

XXXIX. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“Developing the Christian Mind, Part 9—A Summation”

Ephesians 4:17–24; Philippians 2:5–11

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May 15, 2016 – Evening sermon

Prayer:

Father, thank You so much that we can assemble to give you praise and then we can receive the blessing as we already have of You being with us. Thank You for the encouragement You brought us by Your Spirit through Your Word as it is read and sung. We have reminded ourselves that we are a people who live in the midst of the storm of sin and the assault of Satan but we have a Cornerstone that is immovable and unshakeable, Christ. We have a foundation that is Your Word. We have within us the Spirit of Truth and we rejoice in that. We ask now that You would teach us now from that Word in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

We will be looking at two texts in summing our study on a Christian world and life view. I think this is our ninth study in it and we’ll be concluding this soon. We will deal with the issue of burial/cremation in our next study and what the Bible has to say about that concerning our world and life view. It is important to understand a Christian world and life view as we come to a summation. You are attempting to live a seamless life for Christ. Whether I eat or drink or whatsoever I do I want to do for the glory of God. I want to honor Christ in my family, in the public square, in the church and in my vocation. I want to be an ambassador for Christ who with the mind of Christ, out of a love to Christ, lives a life like Christ and for Christ but your culture does not share that seamless view.

The culture will probably not tell you now that you can have a Christian world and life view but they will simply tell you that you must keep it private. In other words, the culture will tell you there is not a seamless life for the Christian for in our culture you have to have a life of separation, a seemed life. You have to have a life in which there is the sacred and then the secular. The word secular actually comes from a Latin word that means living life outside the sacred, outside the temple. People who have studied the history of this country and ought to know better say that we were established to be a secular country and no we were not established as a secular country.

How can we be a secular country when the founding document (Declaration of Independence) starts off saying, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator (God) with certain unalienable Rights..."? Now we have a nation by the premise of what a government is supposed to do does not impose any statement of theology but it protects the right of the free exercise of religion because it is not a secular state. On the contrary, it says it is a state under God. While its job is not to invoke a national church, its job is to protect the church and back the freedom of religion to be in the public square and it is lived in the public square.

The view today is that we are a secular nation. We are not going to give you freedom of the practice of religion but we are going to give you the freedom to worship in a specific place, on a certain day, during that hour. It is fine for you to talk about your superstitions there but you can't take it out of there into the public square. That is what is being done today. There is the secular life and there is the sacred life. We apportion the sacred life there. Everything else is the

secular and you're not allowed to bring that here. The problem is that there is not one inch in this world that Jesus doesn't declare that is His and He is to be exalted. We make think the secular way of life actually works but it doesn't.

We have pointed out in previous studies that all people are religious as we learned from Acts 17, even an atheist. We live in a broken world so if you're religious in a broken world and you're not allowed to speak of Christianity you will manufacture idols. That is why Calvin said the heart is an incessant idol factory. It will always make idols that will supposedly be the answer to their needs in life in a broken world. What will always happen in a world with a Christian world and life view is when the salt and light from the Gospel of grace is removed it is a matter of time until the state says that it is god and we call this state-ism. Therefore it will determine what can be said and done, admissible and acceptable.

Whenever state-ism takes hold there are two institutions that are a threat to state-ism. Interestingly, in the original founding of this country both of these institutions were protected. Now they are both under assault in this country because that is the enemy of state-ism, whether it is a communist or socialist or democratic socialist regime. Whenever the state rises up with its authority of taxation and lethal weapons that is the military, it has the power to begin to invoke its will upon the people and the two institutions that stand in its way are the family and the church. So it is no accident that in the rising tide of state-ism in our country there is the effort to redefine the family into insensibility and to place controls upon the church.

The real challenge for all of us is that this has faced believers for over 2000 years in almost every country. We have just happened to be blessed in God's kind, sovereign providence to have been in a country that God has in a very peculiar way blessed and He has blessed it for two reasons. Reason number one is this country has constitutionally welcomed the free exercise of religion and therefore the Christian church has historically been able to function freely as a perfector of the freedoms that are articulated in this country. The second reason is with all of its faults overall for almost two centuries to some degree, there has been an effective witness of the Gospel and salt and light from the church into the country.

So what we have now is the emboldened power of the state to isolate the church and the reason why is because the church particularly over the last 60 years is no longer salty or shining the light. Therefore it is little wonder that this country would then take its place alongside the track record of other countries as well. That is why we talk about evangelism and discipleship so much here. That's why we talk about in all our ministries of sending people out to be salt and light and to go before the Lord in prayer to ask Him to ignite a Gospel movement again from the ground up.

Why did the early Christians impact so profoundly the initial stages of this country as it moved forward? The reason is they were taught a Christian world and life view. They saw the Christian life as seamless. They were not perfect. They had blind spots that needed to be dealt with and I confess it right now. We could go through a litany of the inadequacies of imperfection but overall you see this continual movement of the Gospel from the first and second great awakenings that were moving throughout this country. The first awakening was from 1735 to 1765 and the second awakening was from 1785 to 1880. Again it can be critiqued and it ought to be critiqued but this overall movement that is moving throughout the land is that you don't compartmentalize your Christianity. Christianity isn't just what I do in my home and my church building, for this is my life. For me to live is Christ. I am now called to Christ to my marriage, my family, my parenting, my job, my citizenship and to my church.

Now how do we live? Therefore our behavior betrays and reveals what we ultimately believe and love. Christians who are motivated by a life love where the love of Christ compels us, must intentionally develop a Christian mind. Romans 12:2 says *[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.* That Christian mind then directs your Christian life. When you live in this broken world with all of its challenges and divine opportunities, how do you see them?

I want to give you an illustration from a lady in our church. How many of you enjoy telemarketing calls? I can't stand them. I was sitting in the reception area of my office talking about how much I hate telemarketing calls and how I hang up as soon as they start. This dear lady who was listening to me said "I listen to them for a few moments and then when they ask if I will answer some questions I say 'I will if you answer two questions for me and you have to answer these or I won't answer your questions.' Her two questions are 'If you were to die tonight do you know where you would spend eternity?' and 'If you were to stand before God and He said 'why should I let you in heaven?' what would your answer be?' I started looking for a hole to go crawl in because here is her pastor so unspiritual who is hanging up on people and she is asking them questions about where they are going to spend eternity. She saw that telephone call as an evangelistic opportunity and I saw it as a problem and a bother. That was a world and life view.

Coming back from Philadelphia from Westminster Seminary Dr. Barker and I would find ourselves on the same plane sometimes because we were both on the board at the Seminary. This was before I came to Briarwood and when I was in Charlotte, North Carolina planting the daughter church of Briarwood. Sometimes we couldn't always sit together and this particular time we were separated by about three or four seats. This time I was so tired and when I got on that plane all I wanted to do was go to sleep. As a pastor I can sometimes do that because I can reach in my briefcase and pull out some theology books piling them up around me so that someone sitting next to me who sees that kind of pushes themselves away from me.

Some will actually go beyond that and say to me "What do you do?" and I think do I want to share the Gospel with them or do I want to go to sleep. If I want to share the Gospel with them I start off by saying 'I have this unbelievable job and the boss who all He does is hire and never fires. The benefits are out of this world and He is hiring so would you like for me to tell you about Him?' If I'm tired I and want to sleep I'll say 'I'm a preacher' and you'd be amazed at how quickly the conversation shuts down right at that moment. So on this particular flight I told them I was a preacher and the conversation stopped and then I noticed that Frank had already led two people to Christ right in front of me. Here was conviction again that laid hold of me.

How do you view that moment? Do you have this compartmentalized life or do you have this world and life view that sees all of life increasingly with greater accuracy with the mind of Christ so that you then make decisions in moments like that, that are consistent with Biblical principles in life, because your mind is being renewed? So in this study I will give you a summation of our last nine studies. Our point is to live a faithful and effective Christian lifestyle a Christian must develop a Christ-centered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled life view propelled by a Christ-consumed life love with all of it being saturated by persistent prayer. To be propelled by a life love leads you to be a learner so that you have a life view and that leads you then to a lifestyle. Your lifestyle is directed by your life view and your life view is propelled by your life love. Because you love Christ you want to know Him and His Word so that you have the mind

of Christ and so your life is more and more reflecting Christ in every area of life. You don't have a sacred and secular. The first thing you find out is that Jesus is Lord of all. He is preeminent in everything. If He is preeminent in everything then how do I manifest Him in those things as I confront them in my life?

The world and life view has five planks. The number one plank is the doctrine of creation. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? Where did I come from? Why is there something instead of nothing? I recently was in a discussion with a man who fully embraces Darwinian atheistic macroevolution. I asked him to give me one scientific experiment where nothing made something. Have you ever seen the something that comes from nothing reproduce itself? Why is that people think something is right and something is wrong? Animals don't have categories of right and wrong. Why is it we look at a sunset and say that's beautiful? Why do you have the ability to appreciate it or enjoy it?

So let me take you back to the question I asked this man and how he answered me. He said that this universe was the result of a probe from alien life that was sent here programmed to develop through macroevolution. I'm thinking to myself as he is saying this, 'and you're laughing at me because I believe there is a God who spoke and brought everything into existence, while you've got a green man up there sending a probe and you don't even know where the little green man came from.' I believe when I read what the Bible says about creation it makes sense. It's not a leap in the dark but it's walking in the light.

The second plank is the doctrine of the fall. Is there anything more verifiable in all of life than the fact that all of us are born sinners? That is verifiable so that is the doctrine of the fall and that leads us to the third plank of this glorious redemption. There is no one so lost that Jesus can't save and there is no one that is saved that He cannot bring to glory. His grace is greater than all of our sin. That led us to the fourth plank which is God's Providence. God's Providence blesses unbelievers in what we call God's common grace where the rain falls upon the just and the unjust. God's Providence blesses believers with a very specific promise. Romans 8:28 says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* Never does He promise that everything will be good but He does promise that His sovereign hand is drawing straight lines with crooked sticks.

In the last study we looked at the fifth plank which is the doctrine of the consummation of all things. For the believer our best days are always in front of us. We always live with heaven in view. Think through what I'm about to say. I hear people say 'Christians are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.' The Christian is care less but doesn't live careless – live carefully in our life for Christ. If your view in being prepared for the new heavens and the new earth is a careless Christian lifestyle then I understand why people would say that statement about Christians. I really believe that our problem is not that we're so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good but our problem is we're not heavenly minded enough to be earthly good. We keep trying to get our new heavens and new earth blessing here. We're not going to get it here because our best life is not now.

You want to live your best life for Christ now and keep growing but what Christ has given you is not your best life now. He is your life now and He will make you more than a conqueror in a broken world now but your best life is in the life to come. Therefore we don't live with the disappointments that come and you will be disappointed if this life is where you put your hope but if it is in Christ and the life to come then that sets you free to live this life for Christ. So this is the doctrine of consummation.

I want to finish the study by looking at two passages of Scripture with you. The first is in Ephesians 4. I want to walk you through this to affirm what we have been studying and the importance of this. Ephesians 4:17 says [17] *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.* Gentiles here, is referring to those outside the covenant, with no relationship in the covenant of grace with the God of grace. Those outside of the covenant, their walk is one of futility. What is directing their walk? It is the futility of their minds. Their life view with the absorption of self and idolatry of self, is giving them a life style of futility. There are multiple isms of ungodly life views – narcissism, humanism, secularism, positivism, scientism, materialism etc. I commend to you R.C. Sproul's book Lifeviews. All of them boil down to one thing and that is it's a life view elevating the sovereign self.

You are seeing this today in our culture where someone sovereignly declares their gender or what marriage is. We are constantly seeing the sovereign self elevating itself and suppressing the truth of God. This is manifested in all kinds of isms but it is basically the sovereign self. What we are trying to do, by God's grace and for His glory, is develop a life view of the sovereign God who is the God of grace and glory – who creates us, who rescues us from the fall, who redeems us, whose providence is at work in our life and is bringing all things to a consummation. We are attempting to have a God-centered view of life.

Peter is my prime example here. Matthew 16:15–17 says [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. Why was Peter able to confess Christ as Lord and Savior? It was because God had changed his mind but it's so easy for that stinkin' thinkin' of that self-centered world and life view to come back because a few verses later after Jesus tells them He is going to Jerusalem to die look what Peter says now. Matthew 15:22–23 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 heard how He was going to redeem sinners and he interpreted that from his sovereign self, his interests but God's interest is that He go and save sinners from their sins. So here we see an unbeliever has a mindset that leads to futility.

Then back in Ephesians He describes that mindset. Ephesians 4:18 says [18] *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.* The heart of the problem is the problem with the heart and it shows up in the mind. The problem is not the lack of information for the heavens are shouting the glory of God. The problem is the heart that suppresses it. They suppress it in order to develop this insensible, self-centered world and life view even with all of its futility because of the hardness of the heart. How hard is it? Let's keep reading.

Ephesians 4:19–24 says [19] *They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.* [20] *But that is not the way you learned Christ!*—[21] *assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,* [22] *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,* [23] *and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* [24] *and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

He says to look at the Gentile for the hardness of their heart they have a mindset that leads to the futility and despair of sin. You didn't learn Christ this way. Christ came to you and

gave you a new heart. Now you have a new heart and have learned Christ and you are learning in Christ. You now have a mind that is being renewed and it shows up in the sensibility of the way you are living in which each day you put off the old man and put on the new man, not to be saved but because you're saved, in order to live for your Lord and Savior. Where is your mind? Is it being renewed or is it still in the futility of the world and life view of the old man that keeps creeping back in to your life? Let's look at one other passage in Philippians 2.

In Philippians 2 the Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Philippi. Philippians 2:1 says [1] *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, (if there is) any comfort from love, (if there is) any participation in the Spirit, (if there is) any affection and sympathy.* This first verse is a little bit of a challenge in the Greek and every translator has to make a call on this. I'm going to disagree with the English Standard Version here. I think the same Greek word 'if' can be translated and should be translated in the context as 'since.' Some of your translations may have that. Since there is encouragement in Christ, since there is comfort from love, since there is the participation of the Spirit, since there is affection and sympathy, what now?

Philippians 2:2 says [2] *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* So how is it that we can live in the encouragement of Christ in the Spirit of God, in the joy of Christ? We live by being of the same mind. What is the mind that we are to have? We are to be in accord of one mind. Now look at the life change that comes from the Christ-centered life view. Philippians 2:3–4 says [3] *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* [4] *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

How do you get into this others-centered, sacrificial, humble life whereby we encouraging one another, loving one another in the Spirit of God, propelling one another forward? He says you have to have the same mind. Whose mind? You have to have the mind of Christ. Christ has it for you for it is in His Word and you can be renewed by the Holy Spirit in your mind. Philippians 2:5–11 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* [6] *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* [7] *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* [8] *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* [9] *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,* [10] *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* [11] *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

How do I start to live with a life that is confessing Christ, everywhere, anywhere, rightly, appropriately, to the glory of God the Father in Christ? It is by the power of the Spirit. I need to think with the mind of Christ. You don't have it intuitively, reflexively or innately for it's in God's Word that is put in your mind by the Holy Spirit as you become a learner in Christ. As you love Christ you want to learn of Christ to be like Christ so you give yourself to it completely and fully in order to embrace that lifestyle in Christ and for Christ. In other words, there is intentionality in this. Then what happens?

Then you begin to live a lifestyle in which we humble ourselves. Do you want me to show you a Christian mind? Here is Jesus. In all of His full equality with the Father He did not grasp His position but He emptied Himself, not of His Deity but of His exalted position to take the form of a man. He further humbled Himself by going to death on a cross between two criminals and to be buried. He humbled Himself. Then God exalted Him. Instead of protecting myself, promoting myself and being absorbed with myself, by the grace of God how can I begin

to humble myself? We pray for humility while we live for exaltation. We exalt ourselves and pray for humility. You can pray for humility but after you do that duck for it's amazing what will be coming in that answer to prayer.

Notice that the Bible doesn't put humility as a prayer request but it puts it as a life takeaway. Humble yourself. You pray for the Holy Spirit and wisdom from the Word in order to know how to humble yourself but it's a life action step when you have the like mind of Christ in you. There is another piece to that so then instead of exalting yourself and praying for humility, you humble yourself and then God will exalt you at the right time. But that goes against every fiber of the old man within us and the world outside of us – take care of number one, have it your way. Sadly, we believe people when they tell us that dribble. Go try to have it your way for I promise you there is a way you won't get it when you're there. We don't have it our way, we want His Way and we want to get out of the way so we humble ourselves and where we don't we confess. Instead of exalting ourselves we ask God to exalt us.

Here is the point I want to end on. You don't have any allies in this world. I could tell you some things I that were done in the public school when I attended that were so outlandish that you wouldn't believe it. I praise God for every single principal, administrator and teacher that goes into the government educational system to stand for Jesus Christ. What missionaries they are! I love them and pray for them but that system is no ally any longer. It's not even a common grace ally any longer. Your children attend that and then come home and unless they have a gifted Christian teacher who knows how to turn this thing around, with about eight to ten hours of the sovereign self world and life view. Then they come to church and we have about an hour and half a week to try and undo all that. That is not the worst part for you see the world and life view driving all of those video games and cable programs on TV. Those things are just unbelievably effective. So we have to be intentional to develop that and we don't have allies.

So what do we do? Get some allies. Jesus has them for you. There are Bible-believing churches. Pray for the preaching of God's Word and that God will do something supernatural in 40 to 45 minutes that will undo the unbelievable hours that are being poured into you every single week. Prepare for the preaching of the Word. Take advantage of it. Get in a small group for discipleship with people who will love you enough to tell you what you need to hear and get into the Word with you. Go share your faith. Put a stake in the ground.

One of the best ways for me to flee temptation and to walk with the Lord when I first became a Christian, is I got online. I drove a delivery truck during the day and at night and would put my Bible in the locker of both places and started telling them about Jesus. When you get on the line and start confessing Jesus it's amazing how even the unbeliever will start holding you accountable. Confess Christ. I'm not talking about being obnoxious about it, just confess Christ as Lord and Savior in a loving way.

Prioritize the worship of God and the Lord's Day as a day to be refreshed for the six days you'll face in the coming week. Get some accountability in your life. When you confess Christ in the marketplace and in the world that gives you some accountability but open up the door to your brothers and sisters that they might uphold you and then whatever you do don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together as is the habit of some but draw together all the more as you see the Day of the Lord approaching. Become a learner. Eat good words. Get some good books even if they are on an iPad or iPhone. Start thinking on things. Get a journal and write down those things from God's Word that is impressing upon you and have it with you all the time. Learn to cease every moment of life.

Great men and women that I have studied don't live with days thought through but they live with minutes thought through. Redeem the time for the days are evil. That means there ought to be some rest time for you too. Make sure you get that rest time, either on the Lord's Day each week or a vacation and time to be alone and quiet with the Lord. Put all those things in place in your life and then saturate all of it with prayer. Have a time for prayer every day personally. Have a time for prayer every day in your marriage and with your family.

In the Old Testament to talk to God you would have to go through the court of the Gentiles, then the court of the women and then the court of the Israelites and then this offering or that. God is telling you that you don't just walk into My presence because it can get dangerous but then Jesus comes and now you can walk right in over anything, anywhere, at any time. I'm so glad I'm in the New Covenant. I wouldn't have been able to keep up with all those things in the Old Covenant but my Savior has fulfilled them, having taught us how awesome God is. He has now brought us near to God so saturate it with prayer in your life. Then watch God do His work.

When I mentioned humility who is the man in the Bible who had a hard time with this humility thing and finally learned it? It was Peter. When he gets to the end of his first epistle and he is exhorting elders and younger men, he quotes from the book of Proverbs. I Peter 5:6 says *[6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.* Do you think it was easy for Peter? Remember when Jesus asked them if they had caught any fish? Peter said "Lord, we've been fishing all night and we haven't caught anything." Jesus says "Put your nets on the other side." Peter says "Okay Lord." Now they are really thinking 'we who are professional fisherman will do what You say son of a carpenter' and the Lord sends all these fish into the net. Peter said "Depart from me for I am an unclean man." The Lord is breaking him. He breaks him on the sea again when Jesus tells Peter to come to Him on the water. When Peter begins to sink Jesus says "Where is your faith?" Then there is the time Peter tells Jesus he will never leave Him yet before the cock crows he denies Him three times.

Then He makes him beside the Sea of Galilee in John 21 as the Risen Christ. Jesus asks them if they have caught anything and they replied no. Jesus tells them to put their nets on the other side and John says 'it's the Lord' and they know to do it. Peter dives in. Jesus then asks him three times 'Peter do you love Me?' The Savior who broke him now remakes him. The next time Peter opens his mouth 3,000 are coming to Christ. He learned his lesson. He got a different mindset. It took a while but he got it. That is why Peter loved to say 'humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and He will exalt you at the right time.' May the mind of Christ dwell within you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word and that we could work our way through this wonderful subject. Now Father, bless Your people as they live it and learn it. Thank You for the love of Christ that compels us, the mind of Christ that directs us and a life for Christ whereby You use us and we'll give You praise, in Jesus' Name, Amen.