

The Transformation Series: Keeping the Cross in Mind

Selected Text, Preached at Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on December 9th, 2007

“You start repenting of your righteousness and not just your sins. What does this mean? Every time we build our lives on what we try to do or be apart from Christ, it is an attempt to justify ourselves. It is a way we try to create a righteousness apart from Christ so that we can feel accepted before God, others and ourselves”

Tripp/Lane

Intro

As we saw last week, we are new persons in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:17**), and because of that, and the process that the Holy Spirit is working in you; you can be transformed by God’s power. You have a new heart, and that heart is malleable to be molded and conformed to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**). If this is true, why do we continue in sin? The issue is we are living in an in between time; the time between our justification and our glorification. We are in process, and not finished. In God’s eyes we are already, but not yet. The truth of our justification in Christ is being lived out in “Fear and trembling (**Philippians 2:12-13**). How can we do that? We need to live a **CROSS** centered life! We must begin with an identity that is shaped by our identity in the suffering Christ (see **Philippians 1:21; 3:7-14**). Without understanding our identity in Christ, we will not grow at the rate that we could if we did.

Living a “Cross Centered” life does not mean becoming a Christian; it means that we are daily taking up our cross (**Luke 14**) to live the life that God intended for us, which is a life that is abundant! We must live daily in faith in order to grow (Colossians 1:6-7). Christ and His cross is central to our everyday walk with our Lord!

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...

The key to living a life focused on the cross is **Repentance** and **Faith**. This is the tension we must hold. Repentance reminds us of our ongoing struggle with sin, while faith reminds us of the incredible grace and mercy by which we are saved. It keeps us in that “Joyful discontent,” that allows us to properly evaluate who we are, and how much we need Christ to live a daily life. When we stop doing this, we start drifting away from God, and before we know it, our relationship is cold and distant.

Faith: Seeing Who You Are in Christ (1 John 2:1-2; 3:1-3)

1. You are justified - **1 John 2:1-2**

Christ not only paid off our debt, but He is our defense attorney (Advocate) against any and all accusations made about us be them true or false. In the court of law, we are shown to be NOT GUILTY! There is much that is being made about this idea of redemption being western, guilt motivated and not the message of the gospel, but it is the heart of the Romans and Galatians, and the gospels. If our sins are merely a faux pas making us less of the person we were meant to be (Which is partially true), and has nothing to do with offending a holy God, then Christ isn’t really needed, and man’s sins are really not that bad. This half gospel leads to a self-centered gospel, that doesn’t lead anyone into social justice any more than any therapeutic conclusion. When we see who we really are, then we are able to live our lives free from the entrapments of this world, and readily available to love others the way Christ loves us.

2. You are adopted – **1 John 3:1-3**

We have a radically new position before God, and we are legally adopted as His children, given all the rights that would come with being a child of the king. Our identity is in that, and not the many entrapments of the world. It is because of this position and this amazing grace, and this love bestowed upon us all that we are compelled to live for Him (**Philippians 1:21**); and it is because of this place with God that we are able to reach and sacrifice our own lives

for the lives of others. This is not our world, but we are ambassadors to it, and we are to share in Christ's sufferings for His glory, which is redeeming His created world for that same glory!

Repentance: Admitting and Turning From Sin (Luke 15:11-32)

Repentance (Greek = "Metanoe") means to change one's mind. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, we see the stages of a repentant sinner. He comes to his senses (v.17), admits his sin (v.18), then runs to his father's loving arms (v.20). Repentance is not just being sorry, which focuses on how bad you feel about your sin and its consequences. Repentance focuses on how bad you offended God (see **2 Corinthians 7:10**). Here you begin to see how your heart contributed greatly to your action(s). *"You start repenting of your righteousness and not just your sins. What does this mean? Every time we build our lives on what we try to do or be apart from Christ, it is an attempt to justify ourselves. It is a way we try to create a righteousness apart from Christ so that we can feel accepted before God, others and ourselves."*¹

...to the Heart

Cross-centered lives that transform us into "little Christs" are shown by a regular daily diet of repentance and faith. Our change comes from knowing who we are, and the fact that our changed status before God allows us the freedom to live the life He has called us to live, and that is a life that loves God and loves others, and sees others as more highly than they see themselves. The cross shows us that we are new in Christ Jesus, and that we are called to live a life that bears that cross, by sacrificing ourselves on it on a daily basis in everything we do (see **1 Corinthians 10:31**).

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 6:4-6; Mark 12:28-31; 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 139:23-24; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-28; Ephesians 3:14-21

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

¹ Tripp/Lane, Workbook, 10.11