

The Transformation Series: Transformation from the Inside Out

Selected Text, Preached at Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on November 18th, 2007

*"We will face the reality that although we are fruit trees by the grace of God, we still have thorn bush responses to life. The THORN bush represents the fact that, as sinners, we all tend to respond sinfully to the circumstances of life."*¹

Intro

We have been taking a look at how it is that God changes our lives and shapes us into the identity that is ours in Christ. Because of His death, and His subsequent presence in our lives, we are changing into His image in a process that He works in our lives through our every day circumstances. We are literally "*new creations*" in Christ Jesus (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Note the process in the above verse. God is using the "HEAT" in our lives to shape us into the people He wants us to be. We need to be sensitive to that and open to change. Is your identity being defined by your circumstances more than they are by the grace of Jesus Christ? It is important to realize that you are a "new" person in Christ, complete with a new heart that is able to be transformed, able to act in obedience to God and His word. Change, however, begins in understanding that the thorns still are present. We still act out in anger, we still numb our spiritual senses with work, possessions, and substances, we still take our identity from the things we do and the things that people say, and we still find our joy in everything except God. For the next two weeks, we are going to take a look at the thorns in our lives, because it is in taking a hard look at ourselves that we are able to see what God wants to change in our lives. We could all benefit from meditating and praying Psalms 139:23-24 on a daily basis. We are called to an "**Ongoing recognition and confession of my 'thorny' responses to life.**"² How do you respond to the daily heat in your life?

5 Gospel perspectives

1. Our sin is worse than we can imagine, but God's grace is greater than our sin!
2. God is concerned about transformation at the heart level, not the behavior level.
3. We should benefit from our relationship with Christ here and now, and in eternity.
4. God calls us to grow and change.
5. Our Christian life is a lifestyle of Repentance and Faith

From the Head...

This is hard in a way, because sometimes asking people to take a look inside is like asking your child to eat just ice cream. On the other hand, many of us are afraid to take a look at the inside; it's too painful a place to journey and we busy ourselves so we don't have to be alone with our thoughts. In our sinful core, both traits can be a disaster. One person wants to soul gaze all day because he is self-consumed, and most often depressed at the findings, with no apparent way out. The other, a "doer" wants to escape, which usually means escaping into a fantasy that leaves him shallow and empty. We are called to look inside, as we have our eyes on Jesus and His cross. Without the latter, we will become self-absorbed, and hopeless, but without the former, we will become shallow and clueless. As Tripp and Lane write, our self-examination should lead us to a, "joyful discontent," which, "*should not be confused with a life of paralyzing self-condemnation.*"³ To this theologian/preacher D. Martin Lloyd Jones adds, "**I suggest we cross the line of demarcation between self-examination into introspection when, in a sense, we do nothing but examine ourselves, and when such self-examination becomes the main and chief end in our life.**"⁴

How can we become "Joyful Discontents?"

1. Acknowledge the Love of Christ in our lives (**Ephesians 3:14-19**).
2. Acknowledge the reality of God's power in us (**Ephesians 3:20, 21**).
3. Acknowledge and use the gifts that God has gifted the church (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).

When we examine ourselves a la Psalms 139:23-24, we can become more like Christ, and less like our "old" self.

Contrasting Lifestyles (**Ephesians 4:17-24**)

Our Old Way

Wrong thinking and desires (vv, 17-19)

Impurity (v. 19)

Lusts of deceit (v. 22)

Lying (v. 25)

Destructive patterns of anger (v.26)

Stealing (v. 28)

Corrupting Talk (v. 29)

¹ Tripp/Lane, Workbook, 7.2

² IBID, 7.3

³ IBID, 7.4

⁴ D. Martin Lloyd Jones, *Spiritual Depression: It's Causes and Cures*, 17

Bitterness, wrath, slander (v. 31)

Our New Way

Thinking in a new way (vv. 20-22)

Speaking the truth (v. 25)

Using our anger righteously (vv. 26-27)

Becoming grace givers with our mouths (v. 29)

Edifying, forgiving, grace-full relationships born in love (vv. 31-32)

A New Way to be Human (**Ephesians 5 + 6**)

The Christian life calls us out in every area of our lives. Every place that is meaningful for us ought to be affected by the gospel of grace in our life.

In our interpersonal relationships (5:3-7)

In our interactions with the world (5:8_14)

In the church (5:15-21)

In our marriages (5:22-33)

In our parenting (6:2-4)

In the Workplace (6:5-9)

...to the Heart

This is why Ephesians 6:10-18 follows. We are in a spiritual battle for our minds and our hearts. Everything in this world points you away from Christ toward the next best thing to fulfill you life. Our response is NOT to separate us from the world, because that doesn't change our heart, rather we are to begin to seek God in word and prayer to change us so that we can engage our world in mission with a heart that is less pleased with the world, and much pleased with Christ.

How do you deal with obstacles in your life?⁵

1. **Deny, avoid and escape?**
2. **Magnify, expand and catastrophize?**
3. **Become prickly and hypersensitive?**
4. **Return evil for evil?**
5. **Become bogged down, paralyzed, captured?**
6. **Self-excuse, self-righteousness?**

These are reactions of our heart. These reactions are exposed by our circumstances (HEAT). They expose what we really love and trust.

What are healthy FRUIT tree responses to HEAT?⁶

1. **Face Reality.**
2. **Respond with appropriate intensity.**
3. **Be alert.**
4. **Constructive activity.**

Books for further study: Most of this material is taken from "How People Change" and "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands" by Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, as well as their accompanying workbooks.

Next Weeks Verses: Deuteronomy 5:6-21; Romans 1:25; James 4:1-4

To dialogue with the sermon go to www.sermonrant.wordpress.com and express your thoughts

⁵ Tripp/Lane, Workbook, 7.7-7.9

⁶ IBID, 7.10-7.11