

2 Corinthians 4:1-10 (NIV)

¹Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ²Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

47-04-02-The Ultimate Epiphany

epiphany, transfiguration, glory, light, transformation

2 Cor 4:1-10

God wants the glory of His Son to shine out of our lives.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as the Scripture reading)

–Today's **text reveals** God's plan for *the ultimate epiphany*. I used to think *Christ's Transfiguration was an epiphany* [manifestation] of His divinity. I now believe it was an incarnational preview of the human *transformation* God wants to produce in us. **HOM.idea.**

–Jesus was an epiphany of the Father through His human life. By the Holy Spirit, God wants to produce an epiphany of Jesus in us.

–Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." But He also said the same of us. That's a tall order and discouraging, if we fail at it. But, v.1 says, "*since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.*" (*ministry?*)

–v.2 shows this ministry's **objective**: "*setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*" **Truth alone** has power to transform, starting with the inner "*conscience.*" But there's an obstacle– v.3-4, "*if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" These 4 verses introduce God's strategy to meet this obstacle, which is *His...*

I. Goal by Transformation– Mat 5:14-16, "You are the light of the world..." "...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

A. In John 9:5 Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (So, when He left, does that mean it depends on us now to be the light? *Yes and No, or rather, No and Yes:*

1. **No**, because, *in ourselves*, it's obvious: we can't be the light, but
2. **Yes**, because Jesus, although He left *physically*, came back to us spiritually, and *if He lives in us*, He is still "the light of the world."– v.5, *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

B. The very way we received salvation is the same way we are to reach those lost in darkness– v.6, *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

TRANS: Humans were created—“spirit, soul and body”—to be *transparent* “temples” *nakedly open*, so *God’s glory* could shine out of us. When we sinned and fell “short of the glory of God,” *we hid* ourselves—human lives became clouded. [Imagine a large clear glass jar covered with *thick dark plaster*. It might serve many purposes, but **not** as *a receptacle for emitting light*.] *God still wanted His glory to shine from humanity*. So, Jesus came to transform and indwell us with *His life and light*. *Faith-union* with Him is *His...*

II. Gift for Transformation— 1 Cor 6:17 (NKJV). But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

A. When Jesus comes into each human heart, He *dispels our sins and personal darkness* through the gift of spiritual new birth.

1. Transformation begins when our spirits are immersed in Christ— 2 Cor 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
2. This is why salvation is uniquely found only in Christ; outside of union with Him, salvation doesn’t even exist.

B. But at the time of that union, through the *indwelling presence of God’s Spirit*, Jesus comes to live in us, at the *center of our being*.

1. In this way, God restores divine glory to human hearts, not just for ourselves to see properly, but for His light to shine on others.
2. This is what Paul describes in Col 1:27. To them [that is, to believers] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.

C. This transformation of us by union with Christ—*we in Him* and *He in us*—is a gift, **not** an *achievement*, so that all the glory comes from God and goes back to God— v.7, *But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us*.

TRANS: We are *fragile, weak, aging* “jars of clay” [KJV, “earthen vessels”], but within us is hidden a “*treasure*” of glory! Through Jesus, *God’s glory* is planted deep within our being, but it’s not meant to stay there. **God wants the glory of His Son to shine out of our lives**. [Imagine again the clear glass vessel with its exterior caked with *opaque plaster*. Imagine the brightness of God’s glory inside it, hidden from view.] That’s the *human condition*, even for Jesus, when He became one of us. The *Transfiguration* revealed the future appearance of His eternally glorified humanity. But even before that startling event, *He had lived in such a way that John 1:14* says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his **glory**, the

glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus isn’t finished with that manifestation, that epiphany of His Father’s glory, because He still reveals it in us. But that *revelation* requires *our...*

III. Growth in Transformation— 2 Cor 3:18. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

A. The requirement of “unveiled faces” can be stated in different words: *exposed, frank, open, naked, vulnerable*, but what’s its purpose?

1. It’s to overcome the fear inherited from our first parents, who hid from God in *fig leaves*, and *bushes*, and *lame excuses*.
2. It’s to openly gaze at God’s glory “in the face of Christ” so we can, as in a mirrored image, “*reflect the Lord’s glory*.”
3. It’s to fulfill God’s goal that, in our “jars of clay,” we continue “being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory”

B. This is **not** just a one-event kind of transformation, like becoming united with Christ in salvation. No, it’s a *process*, and it’s why Jesus told us in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

1. Paul explained what this “cross daily” process looks like in v.8-9. *We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed*.
2. [Back to the darkly plastered glass jar: when that plaster gets bumped into “on every side” by other jars, maybe even “*persecuted*,” mistreated, or “*struck down*” by life’s difficulties, then the plaster will start falling off. It’s **not** an *easy process*, but *necessary*, if the glory within is to shine out from the jar.]
3. Jesus took up His Cross, calling us to follow Him. (Paul affirmed this as our pathway— v.10, *We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body*.)

CONCLUSION:

—Jesus manifested His *Father’s glory* with such *vulnerability* that He chose to die naked before a crowd *for our salvation*. But that *salvation unites* us to Him *in spirit*, so we can do the same thing: die to self and let His glory shine from our lives. Our *resurrected, ascended* Savior sent His *Spirit* to continue manifesting His life and glory through us. No longer is He confined to *one body in one place for one era*. He has incarnated Himself into a *multitude expanding* across generations. This is Christ’s *ultimate epiphany*, and He’s doing it in us, in “*jars of clay*.”