

Devotional 5

Being Transformed by Beholding

The Object of Your Attention Determines the Direction of Your Change

The Awakening

There is a principle embedded in the human soul that neuroscience has confirmed but Scripture announced long before: you become what you behold. Extended, attentive contemplation of anything shapes the mind, the desires, and eventually the life around its object. This is why advertising works, why pornography destroys, why extended meditation on grievances produces bitterness, and why people who spend decades with the same person come to resemble one another.

Paul applies this principle to the spiritual life with a precision that should arrest every person who has ever wondered why they are not changing. The reason you are not being transformed is not primarily a failure of discipline. It is a failure of attention. You have not been beholding. Or you have been beholding the wrong things. And the direction of transformation follows the direction of your gaze.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 — FOUNDATIONAL TEXT

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory — which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

What the Text Reveals

Unveiled Faces: The Removal of the Veil

Paul has been building a contrast between Moses, whose face shone after encountering God but who wore a veil to conceal the fading of that glory, and the new covenant believer, whose face is unveiled. The veil Moses wore is not merely a historical detail — it is a theological category: the thing that stands between the human soul and unmediated encounter with God's glory. Paul says: in Christ, that veil is removed. Daily renewal happens face to face, not at a distance.

Katoptrizomenoi: Beholding as in a Mirror

The Greek *katoptrizomenoi* can mean either 'beholding as in a mirror' or 'reflecting.' Both senses are likely present. We behold the Lord's glory — and what we behold we begin to reflect. The mirror receives the image of what is placed before it. The Christian soul, consistently turned toward Christ in Scripture and prayer, begins to take on the shape of what it has been attending to. This is not automatic. It is the result of consistent, deliberate, unveiled attention.

Metamorphoumetha: The Passive Transformation

The transformation verb is passive: we are being transformed. We do not transform ourselves. But the passive is not passive in the sense of uninvolved. The unveiled face must be turned. The contemplation must be actual. The beholding must be real. Daily renewal requires the daily act of turning your face toward Christ — in the Word, in prayer, in worship, in the sacramental rhythms of the Christian life. The Spirit does the transforming. You do the beholding. These are not the same work. But neither can operate without the other.

The Biblical Architecture

The beholding-and-becoming principle appears at the foundation of Israel's covenant life. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 — 'The LORD our God, the LORD is one' — is not merely a monotheism declaration. It is a direction-of-attention command: love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Keep these words on your heart. Talk about them constantly. Bind them on your hands. Write them on your doorframes. The entire environment of the Israelite home was to be arranged to keep the divine object of attention continuously in view.

Psalms 27:4 captures the contemplative center of the Old Testament renewal pattern: 'One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.' Gazing — *chazah* — deliberate, focused, sustained attention to God's beauty — is David's one request. Not requests, but one. And that one thing is the source of everything else.

Hebrews 12:2 brings the New Testament to the same point with different vocabulary: 'fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.' The Greek *aphorontes* — 'looking away from everything else toward' — implies not merely a glance but a redirecting of the whole orientation of attention. The race of faith is run not by trying harder but by looking in the right direction. The transformation follows the gaze.

CORE THESIS

You will become what you consistently behold. Daily renewal is not primarily a matter of discipline applied to behavior — it is the daily, deliberate, unveiled turning of your face toward the glory of Christ. The Spirit does the transforming. But the transforming follows the beholding. Fix your gaze, and the change will come.

THE QUESTION THAT MATTERS MOST

What has received your most consistent, most attentive, most devoted contemplation in the past month? What has that beholding been producing in you? What would a genuine, deliberate redirection of that attention toward Christ look like in the concrete rhythms of your week?

A PRAYER FROM THE AWAKENING

Lord, we have been surprised by our lack of change. But the surprise is unwarranted — we have not been beholding. We have glanced and moved on. We have skimmed and scrolled past. We have given sustained attention to everything except the One who transforms. Remove the veil — every pretense, every distraction, every competing image that has claimed the place Your glory deserves. Turn our faces toward You.

****We want to be changed into Your image. So we turn now — unveiled, attentive, unhurried — to behold what the Spirit will use to transform us. Do in us what beholding You always does.****

From glory to glory. That is Your trajectory for us. Begin the movement in us today. Amen.

Scripture Treasury

CATEGORY	REFERENCE	SCRIPTURE
Beholding and Becoming	2 Corinthians 3:18	<i>We all... contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory — which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.</i>
	Psalms 27:4	<i>One thing I ask: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD.</i>
Fixing the Gaze	Hebrews 12:2	<i>Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.</i>
	Colossians 3:1–2	<i>Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.</i>
The Direction of Attention	Deuteronomy 6:4–6	<i>The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments are to be on your hearts.</i>
	Psalms 119:15	<i>I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.</i>
The Image of God	Romans 8:29	<i>For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.</i>
	Ephesians 4:22–24	<i>Put off your old self... and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.</i>