

XXXI. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“Developing a Christian Mind, Part I”

Romans 12:1–2

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We will be looking at about four or five verses with a brief overview of them as we begin this series in what the Bible says about developing a Christian mind and this is part one. For many of us when it comes to the issues of life and the events of the day, the ability to process that with a Christian mind has basically been lost in the culture generally. In fact our culture used to be impacted with a Christian mind whether believers or unbelievers but not so anymore. The reason for that is because of the Christian church. My goal in this is that you will be able to think your way through this knowing what a Christian world and life view is and how you should view things today.

For instance, this is not a political speech or endorsement but when I hear a candidate telling me as the church to vote for them because they will protect Christianity, how do you process that as a Christian? If you understand the Bible you understand that Christianity doesn't need protection. Secondly, you don't find the Apostle Paul asking for that in a pagan empire that was dead set against him. Thirdly, that's not the Biblical purpose of government. Government doesn't pick winners and losers in religion for it just protects the free practice of religion. Then let us get in the public square and see what wins. I believe truth wins and I believe truth sets people free.

Here's another one. I hear a lot when people say 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder.' Wrong! I did an article on this for TableTalk. Is beauty in the eye of the beholder or does the beholder have eyes to affirm what is beautiful? What is good and beautiful is true. Is good in the eyes of the beholder or has God told you what is good? Is what is true in the eyes of the beholder or has God told you what is true? The same thing is true about beauty. He has given us the ability to appreciate beauty but sin has distorted us so we're not looking to men, women and the fads of the day to determine what is beautiful. What does God say is beautiful? How would that affect Christian art? I'm talking about Christians doing art and passing it back and forth between each other but Christians doing art of what is beautiful and putting it into the culture. In other words, do I have a Christian mind that gives me an unclouded eye to appreciate what is beautiful as God has declared what is beautiful and true?

I believe this matter of the Christian mind is absolutely crucial because I believe we have lost the Christian mind in the culture, its presence and influence and in the contemporary church. About the closest we come to the Christian mind is maybe valuing what a pastor might say about a subject but the ability to desire to think. I have thought many times, why is this true? I think one of the reasons it's true is that some people who are very much committed to thinking accurately, Biblically also are very detached out of people's lives so there is this anti-Christian intellectualism. We hear this when people say they want a heart relationship and not a mind relationship or I don't want just Jesus in my mind but in my heart. I understand what we're trying to say with that but there is no dichotomy there.

The Apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 1:18, that *[18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, that your thoughts may be true.* We are making distinctions where there are no distinctions. A distinction is not

there in the Scripture. I think we need to appreciate the Christian mind in the context of its place in the Christian life and what it leads to in the Christian life. We need to take the time to start thinking Christianly. Let's quit jettisoning the greatest commandment which is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

We love Him with our mind and that when we become a Christian you don't check your brains out at the decision booth. You can now learn to think and really think with the mind of Christ. The three best decisions I made in life are these; decision one was the sovereign grace ability to believe in Jesus and decide to follow Him which was the best decision in my life. The second best decision in my life was when I decided to marry my wife Cindy. The third best decision in my life was when I left East Carolina to Covenant College and found out that your head has more purposes than to put a baseball cap or a gold visor on. You can actually think and think Christianly and work your way through the issues of the day. And that Christianity is a lifestyle propelled by a life love informed by a life view. It is a way of life. That is why I think it's very important for us to work our way through this and to understand this Christian world and life view.

I would like to try and illustrate this for you. If I am inside and I put on a pair of sunglasses what would all of you look like? If I had green sunglasses on you would all look green. Are you green? No but you would look green to me because of the glasses I have on. That is distorting what people are, but let's say I get glasses but don't take the time to get the right prescription then I can't see you accurately. I need the lens ground to accurately see what happens. So let's say I get the right clear glasses so I see clearly and the right prescription so I see accurately but let's say I get something on my glasses so I can't see clearly because they are smudged. That is what is happening every day.

Every time you turn that television on the world is attempting to smudge your glasses. Please know that every commercial, every song, every book, every movie and whatever the communication venue, it has a world and life view that it is selling you and they are not neutral. They fall into one of two categories and I'll give those in just a moment. Satan has an ally inside of you called the old man and he and that old man are always attempting to smudge the glasses. So how can I get the right clarity, accuracy and how can I keep it from getting smudged every single day? How can I keep my glasses accurate, clear and clean so I can see and see rightly? We want to see things clearly and as the Lord directs us.

We want a life style and our life style is utterly dependent upon our life view and it is pursued when you have a life love. Your life love gives you the pursuit of your life style. Your life view is what decides your life style. **Every life view** in this world, atheist included, is a manner of faith. If you want to know what people believe then watch the way they live and then ask them why they make the decisions they make. Their life style came from their life view which they have embraced by faith. Because of my ungodly lifestyle I was doing my best to be an atheist and I just didn't have enough faith because the faith commitment that required was unbelievable. I think there is a God but I'm going to try and act and live like there is not one but I couldn't. Either your life view is a matter of faith that is informed or a faith that is deformed and distorted. Some of us are not taking the time to be informed and the reason we're deformed is because we think we can think Christianly by intuition. The Christian life is not lived by intuition. It is lived by Divine revelation.

Christianity is not a lifestyle that comes from a life view which is a philosophy. Basically philosophy, unless it is the product of a Biblical world and life view, is profane theology. It is man attempting to declare who and what God is and what truth is. Probably the

closest I ever come to going through a flat screen television is every time I hear Bill O'Reilly talk about Christianity as a philosophy. We don't claim that it's a philosophy. We claim it is not man pursuing truth that is the love of wisdom by the pursuit of man but we believe Christianity is here by Divine revelation, by faith. Our life view is informed from God's Word that we believe is true. All the other life views and -isms of this world are philosophically arrived as man in the pursuit of truth is saying 'this is what I say truth is.'

Sometimes it will be accurate and that is called common grace. If a clock breaks it is still right two times a day. So a false world and life view can have true points in it but you don't want to depend on a broken clock even though it's right two times a day. So wrong life views can have points that are right by God's common grace but they are not dependable. How do we arrive at a Christian world and life view from a theological propositional truths of theology that God has revealed instead of intuition by man's declaration of what is true? In other words, how can our faith be walking in the light of God's Word and not leap in the dark of philosophy? How can it be informed and how must it be informed?

So here is where we'll start and I'll tell you where we're headed. A Christian world and life view like every world and life view is an attempt to answer four framing questions. Here are four framing questions of a world and life view. One is that a world and life view answers this question; why is there something rather than nothing? How does the something get here? Did the nothing make something or did something make the something? Whenever the something is not there the something that made the something tells you that is nothing but maybe it's not a something that made something so that you could know what is nothing and it certainly wasn't nothing that made something. Maybe it was Someone that made the something. What is the evidence and as a Christian what do I believe about that?

The second question is why are some things right and other things wrong? This leads us to a third question which is what things are right and what things are wrong? You could also throw in there that why am I even born thinking that there is something right and something wrong. Why do we think in categories of right and wrong? This brings us to the fourth question of, who or what determines what things are right and what things are wrong? A world and life view answers those questions.

You might be thinking that you haven't even thought about those questions. That means that you didn't develop a world and life view and that you have adopted one from the world because you have answers to that. They are informing the decisions that you make in life. The question is where do those answers to those questions come from and how are they influencing. They are influencing the decisions that you make in life. When you take those four framing questions now we want to bring it home to ourselves for the four framing questions are also followed by four personal questions.

Those first four questions set up these four questions; one, who am I? Two, where did I come from? Forget the something, where did I come from. Is the only difference between me and that bug a couple of mutations a couple of million years ago? Thirdly, why am I here? Fourthly, where am I going? That challenge is in front of every single one of us.

When you became a Christian praise God you received a new perspective. You got eyes to see and ears to hear. When you became a Christian you received a new heart. The old heart was cut out and a new heart was given to you. When you became a Christian you received a new record. Your record of sin was eradicated and the record of perfect righteousness in Christ was imputed, reckoned, and credited to your account. When you became a Christian you received a new life. The old has passed away, behold the new has come. You are a new creation in Jesus

Christ. When you became a Christian you received a new family and new home and you are on your way to that new home.

Let me tell you what you were not given. You were not given a new mind but you were given the power by God's grace to have a renewed mind. Where does that renewed mind come from and how can I start to think Christianly? What does that look like? We will be looking at some passages in this study that we will come back to in future studies but first let's start by looking at Romans 8.

Romans 8:5 says [5] *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.* That word flesh is a very technical term in the Bible. It means men and women living independent from God with self-reliance. That is what the word flesh means. All flesh has gone astray. That is humanity living independent of God. When it says walking in the flesh it means you're walking in self-reliance, self-righteousness and self-absorption. That is what it means to walk in the flesh. Those who walk in the flesh have a mind that keeps making self-exalting, self-absorbing, self-reliant decisions. They are on their own and they think they can do it themselves.

Secondly, there is another mindset in this text and that's the mind of the Spirit. What are the things of the Spirit? They are Jesus, His Word and the Spirit brought the fruit of the Spirit into this world which is a life style. When you are thinking Biblically then the things of the Spirit are affecting the way you think and the choices you are making in life. Let's look further at what is said in the text.

Romans 8:6–8 says [6] *For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. [7] For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. [8] Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.* Do I believe people that are unsaved have minds set on the flesh? Yes and they will make decisions that are fleshly decisions. Periodically because of God's common grace they will think Biblically and that is common grace that restrains them from being as evil as they would be. So what about believers, can believers have a mind set on the flesh? Yes and it can bring death. You are still forgiven of your sins. You can see your wife through the eyes of the flesh to be there to meet your needs and you're on your way to the death of a marriage. You can see your children as the badge of your significance in this world and your family is on the way to death. A minister can see his ministry as existing to fulfill him but he is on his way to death and the church with him.

If we begin to think self-reliantly, self-absorbing, even as Christians, our decisions can bring death in this world. That is why it is important that we think Christianly. We have the new heart, the new record, the new life but do we have a mind that is bring informed by the things of the Spirit and producing decisions that are consistent with that mindset. Now let's look at I Corinthians 2. This fits into our series of being led by the Spirit. The Spirit leads you to a Christ-centered mind. You need the Spirit to have a Christ-centered mind.

I Corinthians 2:6–16 says [6] *Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. [7] But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. [8] None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. [9] But, as it is written,*

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—*

[10] these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. [11] For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. [12] Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. [13] And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

[14] The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [15] The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. [16] "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

How do we have the mind of Christ? We have the Word of Christ and we have the Spirit of God who informs us and teaches us with wisdom from above as He illuminates what He has revealed in His Word. So we don't have to think like the spirit of the age but by the Holy Spirit we can think of the age to come – the completion of the Kingdom of God. We can learn to think that way. Now let's look at Romans 12. After telling us about our salvation in Christ by God's grace the Father, through Jesus' work and the presence of the Holy Spirit Paul then says this.

Romans 12:1–2 says *[1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by (not for – this is not something we work for but are given) the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice (make your life a worship statement), holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Notice that what is good, acceptable and perfect and good, acceptable and beautiful are not in your eyes but it has been revealed to us by God in His Word. So we ask God in the power of the Spirit calling upon Him in prayer that He would renew our mind every single day. Get the green glasses off and put the clear glasses on. Get the prescription right so I see it right even in a distorted world. Help me see clearly. Even though I have an old man, the world and Satan who want to keep smudging the glasses, help me see it clearly, accurately and help me get rid of those smudges internally and externally as they come up in my life.

I want to show you how important this is in our life and how Christians can do this "stinkin' thinkin'" instead of right thinking. Let's look now at Matthew 16. I love this passage because it is what I call evangelism explosion with one verse. Here Jesus asks His disciples two questions. Matthew 16:13–18 says *[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" [14] And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" [16] Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [17] And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Peter said the right thing from the right perspective with the right life view because God the Father has revealed that to him in His Word and by His Spirit. Jesus goes on to tell them that about His death and resurrection where He'll be raised up on the third day. Then what does Peter say? Matthew 16:22–23 says *[22] And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." [23] But he turned and said*

to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Peter went from saying something revealed by the Spirit to pronouncing a malediction on what Jesus has said, not a benediction but a malediction. This is kind of like Christian cursing. I thought Peter was a Christian. He is a Christian doing some stinkin thinkin. That means he has made some wrong statements and some wrong decisions in his life style and Jesus affirms it by telling he set his mind on man's interest and not God's.

There are two mind views out there. There is the sovereign self or the sovereign God. Which one have you set your mind on? You are living in a culture that promotes the sovereign self through sex, marriage, family, gender and the government. The sovereign self comes in many brands. It comes in materialism, sensualism, consumerism, humanism, secularism and the -isms are endless but they all come down to one thing – the sovereign self. This is my philosophical declaration of what my world and life view is. The Christian says my life view has been revealed from God and by His Spirit I can embrace it, understand it and think it. I want my mind set on the things of God, the things of the Spirit and the things of Christ that are revealed in His Word in the power of His Spirit. That is what I call upon and ask the Lord to do in my life.

Here is the takeaway. To live a faithful and effective Christian life style, a Christian must develop a Christ-centered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled life view propelled by a Christ-consumed life love saturated by persistent prayer. The love of Christ constrains me. This is what I believe Christ has called us to in the Christian mind. It can't be me-centered but it has to be Bible-framed. We have to be Spirit filled and He grinds the lens. I'm called to engage in this and intentionally set my mind upon it. We do this by relying on the Spirit, focused on Christ and formed from His Word. I'm called to do this because I love Jesus and I want to think with the mind of Christ.

I have the heart of Christ, the record of Christ, the life of Christ, the family of Christ, and the home of Christ but I want a mind of Christ by the Spirit from His Word that propels me. I need to keep this smudge free so to have that life view and keep it this way I need to be on my knees with my Bible in front of me in prayer all the time, regularly seeking Him. What are the categories of this life view? There are five of them and we'll start on them in the next study. How do you view God? How do you view humanity? How do you view this world? How do you view time and eternity? What is your view of truth? These categories are absolutely crucial for Christians to understand and they are understandable.

I'll never forget a man named Mr. Miller who did something wonderful for me and my dad. Before my dad died he got us into Fenway Park which was about the only baseball park my dad had not been in or to. Mr. Miller worked it out for us to get there. I'll never forget walking out for there were the sidewalk hawks and vendors shouting 'Get these glasses! You don't need those, they are too expensive for we have them for \$5! Just buy this one, it's cheap and easy!' Here I am. Of course you can go on the internet and get those \$2 reading glasses. Have you ever tried to look through those? I have bought them for I'll do anything to save money but I can't see clearly. My dad said "Son, you're not saving money, you're wasting money for you need the right glasses so take the time to get them." That is what we're going to do by God's grace. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father for these people who love You and want to love You with a renewed mind so that we can make

decisions that honor Christ, encourage one another and win the lost so walk us through this I pray. Help us enjoy the journey of a life long journey that only these few sermons will get us started on but can get us started rightly from Your Word and by Your Spirit, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

FOUR FRAMING QUESTIONS

- I. Why is there something rather than nothing?
- II. Why are some things right and other things wrong?
- III. What things are right and what things are wrong?
- IV. Who or What determines the things that are right and the things that are wrong?

FOUR PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- I. Who am I?
- II. Where did I come from?
- III. Why am I here?
- IV. Where am I going?

LIFE TAKEAWAY

To live a faithful and effective Christian LifeStyle, a Christian must develop a Christ-centered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled LifeView propelled by a Christ-consumed LifeLove saturated by persistent prayer.

LifeLove – LifeView – LifeStyle