

Ephesians Review: New Lenses for a New Worldview Ephesians 1-4:30

“And to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things...”

Introduction: There are really only two types of people in this world: those who like the taste of black licorice (or anise flavoring at all) and those of us who are right. There are also only two worldviews by which every person who has ever lived saw the world. A **WORLDVIEW** is a lens by which you view everything else, how you view the world, yourself, others, purpose, etc. A worldview is defined as a network of foundational truth propositions through which all of life is interpreted. Most cannot define their own personal worldview, but regardless if they are conscious of it or not, every person will make value judgments on morality, success, hope, happiness, truth, and reality based on some sort of set of propositions they believe to be true (or true to them). Historically, the early church (meaning the first 1000 years after Christ) accepted a **Christian or Biblical worldview, meaning an acceptance of fundamental and foundational truth:**

- **Ultimate authority and source of truth in Scripture**
- **The Triune God**
- **Sovereignty or Ultimacy of God**
- **Law of God**
- **Salvation of God in Jesus Christ**

This first worldview should look familiar, since it is one that we believe and of which we are convinced. We have a source of truth, authority, power, purpose, and hope, and helps us answer the longing questions of our heart, like: *how did we get here, what am I supposed to do when I'm here, how do I account for evil and wrong in the world, how do I solve for my guilt and shame, where is the hope, and what happens when I die?* This worldview sees God as ultimate and man as created, placing Him in the seat as Judge and recognizing He is control and we are not. Whether we choose to live for Him or not is a different story, but this first worldview acknowledges God as ultimate.

There is a second overarching worldview that mankind espouses, and we will call that **humanism, or a humanistic view of life**. This view says that man is the center of the universe that we are the source of truth and authority, and any version of god is a creation of the mind of man. This is NOT new, but the clash of worldviews was present in the Garden of Eden. When the serpent posed his question to Eve, he was really presenting two fundamental worldviews: ***“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the Garden?’*** (Genesis 3:1) ***“Did God actually say?”*** This is the dividing line in worldviews. God has made Himself known without a doubt in creation and His word, and man either believes or rejects, one that leads to a pathway of life and the other the broad way to destruction.

But, how has this worldview played out in our day? In 1970, a collection of writings by C.S Lewis was compiled into a book called, *“God in the Dock”*. The premise of each article or speech came down to the reversal of who sits as the judge over the world: man or God.¹

¹ John Locke first published the thought of God being in the dock in 1693, calling for Scripture to stand in the dock and be judged by human reason in his work *“the Reasonableness of Christianity.”*

*“The ancient man approached God (or even the gods) as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man, the **roles are quite reversed. He (man) is the judge: God is in the dock.** He is quite a kindly judge; if God should have a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war, poverty, and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God’s acquittal. But the important thing is that **man is on the bench and God is in the dock.**”*

The Christian worldview is willing to live with mystery, since God only gives us what we need (Deut. 29:29) and explain impossibilities by incomprehensibilities and leave it there, acknowledging that God is all knowing and we see things dimly. But, over the last 800 years, there has been a direct, continual, and consistent movement to normalize and standardize a secular humanist worldview, which has blossomed and flowered into much of the chaos that we see today in our culture around. In order to get what people really want – like Eve in the Garden desiring to be like God – mankind had to find ways to rid themselves of God Himself, those pesky Scriptures, the Law of God written on our hearts (Rom. 2:15-16), and seek salvation in self, making Jesus a good man/teacher but not a divine Savior. How did this happen? Starting with Aquinas separating out theology and philosophy, this led to education narrowing Biblical study into its own box, while areas like philosophy, psychology, history, science, math, and music were disconnected from Biblical truth. When secular philosophy took ownership of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, law, social theory, etc., it was not long before sacred doctrine was left with nothing. What was the result?

God is dead – man is god – religion is made up (and for the weak) – science is king (but clearly not absolute) – truth is relative – morality is a construct (I can do what I want) – happiness is fleeting – someone else is to blame – life has little meaning – what do I do now? (Pleasure? Pain? Death?)

From the teaching of Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Nietzsche, and Sartre, and secular humanist view of the world has led people down a path of nihilism, skepticism, cynicism, and hopelessness. Sartre, who died in 1980, left this bit of filth for generations today, **“Everything is possible if God does not exist.”** It was said of him:

*“Sartre, who lived a completely dissolute life absorbed in fornication and drugs, had more influence on modern motion pictures and pop culture than any single thinking in modern history. He posited that man could establish his own essence and perhaps even a little meaning in life by making free and uninhabited, authentic choices. The modern ‘pro-choice’ movement, legitimizing every sexual perversion and killing of billions of children via abortion, was enabled by Sartre’s ideology. If man would make these free choices and **thereby establish himself as a god of his own ethics**, then perhaps he could also claim to be the one defining himself, forming his own essence, and choosing his own sexual orientation and gender identity.”²*

Again, the battle for the minds and hearts of mankind is over the simple question: Is God sovereign or does man’s wisdom trump God and His Word? The problem, in the end, with a secular humanist worldview is it leads to judgment eternally and misery temporally, since it can only fill one with **doubt, uncertainty, and blame, which is a recipe for a life we would not wish on anyone.**

Why is this important, or why did we spend precious time on this? 1) To understand that what we are seeing around us is not new, has been raging for millennia, and though people think themselves to be ‘progressive’, they are really buying into a lie birthed back in the Garden of Eden; **2)** The Bible speaks to

² Kevin Swanson, “EPOCH: The Rise and fall of the West” p. 114.

these things, explains them, and offers hope. We wanted to do a review of Ephesians since its been 2 ½ months since we've preached on it, but I wanted us to see the whole of the book (at least the first 4 chapters) **as a lens, a way of seeing life**. The letter was written to a church by way of REMINDER and ENCOURAGEMENT, and it was a church that decades later lost the love for Christ they once had (Revelation 2:4). **3) "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."** (2 Cor. 10:5) There are strongholds of thought and philosophy everywhere, and our weapons are the divine power of the truth of God, His authority, and the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. To be informed is to be armed, to be aware is to be ready. So as we **review the big picture of Ephesians, it not only helps us see, but in seeing, to love Christ fully.**

- **God is uniquely and pervasively in control of all humanity, reality, and existence (1:1-14)**

Why does mankind exist? How did we get here? Is there a greater, universal purpose for our existence?

The resounding answer? **God, the divine power and authority, created mankind with a distinct purpose, to the praise of HIS GLORY.**

God is presented as Father, as the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promised Holy Spirit – a triune reality of the Godhead, where the Father **selected** through His predestined will, the Son **sacrificed** to redeem through His shed blood, and the Holy Spirit **sealed** us with the guarantee of an inheritance. Mankind is the OBJECT of love (4), grace (7), redemption (7), and forgiveness (7). Far from being presented as a trial where mankind puts God in the Dock, God is seen as the gracious redeemer, the One who created man for holiness and blamelessness (4), worked out redemption through His Son Jesus Christ, so that we could be **adopted as sons/daughters** (5) and live with Him forever, having gained an inheritance in the future (14). This is all accomplished as the "purpose of His will" (5, 9, 11) and the "praise of His glory" (6, 12, 14)

God is undoubtedly in control, and that is the best news we could hear and offer. We cannot live up to His standard and thus cannot save ourselves. We are the clay, He is the Potter (Rom. 9:20), which means He created all things, sustains all things, and dictates all things. Any acceptance of man's autonomy is a rejection of God's existence and authority.

- **God has given a knowledge of the Truth and Hope for Triumph in this world (1:15-23)**

How do we come to know what is real and true? Science? Philosophy? Where is there triumph over the bad/evil in this world? The State?

God gifts us with a knowledge of Himself, through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (1:17).

The truth that He reveals to us in His Word, both written and His Son, allows us to have iron clad hope of a glorious inheritance (18), that we are NOT powerless in this world to overcome our sin or schemes of the world system (19) and that His power worked in Christ to put Him over all things (20-21). This not only means that every other 'truth' system falls short and cannot deliver, but we have knowledge of the One who rules over all things, thus we do nothing have any need to fear or cower, but have courage in the present because of surety of the future.

- **We remember our former (or present) condition that we are born into (2:1-10)**

Is mankind born morally neutral? Are we simply a product of our environment? Are not all people naturally good but have to learn to be evil and do wrong?

Man is born sinful, and we sin because that is our condition, placing us under wrath and rightful judgment.

We were born dead (2:1), and acted out of that deadness, following a course that we could not see or choose, but followed it nonetheless (2:2). Man lives ultimately for himself, his desires and passions, and even when this seems benevolent and relatively good in comparison to others, it places everyone under wrath the justified wrath of God (2:3). The good news: BUT GOD (2:4), who is rich in mercy and love, loved us in Jesus Christ, who sent Jesus to live, die, and rise again so that we too could be risen to life from death by faith, and not as a result of our works, but have been freed to accomplish the good works He prepared for us (2:10).

- **Our condition of death and sin meant we were separated and alienated from Christ (2:11-22)**

If there is a god, what is our relationship to or with Him? Is He distant? Angry?

Being born into death and wrath means we are also without hope since we are separated from God, meaning we don't know where we belong, what to live for, and where we are going.

There is a reason people struggle with identity and belonging. They search for meaning, community, and belonging around causes, or teams, or like interests, but still feel like outsiders looking in. God brings us near through Christ, and makes us one new man (15), one body (16) with access through One Spirit to God (18) and made us **fellow citizens (19), members of one household (19) and growing us into a holy temple (21)**. Being brought near means we have ultimate identity and belonging, both now and forever.

- **God gave us the church to REVEAL the mystery of Christ and His wisdom to the world (3:2-13)**

Is religion just a man made invention for those who are weak, need the subjective, and have to create something to believe in?

The true church is no invention of man, though man has created many forms of religion. Every man made religion is the same – man doing something to appease god, or working his way up to god. However, God gave us the true church to DISPLAY the mystery of the gospel, that Jews and Gentiles come to God through faith in Jesus Christ (3:6), to bring this light to everyone (3:9), and make known the manifold wisdom of God (3:10). This was according to the ETERNAL PURPOSE of God that He has realized in Jesus Christ our Lord (3:11). The church is about Christ, points to Christ, is ruled by Christ, and is what God designed to make Christ known to the world.

- **God not only lavishes His love on us, but actively works in us to bring Him glory, which bring us ultimate satisfaction (3:1, 14-21)**

What will ultimately satisfy us in this life?

Sin cannot satisfy, only tease. Nothing in this earthly system can satisfy apart from knowing and being known by Jesus Christ.

God does withhold love from us, but demonstrates it in Christ, then has Christ lovingly dwell in us, and then helps us comprehend the limitless nature of His love for us. Every person looking for love finds ultimate love from a Savior who cannot love us more and will not love us less. When we know the infinite love of Christ, we seek to glorify Him (20-21), not trying to earn anything with Him, but seeking to please Him and find satisfaction in Him.

- **The church is a visible expression of redeemed, unified humanity who are called, gifted, and equipped in order to grow into maturity in Christ (4:1-16)**

Isn't the church just an expression of organized religion seeking to control people, pilfer their money, and work as a puppet of the State?

The church is a group of people called out of the world through the same message, to display a unity that only God can bring through the gospel, and a group that grows and matures in Christ. The church is not a social club or community service center. It is a place that people can be equipped (12) by gifted servants (11) for the work of ministry (12) so that we all can lovingly grow in our love of doctrine (14) and each other (15-16). This is a church that the world looks at and knows we are disciples (John 13:35) and will desire to know the hope that we have in Christ (1 Pet. 3:15).

This brings us to our last section of study in chapter 4:17-32, where a redeemed life should look and be different from those who do not know Christ, and should show progress as we grow in our faith. A transformed life is not only evidence of true conversion, but it is a beacon to the world that the truth of Jesus Christ is fundamentally different from anything else it can offer. We looked at:

- **How people change** – It is not by doing more, but by cultivating a mindset and life out of a new heart. It means that we **put off** the old self, with its thinking, desires, and practices, **renew our mind in the truth**, since God's Word is transformational to our thinking (Rom. 12:2) and **put on** the new self since we are now children of God reborn for holiness (4:22-24).
- **Change in motion** – Putting off lying (4:25), anger (4:26-27), and stealing (4:28), with each having a component of acknowledging the sin, turning from it, and replacing it with a redeemed reality. This is where we catch up with our last change, that having to do with our words

Dealing with a Potty Mouth (29-30)

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Process – Our words are powerful. In fact, James tells us that there is nothing more powerful or destructive than our tongue, since it is untamable and a restless evil (James 3:8). Our words can bring the most powerful and confident to their knees and encourage the most lowly to heights of action. The word for "corrupting" talk is something that is "rotten, foul, or putrid". These are words that are not only unwholesome ("bad" words) but unprofitable. They are words that cause things to rot, like the rotten peach at the bottom of the box of fruit, and begins to fester and spoil the whole bunch. Our words become worthless when we are not attentive and proactive with watching what we say, since we default to things that are unprofitable. This is why David connected his mouth and heart in a prayer for

both: *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD my rock and my redeemer”* (Psalm. 19:14).

So to “put on” words proper words, we must be purposeful and intentional with what we say, particularly to those that we love in our home and church. We seek to build up, to encourage, to admonish, and exhort. We seek to use words that fit the occasion, meaning that we don’t encourage when exhortation is needed or admonish when someone simply needs lifting up. It also means that we are truthful in our encouragement, saying things that are true and not words intended to flatter or artificially inflate. We must see our words as a valuable commodity and resource, ones that when harnessed and focused can instill confidence in those we care about. We’re reminded that Proverbs 10:19 cautions, *“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent”* (Prov. 10:19). So, a new heart in Jesus desires to build up and use our words economically. What is at stake? Not only the building up of those we love, but the pleasing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, guides in the truth, points us to Christ, and convicts of sin. When we tear down others who are also in dwelt believers, we **grieve or cause sadness** to Him. We are reminded that this does not take away our salvation, so it is not FEAR mongering that keeps us in line. On the contrary, because we are sealed, we can have confidence and assurance of our salvation, which frees us to please the Holy Spirit of God.

Implications - Our words matter. They can be used to build up, encourage, motivate and help. I’ve told Erin that there is no one else that can motivate me like she can when she says or writes something encouraging. It adds to a confidence that comes from the Lord but is tangible with someone else. But, our words can absolutely tear down and cut deeper than any weapon. Even our unintended words or those that we hold back can have adverse affects on our spouse, kids, and friends. Paul was an encourager to the churches, even if he had to correct. Jesus told His disciples that He loved them and desired to be with them. John told the churches of areas they were doing well. No one needs false or artificial sunshine shone at them, but all of us needs encouragement. *Do you actively use your words to build others up? Have you been intentional to be encouraging to those that you love? Where have you used your words or held back your words that have tore down others?*

Conclusion: Next week we will look at the all-important issue of **forgiveness, particularly in forgiving each other**. But, for now, we conclude with the thought we started with: life is not about us, but about bringing glory to God. We only can do that when we see Him clearly, so we can see our sin clearly, so we can cry out in faith for forgiveness, as He restores our life, giving us new hearts and minds, and we live that reality out each day to our great satisfaction and His glory. In this, our lives match our words, as we spread the knowledge and glory of God in Christ to all who can hear it. This is hope for the future and happiness in the present.