

The church started well but soon became a mess. They were divided along theological loyalties, they bragged about who was the most spiritual or gifted, they ignored blatant sin issues among their congregants, and soon, they began to question if Paul was even preaching the true message of Jesus.

The relationship between the church and Paul became tense. While our New Testament lists First and Second Corinthians, most scholars believe there were four letters written to try to correct the messes that were going on in the church. Second Corinthians would be the last of those four letters. We also know that Paul sent two trusted disciples, Timothy and Titus, at two different times to try to work with the church. Paul even visited once himself to try to work with them. None of it was working.

By the time we arrive at our passages, Paul was at his wits end. He had pleaded, he had corrected, he had visited, and nothing seemed to be working. The Corinthians simply were not seeing the glory of who Jesus really was nor submitting to the Holy Spirit to become like Him. So, Paul tries again in this letter. Our passages are Paul's writings on exactly who Jesus is, how He wants to change us, and who He wants to renovate our lives to become.

It is important to know that the renovation process of the Holy Spirit was not a theory for Paul. It was part of the process he had experienced with Jesus. You see, Paul had experienced a lot of early success in his ministry; he was persecuted for sure, but still

very successful. When he came to Corinth for the first time to start the church, the obvious success began to hit some roadblocks.

Paul came to Corinth from Athens (Acts 17), where he received very limited interest in the message of Jesus. In Corinth, things began well, but he was eventually kicked out of the city. He then returned home to his sending church at Antioch, before setting off again for Ephesus.

In Ephesus, Paul again experienced great success, staying in Ephesus for two years building a church there. But then, again, things changed. There was a riot in the city that forced Paul to leave the city. He then wandered around for a while trying to find a place to land and continue his ministry. This is when false teachers came to Corinth. Their primary accusation was, if Paul's message is correct, why is he failing and suffering? For a culture that prized wisdom and success like Corinth did, this argument made a lot of sense. So, they began to question and resist Paul even more.

It is into this mess that Paul writes. Personally, trying to find a place to land and regroup, a church that is difficult for him, feeling weak and broken, he begins to write about the glory that God wants to work in our lives. His prayer was that both he and the church would submit to the renovating work of the Holy Spirit. Let's begin our study!

WEEK ONE

JANUARY 9-15, 2023

THE RENOVATION PROCESS PART 1

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-3:6

DAY 1: MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 2023

THE PROCESS

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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

These are our theme verses for the next 21 days. During the next three weeks we will examine the passages before and after these verses to come to a fuller meaning of what Paul is saying. To begin, let's make a few observations that reveal the key realities of the process of renovation the Holy Spirit wants to work in our lives. Notice the following:

The Holy Spirit is Who works in us. The Spirit is Lord; He is the one we submit to, the one who we ask to change us, the one we ask to be present in our lives. The Holy Spirit brings freedom. Freedom from the things that keep us from becoming more like Jesus, from experiencing His glory, from resisting His image. The renovation process begins by asking the Holy Spirit to fill and change our hearts and lives.

We look to Jesus. He is our savior. He is the one who loves and rescued us. He is also the one who we are called to follow. Following Him is not simply doing what He says, it is becoming like He is. We are called to behold and become like our Savior.

We remove the veil. We will learn more in this devotional about what this veil really is but, for now, just know that we do not need to hide anything from Jesus. We approach Him as we are — nothing trying to cover what we don't want Him to see. When we are honest with Him, He is free to change us.

Renovation is a process. Paul says that when we look at Jesus without hiding anything we are “transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.” The Holy Spirit works to make us more like Jesus; but it doesn’t all happen at once. It is a gracious process. One step at a time. Sometimes, it is leaps at a time. But it always takes place over time.

My prayer for you is that you would ask the Holy Spirit to rule your heart, you would look to Jesus in a new way these next three weeks, that you would be honest with Him, and that you experience a major transformation with Him.

Let’s pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is there anything in your life you need to confess to Jesus?
Something you are hiding? Something you are ashamed of?

What is one thing you would like Jesus to change in your life these next 21 days?

DAY 2: TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2023

TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

— 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

We will take the next three days to look at this paragraph. If you are following along in your Bibles, you will see that it is the chapter before our main passage. Paul is trying to explain to the Corinthian church why there has been brokenness and failure in his life. For the next few paragraphs, he is essentially going to both defend his calling in the Gospel, but also point the Corinthians towards the Holy Spirit's renovation process. It all begins with understanding that Jesus is the one who truly conquers us.

Paul thanks God who leads us in triumphal procession. A triumphal process was a well known ceremony in Roman culture. It took place when a general or emperor returned from war. A parade was declared with many legions of Roman soldiers marching through the streets to adoring crowds. The climatic ending of the parade was the victorious Roman general in full armor riding his chariot through the street while leading, or often dragging, the losing general disheveled or even naked through the streets behind him.

Paul is essentially saying, this is how we need to see Christ's rule over our life. We are the naked, disheveled, defeated enemy who is being paraded before the glory of Jesus.

You see, Jesus' renovation process is different from a normal home renovation. When you renovate your home, you get to tell the contractor what you want done. When Jesus renovates our lives, he says... "nope, I'm going to do this, you don't get a say." We submit totally to Him. The first process of changing us from one degree of glory to another, is to allow Jesus to take us through whatever process He deems to be the best. No matter how hard it is to understand.

Paul also says, we are to give thanks for this!

Let's pray!

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is your heart submitted to Jesus' triumphal procession or are you still trying to give instructions on how you want Him to change you?

What do you need to surrender to Jesus today?

What is one thing you are asking God to change in you in the next 21 days?

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023

THE AROMA OF CHRIST

*But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. **For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.** Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*

— 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

How do you smell? Often with Roman processions there was the burning of incense, spreading of perfumes, the release of fragrances to both celebrate the victory and cover the smell of the defeated foes. Paul is alluding to this imagery, but for a different purpose and also telling us one of the most important aspects of our life renovation process.

We are not being renovated for ourselves! We are the aroma of Christ. Jesus transforms us into His image and brings us closer to His glory so that others see (and smell) Him when they are around us. We are transformed to show others how great Jesus is. We enjoy the glory, but we are glorified for others.

Paul also mentions one other aspect of the fragrance. When we look and smell like the glory of Jesus, some are attracted to that aroma because it leads to life. Some are repelled by the aroma because it warns them of coming judgment. Therefore, the process of becoming more like Jesus includes the joy of seeing others come to know Him, but also the persecution of being like Him and different

from the world. Either way when He renovates our lives, we are showing more of Jesus to those around us.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is your life reflecting Jesus to those around you?

What is one thing you need the Holy Spirit to change in you to show Jesus' love to others?

List a few people you want to come to know Jesus in 2023. Begin praying for them.

DAY 4: THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2023

SINCERITY

*But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? **For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.***

— 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Paul is mentioning the false teachers who have come to Corinth to “peddle” the Word of God. The word “peddle” refers to wine dealers who water down the product and charge a higher price. Paul is saying that the teachers who are attacking Paul and accusing Him of being a failure are weakening the true message of God’s Word to make it easier for the church at Corinth to do what they want to do. Paul says he is preaching a “sincere” Gospel. As hard as his message and, at times, his mission is, it leads to the true renovation process of the Holy Spirit.

In renovation projects it is so easy to cut corners. We hear it all the time, “this cheaper option will do the same thing and cost less money.” I know from personal experience, more times than not, the cheaper option doesn’t work and costs me more money in the end.

The same is often true when the Holy Spirit begins to work on our lives. We ask God for an easier way. “Can’t I just hide that sin I did?... Do I have to forgive that person?... Do I have to pray for that person?... Do I have to endure this hard situation?” So often we

are tempted and even try an easier way only to find we have been peddled a cheap grace and false hope leading to more pain.

Dear Harvest, let's not cut corners on the renovation process of the Holy Spirit. Let's repent. Let's sacrifice to seek Him. Let's trust Him when we don't understand "why?" Let's go all in on the Gospel, even when it is hard. That is where true freedom from the Holy Spirit comes from, total submission to the crafting hands of our carpenter King Jesus.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is there an area in your life where you know the Holy Spirit wants you to submit but you are resisting? Is there an area where you are trying to ignore His voice? Why?

Write a prayer of surrender to the Holy Spirit below.

DAY 5: FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2023

RENOVATE RECOMMENDATION

*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. — 2 Corinthians 3:1-3*

Finding a contractor is easy. Choosing the right one; that is more difficult. I don't know the first thing about construction. So, when it comes to home renovation projects, no matter how big or small, I have to ask for recommendations. Because I have so many great friends in the construction business, I tend to trust their words more than some star-based review on google or a "find me" webpage. The word of a trusted expert means more.

Paul is essentially saying the same thing in this passage. The false teachers came with letters of recommendation to prove they were legitimate. The Corinthians were attacking Paul's credentials because, well, he didn't have the same letters. Paul simply says, "Why do you need a letter, you saw our work. Not only that, your life was our work!" Paul says that the evidence of the Corinthians' renovated life when Paul shared the message of Jesus is all the evidence they should need that his message was genuine.

How does this back and forth between Paul and the Corinthian church impact our own renovation in 2023? I love Paul's statement, "*You yourselves are our letter of recommendation... to be known and read by all.*" The power of a changed life is one of the most

powerful recommendations of Jesus there is! Jesus wants to change your life as a recommendation to others that He can change theirs.

I love preaching! I love making the teachings of the Bible real to people. But time and time again I have seen how a simple story of someone's life changed by Jesus impacts someone far from God. It is such a powerful testimony. Jesus wants to bring you to a new level of glory to show off His glory. Let's continue to ask Him to work mightily in us.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Where do you feel you need the Holy Spirit to minister to you today? Is there a sin you need to confess, an attitude you need to adjust, a situation you need wisdom for? What is it?

Who is someone you want to come to know Jesus in 2023? Pray for them. Ask the Holy Spirit what can you do to be a "recommendation" for them?

DAY 6: SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2023

SPIRIT AND HEART

*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.** — 2 Corinthians 3:1-3*

Yesterday we talked about how Jesus renovates our life so that we can be recommendations to others of His amazing life-changing power. Today Paul tells us the key combination of the renovation process: the Spirit of the living God and the human heart.

Heart transformation is the key. King Solomon wrote, *Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.*⁵ The tricky thing is, it is hard to keep our heart. Our hearts deceive us. Our hearts change their passions. Our hearts are actually often very evil.

It's even harder to change our heart. As much as we like to think it helps, laws don't change people hearts — people keep breaking laws even when they know about them (By the way, that is what Paul is talking about when he says "tablets" of stone; he is referring to the 10 Commandments of Moses. If those laws can't change our hearts, no laws can). Education can't change our heart. How many people know smoking is bad for them, yet millions of people still smoke. Positive thinking can't change our hearts. It may help for a while, but eventually we find ourselves in thought patterns that require us to be positive again. We can't change on our own!

Change requires the Spirit of the living God. The Holy Spirit enters our deceptive, impassioned, evil hearts and begins to write His will upon them. This begins the renovation from one degree of glory to the next. Paul writes in another letter that it is God who “*works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*”⁶ His Spirit writes on our hearts to change our very desires.

Maybe you are six days into this time of prayer and fasting and are beginning to get worried; “nothing is happening!” The temptation is to strive to try to change ourselves. Don’t! Seek the Spirit of the living God who wants to write the glory and image of Jesus on your heart.

Let’s pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Are you striving to see God change something in you? Take a moment to list what it is and ask the Holy Spirit to show you grace and begin to write His will upon your heart.

DAY 7: SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023

SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST

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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

Jesus + Nothing = Everything.

This is the most important equation in life. If you have Jesus that is enough.

Sometimes we don't see the progress in our heart renovation because we want Jesus + Something Else. Maybe its Jesus and a certain career. Maybe its Jesus and a certain relationship. Maybe its Jesus and the lack of a certain tragedy, loss, or fear. Maybe its Jesus and affirmation from someone else. So instead of totally holding onto Jesus through the triumphal procession of life, we have one hand on Jesus and one hand on something else. That hinders the transformation process. Jesus is not going to share His image in you with something else. His glory is enough.

Paul hints at this reality in the verses above. With the false teachers and their letters of recommendation in mind, he simply says "we depend on God to authenticate us." All we need is Jesus. Adding written recommendations to the authority and power of Jesus is unnecessary.

As we prepare for week two of our 21 days of prayer and fasting, let's look again at our lives and make sure we have surrendered all to Jesus. Let's make sure our lives are a completely blank slate ready for Him to write His story on.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Take a few moments to get quiet before God. Ask Him to reveal anything you still have in your life that you want to surrender to Him.

Look over some of the prayer items you have written down this week. Spend some time praying over them.

WEEK TWO

JANUARY 16-22, 2023

THE RENOVATION PROCESS PART 2

2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-18

DAY 8: MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2023

LETTER VS. SPIRIT

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.***

— 2 Corinthians 3:4-6

I'm a "to do" list guy. I write "to do" lists in the morning. I adjust them during the day. I'm even one of those strange people who, when he does something not on the "to do" list, will add what I completed to the list just so I can mark it off as done! I like being productive and finishing a list is one of the ways I measure productivity.

The problem comes in when I take a sense of identity from accomplishing the "to dos." I would love to say this isn't a problem, but at times it can be. If I go a few days without completing my list, I can get discouraged and feel the pressure to catch up. If I go a few weeks without finishing the lists, I can feel like a complete failure. The list can emotionally kill me.

The same can be true of spiritual "to do" lists. They can be helpful — after all, we are doing a 21 Day devotional to help us "do" prayer and fasting. But the secret to spiritual renovation is not a list. It is not a letter. It is not a law. When we measure ourselves based on "doing things" for God we will always fail. That is why Paul says the "*letter kills.*" Our transformation is a matter of faith. It is not a matter of following something in our own energy.

Faith depends upon the Spirit.

Renovations often ends with a “punch list.” It is a list of items where the client inspects the final product and then returns to the contractor and says, “you missed these things.” The Holy Spirit is Who we hand the “punch list” of our lives to. Where we are weak, where we don’t measure up, where we cannot complete the list for our life, He comes in and says, “I got this.” He shapes our lives into the image that Jesus envisions for us. All we have to do is be willing to give Him our lists.

Let’s pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is there an area in your life where you feel like a failure? Why?

Pray and surrender this area to the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to breath the life of grace into your life.

DAY 9: TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023

GREATER GLORY

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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:7-11

This is a fairly complicated passage to unpack in a one-day, 10-minute devotional reading; but here are the basics. Paul is referencing when God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. In Exodus 34, the Bible says that Moses' face shone when he brought the "tablets of stone" down from the Mountain after meeting with God. The shining, or glory, of Moses face caused the people of Israel to be afraid. So, Moses had to put a veil on until the shining went away.

The 10 Commandments were considered one of the keystones of the faith of the people of Israel. Paul acknowledges this revelation had a high degree of glory. But that glory was still lacking in two areas. First, it had to be covered. Moses had to hide his glory because the people could not stand to be that close to the reflection of God. They were afraid, not filled with faith. Second, the law brought condemnation and death. Why? It is impossible to keep because, as we've seen in previous readings, it did not change the people's hearts. It just revealed how wicked their hearts truly were. So, Paul says, when Jesus came, this glory was coming to an end.

What is replacing this glory? Paul says, “the ministry or righteousness.” As we will read next week, this is the ministry where Jesus takes all of who He is — His rightness or “righteousness” — as the truly begotten Son of God and swaps it for our sin through His death on the cross. Then, by faith, He grants us that righteousness so that we are made like Him — the righteousness of God. From the moment we put our faith in Jesus we are instantly transformed into His image in the eternal view of God. For the rest of our lives, until we see Jesus fully in Heaven, the Spirit of God is renovating us from one degree of glory to another so that our lives and actions here reflect the image of Jesus’ righteousness. This is the greater glory.

This is why faith and grace are better than the “to dos” of the law. They truly transform us into something glorious.

Let’s pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

When you think about seeking God, do you get excited or are you afraid? Why?

If you are afraid, ask God to fill you with grace and remove the “veil” of being in His presence.

Is there something you need to confess to God so that your life can more fully reflect His righteousness?

DAY 10: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023

CONFIDENT HOPE

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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:12-16

Have you ever arrived at an event and realized you were wearing the wrong thing? It is so uncomfortable. It's hard to talk to people, you feel the need to explain yourself, you feel embarrassed. Perhaps you try to just stand in the background and hope people don't notice you. I am fashion challenged and the fear of being underdressed or overdressed is an ever-present reality with me.

This feeling of uncomfortable, awkwardness, or even embarrassment is often how we approach God. "I can't come to God like this! I have to look a different way." Like Moses, we try to veil ourselves; ashamed or afraid of what God might think of us.

Paul says, "no!" We can be very bold with God. Why? Because of hope!

What is the hope that Paul is referring to? It is the hope of being made righteous like Jesus. As the old hymn says, "dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne!" When we

allow Jesus to fully renovate our lives, we can be confident in His finished project. We no longer have to be timid before God — no matter how we feel or what we think of ourselves — we can stand boldly knowing that we are fully accepted because we are dressed in the righteousness of God. Jesus makes us to reflect His glory!

Let's pray boldly!

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

What keeps you from feeling fully accepted by God? What is something you struggle to keep unveiled before Him?

Ask Jesus to reveal to you what it means to be clothed in His righteousness. Write down what He brings to your mind below:

DAY 11: THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023

WHEN ONE TURNS TO THE LORD

But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

— 2 Corinthians 3:16

A few years ago, my garage door stopped working. I mean, it would work, but I had to find a bunch of work arounds. I was certain that it was going to be an expensive fix so I just lived with the aggravation of pressing the button dozens of times before the door would close.

Finally, after several months I decided something had to be done. So, I bravely did what any modern person would do; I YouTubed the issue before calling a repairman. Turns out my expensive problem was just a laser sensor pointed in the wrong direction. I straightened the sensor and the door worked like new... no cost at all.

I felt embarrassed. I couldn't believe the fix was that simple. I couldn't believe I had lived with the irritation for months because I was afraid to ask for help.

The same thing happens with Jesus. We struggle with something, try to fix it on our own, try to hide it from others, we are just certain that the "fix" is going to be difficult, shameful, hurtful. When all else fails... we *turn to the Lord*. Then the Holy Spirit simply unveils the true issue, offers His grace and love, and provides what we need. All the time we sit there going, "why didn't I do this earlier?"

Let's not miss any opportunity to *turn to the Lord* today.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

Get quiet for a few minutes and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you. What is He saying? Write it down below.

How can you *turn to the Lord* today?

DAY 12: FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2023

THE SPIRIT OF FREEDOM

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

— 2 Corinthians 3:17

The word “freedom” in church circles is an interesting word. I grew up in charismatic churches similar to Harvest. For us, “freedom” meant we didn’t use hymnals in worship, our music had drums, and people would clap, raise their hands, occasionally dance or prophesy during the service. That is what it meant to be “free” in the Spirit.

Imagine my shock when I went to a Baptist seminary and discovered that Baptists felt like they were the “free” church. For Baptists, “freedom” meant their tradition was less liturgical and formal than the Catholic, Anglican, or Lutheran forms of worship. They preached from the Bible and not from a pre-prescribed liturgy.

Living in Elkhart County for more than seven years, I have seen “freedom” take on a different meaning for people who grew up in a very strict Christian tradition. For them “freedom” in the Lord might mean dressing in a more modern fashion, using certain forms of technology, or going to a less conservative church to worship.

While I understand why all of these perspectives claim and experience “freedom” in these ways, none of these examples is actually what Paul is describing in the verse above. Paul is actually talking about the freedom of the human soul: free of sin, free of the bondage to the “to dos” of the law, free to live in the image of Christ.

“Freedom” for Paul is to live like the true self Jesus has made you to be; like the person you will actually be in heaven.

The only thing required to experience this freedom is to submit to the Holy Spirit as the Lord, the boss, of your life. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, obey His instructions and guidance in our life, He transforms us to be truly free. To respond to life more and more the way Jesus would respond to life. That is true freedom.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is there a place in your life where you are not experiencing freedom? What is it and why do you feel this way?

Ask the Holy Spirit how you can live in freedom in this area.

DAY 13: SATURDAY, JANUARY 21, 2023

BEHOLDING THE GLORY

*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.*

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

This sentence by Paul is almost impossible to believe, “*And we all... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image.*” If you have come to faith in Jesus, then you have a sense of what it means to look at His glory. Sure, it is very murky right now. But you came to faith because you knew there was something about Jesus that was so much better, more loving, more forgiving than anything or anyone you had ever encountered. It drew you towards Him, desiring to experience more and more of Him. That part is easy to understand.

The hard part is the second half of the phrase, “*we... are being transformed into the same image.*” Wait... what? We are being transformed into the **same** image. The Spirit is at work to make us look like Jesus. He wants us to be the same, look the same, reflect the same as Jesus.

It is important to note two things here. First is that we are “being” transformed. In other words, it is an ongoing action, a process. It won’t happen all at once and it won’t happen overnight. Some renovations take a long time to complete, and that is fine.

The second is that the transformation takes place by “beholding the glory of the Lord.” This isn’t necessarily some mystical, spiritual

experience. This is a day-in, day-out surrender to Jesus in our lives. When we worship Him, think about Him, obey Him, surrender to Him, His glory appears in our life and circumstances, and we are transformed.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what He really thinks and sees in you. Write down what comes to mind below.

What is something the Holy Spirit wants you to surrender to Jesus today. Write it down below and then pray about it.

DAY 14: SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2023

GLORY TO GLORY

*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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

We are taking three weeks, a concentrated time at the beginning of 2023, to ask the Holy Spirit to renovate our lives. But the truth is that the Holy Spirit never really stops working on us. He is always crafting us to look more and more like Jesus.

Sometimes transformation comes in concentrated seasons; a 21 Day of prayer and fasting series, a conference, a retreat, a season in life. Sometimes it is a slower, progressive work that we don't truly see the benefit of until many months or years later. But He is always working.

Then there are times when we feel like we are struggling. Maybe we feel caught in a sin pattern. Maybe we have to walk through a tragedy. Maybe we just don't feel like we have enough faith, courage, or passion for Jesus. In these seasons it is easy to worry that we are backsliding or losing faith; however, I often think that the Holy Spirit is just doing a deeper work of His glory. These seasons of struggle are often the evidence of Jesus' deep love for us. He doesn't want you to be a roughed-out, sparse representation of Him. He wants you to be a sharp, well-crafted image of His glorious work in your life. So, He chisels deeper into your life, heart, and soul to do a greater work in you. He is always working.

So don't get discouraged if you don't "feel" as connected, as passionate, as holy for Jesus as you have at other times in your life. Rejoice in the truth that the Spirit is just taking you to a new level of His glory.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you.

How are you doing right now? How would you describe the health of your soul and why? Write down your answer.

Spend some time praying about what you wrote and asking the Holy Spirit to work His glory in your life.

WEEK THREE

JANUARY 23-29, 2023

WHO WE ARE BECOMING

2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-21

DAY 15: MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2023

DEAD TO ALIVE

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

— 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

The last two weeks we have been in chapters two and three of 2 Corinthians looking at the renovation process. We are now going to skip ahead to chapter five of this letter to look at who we are becoming. As we said at the beginning of this series, every renovation begins with a vision of a preferred future. The space we are in now needs to be transformed into something better. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks a lot about the renovated you; the you the Spirit is transforming you to be. The you that better reflects the glory and image of Jesus.

Our renovation begins with a death. Jesus died for us. He died to save us from death. He was resurrected to demonstrate that He defeated death and that all who put their faith in Him will also one day defeat death. Since the Spirit is molding us into the image of Jesus it naturally makes sense that our renovation would include a death.

The death that Paul is referring to, however, is not when we die. It is what we are called to die to. We are called to die to living for ourselves. In other words, I am no longer the center of my universe. We die to us being the center. We are resurrected to the reality that “others” are now the center of our lives. The chief “Other” is Jesus Himself; we *live... for him who for [our] sake died*. His will, His

glory, and His desires become the most important things in our lives. And in those things, we find true life.

We also die to our will to do what we want when we want. Instead, we are resurrected to the joy of Christ's love "controlling us." This means that we both experience His amazing love and are compelled to love others. More on that later this week.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any area of your life where you are still in control. What is He saying to you?

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with the love of Jesus. Who is someone He is asking you to show love to today? How will you do this?

DAY 16: TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023

PART OF A NEW CREATION

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

— 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

You are more like the you who will be in heaven, than the you that lives on earth.

Read that sentence again. Let that sink in for just a moment.

Paul says that anyone who is in Christ is a *new creation*. What is new about you? *The old has passed away... the new has come*. The Common English Bible translates this verse, *if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation...* You are already part of heaven. The power that will make you perfect and holy has already come. The old stuff, the stuff that traps you in sin, that stuff has already passed away!

Yes. I know. We have studied a lot the last few weeks about how the renovation process is just that... a process. A process from one degree of glory to another. We have not arrived yet. But let's not let the fact that we have not arrived unnecessarily rob us of victory.

I see people so often say things like, "I'm not perfect... I can't change that... that is just the way I am..." and they let the struggles of this reality rob them of their victory. No! That is not you! You are

more like the you who will be in heaven than the you that lives on earth! The heavenly power of the Spirit resides in you. Dare to let Him transform you! Stop saying... “I’m just this... I can’t do that...” That is old creation. That is dead. You are brand new!

Let’s pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

What is one area in your life that you feel like you can’t change?
What excuses are you giving yourself not to change?

Do these reflect the you living on earth or the you living in heaven?

Ask the Holy Spirit with the power of the new creation to help you become more like Jesus in this area. Then surrender that area to Him.

DAY 17: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2023

RECONCILED

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

— 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

We said on Monday that because Jesus experienced a death it makes sense that the Holy Spirit, who is transforming us into the likeness of Jesus, would create a death in our life. In the same way, because Jesus came to reconcile the world to Himself, it makes sense that being crafted after His image would require us to be reconciled as well as carry the message of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is an offer of relationship after settling past offenses in the relationship. For Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection settled the offense of our sin. He now offers a relationship to all who put their trust in Him and are willing to confess and seek forgiveness of their sins. We are included in that beautiful reconciliation when we admit our wrongs and put our faith in Him.

To be like Jesus, we are then called to offer reconciliation and forgiveness to those who harm us. This doesn't mean we have to jump back into every past broken relationship and trust that person or hope things go back to normal. However, it does require us to forgive them and, when appropriate, to offer a relationship of blessing to them. That is part of the reconciliation process.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Is there something you need to confess to the Holy Spirit today to experience His forgiveness and reconciliation?

Is there someone you need to forgive today? Who is it? Pray to the Holy Spirit and forgive that person(s).

Is there an extra step you need to take to offer forgiveness? This is not always appropriate, but if it is, you should do it. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to do. Also consider asking a spiritual authority (pastor, mentor, Life Group leader) for advice.

DAY 18: THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023

MINISTERS OF RECONCILIATION

*All this is from God, who **through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.***

— 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

As we have seen already our Holy Spirit renovation is not for us alone. It is for the world! Jesus offered Himself to you and me. Forgave us. Reconciled us. Brought us into His family. Then He gave us a ministry; a ministry to offer His reconciliation to others.

Part of His renovation plan is to declare to the world, “you don’t have to live this way! You don’t have to live in the dusty shambles of your dilapidated lives. You can be renovated into something beautiful by that God-man carpenter from Nazareth. Just look at what He did in my life.”

Often, as with our own church lobby, when we renovate something there is a displacement. You have to move out of a space, stay or store things somewhere else, you aren’t allowed into an important area of your home, etc. Then, when it is completed, there is a reveal! Perhaps you hold a party to show people, maybe you just begin hosting again, maybe you snap pictures and post them to social media. Whatever the case you can’t wait to get back into the space and show it off to the world.

It is the same way with us. Sin creates a displacement between us

and God. We were designed to be in His presence but can't be. So, He offers Himself to us and when we put our faith in Him, His Spirit goes to work to create a renovated masterpiece. Then He reveals it to the world so that others can see His handiwork. You are not renovated for you! You are being renovated to show the world the glory of the Master's workmanship in your life.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Go back to Week One, Day Three and the list of people you wrote down that you would like to see come to Jesus. Spend some time praying for them today.

Is there a step you can take to show them the love of Jesus today?
What is it?

DAY 19: FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023

AMBASSADORS

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:20

Again, we are not being renovated for our sake alone. We are being renovated to show Jesus' glory to the world.

What is an ambassador? An ambassador is an official representative of a nation or government who lives in a foreign nation to make appeals on behalf of their government. That is who you are! You are part of the new creation; you don't belong on this earth. You represent Jesus; you are being made after His image. You represent the interests of Heaven; you are a minister of reconciliation inviting others to come and be at peace with God. That is what Jesus is calling you to and transforming you to be.

What would happen if you really lived this way? With the idea that the true you is made for heaven. The current you is here to represent Jesus to others. That your primary job on this planet is to *implore [people] on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God!* How would that change you? How would that renovate your heart, your love for others, your motivation?

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Spend some time praying for people in your life who need to come to know Jesus.

What is one action you can take to live like an ambassador for Jesus today? How will you take that action?

DAY 20: SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2023

RIGHTEOUS

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21

This is my favorite verse in all of Scripture! It is so confounding. So amazing. So hope-filled. These are the words that I stake my entire hope and identity upon.

Look at them carefully. ***For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin...***

Hanging on that cross God essentially made Jesus like us. Full of sin, suffering, frailty, pain, loss, rejection, hurt; deformed and disgusting to look at. Even 11 of his 12 disciples couldn't bear to watch.

So that... In the original language this is known as the purpose clause. This is why God did with Jesus what He did with Jesus.

... in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Catch this. God made Jesus like us, so that we could be like Jesus. God hung Jesus on that cross and then turned His gaze away from Him in disgust, so that He could invite us into glory and embrace us with open arms. God rejected Jesus, so that we could be fully accepted through Jesus.

Here is the most important part. Just like Jesus did NOTHING to deserve the wrath and punishment of sin, we did NOTHING to deserve the love and acceptance of God. It was simply given to us by the love of the Father and imparted to us by the transformation of Jesus' glory. We can now approach God boldly knowing that we belong in His presence because we are part of the new creation, renovated in fullness from glory to glory. That is the power of the love and grace of God.

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

Spend some time thanking God for His love and acceptance of you.

Is there a place where you feel guilty or shame? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you again with the reality of His righteousness in your life.

DAY 21: SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2023

THE GLORY OF THE REAL YOU

*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.

— 2 Corinthians 3:18

Congratulations! You made it! Twenty-one days of prayer, fasting, and reflection. Twenty-one days of renovation. Let's take a moment to review all that God says you are!

God has renovated you by His Spirit to be...

You are transformed into the image of Jesus. You are to look like the glory of Jesus.

You are being led in triumphant processions. You are conquered by Jesus.

You are the aroma of God. You smell good and are pleasing to be around because of Jesus.

You have been sincerely changed. There is nothing fake in the work of Jesus.

You are sufficient in Jesus. Jesus + Nothing = Everything in your life.

You have confidence in Jesus! You have the hope of His work in your Life.

You are free in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is changing you and ruling over you.

He has made you a letter of life-change. Your heart is different because of Jesus.

You are part of the new creation. You are already part of the eternity you will experience with Jesus.

You are ambassadors for Jesus. Representing Him to the world.

You are reconciled to Jesus. Forgiven and offering forgiveness to others.

You are righteous! Just like Jesus because of the grace of God.

Wow! That is a pretty awesome renovation job. It is a pretty awesome way to live life. Always remember, this renovation job is the REAL YOU. You are more like the person you will be in heaven than you are like the person living here on earth. All it takes is an everyday commitment to beholding the beauty of who Jesus is and surrendering fully to the Holy Spirit in your life. Let's keep it going!

Let's pray.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you today.

What is the most important thing Jesus has revealed to you these last 21 days?

What is one thing you will do differently going forward so that you can live in victory with Jesus?



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