

LESSONS IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

HOLY SPIRIT: GOD TRANSFORMS

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18

Today is our last installment of four lessons on the Holy Spirit. We're in the middle of a series of messages we've entitled, "Lessons From The Rear View Mirror." I'm grateful to God for the truth I learned about His grace and His Spirit. I hope you're learning these same lessons. We've noted that through the Holy Spirit... [SLIDE] **God comes...** [SLIDE] **God acts...** [SLIDE] **God speaks...** And this morning we'll talk about how [SLIDE] **God transforms...** Turn in your Bibles to [SLIDE] 2 Corinthians 3 – then we'll pray...

It took me a while, but [SLIDE] I've been converted. I'm now a Mac guy. It could've been Apple's savvy advertisements that prompted my transformation. Their marketing people [SLIDE] are as smart as their engineers. Do you want to be the cool, young, casual hipster on the right – or the dull, older, stiff suit on the left? When I log onto the internet to pay my bills and check my retirement account, I want to do it with a hipster computer! Here's the real reason I converted... No more virus protection... 114,000 new viruses annually target your PC. In contrast, very few aim for my Mac. Actually, since I made the switch to Apple I've found all kinds of cool features. [SLIDE] My latest discovery is a feature on my iPhone called "Face Time." Since Pastor James and I both have an iPhone, we can now send and receive video calls. Rather than walk three feet across the hallway to talk to each other, we can be cool... We can sit at our desks, shut the door, and talk to each other through a fuzzy camera on a 4 inch screen. But it's hip!

Really, "Face Time" is a marvelous breakthrough in communication. And here's why... Email is dangerous. You send facts and data through email - but try to express your feelings, and something usually gets lost in the translation. Email doesn't convey voice inflexion and nonverbal cues... A text is worse. I'm convinced in coming years wars will start because of texting. It's curt, brief, and lazy... Texting has more pitfalls than email. I know it's terribly old-fashion, and nobody cool does it any more, but a phone call is a much more reliable form of communication. Rather than just words you can hear the person's tone. You pick up on the calm, or desperation, or joy, or sarcasm, or seriousness, or flippancy in their voice.

But "Face Time" is better than email, and text, and phone calls. [SLIDE] It's ingenious. Human communication is as much visual as it is verbal. And "Face Time" enables you to talk to a person while observing their gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye gaze, posture, and appearance... Lots of non-verbal communication goes on when humans communicate. Other than two people actually walking across the hallway and meeting with each other in person – and I mean, who wants to do something that old-school - "Face Time" is the best form of communication available.

In 2 Corinthians 3 Paul informs us that "Face Time" is nothing new. Before it was invented by Apple IT it was already being utilized by God. As we've learned over the last few weeks **God comes...** **God acts...** **God speaks...** all through the agency of His Holy Spirit. And through the Holy Spirit **God transforms...** He transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. I love Colossians 1:13, [SLIDE] **"(God) has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love..."** What a complete transformation... from the vice-grip of darkness, and the sinkhole of sin - into the kingdom of His Son Jesus, a life filled with love. From darkness to light... from bondage to redemption... from defeat to victory... from lost to found... from death to life... from abandoned to accepted... from worthless to fruitful... from hate to healing... from lust to love... from homeless to heaven-bound... from sorrow and sadness to joy and jubilation... God transforms us through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:29 states, [SLIDE] **"Whom (God) foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..."** His intent is for you to radiate Jesus.

And the process the Holy Spirit uses is sort of a **spiritual "Face Time."** Let's read 2 Corinthians 3:5-18, **"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more**

glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech - unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." And here's the verse where we'll focus... "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 by the Spirit of the Lord."

One of the most famous novels of all time was "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens. In 2 Corinthians 3 we find [SLIDE] "A Tale of Two Covenants." Understand what I mean when I use the term "covenant." Paul also uses the synonyms "ministry" and "testament." But the idea is the same. [SLIDE] A covenant is an agreement that sets terms for a relationship.

The [SLIDE] Old Covenant was given to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai. It was written on stone tablets by the finger of God. And the OC was glorious. There was [SLIDE] fire on the mountain when God visited Moses. The mountain quaked at His presence. A physical heaviness accompanied the OC.

In fact, [SLIDE] after receiving the commandments Moses beamed. His face lit up with glory. He came off the mountain with a divine shine – the Mo glow. Moses' mug was like a glow-in-the-dark Frisbee. Put it up to a light and let it absorb as much as it can, then you take it into the night and it glows. The glory Moses saw on the mountain was absorbed by His appearance. So much so, the children of Israel couldn't look on their leader. Moses had to hide his face. He wore a veil. The glory he reflected reminded them of their failure. Because of their sin the people were denied the privilege God gave Moses. Only Moses ascended the mountain to meet with God. And his veil became a symbol of Israel's separation from God. That's why Paul says "the letter kills."

The letter of the Law killed off joy, and hope, and godly desires. It accentuated the vast distance that existed between God and man. Under the Law, God seemed a million miles away. The Law God gave to Moses set a standard to which no man could measure up. It left people frustrated. Paul says in verse 15, [SLIDE] "Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart." They don't see... they don't do... they don't know... It kills.

But Paul mentions another covenant – "the New Covenant." This is a different kind of covenant. It's a "Face Time" covenant. Rather than write down His Law, God puts His Spirit in our heart. The finger of God can write on stone tablets, but the Spirit of God writes His will into human hearts. And this is such a better way to transfer ideas and inspiration. Imagine writing down instructions or directions on a piece of notebook paper. You hope it'll convey the right thoughts, but you're not really sure. You can lose a piece of paper, or spill coffee on it, or misinterpret what's written, or not understand, or take it for granted and never read the paper.

Last week during the announcements Pastor James introduced the new Ladies Bible Study as, [SLIDE] "Living Rationally." It's [SLIDE] "Living Relationally," but James gave it his own title... I figured it was subliminal... After raising three daughters he's probably been exposed to some irrational behavior, and he figured that would make a great Ladies Bible Study, "Living Rationally." But when I asked about his snafu, he said that's not what happened. He just read it wrong. He saw "Living Relationally" as "Living Rationally." And this is what happens with the letter - ideas get misread and confused.

The same complications occurred with God's Law. The glitches that come with writing something down on paper also exist with stone tablets. For [SLIDE] 1450 years the Hebrew people were bound by what was written on those two stone slabs, but seldom did it enable them to walk in God's will. At times they neglected God's Law. Having it written down, doesn't mean it gets read, let alone obeyed... At times they held the Law in high regard, yet it was misinterpreted... At times selfish folk twisted the Law to make it support their own pride and advantage. A skilled lawyer can make a document read however you'd like. You can do the same with the Law... The OC was all about the letter of the Law. It's intent was often lost.

The OC was like God sending us an email, or a text, or even a phone call. It conveyed His truth to a point, but not without some complications. This is why God invented [SLIDE] **Spiritual Face Time**. He put His Spirit in you. Rather than writing His will down on paper, or stone tablets. Imagine, God puts His face in everybody's pocket. God is right there in your pocket. When a thought crosses your mind, or you start to take a step... you know instantly what He thinks. Just look at "**Face Time**" and you'll see God frown, or smile, or nod with approval, or shed a tear, or jump for joy. You can know His intent, as well as His words. The Holy Spirit is right there.

Yes, God **comes**, and **acts**, and **speaks**... but Holy Spirit "**Face Time**" is more than that. God agrees to remain online with you at all times. He never breaks connection. He has constant access. He speaks when appropriate, and sends power when needed, but His influence is always present! This is how the Holy Spirit transforms us... through **Spiritual Face Time**. This is [SLIDE] "**the New Covenant**." It's the difference between writing down directions, and putting an active, online GPS in your pocket. I can fumble around with directions, misread them, misunderstand them... but a satellite controlled homing device keeps beeping until I reach my destination.

And according to Paul, this NC is also glorious – even more glorious than the OC. [SLIDE] The glory that glowed from Moses' face eventually faded away. It was a reflected glory – absorbed from the outside in. Over time, the reflection wore off. There was no power source to sustain the shine. But the [SLIDE] NC exudes a different type of glory. **It's a radiant glory, not a reflected glory**. Reflection comes from a borrowed source, while radiant glory is internally-produced. It works from the inside out, not the outside in. This is amazing grace, Moses crossed a desert and scaled a mountain to see the glory that God placed just inside your ribcage. The Holy Spirit fidgets, and pulsates, and glows and flows, and moves and grooves inside you. This is the NC. God was tired of superficiality. He got under our skin.

The OC was a external. It was a mountain I had to climbed. But it was too steep. [SLIDE] It was a ladder with too many rungs. If the goal of religion is to be good enough for God, how good is good enough? That's why religion always has one more rung. The glory is just above where I'm able to climb. But under the NC, Jesus forgives us and puts His glory in us. What faded from Moses - what Israel never saw - we get the very second we're saved. Jesus makes us right with God and earns us access to His glory. Did you know that right now... regardless of what I might do for God tomorrow – I'm as right with God as I'll ever be. After I've lived in heaven for a million years, I'll be no more acceptable to God as I am this moment. This is why Paul writes in verse 16, [SLIDE] "**When one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away**." Feelings of guilt, and separation, and distance vanish. In their place is freedom! [SLIDE] "**Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**."

From the time of Moses down to Jesus, God's people related to Him through the OC. Yet on the night before He was crucified, Jesus took the cup, and said to His disciples, [SLIDE] "**This is the blood of the New Covenant**." The next day on the cross Jesus was struck by the torturers, and He struck a new deal with God. It's still in force today. Jesus bought new terms in our relationship with God. [SLIDE] Rather than make us climb the ladder, He drops us a rope. And if we hold on to the rope of His grace He'll pull us up! From now on [SLIDE] **Jesus does the work. We simply believe!**

And this news brings life! Notice again verse 6, [SLIDE] "**the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life**." Realize it's not up to you to stay on right terms with God. Realize, all you have to do is rely on what Jesus has already done - and it sets you free. As Paul put it in verse 5, [SLIDE] "**our sufficiency is from God**." Rather than kills, the NC thrills. It brings hope, love, joy, life... The glory of the OC was temporary, because a greater glory was on the horizon. The NC and the work of Jesus has set us free to know God, and love God, and walk with God, and be like God. We can radiate His glory.

I know some of you guys not only "**Face Time**" you [SLIDE] "**Face Book**," and it's always interesting to check someone's status or update your own status... But here's your **status in Christ**: [SLIDE] "**unveiled face**." That means no shame, no guilt, no fear, no sin, no probation, no distance between you and God. Only fellowship and glory. This is your spiritual status. This is who you are in Christ. This is how God sees you... **All you do is** [SLIDE] **believe and behold!**

I love verse 18, [SLIDE] "**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 by the Spirit of the Lord**." On the cross, Jesus purchased you an unlimited, eternal data package - He gives you the Holy Spirit. And

through the Holy Spirit we get “Face Time” all the time. With “unveiled face” – that means whatever was holding you back is gone. All that’s left for you now is to walk with God in repentance and faith.

Let me talk to you a bit about **Spiritual Face Time**...The Holy Spirit is the most dynamic person you’ll ever meet. He is captivating and engaging and convincing. The Spirit of God is the most powerful change agent on Earth. And **God transforms** us through the Holy Spirit. Here’s what you need to understand. [SLIDE] It’s nothing you do! Look at how Paul puts it, verse 5, [SLIDE] “**Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves...**” **Spiritual Face Time** isn’t an exercise plan, or a program you work, or a Ten Step method, or willpower you muster, or discipline techniques, or religious principles, or behavioral conditioning, or a self-help approach... [SLIDE] It’s not working out. It’s hanging out. **Spiritual Face Time** is living your life in fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

To me, one of the strangest phenomenon’s of nature [SLIDE] is to look at two people who’ve been married for 50-plus years, and notice the similarity in their appearance. After [SLIDE] being together so long they start to look alike. Of course, this bodes a lot better for me than it does for Kathy. I could stand to look a little more like her... I’m not sure she wants to look like me. But hang out with someone long enough and they rub off on you.

And this is what happens when you **do Face Time with the Holy Spirit**. When you hang out with Him, you become like Him. You adopt His ways - share His concerns. You heart begins to beat with His heart. When you dance with someone on a regular basis you learn to move as one. As I look in the rearview mirror of my life I use to think being like Jesus required a monumental effort on my part – a herculean effort of holiness. It was my job to muster up love, stir up peace, conjure up joy, generate goodness, and manufacture holiness... but I was terribly mistaken.

Paul teaches us we’re under a NC. As long as I think the sufficiency is in me a veil covers my eyes. I’m blind to the glory I desire and Jesus gives. But the moment I rest in God’s grace and trust totally on the work of Jesus – when I adopt an “unveiled face” status – the Holy Spirit rises up in my life. The Face Time feature suddenly turns on. I get some connectivity.

Think for a minute what the Holy Spirit promises to do in us. Let me give you three words – [SLIDE] **convict, quicken, comfort**. This means when I’m in **fellowship** or **Face Time** with the Holy Spirit, this is what He’ll want to do. This is what’ll be going on in my pocket, so to speak. This is what the Spirit does and does and does... He’s convicts and quickens and comforts.

John 16:8 tells us it’s the Spirit’s job [SLIDE] “**to convict the world of sin.**” Two chapters earlier John says the Spirit has come “[SLIDE] **to guide you into all truth.**” When you hang out with the Holy Spirit this is what He’ll do.... **convict**. He’ll make course corrections. He’ll slap your hand when you reach for something evil. He’ll show you a better way. If there’s an issue in your life that’s out of kilter He’ll tell you it’s time to straighten it out. If you’re in error, He’ll red-flag your attitude, and give you an opportunity to make it right. The Holy Spirit deals with our pride, and serves a sweet humble pie.

I love Colossians 3:15, [SLIDE] “**Let the peace of God rule in your hearts...**” The word “**rule**” means “**umpire.**” [SLIDE] The Holy Spirit is like an umpire. He calls you safe or out. When somebody makes a pitch He lets you know if it’s in or out of God’s strike zone. And He does it with an awareness of His peace. When you’re where you need to be, the Spirit gives you a strong sense of God’s peace. If you buck and kick, He’ll keep you restless - on edge.

Many of you remember Bob Temps. I love Bob. He got saved in our church... became a deacon, then an elder... eventually Bob served as a pastor. I’ll never forget Bob standing in this pulpit to share his testimony. He recalled the moment he got serious about following Jesus. And I quote, “**the Holy Spirit came down and kicked me in the butt.**” I turned to James and asked, “**Can you say the Holy Spirit kicked me in the butt?**” I’ll never forget his reply, “**Sandy, just be glad that’s all Bob said!**” Well, let me say it this morning, **I believe the Holy Spirit will kick me in the butt!** He’ll get you started, or speed you up, or slow you down, or shift your gears. He’ll do whatever it takes to keep in the center of God’s will.

The Holy Spirit **convicts**, but He also [SLIDE] **quicken**s. I love this word. It’s an OKJ word. It means [SLIDE] “**to bring to life, to birth, to germinate or generate.**” Romans 8:11, [SLIDE] “**But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**” The Spirit quickens. It’s interesting in the second verse of your Bible, Genesis 1:2, at the

moment of creation you see that [SLIDE] “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light; and there was light.’” The Holy Spirit was there to inject the first spark from God into the shapeless, darkened deep. The Holy Spirit struck and creation commenced. This is what the Holy Spirit does. He continues to create... He sparks new ideas, and forges new initiatives, and grows new ministries. Above all else He takes stuff that died and makes it alive again. As the Holy Spirit resurrected Jesus, He resurrects hopes and dreams, marriages and families, talents and ministries, opportunities and potentials.

[SLIDE] Remember how Jesus befuddled Nicodemus. He told him, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus wanted to know how a man can re-enter the womb and be born a second time. Jesus explained, [SLIDE] “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit... That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.” The water breaks and you’re born physically. But there’s also a spiritual birth. The Holy Spirit loves to birth stuff. In your heart of hearts, He’ll birth new desires, a new nature, new love. The Spirit specializes in quickening what was dead and making it alive. Ask Jesus, and you too will be born again!

The Holy Spirit also [SLIDE] comforts. When Jesus told His disciples He was departing, He said He wouldn’t leave them orphans. He’d send [SLIDE] “another Comforter.” The word translated “another” is [SLIDE] “another of the same type.” The Holy Spirit would do for His disciples what Jesus had done while on Earth. As long as they learned to live spiritually they wouldn’t miss a beat. Think of all the ways that Jesus comforted His followers while He was with them. He healed, and helped, and taught, and forgave, and advised, and strengthened, and refreshed, and cleansed, and provided for them... And this is what He wants to do in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for “Comforter” or “Helper” is the word [SLIDE] “parakletes.” It’s a compound word -[SLIDE] “Para” means “alongside” and [SLIDE] “kletes” means “to call.” Jesus summoned the Holy Spirit to come alongside us to help us. Watch this... The Holy Spirit is [SLIDE] part caddy, part secret service agent, and part coach... You don’t want to take a shot without His advice... He’ll keep you from getting shot... And He’s the person who’ll give you a shot... I like what AB Simpson once said about the Holy Spirit. He’s [SLIDE] “A God at hand, One by our side, One that we may call upon in every emergency.”

Let me give you one more metaphor for how the Holy Spirit comforts us. He’s an usher. He ushers us into God’s peace. “He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul...” There’re times when the Holy Spirit becomes so real. He literally takes me by the hand – or wraps His arm around me - or kicks me in the butt, if that’s what I need... and He walks my heart to a place of peace – a stronghold - a place where I can take refuge until the storm passes. And it’s through this work of conviction, and quickening, and comfort that He melts me – and shapes me - and forges in me the virtues of Jesus. This all works from the inside out. Under the OC we conformed to the letter. Under the NC we’re transformed by the Spirit. A miracle occurs...

Here’s what’s taken me a long time to understand... Holiness happens! It occurs through spiritual osmosis. Rub shoulders with the Holy Spirit and Jesus rubs off on you. Abide in Him – rest in His influence – rely on His sufficiency - and fruits of the Spirit begin to grow – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. We teach our kids the importance of selecting the right friends. You become like the people with whom you spend time. The same is true with “Face Time.” Stay online with the Holy Spirit and you’ll be more like Jesus. The NC provides us an “unveiled face” – no sin, no guilt, no cover-up.

Now with it look to Jesus. Face Time with the Holy Spirit. “Behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” and you’ll get a mirror effect – Behold Jesus, and one day, “Behold, I’m acting like Jesus!” Fix your eyes on the glory of Jesus, and you’ll be change into the same image “by the Spirit of the Lord.” Remember, the only thing you’re asked to do is [SLIDE] “believe” and “behold.”

But this is where we can go astray. We get distracted. Lured away. We get tempted. We turn off the Face Time feature to surf other networks. The Spirit convicts, but we’re not done bucking and kicking and thinking we know best... The Spirit quickens, but we like the rut. We’re afraid of what change might mean... The Spirit comforts, yet stubborn pride insists on doing it ourselves... “Behold” means stay focused spiritually. Lock in. Live in the Spirit! Never turn off your Face Time with the Holy Spirit.

If you **believe and behold** your life will change forever. The English word **“transformed”**, verse 18, is a translation of the Greek, “[SLIDE] **metamorphosis.**” A metamorphosis is a dramatic alteration - a change in shape and structure. [SLIDE] A metamorphosis occurs when a furry caterpillar turns into a beautiful butterfly... Or when a roughed out rock becomes a sparkling crystal... And this is what will happen to you. If you with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, you’ll change! **First**, your [SLIDE] desires and loves. **Second**, your [SLIDE] thoughts and attitudes. **Last**, your [SLIDE] speech and actions. **Believe and Behold...** Hang out with the Holy Spirit, and He’ll do the work in you! It’s called **Spiritual Face Time**. I pray you’ll sign up for it today!