

Romans 8:13-27, Living Free in Christ pt. 4
Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on **May 20th, 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

“When you are shaken by life's circumstances, what comes out of you is what is in you.”
Paul Tripp

Intro

We have been taking a look at Romans 6:1-8 and asking the question, how is it the gospel transforms us into the image God wants for us. Romans 1-5 shows us that we are all sinful by nature (Total Depravity) which means that we are incapable of doing anything that isn't centered around our greatest affection, which is not naturally God, but our own desires and needs. Romans 6 shows us that we have been freed from our enslavement to that reality and that transformation is a possibility for all in Christ, by God's grace in our lives. Romans 7 reminds us that there is a tension between our new nature (Heart) and indwelling sin (Old man). Whereas the world seeks “Transformation” through behaviorism, and conformity, God seeks our transformation through the saving power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and how that gives us a “New” heart (**Ezekiel 36**) to mold into the image of God. Motives, and heart issues are as important to God as outward change, which can occur through the will of a person, and not by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In today's passage we see how life's circumstances have a huge bearing on our growth, and how the heat of life's trials either move us toward God, resulting in repentance, faith and fruit, or move us away from God and toward the thorns that result in our hardened hearts, when we continue to operate in our own self control mechanisms. What is growth, and what stops us from growing?

From the Head...

Romans 8:13 reminds us of the heart of our study. If we live by the flesh (Our own self saving, self controlling mechanisms) we will die (Spiritually and eternally). If we *“Put to death the misdeeds of the body, we will live.”* Now this ought to bring us to despair if we don't understand the “But” (Contrast” in the passage. We are able to put to death the deeds of the body, *“By the Spirit!”* This is important and can't be missed! The Christian life is an impossible life, apart from God's grace and power through His Son and the Holy Spirit. Today there are three key things that we need to understand in order to grow.

Not Knowing Our Identity (Romans 8:14-17a)

If our worth, identity and acceptance come from anything but our treasure in Christ, we will forever chase “Fleshly” solutions to our problems. According to these verses we are God's children, and no longer have any reason to “Fear” condemnation or judgment since Christ has already paid that penalty for sin (**Romans 8:1**). In realizing that we are sons of God, we realize that He hears our cries as a father would (see **Hebrews 5:7-9**), and we are heiresses to all of His riches. But our identity in Christ doesn't hide us from suffering.

Not Realizing Our Predicament (Romans 8:17b-25)

If we can't see that suffering is part of what it means to be human, we will miss out on some amazing opportunities for growth in our lives (**Romans 5 and James 1**). In verses 17 + 18 we begin to realize a clear pattern in our suffering. Romans 8:19+20 remind us that it is a fact that death, decay and heartache are a normative pattern in a fallen world. The question is how are we as redeemed believers going to react to it? What does this say about God, and the mechanisms He often uses for our growth? Is comfort and recovery in the forefront of these passages in regards to spiritual growth? What we find is that it is God who subjects creation to groaning and frustration, so that we would be liberated. It is done in love, and with an eternal perspective, once we understand the pattern of God in death and resurrection. Jesus is the only God who has ever understood our pain. His Father understands the death of a loved one, and Christ understands the pain of sin. God understands the pain of rebellious children, and is grieved by the sin that besets us!

Not Moving Toward Our Resources (Romans 8:26-27)

It is in these times of severe trial that we can either move away from God, or to Him in Hope. We are given a fantastic resource in the Holy Spirit, and in prayer. And when we can't seem to find the words to pray in our struggle, we are

comforted to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf. It is in this hope that we are saved from our own desire to move away from God. We (Believers) live our lives as though this world is not all there is, and that God will redeem us and our world, and that the glory that awaits us far outweighs any disaster that we encounter on earth (see **Romans 8:18**).

...To the Heart

What do you do during minor trials in your life? Sometimes it is the minor things in our life that give us the strength to get through the major trials that come our way. Spiritual growth is easily thwarted by bitter reactions to our life's circumstances. Heat either melts or hardens an object depending on its make up. I pray that we can begin to see life's trials as opportunities for growth, and not a wedge that drives us further away from God, because we can't see past our own circumstances.