

Greetings:

The study that Connor Shady brings on Sunday mornings reflects the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teachability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at cmanshades@gmail.com.

Date: July 28, 2024

Sermon Title: **Christ-Centered Clarity: Putting On Your Gospel Glasses**

Text: Variety of Ephesians Passages and Genesis 1-3

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God's Good Design:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and everything was good. Day by day, the Lord continued to expand this creation until, finally, on the sixth day, God created His crown jewel: mankind. He first formed Adam from the dust of the ground, then after a quick surgery, Eve was formed from Adam's rib, and the two stood as one flesh in perfect union, naked and unashamed in God's presence. God designed both man and woman to be His image-bearers on earth, granting them dominion over all creation.

In the Garden of Eden, harmony reigned between God, humanity, and creation. Everything was as it was meant to be—no strife, no division, no pain, no suffering. All was good and within God's presence. Genesis 1:31 speaks to this beauty as, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." This perfect unity with God was something Adam and Eve were invited to join in. They dwelled with Him and lived in a state of innocence and goodness.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we see that the uncreated creator handcrafted all things out of His own goodness and designed them directly as He intended. The harmony between God, mankind, and creation in Eden was a glimpse of what life was meant to be—a life of joy, peace, and perfect communion with the Creator. However, it takes but one more chapter of scripture to reveal how things went oh so wrong.

We can be sure that there was certainly no issue with the one who created all things, but clearly, something within His good creation went awry.

The Fall:

This beautiful, unhindered fellowship with God lasted but a few moments. In Genesis 3, we find what we all know to be The Fall. Here man committed the first sin that has enabled every sin to follow... **man sought to find satisfaction outside of God.** God had only given Adam and Eve one negative command, do not eat from - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Unfortunately, the serpent's temptation soon overcame them. By questioning God's command and suggesting that eating the forbidden fruit would make her like God, knowing good and evil, the serpent deceived Eve as she and Adam ate from the tree.

In that instant, their eyes were opened, and they became conscious of their nakedness, feeling shame for the first time. **This single act of disobedience caused an immediate separation from God,** as they hid from Him, realizing they had shattered the perfect fellowship they once enjoyed.

Knowing what had happened, God confronted Adam and Eve. Because of their failure to uphold His command, He pronounced judgments on them and the serpent. The serpent was cursed to crawl on its belly and eat dust.

Eve was told that she would endure pain during childbirth and that her relationship with Adam would be characterized by a continual struggle for control over creation. Adam, as the Covenant head—the one with whom God made His commands, to whom the promises were given, and who is responsible for

upholding these commands—was told that the ground would be cursed because of him, and all their descendants would be cursed due to his actions.

The fall brought sin, pain, and suffering into the world. The once good and glorious creation was shattered by humanity's sin. As a result, Adam and Eve were kicked from the garden, expelled from His presence, and their fellowship was severed.

This separation from God began humanity's vicious struggle with sin and created a desperate need for redemption and restoration. Thankfully God in His grace, even in this moment of judgment, hinted at His plan for salvation, promising that one day the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head. In this promise of Genesis 3:15, we are given a glimmer of hope that one would come to destroy sin and death and restore all things to perfect union.

Where We Are Now - Developing a Gospel Worldview:

To properly understand the Christian life, we need to reflect on the journey that has brought us to where we are now.

- Let's consider:
 - **Where we were:** Perfect union with God in the Garden.
 - **What happened:** Humanity fell, leading to a cursed creation and separation from God.
 - **What God did:** He sent His Son to save us, to suffer and die in our place. In doing so He has established this "already, but not yet" reality.
 - **Where we are now:** Living as saved people in a fallen world, awaiting the restoration of creation.
 - **Where we are going:** Christ will return to restore all things to Himself.

We, like everyone since the fall, are waiting for all things to be made right. Both Christians and non-Christians alike acknowledge that things are not as they should be. We are all trying to grasp and obtain some solution to this brokenness but many completely miss the mark on identifying the problem.

The problem is fallen man. That is us, we are the problem. Therefore, we need someone outside of ourselves to fix it. The entirety of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation details the countless attempts of man trying to solve this problem of sin. The goal has always been to get back to that perfect union. How do we make all things right and good again... **crucial to our worldview understanding is realizing that "we can't" and never will restore this world to the way it should be.** In fact, the more and more this world continues to try to find the answer, the further they find themselves from it... **we must understand that the repair is coming... not from us... but from the one that Genesis 3:15 promised.**

We know who holds the keys to victory, the one who will put all things under His feet. And while we wait for this consummation, we live with this already but not yet reality. Christ has already come and defeated sins' rule and reign, but when He returns, He will completely eradicate its power and presence, and restore the perfect union and goodness that was present before the fall.

How Our Worldview Impacts Our Choices and Behavior

Oh how glorious that day will be, and while we know that day will come, it is not up to us to figure out the exact date and time. But we are to patiently wait knowing He will return just as He has said. From our human perspective that time and date are still TBD.¹

So until then, we are left with this age-old question: **How shall we live as we wait for that day?**

Just as we need to understand Ephesians 1-3 to properly view Ephesians 4-6, we began today's study by setting up this gospel truth (similarly to Ephesians 1-3) in order for us to rightly understand and live out the implications of this truth (similarly to Ephesians 4-6).

The question then becomes why must we examine God's original good design, the subsequent fall, and the struggle to the cross, just so I can know how to love my neighbor better?

Simple. Everything we have detailed so far has screamed to us that “we have no hope outside of Christ”, that “we are not good people”, and that “this broken world will never offer us the solution that we need.”

We cannot miss these three points otherwise we will spend our entire Christian life banging our heads against the wall because we have failed to understand humanity's own limitations.

Our lives here on the horizontal need to be foundationally rooted in the idea that “we can't”. **We can't** fix the brokenness. **We can't** save ourselves. **We can't** usher in God's Kingdom. **We can't** expect broken humanity to improve and meet the expectations that only Christ can meet.

It is crazy that we actually find our answer to how we are to most graciously view the world in the most unlikely of places: we find it in having a low anthropology, or a low view of man!²

We would do well, especially as Americans, if we would finally lower our self-righteous, limitless, I can do anything and everything no matter the obstacle view of ourselves, if we dropped this facade, we would be a lot less focused on man, and a whole lot more dependent on God.

If we fully grasped the devastating impact of the fall on all of humanity, we would start to realize our own brokenness as clearly as we perceive the brokenness in others. This would humble all of us without a doubt, in turn, we would be a whole lot less quick to judge, to hurt, to fight, and to kill.

Christian and non/Christian alike we are broken and depraved, apart from Christ we have no good in us, we are sick and fractured. Though as believers we most certainly are being sanctified and we do grow in likeness to Christ, we must realize not everyone is a believer, and even believers are sanctified far slower

¹ Elijah Litzner, Big E

² David Zahl, Low Anthropology

than we would like. Though as Christians we certainly still battle sin, it can become very easy for us to get into the comparison game.

Where we allow the brokenness of others to become a point of pride for us... I mean we have all found ourselves at one point or another comparing our lives to others going, "Yeah, I might be a sinner, or I might be bad, but at least I'm not as bad as them, or at least I don't struggle with that sin." We've all uttered something or thought something along those lines, yet as believers, we need to wipe that attitude from our minds completely.

When we see the worst things happen on the news, we need to realize we are all capable of the most egregious of sins. None of us are above this. This truth challenges our high view of ourselves and should rightly humble us. Don't be deceived, our sin nature is deadly and still lingers.

Sin still affects us and our brokenness is still present. But be reminded of Paul's words:

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **in which you once walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **among whom we all once lived** in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." - Ephesians 2:1-3

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." - 1 Corinthians 6:11

Be reminded that the only difference that separates us and non-believers is the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We don't merit his favor, we are gifted it on account of Christ alone.

Paul reminds us that our identity has changed solely because of Christ. We are made right in God's eyes, but we still carry our old sinful nature, we still drag around the corpse of our old dead man.

Christians are still affected by sin, so our lives don't always reflect our new identity. We live as saint-sinners in this fallen world: perfect before God, but still oftentimes looking like sinners here on earth.

Pastor Pat reminds us to think of it this way,

"What we once were (we were dead in sin) we no longer are (we are no longer dead) but still have (sins still lingers)."³

Until He returns and makes all things new, we like the rest of mankind will continue to be marred by sin.

Therefore we need to rightly view ourselves and every one of us around us, Christian/non-Christian, from a true biblical anthropology. We need to understand our weaknesses in order for us to rightly respond in humility. We need to understand our brokenness and neediness before we set otherworldly

³ Pastor Pat

expectations of ourselves and others. **We need to lower our expectations of this broken world and increase our expectations and understanding of our perfect God.**

Recognizing our broken and lifeless state apart from our union with Christ allows us to think more highly of God and a little less of ourselves. There is a reason trusting in Christ first begins with realizing that I can no longer trust in myself, and that idea doesn't disappear after conversion either.

How We View Relationships

This realization is especially important when we think of relationships with those around us. Unfair and unrealistic expectations have destroyed more relationships than we could ever realize.

When we look for Christ to be the center of our earthly relationship we begin to take the burden off one another and root our relationship in Christ's satisfaction.

Thankfully, both our marital/relationship counseling material here at WBC is loaded with this idea. The main premise of the entirety of the material is rightly distinguishing what we find only in Christ versus what we can realistically expect from one another.

Humans are born as dependent and needy beings with immense physical, emotional, and spiritual limitations. Unfortunately, we struggle to identify who truly fulfills our greatest needs.

God is the one who meets all these needs. Only He can provide wholeness, health, and hope. He is the substance that fulfills us, while your spouse, friends, and family are merely the shadows.

The shadows are great and they point us to and give us a glimpse of the greater substance... I mean that is ultimately what marriage is, it is a picture or a shadow of the substance - being Christ and His church. **Our earthly relationships are meant to offer us a glimpse into our vertical relationship with God, but they are not meant to replace it.**

Unless and until you have your needs met in God you will never find any joy in the shadows He has given us.

You will expect others to fill a role that only God can. By trying to make the shadows the substance, you will ruin both the design of the shadow and the substance.

So, what should be our expectations when it comes to Christian relationships of any kind:

- First, we need to see them in the same light that we see ourselves...
 - We must remember that they too are sinful, imperfect, and in need of constant grace
 - We need to realize constantly that they need a savior just as much as we do
 - We also must recognize that as sinners, we will inevitably hurt each other
- We need our vertical relationship with God to illuminate our horizontal relationships with others as well.

- Just as we see and acknowledge others as sinful, imperfect, and in need of a savior, we also need to view others as God sees them.
 - Holy and Righteous in His sight on account of Christ.
 - Through a lens of grace instead of a lens of duty.

We have harped on this for weeks, the best way to grow in love and care for those around you is to look to Christ and grow in your love and understanding of Him.

It is to take the burden off of our attempts at perfection and instead look to our already perfected identity. We are freed people, set apart by God's grace, adopted into His family, justified, sanctified, and soon will be glorified by His Spirit. God has done this all for us through His son, we have been set free by His work, and now we are free to work from this freedom!

The Gospel is incredibly good news for our relationships with others as well.

If the gospel can reconcile a holy, perfect, and sinless God to a depraved, and vile, dead person, it can surely reconcile a person to another person.⁴

When believers truly grasp the riches of their identity in Christ and His presence within them, their understanding of these truths begins to blossom in all areas of life. The Gospel of Christ Jesus is the only thing that has the power to bring life and hope to all relationships, even those that seem hopeless.⁵ Christian fellowship and all types of relationships are grounded in understanding the grace we received at Calvary. Ephesians has laid this truth out for us week after week, only once we understand what He has done for us, can we ever start to reflect and overflow that love for others here and now.

This is the truth that Paul gets at in Ephesians 4:17-24, he reminds us that we have been set free by Christ's work, we have been given this new identity, and now we get to freely live from this identity.

“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. 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. 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.” - Ephesians 4:17-24

Paul's words encourage us to remember the way we learned Christ! To remember that He has changed our identity and He has empowered us to love others here on the horizontal.

⁴ Dustin Bengé

⁵ Reigning Grace and the Marriage Relationship, WBC

How We View The Church

This way of thinking should not only permeate our relationships with others but it also must extend into how we are to view the church as a whole.

From the outside perspective and sometimes even from the inside perspective, the Church and Christians as a whole often get labeled many things. Unfortunately, some of these are true, and some of these are massive misunderstandings.

The most common ones I hear are that “the church is a bunch of hypocrites” or that “Christians are holier than thou”. Two things that often have some truth to them but are misunderstood on both sides.

In response to the Church being a bunch of hypocrites, we like anyone, certainly can be, and we need to acknowledge that. However, we as believers should be the first ones to respond with grace and compassion, the first ones to be vulnerable and honest about our struggle not hide behind our pride.

When we remember that it is only by God’s Sovereign grace that we get to know and love him, we should be all the more likely to resemble humility instead of self-righteousness.

In response to Christians being holier than thou, our response should be similar, and acknowledge that the claim is often right. We frequently present ourselves as greater than others, smarter than others, and morally better than others. Even as believers, we, as sinful people, still act in ways that we shouldn't.

However, we need to stop viewing this behavior as unexpected and acknowledge that we are imperfect and broken people in need of a perfect Savior.

I really appreciate Pastor Mark Devers's approach to these criticisms.

When a family member of Mark accused the church of being a bunch of snakes and liars, Mark agreed with him saying we absolutely are a bunch of snakes, so why don't you slither on in and join us!⁶

Mark wasn't doing this to be funny or coy, but to present the truth of life as a Christian. We need to understand the church is a hospital, it is a place where the broken and unwell come to find healing and freedom. We as Christians need to realize that we are sick, slithery snakes, who bring absolutely no righteousness of our own to the table. We are bad people who realize our sickness and go to the only one capable of healing it.

The Gospel is not at all about us being good people, on the contrary, it is about broken people realizing that we are not good and we desperately need Jesus to save us from ourselves.

⁶ Mark Devers

Understanding this as a church we must realize that the church should not be an assembly of the self-righteous but an assembly of people who admit that they are not righteous apart from God's grace.⁷

Therefore, even amongst God's people, we should not be surprised by hurt, pain, and suffering. We still grieve it and battle it, but the church is by no way immune to it.

How We View The World

This idea should also carry into how we view the world as a whole.

How do we handle living in this world amongst unbelievers, amongst brokenness, amongst suffering?

How do we handle the politics, the government, the cultural change, the hatred, the divisiveness, the disunity, and the all-out endorsement and celebration of sin in this broken world?

How do we go about being salt and light amidst a world that only seems to be getting darker?

We need to go back to where it all started.

We need to go back to the garden.

We need to return to the understanding that this world is not as it should be. God designed the world as perfect and good, and we once dwelled in His presence in the garden. But because of humanity's sin, we are no longer there. We are cursed and corrupted by sin, and the whole world now suffers and groans as a result.

Understanding this reality, we cannot be surprised by the pain that marks this world or by the pervasive disunity among people of different parties, ethnicities, races, and backgrounds. **The scripture assures us that there will never be true unity in this world until we are all unified around Christ when He returns.** Our separation from God is what leads to the brokenness we see in the world. No amount of human effort or policy change can rectify this.

Government policies can certainly help address societal issues to some extent, but they cannot change the human heart. Ending world hunger, achieving world peace, resolving racial divisions, or curing diseases are noble goals, but they don't address the underlying human condition that causes these problems.

Even if things seem to get good here on Earth, remember that it's all Egypt, it's all smoke and mirrors! There will never be enough gold chains, fine linen, praise, adoration, or anything else to satisfy the yearning that God has placed in us. Only His presence in the land of promise will satisfy His people.⁸

⁷ Mark Devers, The Unadjusted Gospel

⁸ Voddie Baucham

Thinking that we as broken people can fix a broken world, would be the equivalent of us polishing a turd, or putting lipstick on a pig. Our job is not to fix what is broken, but instead look to the one who can!

So yes government matters, politics matters, sports matters, school matters, music matters, things here do matter...

But we are not placing our hope there.

We must refuse to put our hope and trust in the things of this world.

When it comes to our eternal hope:

It does not matter who is in office next year.

It does not matter who is leading the school board.

It does not matter how the economy performs.

It does not matter how many World Series the Brewers win.

While it is important to be a light in these areas and support what glorifies God, our ultimate hope isn't placed there.

Eternal hope can never be found in the fragility of man and material things.

Seeking satisfaction in anything other than God will only lead to disappointment. There is a longing within our soul that can only be satisfied by Christ. He alone can restore what has been broken.

Electing a new leader or changing policies will not perfect this world, nor will it usher in the new heavens and new earth, end sin and hatred, or fix what was shattered in the garden. Only Jesus Christ, the Savior and Messiah, can achieve this. We look to Him and we long for His return.

This doesn't mean being a bump on a log sitting around, ignoring the world around us, disengaging from civil matters, or being absent from community life.

It is certainly not a bad thing to care about some of the things of this world and to contribute to government, politics, sports, and social matters, that is not the problem. **The problem is when we give those things an elevated standing and emphasis that they simply do not deserve.**

I'm not here to offer voting advice or tell you how to win a debate, that isn't the Bible's focus nor is it mine. Instead, the Bible speaks largely to a broken world and broken people needing one unifying answer: Christ Jesus.

As the Church, we should understand this better than anyone because we have the key to what our souls long for – He is the one who will bring about the perfect restoration we desire.

Sometimes – especially with how decisively culture-driven the world has become, **I think we need to be reminded that the purpose of the kingdom is not social transformation... but instead gospel proclamation!**⁹

Growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and sharing this Good News of the Gospel should be our number one goal above all else.

We need to be reminded of who He is every day. We need to know that there is only one person who can save us and restore all things to perfect union.

That person is Christ.

Hope has 5 Letters - Jesus

This world is broken. People every single day, no matter the country, are abused, hurting, starving, suffering, neglected, diseased, and killed. This is a real-life reality.

How do we even begin to grasp and fathom stuff like this?

How can such things happen? How can this be right or just? The answer is that it's not; it's the result of the brokenness that began in the Garden. This reality doesn't lessen our pain or answer our questions, but it helps us understand why the world is the way it is.

The greatest thing we could possibly know is the Lord Jesus Christ. To know the one who suffered at the hands of broken people in a broken world. But He overcame the world. We get to know that Jesus.

We get to know that He loves us, that He died for us, that He is faithful, and that He alone can deliver us from this kingdom of darkness and into His kingdom of light.

This good news, this gospel is the hope we need for all things, whether that is relationships with others, with the church, or with the world, we need to hold fast to Christ.

He is the only one who can make all things right!

It is in Christ alone we find our hope.

⁹ Theocast