

I AM THANKFUL...

For Jesus' transformative power, *2 Corinthians 3:12-18*

Considering our upcoming celebration of Thanksgiving, we are using our Sunday mornings this month to explore things for which we should be thankful. However, more than mere opportunism motivates this series; we are using the holiday as an occasion to focus on thankfulness because it occupies an essential place in our Christian identity (cf. *Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18*). Therefore, this lesson considers another reason motivating our thankfulness:

I am thankful for Jesus' transformative power.

“We all...are being transformed into the same image”¹

- When challenged over his decision to dine with the tax collector Zacchaeus, Jesus explained his action by announcing that he “came to seek and to save the lost” (*Luke 19:1-10*).
- Jesus' mission pursues a goal far more radical than offering spiritual salvation to sinful people; it focuses on transforming the identity and character of people in their present lives. Consider the following passages:

Romans 8:29

God calls Christians “to be conformed to the image his son.”

2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Drawing on Moses' experiences on Mount Sinai, Paul wrote that being “transformed into the same image” as Jesus allows one to reflect God's glory in a way that fulfills the purpose for which God made humans (cf. Exodus 34:29-35; Genesis 1:26-28).

Galatians 3:26-28

Jesus transforms people by sharing his identity with them.

Galatians 6:15

Paul characterizes the new identity Jesus gives to individuals as a “new creation” (cf. Ephesians 2:11-22).

¹ *2 Corinthians 3:18*. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



Jesus' transformation of Peter

The abstraction of Jesus' transformation finds a concrete example in Peter. Consider:

- Near the beginning of his gospel, John commented that Jesus "himself knew what was in man" and, therefore, knew how he should relate to people (*John 2:23-25*).
- Jesus' insights into peoples' hearts certainly played a role in his selection of the apostles, a group of twelve men he chose to partner with in forming God's new Israel (*cf. Luke 6:12-16; Galatians 3:15-29; Romans 9:6-8*).
- And, from among his handpicked apostles, Jesus selected Peter for a unique leadership role (*John 21:15-19*).
- Peter, however, struggled in his role because – as Jesus commented about him – “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (*Matthew 26:36-41*).
- The Bible does not hide the struggle between Peter's willing heart and weak flesh.
 - Peter allowed the world around him to compromise his faith in Jesus (*Matthew 14:28-33*).
 - Even though he knew enough to recognize Jesus' identity, Peter nevertheless denied what Jesus' identity meant for his mission (*Matthew 16:13-23*).
 - Peter's struggles peaked when he denied Jesus three times after claiming undying faithfulness to him (*John 13:36-38; 18:15-27*).
 - Peter struggled to develop the self-sacrificial love that would motivate him to follow Jesus as Jesus demanded (*John 21:15-19*).
- Despite his struggles, Jesus announced to Peter that he would be transformed and learn to commit himself selflessly to Jesus (*John 21:18-19*).
- Peter continued to struggle even after he stepped into the leadership role in the church to which Jesus called him (*Acts 10:1-35; Galatians 2:11-14*).
- However, Peter's two letters (1, 2 Peter) reveal a submission to Jesus even in the face of hostility, evidencing a settled maturity not present in the gospels and Acts.

Jesus' transformation and us

- Jesus desires to make us into new and better people.
- Jesus has the power to change us.
- Jesus will not leverage his combination of desire and power without our consent; we must submit to him to experience his transformative power.
- Jesus' transformation takes time.
- Jesus' transformation discomforts us.
- We must trust Jesus' process – God has given him “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (*Colossians 2:3*).

May God help us show our thankfulness to Him for how Jesus transforms us.

