

Seminar

Growing in Glory



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Growing in Glory: a true self-image and a joyful discontent

IDENTITY

2 Corinthians 3:1 – 4:6

Key Text: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

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More like Christ, but still falling short

- How did this happen?
- How should I feel about it?
- What should I do about it?

More like Christ, but still falling short

- People who feel stuck in sin
- People who are stuck, but don't know it
- People in dysfunctional relationships

Seminar aims

- To help us, and those we help, live out our fundamental identity as those who already reflect Christ's glory but who still need to grow more in glory
- Finding joy in the glory that is present, and discontent about where we fall short

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Looking to Christ is key for us

- Anger, lust, immorality, greed, misuse of alcohol . . .
- Lack of growth, focus on own kingdom
- Relational disorder – self-seeking, suspicions, evil for evil (and evil for good), deceit, betrayal

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Mixed bag

- The church as a letter from Christ



- The church tolerating what pagans don't

Talking about glory and falling short

- We struggle to talk of the good God has brought about in us (yet we are a letter from God with present glory)
- We struggle to talk about our weakness, and especially our sin (yet we confess 'there is no health in us')

This makes conversational ministry of the Word difficult

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DISCUSSION: Who are we thinking about?

- What personal problems are you seeing?
- How do your people understand their falling short?
- How much of it is seen as falling short of the glory of the Lord that needs a Spirit-led solution of looking to the Lord

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

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Current state of play and the outcome

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 is addressed to us on this side of the Cross

- Surprisingly optimistic about the present
- Delightfully hopeful about the future
- Soberingly realistic between the lines

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God's black box

2 Cor 3 outlines the method

- Not acknowledged by the world
- Beyond our control and analysis
- Is the work of the Spirit in a believer
- Yet, *we* look at the Lord in his Word

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We become what we see, Jesus Christ, comprehensively addressing:

- Relational disorder
- The heart of addictions
- Wrong teaching
- Poor thinking
- Stray desires
- Motivation issues
- and much more . . .

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It has always been this way

'...the Bible has worked moral miracles by thousands.

It has made drunkards become sober, unchaste people become pure, thieves become honest, violent-tempered people become meek.

It has wholly altered the course of men's lives.

It has caused old things to pass away and made their ways new.

It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God.

It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God.

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It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God.

It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards.

It has made men think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight.

All this it has done in every part of the world.

All this it is doing still.

J C Ryle, First Bishop of Liverpool, *Practical Religion* 80-81, 1878

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DISCUSSION

- Where would your people see themselves in 2 Cor 3:17-18 , if at all?
- Are some too relaxed about their lack of glory?
- Are some too discouraged to expect to have glory in this life?
- Is your church rightly concerned about sin and joyful about present and increasing glory?

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The method of 2 Cor 3 is unique

... radically unique!

- culture
- mental health system
- church at risk of distraction, syncretism, counterconversion

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DISCUSSION

- How do *you*, personally pursue change?
- What solutions do those you help pursue?
- How do *you* keep the reality of 2 Cor 3 at the forefront of your understanding and practice of change – assuming you do?
 - What words do you use to describe it?

Same model in Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

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**²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!—
²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were
taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old
self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is
corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in
the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self,
created after the likeness of God in true righteousness
and holiness.**

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False gospels for our lack of glory

- Ancient 'philosopher therapists'
- Modern 'philosopher therapists'
- Current culture

Looking to the Lord above all

- Many of us are 'well' trained in worldly wisdom that can bring about change
- But for true glory we need to look at the Lord – to behold him

DISCUSSION

- How do *you* help people see the Lord so that they are transformed by the Spirit into his image?
- How have you applied 2 Cor 17-18?

See the Lord in the sacraments

- Baptism
- Lord's supper

See the Lord in the Word of Christ shared

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

¹³ But **exhort one another every day**, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵ As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Hebrews 3:12–15 ESV

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See the Lord in the Word of Christ shared

- All the time – not less than daily
- In church, small groups, one to one
- With prayer
- Relevant to life

Seeing the Lord day and night

- We meditate on the Word day and night
 - The way of blessing
 - The way of resisting ungodly counsel

Psalm 1

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DISCUSSION

- How do *you* meditate on God's Word day and night?
- How do *you* help your counselees to do it?

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and **on his law he meditates day and night.**

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³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.

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- ⁴ The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- ⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Meditating on God's Word

- Psalm 1 makes it clear that singing is a *normal way* of meditating on God's word
 - It is itself for singing
 - It introduces 150 songs for singing that meditate on the Lord and his Word in the details of life

Psalm 77

To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.

I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, and he will hear me.

² In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without
wearying;

my soul refuses to be comforted.

³ When I remember God, I moan;
when I meditate, my spirit faints.

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Psalm 77

⁴ You hold my eyelids open;

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

⁵ I consider the days of old,

the years long ago.

⁶ I said, **“Let me remember my song in the night;
let me meditate in my heart.”**

Then my spirit made a diligent search:

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Psalm 77

- a song of Asaph, for the choirmaster, with a named tune
- *remember my song in the night* is parallel to *meditate in my heart* (=overlapping meanings)
- the next lines of his song meditate on the words of his psalm/other psalms through singing

Psalm 77

- ⁷ “Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favourable?
- ⁸ Has his steadfast love forever ceased?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
- ⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?”

Psalm 77

- 11** I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
- 12** I will ponder all your work,
and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Psalm 77

¹³ Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is great like our God?

¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders;
you have made known your might among the peoples.

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Psalm 77

- Asaph is **meditating on God's word by singing** his song in the night
 - He is remembering the Lord through singing
 - He is pondering the Lord through singing
- It's all **in his heart ready to go** wherever he might be – 'in the night' not 'at church'

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Colossians 3:16

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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Ephesians 5:18-20

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery,
but be filled with the Spirit,
addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual
songs,
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

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Ephesians 5:18-20

Interpreted:

Always sing and give thanks, whether alone or with others, so that you may be filled with the Spirit (and not pursue the false refuges of intoxication and immorality)

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Reconsidering how we help people see the Lord in his Word

- Without serious practical theological consideration, many of us have drifted from singing the Word individually as a normal, daily way to see the Lord and meditate on his Word
- And some churches are less than '*devoted* to the public reading of Scripture' 1Tim 4:13

Reconsidering how we help people see the Lord in his Word

- Reading off a page or screen by ourselves is good, but it is not a substitute for singing the Word implanted in our hearts
- We need to make full use of the techniques of our faith

Reconsidering how we help people see the Lord in his Word – the method

- Sing the Word aloud daily (alone and with/to each other)
- Hear the Word read aloud (in public)
and, as God gives skill and opportunity
- Read the Word (alone, together, aloud, silently)

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Look to the Lord and 'put on Christ'

- Having seen the Lord in the Word, we will not 'learn Christ' and gloriously reflect him without the deliberate effort of 'putting on Christ'
- This is effective because the 'Lord who is the Spirit' is working in us what he is recreating—the image of Christ

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Imitate others who imitate Christ

- We see the image of Jesus Christ reflected in our brothers and sisters
 - 'Learn Christ' from what you see in them

1 Cor 11:1

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Repentance is essential

- The only good response to falling short
- 'From one degree of glory to another' helps us to be honest with hope and without fear
- Humility and distress over remaining sin leads to exaltation

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Moving toward

- Love is at the core of being in God's image
- Growing in glory is a community project
- Moving out in love is essential to growth

Speak with the Lord

- We know the Lord more as we speak with him – we 'behold him' more clearly in lived relationship with him
- We pour out our hearts to him – confessions and laments, along with praises
- He speaks to his in his Word by his Spirit

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Follow the Source of all wisdom

- Jesus Christ is the source of all wisdom – including extrabiblical wisdom
- This won't itself transform us, but it helps to
 - Manage the body wisely
 - Manage circumstances as God enables
 - Lead us to contemplate the Lord in his Word

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2 Corinthians 3:17-18

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