

# The Transformation Series: Why Are There So Many Thorns in My Garden?

Selected Text, Preached at Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007

*"All ungodly behavior grows out of a heart that has been captured by something other than Christ."*  
Lane/Tripp

## Intro

Last week we took a look at what entangles us in the thorns. This week, we will be looking at why we get entangled. First it is important to put this study in its appropriate place. It is easy to take a long hard look at the inside and come away disappointed. As we saw last week, we should have a "joyful discontent," reminding us of the tension that is our lives. We cannot look at the inside and become paralyzed by what we see, but we cannot be people that aren't able to stop and, "examine our selves" to see if we are in the faith (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). Any look on the inside should result in repentance and faith, and any imbalance here results in an unexamined life or morbidity. It is easy to get everyone thinking about their issues and miss the forest, which is transformation for the sake of God's mission in the world. This is not a 10-year transformation before you are ready. It is an ongoing process of self-correction and transformation that never ends, and therefore must be seen as happening while the mission is taking place. What we are studying is how God works in our lives, and the lives of others, so that we can become healthier and use what God is doing in our lives to help others benefit from the life changing work of the Spirit of God (See **2 Corinthians 1**). Everything God does with the gospel is for His glory and His mission, and we must reconnect ourselves to that narrative to understand what God is doing in our life. When we disconnect from that larger narrative, we miss the point of what God is doing (See **Ezekiel 36:22ff; Romans 3:23-25**).

Another thing for us to remember is that "*bad fruit (THORNS) like good fruit (FRUIT) is rooted in the heart.*"<sup>1</sup> Thorns are created in our lives because our hearts have strayed from home (ie. God/Jesus). We have, "*left our first love*" (**Revelation 2:4**). Our problem with sin exists because our desires have found another object, or have made other objects more important than Christ in our life. "*Our real problem is a worship disorder!*"<sup>2</sup>

The big question is: what has captured your heart? Where are your affections set? When we begin to take a look at our hearts, and not just our behavior, we can begin to allow God to transform the ugly residue that still exists inside all of us.

## 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 10 Commandments and the Heart (**Deuteronomy 5:6-21**; also **6:6**)

So often we see the 10 commandments as a series of rules to keep, and we, like the rich young ruler, try our best to keep them without a change of heart. The commandments of God teach us that there is something wrong inside, they are not a set of rules to keep to please God (see **Galatians 3:22ff**). It's not unlike stapling fruit on a tree that cannot produce fruit in order to make it "look" like a fruit tree. The reason we have trouble obeying God's commandments is that we have trouble seeing God/Christ as our one and only spouse.

### Worshipping the Blessings Instead of the One Who Blesses (**Romans 1:25**)

As we have talked a lot during this study, we sometimes have thorny responses because we continually try to make ultimate things out of good things. We take the things that God wants us to enjoy and make them our functional gods and idols. We desire more that our spouses would love us more, or that our children would respect us more, or that special someone would look our way, more than we want Christ. When God created, everything He created was "good." He created them so that we could use and enjoy them, but sin has turned that blessing into desires that have corrupted our hearts.

### The Result of a Desirous Heart (**James 4:1-4**)

When our desires are set on something else as ultimate and our desires are not met, war is usually the result. When our desires are not being met, we explode in anger, sadness, fear, and often depression.

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<sup>1</sup> Lane/Tripp, Workbook, 8.1

<sup>2</sup> IBID, 8.5

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

It is important to spend some time this week and take an inventory of some of the thorns that still lie deep in your heart in order for God to reveal His grace to you and begin to transform every area of your heart. When we see the thorns in our heart, we can see the areas that still need transformation, and God is committed to continue His work in our lives. That work involves a daily process of cleansing and obedience that comes from repentance and faith, which will be our topic for the next couple of weeks. "*Lasting growth begins when we see the things that lead our hearts away from Christ.*"<sup>3</sup>

Notice that in many religious systems we are asked either to obey to be loved or to forsake "earthly" things in order to be made right. Yet both of those systems do not get rid of sin, motivate anyone, or change the heart. The Christian walk is not a life of seclusion and separation, but a life of redemption that continues to change a life to reveal what real life is like; expressing that life in a heart change, not a rule change.

**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 Week's Verses:** Galatians 2:20; Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:12-15; Romans 12:14-21; Ephesians 4:29

**To dialogue with the sermon go to [www.sermonrant.wordpress.com](http://www.sermonrant.wordpress.com) and express your thoughts**

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<sup>3</sup> IBID, 8.13