

# The Transformation Series: Taking a Look at Real Reality

Selected Text, Preached at Harambee Church by Pastor Mike Gunn on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007

*"God is not absent from you heat...When you are in the middle of the Heat, you haven't somehow gotten yourself outside the circle of God's love and care. God is simply taking you where you do not want to go to produce in you what you could not achieve on your own."*

Lane/Tripp<sup>1</sup>

## Intro

**Week #1** – Knowing that God is committed to transformation brings forth Hope and perspective.

**Week #2** – Hope of change rests on a relationship with Christ.

**Week #3** – Transformation takes place in the community of a loving church.

**Week #4** – Transformation comes from seeing the change process through the process of Heat, Thorns, Cross and Fruit.).

**Week #5** – God understands our full range of joys and sorrows!

## 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

**Today we are going to look a bit closer at the reality of the world we live in according to the bible, and how our reality (Heat) is calling us to change something in the process God is working in us.**

## From the Head...

### 1. **A Stark Picture of Reality** (Romans 8:20-22)

Life on earth is:

***"Subjected to Futility"*** (v. 20)

No matter what humanity seems to try to make change, nothing seems like it changes at all. All life under the sun is "Vanity, vanities."

***"Bondage to Decay"*** (v. 21)

Everything is dying, and no matter what humanity does, we can't seem to reverse this problem.

***"Groaning together as in the pains of childbirth"*** (v. 22)

This last phrase is a metaphor for our experience in life. Life is painful and a struggle, and then blessing comes at a cost. This metaphor demonstrates a redemptive purpose in the midst of our pain. In spite of pain and trials, there is blessing to follow.

All of "Creation" is subject to this reality. No one is exempt except God who is the creator, and outside of time. The fact is everything is broken! Nature (Storms, floods, etc) Bodies (Disease, old age, etc.), Relationships (Conflict, division, etc.), Culture (Wars, racism, injustice, etc.), Work (Inept boss, people yelling at you, etc.).

## The Reality of a "Real Evil" (1 Peter 5:8)

Our world really has a hard time believing in the presence of evil personified in a being such as Satan. This is the one place that Christianity gives answers that the rest of mankind can't. It's also the place where the notion of God is questioned the most. The Buddhist worldview says that the current world is an illusion and the aim is to escape our desires, which holds us in its bondage. Hinduism also believes that all matter is illusory and that our problems are a result from another life. Islam, says that the world is wicked because the world isn't yet subject to "Shariah" (The laws of the Holy Quran). Marxism/Humanism says that evil<sup>2</sup> is either a product of materialistic reductionism and/or inequity of capital distribution. The Christian message is not merely cognitive (Right thinking) or behavioral (Right actions); it is a surgery of the heart that only God can perform by entering into a relationship with Him based solely on the work of His Son on the cross.

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<sup>1</sup> "How People Change, pg. 131

<sup>2</sup> Evil is used loosely here since evil in these camps are not seen from a moral lens, but a culturally constructed one. Evil is not absolute, it is situational and environmental.

## 2. **Responding to the Reality** (Numbers 11:4-23; 14:11-4; 20:1-5)

Often our responses are quite far from the intended purpose to transform our hearts into people that love God and love others. We are often like the wilderness dwellers, complaining, blaming and desiring the “Good ‘ole days” of yesteryear (**Numbers 11:4-23**). This type of life most often leads to the fears and panic of our lives (**Numbers 14:1-4**). After reading Numbers 14, have you ever felt that way? Quite often that fear and panic leads to blame (**Numbers 20:1-5**). We see how easy our circumstances produce panic and fear, and then anger and blame. The issue however is not on the outside; it’s on the inside. This is the defining difference between Christianity and other faith claims.

## 3. **A Reminder About this Reality** (Deuteronomy 8:2-10)

The heat in our lives is there to humble and discipline us so that our heart would be exposed, and transformed. In the midst of this parental discipline (v. 5), God is gracious and gives us good things in spite of our hard heartedness, because God is “*Bringing you into a good land*” (v. 7), God was using this time in the wilderness to teach His people **three truths**.

1. He was preparing them for both the blessings and the obstacles they would face in the promise land.
2. They needed to see the wickedness of their own heart, and their proclivity to reject God and not trust Him.
3. They needed to see that God is able to do anything, so they would not fear the things they had no control of.

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

Take some this week to think through what God wants to work on in you. Pray, spend some time in the word, and ask God what that might be. It could be something insignificant like biting your nails or something large like outbursts of anger at your family. Begin to write down how long this has been a problem? How often does this happen, and under what circumstances usually bring it out? How do you respond when the “Heat” happens? What specific things does scripture have to say, and how do they speak to your struggle? What might a changed heart look like in these situations?

If we are not, according to John Owen, “*Mortifying sin, sin is mortifying us.*” We are either taking conscious steps to put to death the little thorns that creep up in our lives, or those thorns will grow in to bushes and enslave us in its grasp. Psalm 139:23-24 says to, “*Search me oh God and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.*” **We are either living a life that is seeking after God, or we are living a life that is drifting away!**

In this life, we are going to have problems, but God is an “*Ever present help in trouble*” (**Psalm 46:1**). This is a fallen world, and storms destroy, and relationships break apart, but God is a refuge, particularly when things are out of control!

**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:** Ephesians 4:17-6:18

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