

## **Holy Spirit Transforms**

*<sup>17</sup> For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup> So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (NLT)*

There is an old saying, “you cannot teach an old dog a new trick.” However, the Apostle Paul taught the early Corinthian church that people could change by the living God’s transforming Spirit through faith in His Son Jesus and the power of the Gospel (Good News) (2 Corinthians 3:2-3; see also Romans 1:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Through wholehearted faith in Jesus and His Gospel message, believers die to their old ways of selfish living and now live to please and obey Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:5, 14-15). Faith in Jesus not only declares believers righteous and blameless before God but also results in a new and changed lifestyle of unselfish living for God and others by God’s transforming Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6; see also John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:15, 21). In essence, genuine believers of Jesus are brand new people on the inside!

Sadly, some people in the early church criticized the Apostle Paul’s ministry efforts and His Gospel message about Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-2:17). The Apostle Paul refuted this criticism by asking his accusers to look at the good change in the Corinthians’ hearts and the good work (fruit) among them (2 Corinthians 3:2; see also Galatians 5:22-23; James 2:14-26). The Spirit of the living God was changing the hearts and minds of Corinthian believers through their genuine faith and obedience to Christ Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 3:3-5). The Holy Spirit had written the truth of God on the Corinthians’ hearts making them living letters from Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 3:3). Believers’ continual relationship with the Christ Jesus is the source to receive God’s transforming Spirit and removal of our spiritual blindness.

The Apostle Paul explained to his critics that Christ Jesus instituted a new covenant from the living God at His sacrificial death on Calvary’s Cross (2 Corinthians 3:3, 6; e.g., see also Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 9:15). The Old Testament prophets had predicted that God would make a new covenant with His faithful people (Jews and Gentiles). This covenant would be written on their hearts and not stone tables and would bring forgiveness of sins (e.g., see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Jeremiah 32:37-41; Ezekiel 11:19-21; Ezekiel 36:24-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; Hebrews 10:16). The Apostle Paul saw the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s prophecy at Jesus’ sacrificial death and resurrection that brought an outpouring of the living God’s Spirit and a new life on all who trusted and obeyed God’s Son Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:6; e.g., see also John 6:63; John 7:38-39; John 14:16-17, 25-26; Acts 2:33, 38-40; Acts 5:31; Titus 3:4-8).

The old covenant given by God at Mount Sinai to Moses and the ancient Israelites was not bad nor evil but holy, good, righteous, and glorious (2 Corinthians 3:7, 10-11; see also Exodus 34:29-30; Psalm 119:39; Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8). However, the old system of law – the Mosaic covenant – was written on stone tablets and not on the human heart. Thus, the old system of the law on stone tablets was powerless to purge away our sins and transform our heart and minds from within (2 Corinthians 3:3, 7; see also Exodus 24:12; Exodus 31:18; Exodus 32:15-16; Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 9:10; Romans 8:3). However, the new covenant instituted at Jesus' sacrificial death on Calvary's Cross was more glorious than the old covenant (see 2 Corinthians 3:10). The new covenant instituted at Jesus' sacrificial death brings a new and transformed heart and mind by the Holy Spirit and declares everyone righteous who believe and obey Jesus and the Gospel message (2 Corinthians 3:6-9, 11-12; see also John 3:3-8; Romans 3:28; Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 3:2-5). The new covenant through the Holy Spirit brings (1) a changed heart, (2) reconciliation with God, (3) knowledge of God, (4) forgiveness of sins, and (5) a new life (2 Corinthians 3:6; see also 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

The power of the living God's transforming Spirit changes everyone who wholeheartedly repents of their sins and genuinely accept and obey the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel (2 Corinthians 3:16; e.g., see Acts 13:38-39; Romans 10:9-13; 2 Peter 1:3-4). The Spirit of God has the transforming power to give everyone a new and eternal life who believes and obeys Jesus and His Gospel message of salvation (2 Corinthians 3:17; see also Acts 1:4-5; Acts 11:16; Romans 1:16-17). Through our faith and obedience of Jesus, believers not only receive new life but freedom from trying to obey the Law through our own physical efforts (2 Corinthians 3:17; see also John 8:31-32; Romans 2:29; Romans 7:6). The Holy Spirit adopts believers into God's family and gives believers the enabling power and desire to obey the Law from within (see also Romans 8:2, 5-6; Galatians 4:6-7). In other words, the God's transforming Spirit gives believers new hearts to obey God and His good Law through our faith in His Son Christ Jesus (see Romans 3:30-31; Philippians 2:12-13).

Under God's new covenant, God's same laws and statutes are now engraved inwardly onto believers' hearts and minds and it is no longer an external set of rules and principles (2 Corinthians 3:3-4; e.g., see also Jeremiah 31:31-34; Jeremiah 32:37-41; Ezekiel 11:19-21; Ezekiel 36:24-27). The Holy Spirit works inside believer to activate our consciences, influence our motives and desires, and make us want to obey God (see Romans 8:2, 5). Now doing God's will is something believers genuinely desire with all our heart and mind (see 2 Corinthians 4:4-6). With new hearts, believers find that serving God is our greatest joy and freedom!

As the Spirit of God transforms our hearts and minds from within, we become more and more like our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus and reflect His bright

glory (2 Corinthians 3:18; see also John 17:22, 24; Romans 8:29). Biblical scholars call believer's transformation by the Spirit sanctification. The old system of law – the Mosaic covenant – written on stone tablets faded with time (2 Corinthians 3:13-14; see also Exodus 34:29-35). However, God's transforming Spirit brings ever increasing glory to all believers as we trust and obey the living God found in Christ Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 3:16-18). God is a living, personal Presence and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, freedom, and deliverance from evil. God's transforming Spirit helps believers through faith in Jesus to become excellent, self-controlled, patient, merciful, and godly (e.g., see John 14:17, 26; John 15:26; Romans 8:26; 2 Peter 1:3-11).

#### References

- NLT Study Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 2008).  
*ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008).  
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