

The Gospel Changes How We View Others

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 July 2014

Preacher: Seth Lewis

[0 : 00] It's great to be back. It is, this is a great place. We had heard good things about it, but now we know they're true. I think it was Yeats that said, there's no strangers here, there's just friends you hadn't met.

And I think the truth of that really is in the body of Christ, that it really is true, that the body of Christ, that Christ breaks down the barriers between us.

So last week we were talking about, thank you very much, Ralph. Last week we were talking about this good news about the gospel, what Jesus has done for us, and how that impacts our view of ourselves.

We looked at how it really gives us perspective, that it shows us who we are in relation to God, that we are very small and sinful, and yes, we are extremely loved by God and secure in Him.

But also how the gospel shows us that our guilt is removed, it frees us from the power of sin, that it removes our guilt, and also that it fills us with the fullness of God.

[1 : 16] And that gives us the strength to, that even the desires for sin start to wither, because we have full satisfaction in Christ.

And finally, we also saw that the confidence that we have in the future, that we can trust God because He's proven Himself. He's proven that His promises are good. He's proven that He really does want what's best for us, and is really willing to do what is best for us, whatever the cost.

So because of the gospel, we have hope for the future. We're just going to start with the same verse that we, a few verses that we read at the beginning of last week, 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. In the Church Bible, it's page 1161. So 2 Corinthians 5, starting in verse 14.

He says, 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 and was raised again.

[2 : 31] From now on, we know, 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, he is a new creation.

The old has gone. The new has come. We talked last week how the gospel changes everything. It really literally changes everything. And if you look particularly at verse 16, it says, From now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

What we want to focus on this week is how the gospel changes our view of others, how the gospel changes our relationships with others. How does it impact the way that we relate to the people around us?

So, what we'll start with, maybe recognize some common themes. What we'll start with is, what we saw last week is that the gospel gives us a new perspective on ourselves.

It shows us who we are in comparison to God. And we talked about how the gospel kills our pride. That there's really just no room for pride in the gospel.

[3 : 36] It shows us that we're not the center of the universe, as much as we like to pretend to be. That we really are not the ones that are most worthy of even our own love and devotion.

That God is the one that is worthy of that. That God really is the center of everything. It shows us that other people, then, are not rivals to our pretended throne.

Instead of other people being competition, like, you know, if we're all trying to be the center of the universe, then that's not going to work very well, is it?

We're all going to be bumping up against each other, all trying to pull everybody else into orbit around us. And, we're always going to be pulling and fighting against each other, if we're all trying to be the center of the universe.

But, the gospel frees us from that, because it shows us that instead of other people being rivals, other people being a threat to us, it shows us that they are fellow creatures, made in the image of God, just like we are.

[4 : 45] That he is the center, and that we all should be relating to him. Paul says this. Well, let me just say, it affects all kinds of things in our relationships with others.

And, let me just take a couple of specific examples, but it's not going to be exhaustive by any means. But, maybe the first one we'll look at is, how does it affect our relationship with people when they think well of us?

When they admire us? When they see something that's good? When they compliment us? Paul says, by the grace of God, I am what I am. And, his grace to me was not without effect.

No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me. So, basically, if people notice anything good in us, it's not like we can really even claim the credit.

Paul says, by the grace of God, I am what I am. Even though he says, I worked harder than anyone, and yet not I, but the grace of God that was working in me.

[5 : 54] So, that frees us from the burden of trying to impress people. It frees us from the burden of trying to bring people into our orbit and make them recognize us as the center of the universe. It frees us not to have to point to ourselves anymore.

Not to have to try to build ourselves up anymore. It frees us from this charade of trying to convince everyone that we are the main thing, that we are the greatest. And that's a huge freedom.

But what about when we make mistakes? What about when those things that are not pretty about us, those things that are not nice about us, come out, and people see them, and they criticize us? I mean, we can't do the same thing then. We can't say, deflect the credit to God then. We have to own that.

But once again, what we see is that the gospel, it kills our pride. The gospel proclaims to everyone, from the rooftops, quite loudly, if we claim the gospel in our own lives, what we're claiming is that we are so sinful, that we are so, we were so wrong, that what it took to forgive us was the death of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 14] This is what we're claiming as Christians. We're claiming that our sin was so bad and so serious that Jesus had to die in order to forgive us.

And once we've admitted that, then it shouldn't be, we shouldn't be surprised by the sin in our lives. We shouldn't be surprised when it shows up.

We've already admitted that we're sinners. We've already admitted that it took the death of Christ to forgive us. So that means that if anyone is criticizing us, that means that if anyone tells us how bad we are, we don't have to disagree.

We don't have to defend ourselves. In fact, we can agree wholeheartedly. We can even, I mean, if somebody wants to tell us how rotten we are, we can tell them, look, you don't even know the half of it.

I'm much, much, much worse than you think I am. I'm much worse than I think I am. But that's a freeing thing because it frees us from having to actually defend ourselves or from having to pretend to be something that we're not.

[8 : 26] Paul said to Timothy, he said, this is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.

He didn't beat around the bush. He just said, I'm the worst. My sin is terrible. He puts it plainly out there. And it sounds, it sounds awful to say something like that, but it's actually wonderfully freeing. And it gives glory to God because he's the one that's forgiving us. He's the one that's changing us. Now I have lots of practice defending myself when people come at me with criticisms.

I've told my wife many, many times why she was so wrong about the things that she was saying that I had done wrong. But I tell you, we need to realize that the gospel means that my sin is already on display.

And that when my sin is on display, God's grace and mercy is on display as well. We don't have to try to hide. We don't have to try to cover it up.

[9 : 36] We need to rest in the forgiveness that we've received from Christ. So we don't have to pretend. We don't have to defend. Now I realize that if we're wrongly accused of something that's slightly different.

But still, even when people are wrongly accusing us of things, well now oftentimes there's more truth in their accusations than we like to admit. But even if it's wrong, even if the accusation isn't even true at all, we can still say that no matter what people could bring against us, no matter what the accusation they could come at us with, the truth of our rebellion against God and the seriousness of that and what it caused Christ to forgive us is actually worse than anything people could accuse us of.

And yes, his forgiveness is bigger. Now it's not that we resign ourselves and we just say to people, well, yeah, I'm a sinner, that's it, you're going to have to deal with it.

That's the way it is, buddy. It's not that we resign ourselves to just live in sin. The Bible doesn't present that at all. In fact, what the Bible says is that if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us, but it doesn't stop there.

It says, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So we can come to people, when they come to us and say, you're wrong, you've done this wrong, you've failed here and here and here, we can say yes, we can own that, we can say, yes, that's a problem, but I have hope, not because I'm going to try harder, I have hope because the blood of Jesus forgives me and the power of Jesus cleanses me from all unrighteousness.

[11 : 29] My hope is not in turning over a new leaf and trying again and trying to do it better. My hope is the power of Christ to change me and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. And we need to share that with other people when they come to us with criticism.

We can own the things that we've done and yet we can own them with hope because the gospel does something that nothing else can do. The gospel kills our pride and yet at the same time gives us supreme confidence.

Now usually we put those two things together. Usually if somebody is very confident that's because they're very proud of their own abilities. But the gospel separates those things in a way nothing else can.

The gospel completely kills, destroys any hope of our having pride in ourselves because it shows us who we really are. And yet at the same time the gospel gives us the supreme confidence that is greater than any confidence we could have in anything else because it's in Christ.

we have a secure hope in Christ that's better than anything we could have in ourselves. There's no condemnation from God so why would we need to fear condemnation from people?

[12 : 49] Our security as God's children gives us confidence to live without needing to seek the approval of other people. I mean, everybody wants approval.

Most of us seek it from other people. But when we have the approval of our creator secure in Christ we're free from that never-ending treadmill of trying to win people's approval trying to keep people's approval which just just goes on and on and on.

But when we have our creator's approval secure then that puts an end to that. We don't need people's approval so much anymore. So the gospel gives us perspective.

It shows us that the praises and criticisms it shows us that the approval or disapproval of other people are not ultimate. It shows us that we don't have to pretend to be something that we're not. We don't have to defend ourselves. We can own our sin and yet we don't have to try to hide it or anything because it's covered in Christ. And we have the power to change because we have of him as well.

[13 : 58] So the gospel shows us that God's perspective really is what matters and that God's perspective on us is that he's loved us so much that he's been willing to die for us to give us life to give us new life in him.

He's loved us beyond anything that we can imagine. So really it's not just perspective that the gospel gives us now it's this huge amount of freedom as well because all of a sudden we don't need people the way that we used to.

We talked about we don't need their approval so much. We've looked to people to fill our need for approval that we crave but God's approval makes the approval of people seem pretty small.

We've looked to people to fill us with the love that we long for and yet God gives us this showers us just dumps this huge amount of love that is just unimaginable unconditional amazing love and he pours it on us freely.

It makes any kind of human love seem pretty pale in comparison. We've looked to people to give us an identity. We've looked to people to recognize that we're something great.

[15 : 10] We've looked to people to recognize that our accomplishments are something significant but when the God of the universe is willing to give his life to save us then our significance is not in question anymore.

And our identity as his children is secure and people can't change that. So we don't need people the way that we used to need people.

And once again I think here's the unique ability of the gospel to separate things that the world can't separate. Because we already saw how the gospel can kill pride on the one hand while at the same time giving us the supreme confidence which usually you couldn't separate.

But the gospel also does this. It frees us from needing people while at the same time giving us the new ability to love them like we've never loved them before. Now in the world those things usually go together.

If you listen to love songs and things a lot of times it's you know I need you so much I can't live without you. A lot of love is love of necessity. Basically I feel like I really need you so you fill that need so I love you.

[16 : 31] But the gospel completely changes that. That kind of love when it comes down to it if you love somebody because they're filling the empty places in you then that kind of love is ultimately selfish.

Because it's really about the empty places in me. It's not about you. And if you're not filling the empty places in me like I expected you to well there's a whole lot of love songs about that too. Those are the sad kind. The breakup ones. But the gospel transforms that whole dynamic. Because what it does is it fills our emptiness with God's love.

It fills us so much that David can say you anoint my head with oil my cup overflows. It fills us so much that it fills us to overflowing.

So this security that we have in God means that we don't have to seek our security in other people. We don't have to seek, try to get from other people the things to fill us.

[17 : 38] But that doesn't mean that we don't love them. In fact what it means is quite the opposite. Because it actually gives us the freedom to love others without needing to put a list of conditions on what they need to do for us.

We're free to love others without needing them to fill us up at the same time. In other words, basically, we are free to love others the way Christ loved us.

Because when he loved us, it certainly wasn't because we could give something back to him.

Ephesians 5 says, follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children.

Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. He gave out of his fullness to people that were completely empty, who had nothing to give in return.

And now, if we are filled with his fullness, we can give to others out of his fullness, not out of our own, but out of his fullness as well. I mean, Jesus told us to love our enemies.

[18 : 43] Now, that command doesn't even make sense unless you see it in this context. Because the way Christ loved us was that he loved even when we were his enemies.

Enemies don't have anything to give us except pain and heartache, really. I mean, that's what we expect from enemies. And yet, God gave out of his fullness even while we were his enemies.

So, now we are free to love others as well without needing a return on our investment. So, the gospel gives us perspective.

It shows us who we are and it shows us that we don't have to hide, that we don't have to pretend, we don't have to pretend to be something that we're not, we don't have to defend ourselves even. we don't have to try to win people's approval because God already loves us. He's already paid the price for our sin and he's given us the strength to follow him.

[19 : 47] And the gospel frees us to love other people freely out of the overflow of what God has given us. But I think there's a bit more. Last week we talked about the hope that we have in what God has done that it gives us hope for the future as well.

and that hope affects the way that we relate to others as well. If you read through Romans you see Paul spend chapter after chapter after chapter developing the gospel.

And what exactly is the gospel? That we're all guilty before God but that God has given Christ and that he's paid for our sin and that he's provided a way to come back and to be his children.

And Romans chapter 8 is kind of the climax of all of this. And it's full of amazing things. That we're adopted into God's family that there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ. He talks about, you know, just, he just, it's full, that there's nothing that can separate us from the love of God.

Do you know this chapter, Romans 8, is one of the most popular because it's so full of just these amazing things that the gospel, the promise that the gospel holds for us. So then, what does Paul say directly after Romans chapter 8?

[21 : 11] The first verse of Romans chapter 9, the first two verses, he says, I speak the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit, I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

What? I mean, he's just said, like some of the most amazing truth, that there's no condemnation in Christ, that we're adopted into Christ, into God's family, that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.

And now he's saying there's great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, like how does this follow? But he explains why. He explains why in verse 3.

He says, for I wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race. The reason he's upset, the reason that he has sorrow, is because he sees the people around him.

He sees that they don't have the same hope that he has. He's just been dwelling on how amazing, how wonderful the gospel is in his life, in those who believe, and the great promise that it has for us, and this awesome security that it gives us.

[22 : 28] And what it leads him to is to say, I have sorrow and unceasing anguish. Yes, there's great joy in the gospel, and yet at the same time, he has this sorrow in his heart that not everyone is experiencing these same benefits that he is.

So, it caused him constant grief, and the more he dwelt on the gospel in his own life, the greatness of it, the more he wanted other people to experience it as well.

In other words, really, the hope that we have in the gospel is the foundation of evangelism, that we want other people to experience that, whether they are here, whether they're in Kosovo, whether they're in Derby, or wherever they are, we want other people to see Christ for who he really is, and to experience the hope that we have in him.

And it also, you know, the gospel gives us hope that no matter who we're talking to, that no matter where we go, the gospel can reach those people.

And no one is beyond the reach of God's mercy because of the greatness of what Christ has done. No one is actually beyond the reach, and that we can never give up on anyone, but we can rest in the fact that the gospel is not just words that we say, but the Bible says it's the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

[23 : 57] And I think Paul himself is a great example that the gospel has no limits on who, there's no limits on who can be saved. Paul himself had done horrible things persecuting Christians, and yet God saved him.

We never give up hope on anyone because the gospel is the power of God for salvation. It's not just the power of God for salvation for others. It's the power of God that is at work in us, in our salvation, constantly making us more and more in our day-to-day life like Christ.

Every attitude, every decision, every interaction with others, everything that we are, everything that we do, everything is impacted by the gospel.

Everything should be founded on the gospel. people. And so what I'd really like to encourage you, like there's a lot of other areas that we could have gone into and how the gospel impacts our relationship with others.

I mean, we could have talked about how the gospel breaks down barriers within the body of Christ, that all the things that used to divide us, you know, Paul talks about there's neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, they're all one in Christ, how the gospel brings us together and unites us.

[25 : 12] Or we could have talked about how the gospel gives us the ability to forgive others. The gospel has implications for everything.

But what I really encourage you to do is just to constantly, daily, remind yourself of what Christ has done for us and whatever we're doing and whoever we're relating to, that we should relate to them on the foundation of the gospel and when we think about ourselves, we should think about

ourselves on the foundation of the gospel and when we do things and when we think things, whatever it is, everything should be built on the foundation of what Christ has done for us, of who he is and what he's done on the cross and what the gospel means in our lives.

So I would just encourage you, please, you know, take time and not just, I'm not going to just say this week, but every day we constantly need to be reminded of what Jesus has done for us and we need to build our lives on that foundation and that will impact how we view ourselves but it will also impact how we relate to others and how we do everything.

So that's what I want to leave you with today. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you.