

**Romans 8:1-13**, Living Free in Christ pt. 4  
Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on **April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

*“For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*  
**Romans 8:13**

*“...by making life easier for ourselves in minimizing the nature and seriousness of our sin, we become greater victims of it. We are in fact not healing ourselves. Those who say that they already feel bad enough without being told about the corruptions of indwelling sin misread the path to peace. When our people have not been taught well about the real nature of sin and how it works and how to put it to death, most of the miseries people report are not owing to the disease, but it's symptoms.”*  
**John Piper**

*“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the **condemning** power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the **indwelling** power of sin.”*  
**John Owen**

### **Intro**

How does Christian transformation take place? This is definitely an important question, and one that we are taking a look at during this study of Romans 6-8. The teaching of Grace is dangerous in that it can be mistakenly understood as meaning that God is not concerned with our behavior. While this is not true, God is more concerned with your motives (Heart) than with your behavior (Actions). Behavior changes can be a mask for the sins of the heart, and changing behavior is not the goal of Christian transformation, loving God with our heart, mind and soul is, and loving our neighbor as a result of that change is certainly the goal of the gospel.

### **What We Don't Mean**

1. That you can live in perfect victory over sin on this earth
2. That cleaning up your life is the clear path to God
3. That sin is always manifested outwardly
4. That you can overcome sin without God
5. That holiness or righteousness is something you work harder for

### **What We Hope to Say**

1. Sin is far worse than its symptoms
2. Our Motivation and power to transform comes from God alone
3. That we have been freed from the oppression and power of sin in our lives, but the presence of sin remains in reality in our “Flesh”
4. That there is no condemnation for sin in Christ Jesus, and we are freed to love God and others without being motivated by guilt or need.
5. That the resurrection is the single greatest event in human history, and the backbone for the Christian faith

It is important to see in the verses we have already looked at, that we can now see ourselves for who we are; sinners in the hands of a loving God! Look at chapter 7 in the final verses leading up to Romans 8:1. These are incredible verses! Though we are “Wretched,” we are loved, and there is no “Condemnation” (Judgment) against us because of Christ Jesus (See also **Luke 11:13; Jeremiah 17:9**). No other system of thought teaches this truth. Liberals deny sin, and have no category for evil, while conservatives love to talk about it, but believe it is out there, and do not know what to do, when they sin. But when we begin to understand that we are evil, yet loved, it humbles us into realizing that we have a bond with all of humanity that can't divide any longer between “Good” people and “Evil” people. We “*All sin, and fall short of the glory of God*” (**Romans 3:23**). We all are flesh (Sarx). The flesh Paul mentions in chapter 7 has to do with man's desire to be his own god. Gaining our acceptance from God by way of rituals (Like circumcision, baptism, etc.) or from our own keeping of the law does not find favor with God apart from Christ. Being our own God can come in the form of breaking all of the laws, or by keeping all of the law as a form of self-righteousness. The gospel gives us the freedom to admit that we are sinful, but that we are loved and accepted in Christ.

Today I hope we can begin to see a new way to apply this reality in our lives, so that spiritual transformation can become a reality in our lives.

### **From the Head...**

#### **We Are Free in Christ (Romans 8:1-3)**

Applying will power does nothing to transform us since self-centeredness can take both a moral and immoral form.

### We are Enabled by Christ (Romans 8:4-13)

The answer is found in these next verses (Esp. vv. 5 + 13). “Putting to death the deeds of the body,” does not mean your physical body, but has to do with the idea that you are trying to gain approval by physical means rather than spiritual (ie. Works based, self-salvation, rather than faith based in Christ, see **Romans 4**). It is in recognizing this and “Killing” off this idea that brings forth transformation. Trying to do it by our works robs our joy, and brings forth death (**Romans 8:13**). In the bible mind is not just the rational end of man, but the whole person. The mind encompasses the heart, the mind and the emotions. What are you most preoccupied in? What motivates you? What are you living for? Is it Christ or something else? It is because we are free from the condemning power of sin that we can now put to death the indwelling power of sin. Our master is Christ, and not our desire to make ourselves God.

### **...to the Heart**

So the gospel gives you the ability to change, and the method by which we can identify our real problem (Our desire to be our own gods), but it also goes beyond this to give us the power to change. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we change. It is the Spirit that brings to our mind the beauty of Christ in such a way, that He becomes more beautiful than anything else that we place our affections on. We work in concert with the Spirit by yielding to the things that we discover by the Spirit and His word. In order to put to death the flesh, we need to be in Christ, and have His Spirit in us, and then as we set our hearts and minds on His word, He can begin to do His surgery in our lives.

The gospel gives us a frame work that is more than emotions (Affections), more than the will (Volition) and more than pure reason (Cognition). It confronts us with ourselves, and allows us to see that we are loved in spite of it, and that God has given us His Spirit in order to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

Next week's verses: Selected Verses on living our lives in Worship!

Books for further reading: *Commentary on Romans*; Martin Luther; *A Rereading of Romans*; Stanley K. Stowers; *The Mortification of Sin*; John Owen; *Romans: An Interpretive Outline*; David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas; *Romans: The Righteousness of God*; Adolph Schlatter

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