

Our world view

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[0 : 00] Everybody on earth has something called a worldview. You have a worldview. Even if you don't know you do, you have one.

In that way, it's kind of like an accent. Having a worldview is kind of like having an accent. You don't realize you have one until someone with a different one points it out to you. You know, Naomi still thinks we all have accents and she's the only one who doesn't.

But, you see, we all grow up with a certain worldview, a certain way we make sense of this world and what we're doing here. And different people from different cultures have different worldviews.

Because like an accent, we don't get to decide on our worldview as much as we absorb it from the people around us. I mean, you don't go to a school to learn your accent, do you?

Just like you don't go anywhere to learn your worldview. You don't choose what your accent's going to be. Just as much as very often you don't choose the way you look at the world.

[0 : 58] You absorb it from the people around you as you grow up and society. And you do that without even noticing that you're doing it. You absorb this particular worldview.

And also, like an accent, it's something that it's not easy to change once we have it. And when you come across people who challenge your worldview because they have different worldviews, you're very, I mean, we tend to be very hostile towards those people.

We don't want to listen. We don't want to change our worldview. Rather, we want to fight theirs. It's difficult to change our worldview. And that's why the gospel of Jesus Christ is such a powerful message.

Because what the gospel does, when someone believes it and embraces it into their life, it doesn't only change their behavior. It actually changes their underlying worldview, which determines their behavior day to day.

The gospel is in the business, the church is in the business of worldview alteration.

[2 : 06] That's what the gospel does. And so you can think of it like this. When you enter into God's family, it's like you get a new accent. But not for your mouth, for your brain. Because the gospel changes the way you actually think about the world.

And doing this, coming to church, sitting under the Bible, week in and week out, isn't so much about coming and getting some instructions for how to live the coming week.

Coming here, listening to the Bible, going to growth groups, and chewing over the Bible's message and the truths that it reveals to us is about actually getting a new worldview.

Getting your worldview changed so that you will naturally start doing what God wants you to do without having to be told. So I want to say that again. It's an important truth.

Coming and studying the Bible and listening to preaching isn't about getting some instructions of how to go out and live. It's about letting your worldview, bit by bit, your current worldview be deconstructed and a new worldview, God's worldview that He gives us in the Bible, be put in its place so that you will naturally start living out how He wants you to.

[3 : 14] And that's really what this morning's passage in 2 Corinthians is all about. Paul describes in this passage some ways the gospel changes our worldview and what it means for how we live.

And so in this passage, he mentions three main worldview alterations that the gospel should do for you and me. And we're going to look at each of those three in turn.

So that's where we're going this morning. So I'll start with the most basic. The first major worldview change the gospel gives you is how you see yourself. How you see yourself.

Now what I'd like to do first with each of these three points is look at the typical worldview that we absorb from society with regards to each of them before seeing how the gospel gives us an alternate worldview.

All right. So what does society tell you about yourself? What does modern society tell you about you? Well, the prevailing worldview of society today says that you don't actually have any value in and of yourself.

[4 : 14] And if you dispute that, all you've got to do is go to New York and see that you can legally murder a full-term baby in New York State, which really demonstrates this worldview that people aren't valuable in and of themselves just by being people.

That's the worldview. So what that means then is that you've got to live your life to make yourself valuable. If that's society's worldview, that you don't have any inherent value in yourself, you've got to then make yourself valuable through what you do in life.

You've got to find your place in this world by working hard and getting rich or famous if you can. In other words, self-promotion is the aim of the game in this world and in this society.

And it's not looked down upon, such self-promotion. It's assumed that you'll live in a way that promotes yourself. That's the norm in our world.

And that was also, in fact, the assumed worldview of the people of Corinth 2,000 years ago when Paul wrote this letter. And that's why they had no problem, in fact, with the self-promoting teachers who came.

[5 : 25] Remember, if you've been here so far, these other teachers were coming in promoting themselves, and the Corinthians had no problem with them. They embraced them. They paid them more money. And they were getting rich off the church.

And the Corinthians actually expected that they would promote themselves. Lots of people today as well love to follow teachers who promote themselves, you know, who fly around in private jets and wear fancy thousand-dollar suits.

And we wonder, you look at that and you wonder, why do people follow them? Why are people so attracted to these self-promoting, egotistical teachers when it's so obvious what they're doing?

Have you ever wondered that? Well, I'll tell you why. It's because, think about it, if the aim of the game in this world is to promote yourself, you'll want to listen to someone who has shown that they can do it.

So you can learn to do it too. That's why these guys have such a following, and women who promote themselves. Why they have so many people following them, even if they're not preaching the truth, it's because they have succeeded in the world's goal of self-promotion.

[6 : 40] And so people are attracted to that. They want to do it too. And that's what the Corinthians were attracted to as well. Well, that's what they expected. Teachers who were good at promoting themselves.

What they weren't expecting was Paul, who wasn't promoting himself. He came and he wasn't drawing any attention to himself. And you see it throughout his letter. You see it in this passage as well.

He, you know, he will look at it more in growth groups. But quite often in this passage, he points out the fact that he's not here to promote himself to the Corinthians. He's here for another purpose. And they were skeptical of that.

They wondered, you know, why is he here then? What is this guy Paul doing all this for, if not to promote himself and get rich and become a popular speaker? Why is he not interested in all that?

And so this passage is him explaining why. Why he's not interested in self-promotion. And he explains here what's really driving him. And also why he doesn't need to promote himself.

[7 : 42] And it's all because of how the gospel has changed his worldview. So have a look in verse 14 and 15. For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died.

And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. And so that is Paul's worldview on himself, essentially.

He's explaining here what compels him, what drives him. And it's not the promotion of himself. It's the promotion of Jesus Christ. Now why is that? Why do you have this guy, Paul, who lives for the promotion of Jesus rather than the promotion of himself, when actually self-promotion is what the world tells us to do, and self-promotion is what we automatically want to do.

What is it that changed Paul to live a life of Jesus' promotion? Well, he says here, why? In verse 14, he says it's because he's experienced the love of Christ.

The love of Christ compels us. In fact, that word, compel, is actually even stronger than that. It can be translated, arrests us.

[8 : 57] It constrains us, as some translations say. We don't have a choice. That's how powerful his experience of Christ's love was. Christ's love compels us.

Notice, it's not Christ's command that compels him, or Christ's authority that gets him to do what he's doing. It's Christ's love. The love that Jesus displayed by willingly dying on the cross, giving up his life to save Paul's life and other believers' lives.

That is an act of love. It wasn't a cold-hearted thing that Christ did because he had to do it, or because his father told him to do it, or because it was all part of the big plan.

While those things are true, Christ did it out of love for his people. And that act, that act of Jesus Christ giving up his life to save those of his people, convinced Paul that as a person he was intensely loved by God.

And it gave him value that he'd never experienced before. And that was such a powerful driving force in his life.

[10 : 11] And that's what the gospel reveals to all believers, all who have come and put their faith in Christ, and who call him Lord and Savior. It convinces us.

The gospel convinces us that the creator of this world loves you, if you're a believer. He loves you. He actually, he cares for you.

He wants your best. And that he has already made much of you, when he decided to save you before you were even born. And so you are valuable, more valuable than you can ever know.

You are valuable to God. A person does not give up their life for something that's not valuable to them. You need to know that about yourself if you're a Christian. It's the foundation of who we are and how we live.

If you don't, if you're not convinced of that, that Paul was convinced of, that God loves you intensely, then you won't be able to go on and live the way he calls you to live.

[11 : 13] You won't be able to be who he calls you to be if you don't get that fundamental truth right, that you are loved more than you ever could dream. And when Paul realized that about himself, that Jesus has made much of him, you know what that did?

That freed him from needing to make much of himself. He didn't need to make himself valuable because Jesus has already done that by dying for him.

It freed him up to not have to focus on promoting himself anymore. And so he was free to promote Christ instead. And so that's why he says in verse 14, those who Jesus died for have, in a way, themselves died to a life of self-promotion.

You see what he says there? Verse 14, we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. All those who have been saved, who he died for, have themselves died, in a way.

They have died to a life lived for self. They have died to a life lived for self-promotion. And now they can live to promote Christ instead, so that others might come to know Christ's love for them.

[12 : 23] That's how the gospel works. The gospel convinces you that you are more valuable to God than you could ever know, so much so that it frees you up not to have to focus on promoting yourself anymore.

And to trust God that he knows what's best for you and you can focus on him and his kingdom. Seek first the kingdom of God and all these other things will be given to you, Jesus says.

But you will only seek first the kingdom of God when you are assured that God has your best interests at heart. That God promotes you so that you don't need to promote yourself. So, that's what Paul is saying here.

That it's through him, his experience of love, that he's been freed up to be God-focused. And that's what true love does in any relationship, not just our relationship with God.

When you're truly loved by someone else, it removes the need to promote yourself to that person, right? If you're convinced of their love for you. You see it in a good relationship. You want to have some relationship tips this morning?

[13 : 25] Well, a good relationship is when there is a love that makes something of the other person so much that they don't need to make something of themselves.

That is the ingredient for a good relationship. And that's the kind of love, that's the kind of relationship we should be aiming for in our lives and in our relationships.

And it's also the kind of love that is experienced nowhere more than in the gospel where we discover that Jesus loves his people like that. And discovering that for yourself, if you are one of those people, discovering that Jesus lived and died for you is what will free you from having to live for yourself.

And it's the only thing that will free you from the trap of self-promotion that this world encourages. And so that's how the gospel changes the way you see yourself.

Secondly, it changes the way you see other people. So our society trains us to evaluate other people by what we see on the outside. And we don't even notice it, but that's the way we're trained.

[14 : 32] Movies, magazines, the famous people are the beautiful people, right? The wealthy people, those are the movers and shakers of society. Those are the people whose opinion matters.

You know, if there's a controversy or a discussion going around in society, the moment a celebrity stands up and says something about it, everybody listens to them. Why? It's just because they're a celebrity. It's not that they actually know what they're talking about.

It often happens that celebrities stand up and say something about an issue that's present in society. And everybody hangs on their words.

But what on earth do they know? They just went to acting class and they've been in a few movies. What do they know about these world issues? But of course, those are the people we listen to because that's how we've been trained.

We can't help it. We've developed a habit of ranking people in this world in order of importance based on wealth, status, power, and other external factors. But the gospel fundamentally changes all of that.

[15 : 32] It changes what factors we use to view other people. So look at verse 16 and 17. Paul says, So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old is gone. The new is here.

Okay, so Christians who have come to know and believe the gospel learn not to see people according to a worldly point of view. But we see people, the gospel teaches us to see other people through a completely different filter.

So you know how when you buy a pair of polarized sunglasses, when you're there at the stand and you're looking for what sunglasses suit your face, you kind of put them on and then there's this little white thing at the top that you look at.

But if you look at it without the sunglasses, it's just white block. But if you put the sunglasses on, you see a little picture. You know what I'm talking about? I hope you know what I'm talking about. Have you never bought polarized sunglasses before? The idea is that you're able to see things through the polarized filter that you wouldn't see otherwise.

[16 : 47] That's the whole point. Well, the gospel message in a way is like that. It's a special set of lenses that help us to see things that we couldn't see before with our natural eyes.

And as I said, coming to church and Bible study is the process of putting on those new lenses more and more and living your life more and more and seeing things more and more through those lenses.

And so what do we see when we look at other people through gospel lenses rather than through the lenses of the world? Well, that's what Paul tells us. Verse 17, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation.

That's how he sums it up. That's the gospel view of other people. If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. In other words, when Paul the apostle looks at people, he doesn't see black or white or brown or rich or poor or famous or not.

He sees only one thing. He sees whether that person is part of the new creation or not. Either they are in Christ and they have eternal life or they don't. And to Paul, that is the only criteria that matters.

[17 : 55] Now, through Isaiah, God revealed many of his plans for what's to come in this world. And he says this. This is from Isaiah 43, the reading we had earlier. He says, forget the former things.

Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing. Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

So God was here through Isaiah talking about what he was planning to do through Jesus by sending Jesus, his son, into the world that he was going to bring about something this world has never experienced before in Jesus.

He's planning to do a new thing. But look at verse 19. I'm doing a new thing. Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it? So he also warns us that not everyone will realize the new thing when it comes.

And this was written about, what, 700 years before Jesus came through the prophet Isaiah and it was talking about what God was planning to do. But when Jesus came, not everyone would realize that this is the new thing God was talking about.

[18 : 58] And it's still today. People look at Jesus and they don't see him as who he truly is. Maybe even you sitting here this morning, when you think of Jesus, to you, he is just a historical figure.

Nothing more than a person. A great person, to be sure. A great teacher, but just a person. Many, many people see Jesus that way today. Even Paul says he thought of Jesus that way.

See what he says? Though we once regarded Christ in this way, verse 16, we do so no longer. So Paul thought of Jesus just in worldly criteria.

He judged Jesus based on worldly criteria until the day on the Damascus road when he came face to face with the risen Jesus in all his glory and he realized who he really was and he was struck down with awe.

The Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth appearing to him. He no longer saw Jesus from a worldly point of view after that day. And the new thing that God was talking about in Isaiah is a whole new world.

[20 : 12] We looked at this last week. A new creation and Jesus is the only way people can qualify for that new world through trusting in his death on the cross to take away their sins.

That is the only way to be part of the new thing that God is doing in this universe. And so, if that's the case, you know, we've seen the cosmic reality of what Jesus is and what he does for us and what he means.

If that's true, then all that really matters. The only criteria that is worth considering when viewing other people is whether they are part of that new creation or not, whether they are part of that new thing or not.

You know, we look at people's importance and status and their wealth and their accumulation and, you know, their sway they have in society.

You know, a great antidote I've found to the importance of people is astronomy. If you do a little bit of astronomy and you realize how tiny this world is, that we are a speck of dust in another speck of dust floating in another speck of dust in a giant creation, you start to realize that the importance we give ourselves is really nothing.

[21 : 28] So, all of this status and importance and wealth of people who are dying anyway and who can't keep it, is nothing compared to the real criteria to evaluate people as to whether they are part of the new creation to come or not.

Whether they've had their sins forgiven or not. That's all that matters. When you consider your work colleague or your school friend or your cycling buddy, learn to see them through gospel glasses.

Learn to not look at their status or their success or their wealth in this world. Rather, consider whether they will be in the new world or not. Because that is what really matters. And if we start seeing people like that through gospel glasses in reality, then you know what?

We will know how to relate to them and what to say to them for their ultimate good. We will not be intimidated by their wealth or status and we will talk about what they really need, even if they don't know what they need.

Because, you know what? No matter how much they've got in this world, no matter how much those important or wealthy or highly regarded people have got materially, they need you.

[22 : 42] They need someone like you to tell them the truth that they need to hear about life and death and God himself. Which is, in fact, the last of the three ways the gospel changes a person's worldview.

Not only does it change how we see ourselves, not only does it change how we see others, it also changes how we see God. And so, what does your cycling buddy or your work colleague or your school friend think about God?

Have you asked them? What do they think about God? Well, if they get their worldview from the society around them, I will tell you what they think about God, if they believe he exists at all.

They think that he is on their side. In fact, they think that his very purpose is to make their life better, to keep them safe, and to take them to a better place when they die.

That is society's view on God. How many funerals I've been to where they talk about Bob or Susan having gone to a better place even though Bob and Susan never spared a moment for God in their life.

[23 : 47] Well, because isn't that God's job? Isn't that what he does? Or prayers uttered by someone in a dangerous situation. You know, when their car is broken down in the middle of Mitchell's Plain or something, in a really dodgy area, or Lavender Hill when there's gang wars going on.

And what do they do? They pray. They've never prayed in their life before, but they pray then, because isn't that God's job to protect them, to keep them safe, even though they don't care about him the rest of their life when things are going well?

And you can also see this worldview, this view of God coming out in how people react to suffering. You may have heard it before. If there's a God, why does he allow so much suffering?

The assumption is his job is to stop suffering, his job is to take away our suffering. Or when a person is going through a particularly painful time in their life, why is God doing this to me? If there's a God, he would protect me from this, he would take this away.

Or, on the other side, when something goes really well, when a person's football team wins the championship, they say, ah, there is a God in heaven. And all of these, the basis of all of these attitudes is the assumption that God is here to make our lives better.

[25 : 01] Almost that he works for us, that he's our employee, that's his job, to make our lives better. Well, that couldn't be further from the truth. God works for no one but himself.

His job, if you like, is displaying his glory. glory. And it's us, humans, who actually try to rob him of his glory by ignoring him and glorifying ourselves instead.

And so, if he's doing his job well, he should destroy us all. That's his job. That's pretty scary. Far from God being on our side, the Bible tells us we are by nature God's enemies, because we are robbing him of his glory.

When we, the people that he has made, the people he has given life to, who are designed to enjoy and know and worship God's glory, we ignore that, and we take what he's given us, and we try to glorify ourselves, and try to make our life nice with what we've got, totally ignoring God, totally ignoring the reason he's put us here.

When we rob God of his glory, we make ourselves his enemies. And therefore, our attitude towards him should actually be fear.

[26 : 16] That's why Paul says in verse 11, since then we know what it is to fear the Lord. We try to persuade others. And people don't.

People don't fear God. They laugh at the idea of judgment. People don't fear God because they don't realize what's waiting for them when they die. You don't insult and ignore and disobey the God of the universe for your whole life and think you can get away with it.

But people do. And so Paul's right view of God motivates him to warn others. Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But there's something else he knows about God which motivates him, which he describes from verse 18.

Have a look. I'll read from verse 18 to 21. He says, All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

That God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us.

[27 : 28] We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God. Okay, so I've said God works, his job is to display his glory, which is the best thing for this universe.

But he displays that glory not only in the punishment of sinners, which is right and glorious. To see those who rob God of his glory getting what they deserve, that is right and good.

And in the punishment of sinners, God is glorified, but not only is he glorified in punishing those who insult his glory, he's also glorified in his desire to reconcile with sinners who don't deserve his glory.

You see, we as the human race are at war with God, naturally. That's not what the society will tell you, that's not the worldview you'll get from society, but that is what the Bible clearly says. We are at war with our creator and we've been ever since Eden and it's a war that we will lose one day on judgment day.

[28 : 41] But before we lose, God extends to us an olive branch. He desires peace with us, with humanity in the gospel.

In fact, that phrase, extending an olive branch, you've heard it before? It comes from the Bible. It comes from Noah's Ark. You know, when God judged humanity and yet he took one family and spared them and the symbol of his grace towards them was a dove, also a symbol of peace, interestingly enough, coming and giving an olive branch to Noah on the Ark to show that God, while he judges sin, also offers peace to sinners who fear him.

Because that is who he is. And so that's what the gospel tells us about God. that while we're at war with him and we deserve his punishment, his glory is also shown in his offering us mercy and peace, extending an olive branch to us before it's too late.

And we know the reason he can even do that, the reason he can offer you and I peace despite our sin, despite the fact that we've robbed him of his glory, despite the fact that he is a just judge and he must punish sin, the only reason he can offer you peace without compromising his glory, is verse 21.

Look at it. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. This is one of the greatest verses in the Bible.

[30 : 17] God made Jesus into sin. He didn't just, he didn't, he wasn't just blamed for our sins, Jesus fully absorbed, our sins, he was made into sin to take all the rightful punishment we deserve so that we can be righteous before God one day.

In the gospel, God's justice is satisfied and his mercy is shown in offering peace to sinners like us. And he is committed to us, Paul says, the message of reconciliation, we are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us.

And so the gospel showed Paul not only that God has made peace possible, but that God has chosen him and the other apostles to be the ambassadors going into a hostile country, into enemy territory to take that peace offer.

That's a very dangerous job to be an ambassador in wartime, isn't it? Because if your enemy wants to make peace with you, the ambassador will have to go into that country.

Now, of course, today we've got technology and communication, but back in the old days, the ambassador had to go risk his life so that he could take this peace offer to the enemy.

[31 : 37] That's what Paul is. That's what he calls himself, the ambassador to take this peace offer into hostile territory so that other people might know that there is a way that they can be at peace with God.

God. And that is why his words and those of the other apostles have been preserved for thousands of years in the Bible. For us today, even long after they've died, we've got the words and the records of the prophets and apostles, the ambassadors that God has sent to make peace with this world.

Which means that whenever the Bible is opened and the gospel is preached, God is extending an offer of peace to his enemies. That is a pretty profound way of thinking about Bible study and Sunday service, isn't it?

Every time we gather around the Bible and we open it, God is extending an offer of peace to his enemies, to you, if you have not yet found peace with God, which may very well be the case.

If your sins are still weighing on your conscience, if you know, no matter how much you try to deny it, that God's judgment is coming to you when you die, well right now, as you sit here under the preaching of the word right now, God is extending an olive branch to you.

[32 : 56] He is offering you a way out of his judgment through faith in his son Jesus Christ. All that's left for you to do is to take it by believing who Jesus is and living appropriately to that belief.

And if you are saved, if you've done that, if you've taken that offer of peace and you've trusted in Christ, then realize what that means for you. what this passage means for you, that means that you also act as an ambassador for Christ in enemy territory whenever you bring the gospel to someone else.

But you'll only be willing to do that. You'll only be willing to be an ambassador for Christ, which is the best way you can spend your life. You'll only be willing to do that when you've first let the gospel change your worldview.

If you live with a current secular worldview, you will never be effective for Christ. If you let the gospel change your worldview, then you will be. When you've experienced the love of Christ for yourself so much that it compels you that you can't help, that it arrests you to wanting others you care about to experience that love too.

When you start seeing other people, not like the world sees them, but through gospel lenses as either saved or not, reconciled with God or not. And when you realize that you as a Christian have been put into their lives to be God's ambassador, to bring them a message from their creator that he desires peace with them and offers them a place in the world to come.

[34 : 26] When you realize those things, when you have that worldview, when you begin to see life through those lenses, that's when you will really start living in a way that matters for eternity. Let's pray.

Lord, we do thank you for the worldview that you give us through the lenses of the gospel, through scripture. scripture. It's a view of life and eternity that we would never have otherwise. And so we thank you, Lord, for giving us this passage.

We thank you for sending and inspiring the apostle Paul to write it. And we ask, Lord, that you would help us to see you, to see others and to see ourselves through gospel lenses so that we might be effective in the work you've called us to do in this earth.

In Jesus' name, Amen.