

The Gospel that transforms our lives

1. Moral Driven Transformation

- For those who have children / worked with children no doubt you've tried many different things to discipline your children when they misbehave
 - This will vary widely depending on
 - their age
 - what is fashionable
 - what book you are reading and
 - who you are taking advise from

- Two common forms of disciplinary measures that are often used are
 - Time out
 - Reward charts
- Time out
 - Sometimes known as the naughty chair / naughty corner > older kids get grounded
 - We used to send the kids to the bathroom and sit on their Tommy Turtle!
 - The idea is that it
 - breaks the child away from the thing they were doing,
 - denies them the pleasure of doing what they like to do and
 - gives them time to reflect on their misbehaviour
 - It tends to be a more a reactive / retrospective disciplinary measure that deals with negative behaviour
- Rewards charts
 - This is a more proactive strategy and encourages positive behaviour
 - You set some expectations with the children about
 - Behaviour standards
 - Chores to be done during the day (dressed > shoes > teeth > bed)
 - If they complete all the things on the chart they get a reward
 - Sweet, time on Play Station, extra pocket money etc

- I'll put my hand up and say we have done all those
 - My guess is many of you have too
- And while it's necessary to encourage good behaviour and deal with anti-social behaviour with kids ... time out and reward charts are at best limited and at worst deeply flawed
- Why?
 - Because they deal with external behaviour and not with the heart

- Tedd Tripp talks with this in his book 'Shepherding a child's heart'
- Tripp points out that 'time out' encourages kids to behave because they're fearful of the punishment
 - They learn to behave the right way because they don't want the punishment ...
 - While that might modify their behaviour ... heart of the issue is not being addressed
- Reward charts are also just a behaviour modification tool
 - We reward them for doing what is expected ... and so the child's heart is trained to behave primarily to get the reward ... and not because that's just the right way to live and act
 - Their motivation for good behaviour is to get the reward
 - In effect we are training the child's heart to be greedy and selfish
- Both forms of discipline only deal with the externals and not with the heart
- Of course, the problem is ...
 - What will junior do if mum or dad is not around to see their good or bad behaviour?
 - There's no incentive to do what is right
- If mum or dad isn't there and they think they can get away with it and not get punished ... they will
 - Hit their brother or sister > steal money from their wallet > take a biscuit etc
- Similarly with rewards, if mum or dad aren't there to see and reward their good behaviour, there is no incentive to do it
 - We're training them to only do it when we are there to reward them
 - If not, they will do what their hearts by nature want to do
- Problem is ... the motivation for good behaviour is not to be loving to others, respect others etc
- Rather the motive is one of self-interest
 - Either avoiding being punished
 - Or getting a reward
- Now this is not a sermon on parenting
 - And I'm not going to give you directly the answers to the questions I've raised about the best way to go about raising your children
 - I'll leave you to read
 - Shepherding a child's heart - Tedd Tripp

- Instructing a child's heart – Tedd & Margy Tripp
 - Grace based parenting – Tim Kimmel
 - Age of Opportunity – Paul Tripp (teens)
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- The reason I mention it is because as adults and young adults we can do the exact same thing when it comes to the way we live in response to God
 - If we fail to understand the grace of the gospel and delight in the Lord and all his goodness to us in Jesus ... then we too are in danger of seeking to live godly lives ...
 - Not for God's sake
 - But for our sake
 - That is ...
 - Because we're fearful of being punished
 - Because we want a reward from God
 - And the problem is ... just like with children ... all we are doing is dealing with external behaviour, and not the heart
 - And when that happens, Christianity turns into religiosity and moralism
 - People who act morally primarily to escape punishment, or to win self-respect and salvation, are in effect ... being moral to serve themselves
 - At one level, they may be kind to others and helpful to the poor ...
 - But at a deeper level they're behaving this way so God will bless them
 - Just as dealing with the externals only with kids is flawed ... so it is with us
 - For example
 - People ordinarily try to instil honesty in others like this
 - "If you lie, you'll get in trouble with God and other people," or
 - "If you lie, you'll be like those those dirty rotten politicians and car salesmen ... and you're better than that!"
 - The motivation to change their behaviour are
 - fear of punishment > "You'll get in trouble"; or
 - and pride > "You'll be like a dirty liar. You wouldn't want to be like one of them"
 - Both fear of punishment and pride are essentially self-centred
 - The motivation is to be honest because it will pay off for you
 - That is moralistic behaviour change

- It puts pressure on the will and stirs up the ego to more selfishness to force a person to curb his or her inclinations to do wrong
- However, this approach has fatally flawed
 - Because stirring up self-centeredness to motivate someone to do the right thing doesn't get to the fundamental self-regard and self-centeredness that are the main problem of the human heart
 - Moral driven transformation simply manipulates our own selfishness
 - It may **restrain** the heart's self-centeredness ... but it doesn't **change it**
- What moralism does is it bends a person into a different pattern through fear of consequences and pride ...
 - ... rather than melting the person into a new shape through a new joy, love, and gratitude that replace the deadly self-regard and self-centredness
- **Illustration – Bending Metal**
- If you try to bend a piece of metal without heat's softening effect, the metal tends to snap back to its former position
 - This is why people who are trying to change through moralistic driven transformation find themselves lapsing back into sins that they're seeking to escape
- To complete the illustration, unsoftened metal can also break if you try to bend it
 - Many people, after years of moralistic driven transformation abandon the faith altogether ... complaining that they are exhausted and they "can't keep it up."
- Behaviour might have been altered for a while by putting pressure on the will, but the heart's self-centeredness remains undealt with

2. Gospel driven transformation

- Is there a better motive for living transformed lives?
 - Is there something that can move us to live lives that are pleasing to God and loving of others around us ... that ultimately isn't self-centred?
- Yes there is ... and comes as we 'delight in the Lord' and all that he has done for us in the gospel

- That is ... it's the good news of Jesus and his amazing grace to us at the cross that provides the foundation for transformed living that's not rooted in what we get out of it

- We see an example of that in Titus 2
- **Background to Titus**
- Paul writing to Titus who was a friend of Paul's and who he left in Crete to take care of the church there (1:5)
 - He wanted Titus to appoint elders so that the church there might become well established in their faith

- Letter to Titus is very instructive
 - Paul is giving Titus lots of advice > from a senior pastor to a junior pastor, and mentoring him in his position of leadership
 - Ch 1 > advice for what characteristics elders of the church should have
 - Ch 2 > Paul advises Titus the things he ought to teach those under his pastoral care

- See as you look at Ch 2 that Paul says that Titus is to teach
 - Older men
 - Older women
 - In turn to teach the younger women
 - Young men
 - Slaves

- Notice what he is telling Titus to teach them
 - Temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled
 - Sound in faith, love and endurance
 - Reverent, not slanderers, not addicted to too much wine
 - Love their husbands
 - Be pure, kind, subject to their husbands
 - Slaves to submit to their masters, please them and not talk back or steal from them

- He's to teach them to be people of godly character and godly living

- But then in v11-14 ... Paul reminds Titus and those he's to teach what is the motive for living such lives
 - 'For...' in v11
 - "I urge you to live like this ... FOR ... here is the reason..."

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- *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives*
 - God has always been a God of grace
 - Grace didn't come into existence when Jesus came
 - But grace appeared visibly in Jesus Christ
 - God's saving grace, given to us before the beginning of time has now been revealed through the coming of Christ
 - Just in case we don't know what this grace is ... we only have to look at v13-14 to see what it is
 - *the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own*
 - Gave himself up for us – means he sacrificed himself on the cross in our place
 - Why?
 - To redeem us from all wickedness – to pay the price necessary to free you and I from the punishment our sin deserves
 - Not only that ...
 - Purify for himself a people that are his very own
 - To make them his > to restore and reconcile people back to God so that they can share in all the blessing of being children of God
 - Paul puts it another way in Titus 3:5
 - *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy*
 - So here's the gospel of grace that brings salvation to all men
 - That God in his grace and mercy has dealt with our sin once and for all at the cross
 - But notice in v12 Paul says
 - *"It (being the grace of God) **teaches** us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives*
 - Paul is saying that if you want to really change, you must let the gospel *teach* you—
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- You must let the gospel train, discipline, instruct and coach you over a period of time
 - You must let the gospel sink down deeply until it changes your views and the structures of your motivation
 - The gospel, if it is truly believed, eradicates
 - the need to be constantly respected, appreciated, and regarded well;
 - the need to have everything in your life go well;
 - and the need to have power over others
 - All these great, deep needs overwhelm you ... if the concept of wonderful, and gracious heavenly Father who loves you with all his being ... is just that—a concept and nothing more
 - But to the extent that we grasp the grace of God shown so wonderfully and amazingly to us at the cross ... then it begins to teach us
 - It begins to shape our hearts
 - It teaches us say '*No to ungodliness and worldly passions*' ... because the gospel is teaching me that Jesus gives me so much more
 - It teaches us to '*live self-controlled and godly lives*' because we're so captivated by Jesus and all that he has done for us ... we **want** to live to please him
 - Think of all the ways you can tell yourself "No" to ungodly behaviour
 - You can say
 - "No—because I'll look bad!"
 - "No—because I'll be excluded from the social circles I want to belong to."
 - "No—because it's against the Bible
 - "No—because my sins will find me out; I'll reap what I sow"
 - "No—because then God won't bless me with health, wealth, and happiness."
 - "No—because it's against Christian principles
 - "No—because God will send me to hell."
 - "No—because I'll hate myself for it"
 - All those things are inadequate and secondary motives
 - Virtually all of them use self-centred impulses of the heart to force compliance to external rules without really changing the heart itself
 - The motive behind them is not love for **God**
 - The motive behind them is love of **me**
 - I "do good" not for God's sake or for goodness' sake .. but for my own sake
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- The alternative of **gospel** driven transformation ... means being faithful and honest not because it profits you or makes you feel better about yourself
 - Instead it grows out of love for the One who was completely faithful to the point he died for you
 - Gospel driven transformation is doing the right thing not for your sake, but for God's sake

- This kind of motivation can only grow in a heart deeply touched by **grace**
 - Think of the motivations driving common morality—pride and fearfulness
 - Remember
 - Don't want to lie because I'll be like those other ppl > pride
 - Don't want to lie because I'll get caught / punished / hell > fear
 - The grace of the gospel destroys *pride* ... because it tells me I am so lost that he had to die for me
 - The gospel of grace melts our hearts and humbles us
 - On the other hand the gospel of grace destroys *fearfulness* ... because it tells me that nothing I can do will wear out his love for me
 - The gospel of grace strengthens our hearts because it assures us
- When I deeply embrace these truths, my heart is not merely restrained ... but changed
 - It's fundamental orientation is transformed

3. Living Gospel transformed lives

- So do you see the difference?
 - Moral driven transformation only results in external transformation that is self-centred and motivated to do what's right for my sake
 - Gospel driven transformation results in a internal transformation that flows from an understanding of the grace of the gospel and is motivated to do what's right for God's sake
 - Because he's saved me and been so gracious to me ... and that truth melts my heart

- So when our transformation is driven by the gospel and the grace that brings salvation ... that's when true and lasting transformation can take place

- Money

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- The Bible's solution to greed then, is a reorientation to the gospel and the generosity of Jesus, who poured out his wealth for you (2 Cor 8:9)
 - You don't have to worry about money, because the cross proves God's care for you and gives you ultimate security
 - You don't have to envy anyone else's material possessions because Jesus' love and salvation give you an eternal inheritance that nothing else can provide

 - Serving
 - A gospel driven attitude to serving is one where ...
 - We grasp how Jesus left his heavenly throne and came to earth as a servant ... not to be served but to serve and die as a ransom for many
 - Which means I don't serve out of guilt or obligation, but from a heart moved by the one who came to serve me
 - I don't count the cost of serving, because I know Jesus gave up so much more to serve me

 - Marriage
 - A gospel driven solution to a bad marriage is a reorientation to the radical, spousal love of Jesus in the gospel
 - "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14) makes sense in the context of Jesus love, especially on the cross, where he was completely faithful to you
 - When you and I grasp the extent of Jesus sacrificial, spousal love ... will you have any real fortitude against lust, porn, adultery etc
 - His love is ultimately fulfilling ... so it keeps you from looking to sexual fulfilment to give you what only Jesus can

 - Do you see the point?
 - What makes you
 - a generous person or
 - a servant-hearted person, or
 - a sexually faithful spouse or
 - is **not** a redoubled effort to be good or follow the example of Jesus
 - Rather, it's a deepening your understanding of the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ who brings salvation ... and living out the changes that understanding makes in your heart

- ***Parenting***

- One of the most practical ways that gospel driven transformation makes a difference for many of us is in the way we parent
 - As I alluded to at the start ...
 - In the same way genuine transformation happens to us
 - Not when we just try harder to be good
 - But when the heart is melted by the grace of God
- And the if we are going to help grow our kids ...
 - Not just to be good kids with morals and ethics who care for others
 - But kids who also love God
- Then we need to be ministering to their hearts and making the gospel real for them
 - They need to understand the gospel ... understand they are sinners
 - But also that God is forgiving and loves them higher than the heavens
- And with that foundation we can start to shepherd their hearts and not just bend them and manipulate them to 'be good' through
 - Time out, grounding them, yelling, guiltting them, reward charts
 - We want to do gospel driven transformation with our kids not moral driven transformation
- Much more to say on that
 - Check out the books

- ***Pastoral Care***

- The other area of that gospel driven transformation must make a difference is in the way we minister to one another and encourage one another in our Christian walk
 - Morning tea
 - Growth group
 - Kids church
 - Youth group
- Urging, encouraging, exhorting our friend to
 - "Stop that because the Bible says this ... "
 - "Let go of that sin because you know what the consequences will be"
 - That is just moral driven transformation
 - Dealing with the external behaviour and not the heart
- I've done this in sermons, and in GG, and with my kids
 - There are times when it might be okay to say these things

- However ... a far deeper and longer lasting transformation will occur when we help others to see the grace of God who brings salvation to all who believe
- And see how that grace teaches us to say
 - *"No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives*
- **Other Resources**
- Finally, I want to recognise there are many good resources out there that can help you and I live a transformed life
 - Counselling
 - 12 step programmes
 - Medication
 - Support and prayer of close friends
 - Internet monitoring software etc
- They can be excellent and invariably help a great deal in the right situation
- But they cannot replace the power of the gospel to bring about real and lasting change in a person
 - Because without the gospel we are
 - Doing it all in our strength
 - We're not dealing with the heart
- It's the heart that needs to be transformed
 - As Thomas Cranmer said
 - *What the heart loves, the will desires and the mind justifies*

4. Conclusion

- Friends ...my prayer is that as a result of what we have looked at today and over the past 4 weeks that you will see with fresh eyes the glorious news of the gospel and the truly amazing grace of God to you in Jesus Christ
- That you would 'delight in the Lord'
 - And as you continue to reflect on that ... you will have moments of relief, joy, comfort, assurance, love, forgiveness, and security
 - As you dwell on the gospel and have those moments ...
 - they would re-orientate your heart away from your idols, the desires of your heart ... to something bigger, better and more beautiful in Christ
 - they would move you to repent not out of fear of rejection, because you know they one who was rejected for you ... which means you can

be honest with God even with your deepest and ugliest sins, because the blood of Christ has covered them all

- they would transform your hearts so that you'll to want to say - *"No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives*

- May you 'delight in the Lord' and the gospel of Jesus
 - Gospel that saves by grace
 - Gospel that replaces our idols
 - Gospel that moves us to repent
 - Gospel that transforms our lives

PRAY

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.