**Make: 2 Corinthians wk 4 – Transformation: Bring it!**

**Imagine I was looking for a replacement for myself (pastor) I Google him and find a: \*History of several arrests, \*In and out of prison, \*Often run out of town, \*More than once run out of a church, \*zero tech skills, \*no website, \*no Facebook or Instagram, \*no credit history, \*no home, \* when he speaks he can confuse people, \*known to preach for 8 hours, \*Unimpressive appearance, \*Often got involved in public controversies.**

**I'm not sure I would want this guy around. Well, neither did the church he started. I’m talking about the Apostle Paul.**

**In 2 Cor Paul is writing to a church, he started - who now wanted nothing to do with him. A group of critics are taking over the church.**

**Saying they can’t trust this guy. Paul responds - do you really require evidence of my credibility? He didn't tell them to look at the building I built, $ I raised, books I wrote, TV show, social media followers and popularity. He said look in a mirror, the proof is you!**

**2 Cor is about the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ – a letter to a church stumbling *and* growing.**

**2 Corinthians 2:17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (We are not here to get rich off you – like the others) 3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? (Do we need to prove ourselves to you?)**

**Truth is - we often judge ourselves and others by accomplishments, degrees, titles, and account balances. \* How do you judge success?**

**Paul is asking, "Do I really need to prove myself to you after all we’ve been through?”**

**2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

**You want proof? The real proof is you – your changed lives – the fruit of our time together. You are Christs letter of proof!**

**Corinth had a reputation - “to corinthianize” had become a by-word in the 1st cent. It meant that one was a sexual deviant and pursued selfish appetites. Paul says just look at yourself…**

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor homosexuals 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. (But that is not you anymore) 11 But you were washed, (forgiven) you were sanctified, (set apart and holy) you were justified (made right with God forever) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

**That is what you were - but by the HS - not any longer.**

**The miracle of a life changed… You were lost, now found – you were dead, now alive – once an adulterer / prostitute / thief / cheat / drunkards / violent… but no more! You are the proof!**

**\*\*\* True salvation brings transformation**

**Saying a prayer, walking an aisle, signing a card, going to church is not transformation – it starts deeper.**

* **It’s an inside job - it's an inside job that affects the outside**

**v3b… " written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”**

**It’s not transformation that brings salvation – but salvation that brings transformation – Not behavior modification, but spiritual transformation – from the inside out.**

**Does a person need to change to come to God - no. Just Come! But once you meet Jesus a new story is written & lived.**

* **You're visibly different - A change read by others.**

**v2 - a letter "to be known and read by all”**

**v3 - "you show that you are a letter from Christ”**

**People can see the letter that started with a pain filled page is now made brand new - ready to be filled with a new journey.**

**Jesus is the writer, the HS is the ink, Paul was the pen, and they were the paper. Likewise, we are a walking letter of God read to the world!**

**Our new life tells the story of the gospel – of Jesus saving power to conquer sin and bring freedom to a broken life.**

**Paul didn’t point to crowd size, baptism #'s, programs started, or degree to tell them who he is. He simply said, “If you want to know me, look at what God has done in those who know me.”**

**Q- What do the lives of those around you say about your life with God?**

**What is your fruit – who do you disciple, mentor, who are you walking in Christ with, sharing Jesus with… who are your letters?**

**Can you produce a living letter of your walk with Christ?**

**The measure of our success is not on accolades and achievements - but on the lives of those around us who are closer to God.**

**It's not perfect attendance, # of mission trips, giving totals, (though they can result in changed lives) or conversion #'s - But who did you disciple? Lives changed by the Holy Spirit.**

**Do you know why you are alive? When this life is over, what will you have to show for your life before Christ? God, I had this job, money, friends, reputation, career, awards, position… I want to pull out a box of letters… that represent people (#1 - my wife and kids- then you)**

**Are you writing into lives? Who are your letters?**

**2 Cor 3:4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. (I know this because of Christ) 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, (it’s not about me)**

**Paul was brilliant, educated, miracles followed him, traveled the world, met w/ kings and great leaders… but he says many times - if there was anything good in me - it was totally God!**

**\*\*\* True brokenness precedes transformation (humility)**

**It’s said, “The man that knows he is nobody, God will make somebody”**

**The false humility and humble brags – sub arrogance / pride.**

**(John the Baptist) John 3:30 He must become greater; I must become less.**

**Matthew 23:12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. / James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (James 4:4-10)**

**There is no life transformation without humility & brokenness.**

**Psalm 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. / Psalm 34:18 - The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. / Psalm 138:6 For though the LORD is high (great), he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.**

**Are you broken/hurting? It’s a great place for transformation.**

**The letter of our heart is written thru brokenness before God.**

**2 Cor 3:6 (God) who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (OT laws, we don't break them, they break us, reveal sin- they condemn us as guilty)**

**The OT functions like a CAT scan that reveals cancer but does not cure. The CAT scan is good but it does not save, it reveals disease. That is the difference between having OT & NT**

**7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, (10 commands) came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, (glory on Moses face – not the commands) 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit (in a person) have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, (OT law) the ministry of righteousness (Jesus) must far exceed it in glory.**

**The NT message - No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**

**10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, (the visible glory on Moses face) because of the glory that surpasses it. (the visible glory on believers in Jesus) 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, (the ministry of the temple law) much more will what is permanent have glory. (the ministry of the Jesus)**

**\*\*\* True teachable spirit produces transformation (humility)**

**Paul explains how God is doing something new in us thru Christ – a new / greater covenant - if we will open our eyes to the truth.**

**To be transformed is to increase in understanding. Growing in theology and depth of insight. We don’t live on just the basics. The word of God transforms. You have more to learn.**

**2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.**

**And - Paul’s constant challenge to grow deeper beyond the basics.**

**2 Cor 3:12 Since we have such a hope, (in Christ) we are very bold, (before others – our boldness is a self-motivation pep rally) 13 not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.**

**(A veil) Paul is talking Ex 34:29-35 – Moses after being with God on the Mt. wore a veil before people due to his exposer to God’s glory, but it faded away (temporary glory). How much more glorious is that which doesn’t fade away? The HS in us.**

**14 But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. (they don't know Jesus - the veil is still on) 15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.**

**The veil represents a denial of truth. Blind to Jesus.**

* **There are people who are spiritually blind (Unbeliever’s)**

**They can hear it – know it and still don’t get it – they are veiled.**

**Some of you here are veiled – spiritually blind.**

**2 Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, (covered/ hidden) it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

**To some Jesus makes no sense - it's foolishness, just can’t see it. There are people who know a lot about the Bible but still blind to it.**

**We can’t argue people into seeing Jesus. We can’t get angry at a blind man because he can’t see the color green - we pray, lead, guide, and introduce - God might use us to get them to him, but…**

* **God Alone Gives Sight to the Blind**

**2 Cor 3:16 But when one (anyone) turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**

**When the HS lifts the veil – we finally see Jesus and freedom!**

**Fear Factor – the dumb stuff done blindfolded. When the veil is lifted – we see the condition of our heart and the grace of Jesus. Covered we think we are fine… but then the light comes on and we see our filth and need for Jesus – and drawn to the light.**

* **we see Jesus = we turn to Jesus.**

**2 Cor 3:18And we all, (Christians) who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory (like looking in a mirror, we can see the change - we see we...), are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, (glory to glory – day by day) which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (By the Spirit of God)**

**2 Cor 4:1 Therefore, having this ministry (knowing Jesus) by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. (Because I can see the baby steps in my life - I won't get discouraged or walk away and quit)**

**I look in the mirror and see God at work in me – a letter still being written – a life daily becoming more like Christ. Ask those around you - what do you see? God help me see it too.**

**Paul tells us how - (Christians) “…are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**

**Transformed - Greek word “metamorphoo” = change**

**\*\*\*Spending time with Jesus creates transformation**

**This is how you can tell someone is spending time with the Lord - they reflect him more and more.**

**You can tell when someone spends time with God – in worship / in the word / prayer / silence - we don't give in - we press in.**

**This is God’s will for every Christian.**

**Ticket games / cheap prizes - Likewise, many spend their life pursuing tickets to buy cheap stuff that breaks easily. This life is not about what I want to do, where I want to go, how many rides can I ride, tickets can I get, money I can make- Jesus for you I live – to know you!**

**“are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory”**

**We are “being” change – ever increasing. Over time and gradually – as we seek his presence and spend time w/ Jesus.**

**Born in 1725, son of an English sea captain - He became a slave ship captain, taking Africans to the Mediterranean and West Indies. Years later - forced to join the Royal Navy, he tried to desert but was flogged and forced to work on a slave ship - he lived in hunger and destitution – often contemplating murdering the captain or suicide. / Hard to control - He was eventually traded to an African Princess and made a slave – where he was abused – and made a servant of slaves. His father had been looking for him and found him years later. Ironically, he continued in the salve trade.**

**While returning home - a violent storm hit the ship… as it began to fill with water - the ship broke away from the side… sinking he cried out to God to forgive and save him! The cargo broke loose (bees wax) and filled up many of the holes. He writes - a light came on as he read the Bible.**

**He soon left the slave trade (publicly repenting / working to the rest of his life to abolish it) and became a preacher of Jesus Christ. He became a great preacher who attracted enormous crowds. - Before he died, he prepared his own epitaph, which reads this way:**

**John Newton, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.**

**He once said, “I am not the man I ought to be, I am not the man I wish to be, and I am not the man I hope to be, but by the grace of God, I am not the man I used to be.”**

**He wrote nearly 300 hymns, most long since been forgotten… But there is one that has become the most famous hymn of all time:**

**Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound**

**That saved a wretch like me**

**I once was lost, but now am found**

**Was blind but now I see**

**Veil - God called me out of darkness into his marvelous light – (by the HS) I turned to him - the veil was taken - Thank you God – You saw me, called me, revealed your truth to me, teaching me, maturing me – growing me – making me!! Thank you, Jesus!!**

**I want to end with this – 2 Cor 3:16 But when one (anyone) turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**