

Transformation

2 Cor. 4:18

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.

3:18

δὲ

63 ἡμεῖς πάντες...τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα

ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ

τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι

ἀπὸ δόξης

εἰς δόξαν

καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.

face after speaking to the people while his face was glowing from having spoken with the Lord on Sinai. The glow faded with

Authentic interpretation of the biblical text depends on correctly understanding the relationship between primary and secondary ideas in the text. With Greek syntax typically being so dramatically different from English, understanding the Greek properly becomes all the more important.

In the concluding sentence of the paragraph (3:12-18) as found in verse eighteen, the primary idea, is illustrated in the above diagram, In the core declaration ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ...τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα, Paul asserts that *we all are being 'metamorphized' into the same image*. Contextually, ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες, *we all*, includes those who have *turned to the Lord*, ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον (v. 16a).

The present tense first plural passive verb μεταμορφούμεθα from μεταμορφῶ specifies a profound transformation of life taking place as an ongoing process over the life of the believer. It is not a one time experience. Instead this transformation is a life time happening that is being done to us (passive voice verb). We don't achieve it ourselves. μεταμορφῶ as a one time event refers to the transfiguration of Jesus in Matt. 17:2 and Mk. 9:2. But in the other two NT uses in Rom. 12:2 and 2 Cor. 3:18, it refers to the believer's life being transformed as ongoing experience. The sudden transformation of Jesus reflects the full intensity of the Divine Presence enveloping Jesus for that moment Believers experience this over a life time of repeated experience prior to Heaven.

Crucial to being transformed is the term δόξα, used three times in this sentence. In the vast majority of the NT uses (149 of 166) δόξα is for תְּבָרָה, the Shekinah Glory of God. The transformation takes place in connection to the level of divine δόξα at work in our lives.

Here is where the modification role of the five modifying define and 'flesh out' the ongoing transformation in the believer's life.

First is ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ, *with an unveiled face*. Both the nature of the reference as well as its

pre-position in front of the core verb highlight the connection of this statement to vv. 12-17 especially. This is a continuing commentary on Moses using a veil after encountering the Lord on Mt. Sinai in order to receive the Torah. In an unusual pattern, Moses covered his

time and Moses sought to hide this fading glow from the people so they would not doubt that he had been with the Lord. The veil came to symbolized absence from the Lord. The apostle contends that the hardness of heart by the Israelite people is represented by Moses' veil even into Paul's day when the Torah is read in sabbath study in the synagogues (vv. 14-15). The only way for this veil to be removed is by turning to Christ (v. 16). Thus when believers focus on Christ they experience transformation by having doubt and rejection removed from their lives.

Second is τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι, *seeing the divine presence of the Lord as reflected in a mirror*. How does one experience the divine presence? In this modifier the apostle presents it as coming through Christ who functions as a mirror in reflecting it to the believer. Thus transformation of life comes in proportion to our gazing into the mirror who is Christ. The more we focus on Him the greater the transformation of our life.

While the first two modifiers in front of the verb define the means of this transformation, the subsequent three modifiers stress the impact of this transformation.

Third and fourth come the pair of inner connected prepositional modifiers: ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, *from glory into glory*. Contextually from vv. 7-11, the meaning is from the limited glory with Moses to the full glory with Christ. The premise is that the divine presence increases its transforming power the more we focus on Christ. This is essential since ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία, *now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom* (v. 17). Freedom here is the limitations of Torah being removed so that the divine presence can freely operate in transforming us. The Torah puts transformation on our back as a believer, but the Spirit liberates us from that by taking on the responsibility for translation Himself.

Fifth, how this works is asserted in the comparative phrase καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος, *just as from the Lord who is the Spirit*. The source of this transformation is the Lord who is the divine Spirit at work in our lives.

The transformation comes from the Lord through His Spirit working in the lives of believers. It's not self effort, but a divine presence that transforms us.

Praise be to God who changes us and enables us to experience His presence increasingly as we focus our attention increasingly on Christ. That frees up the Holy Spirit to produce this transformation of our lives as an ongoing process all through our journey on planet earth.