



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast Season 2: Episode 2

Transcript: The Chief End of Humanity and Christian Worldview

The events of January 6th 2020 would not have happened if we had sought after and applied a Christian worldview.

Welcome to the Pastor's Voice. I am Reuel Sample - and I am passionate about Christian Worldview. Believers in Jesus can stand up to the challenges of the day - if only we would keep our eyes focused on the Cross, our mind focused on wisdom of God, and our hearts overflowing with the grace of God.

Listen to the Words of God from I Corinthians 10: 23 - 33:

23 All things are permitted, but not all things are of benefit. All things are permitted, but not all things [a]build people up. 24 No one is to seek his own advantage, but rather that of his [b]neighbor. 25 Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions, for the sake of conscience; 26 for the earth is the Lord's, and [c]all it contains. 27 If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions, for the sake of conscience. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of that one who informed you and for the sake of conscience; 29 Now by "conscience" I do not mean your own, but the other person's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered about that for which I give thanks?

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. 32 Do not offend Jews or Greeks, or the church of God; 33 just as I also please everyone in all things, not seeking my own benefit but the benefit of the many, so that they may be saved. [NASB]

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism of Faith:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

On this Sunday edition of the Pastor's Voice, I am kicking off a series of meditations based around the Westminster Shorter Catechism of Faith. Most Presbyterians are at least somewhat familiar with this document - but admittedly it is mostly unknown outside of that denomination. However - in my opinion - it provides an incredibly clear road map as to how we are to develop - and live by - a Christian worldview. It is a series of 107 questions and answers - designed to take communicants through the entirety of the Christian faith. It is primarily a teaching tool. Yet - even though they did not use the term "Worldview" in 1647 - it is entirely dedicated to instructing Christians how to live out a life of faith. And - as we will see how we go through these questions and answers each Sunday - we will see that God has equipped the church and her members to answer to, respond to, and live faithfully in any culture and any challenge.

The first question catechism asks simply - what is the purpose of humanity. Interesting - it does not ask what is the purpose of Christians. We might think are dealing only with believers in Jesus - as this is a Christian document.

But no. We are asked - what is the chief end - the church purpose - the reason d'entre - the reason for being - for humanity. Not just inside the church - not just those who read the Bible - or who call themselves Christian. But - what is the chief end of all of humanity.

The answer is both incredibly simple - the purpose of humanity is to glorify God in all things - and to live in enjoyment of him forever. There is no greater statement of Christian Worldview than this - to live in all things and to do all things and to think all things for the Glory of God - and to seek his Joy.

The Westminster Divines - the authors of this catechism - included their Bible references for all the questions. The principle one for this first question comes from I Corinthians 10:31 which clearly states: Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. Cannot be any clearer than that.

But the larger context of this passage is fascinating. Paul starts off this passage by talking about the freedom of the Christian within the Law of the Jews. All things are permissible - but yet - not all things are either beneficial nor edifying. We have freedom in Christ - but only so long as they build others - and ourselves - up. We do have to be careful that we take this concept of freedom in context. Paul is not saying that ALL things are permissible. We are not to be a people of lawlessness. Paul in Romans 6 clearly states that we can either be chained to sin or chained to Christ. Paul's view of freedom is not one of licentiousness - which freedom is often seen to be. As Christians - our freedom is constrained and guided by Christ.

But in this passage from Corinthians - Paul is talking about the routine matters of the day - in this case - going to dinner with friends who may or may not be Christians. Under the law of the Jews - one would have to be very careful in asking the origin of the food. It cannot be pork, it cannot be certain seafood, it cannot be sacrificed to idols - and so on. For the Jews - these holiness codes were essential in establishing their separateness as the People of God.

But for the Christian, these particular laws hold no sway. All things are Gods - and as Peter's vision in Acts clears up - we are free to eat whatever we like. Meat sacrificed to idols is just meat - since neither the idol nor the god it represents has any meaning whatsoever. So - says Paul - if you have a meal with a non-believer - have a meal and don't inquire where the meat comes from. It doesn't matter - it is just meat.

Unless...

Paul's only caveat is if that person - or another person - makes a point of telling you where the meat comes from. Paul then says - don't eat. But the reason is interesting. It has nothing to do with the meat. It has nothing to do with your own holiness. It has everything to do with the people around you - and how they view you - and ultimately your beliefs and practices - that drives why Paul says to abstain.

For the non-believer of the day - to eat the meat sacrificed to idols is to closely identify with those gods. Thank you - O Insert Name of False God Here - for providing this meal. Thank you for being the Insert Name of False God again here - who you are and what you do. I eat this meal in your name.

For Paul - that was the problem. On one hand, it is just meat. On the other hand - in the eyes of the unbelievers - you are literally ingesting everything that particular god stands for. That becomes a stumbling block - a non-uplifting moment - for a Christian in relation to a non-believer. For the Christian to knowingly accept meat given to an idol is - in the eyes and conscience of the non-Christian - is to accept the idol and everything it stands for. That trips up the non-believer - and sullies the reputation of the real God that we worship.

Paul uses this daily challenge in the life of a Christian - interacting with non-believers - as the basis of an incredible worldview which is at the heart of the first question of the Westminster Confession - in all things - the routine of eating and drinking to the more important - in all things - do them for the glory of God. Paul rounds out that thought by saying that part of this is to try - in all things - to give no offense to others, to try to be as beneficial and uplifting to others as possible and where faith allows. To purposely offend or divide brings no glory to God.

Paul's statement is incredibly encompassing - and - a little daunting. All things - eating, drinking, talking, interacting with others, podcasting, writing - you name it - if it is in the realm of human capability - we are to do it for the Glory of God. It is our chief purpose - it is what we are made for.

What about non-Christians? They too are to bring glory to God. They are made for it. Genesis points out that we are made in the image of God - we reflect and mirror His being and nature in all that we do. Throughout the ministry of Jesus - we see that within

the Trinity of God there is constant worship and praise and glory given and received. We are - in fact - hard wired to worship and glorify. When we glorify God - we are living out our purpose. When we do not glorify God - we will glorify something else to our detriment - because we are hardwired to do so. But God's plan and design - his chief end for humanity - is for us worship and glorify Him in all things.

The catechism goes even further. Not only are we to glorify God - but we are to enjoy Him forever. I think a better reading of that is to Be In Joy with God - for an eternity. This is not about going to a movie and walking out if we do not enjoy - are not entertained - by what we see on the screen. It is not about making sure we are happy all the time and walking away from God when things get tough. To enjoy God - to be In Joy with God - is to realize that one of the gifts of the Spirit is Joy. That joy is the knowledge of God's love, of his saving grace, of his peace. Joy is not a feeling - feelings change. Joy is a state of being. Jesus never promised happiness, or wealth, or comfort. In fact He promised that the opposite might be true. Millions of Christians throughout history have lived under constant oppression and terror. Many had their lives ended in the most terrifying and horrendous ways. But as James writes in his book, we are to count it all joy. Nothing - Paul writes - can separate us from the love of God - nothing! That is joy - and that is the wonderful purpose that God has for us. To glorify Him - and to enjoy Him - to be in joy - with Him forever.

So how are we to live that out?

Quite simply - we are to do nothing - nothing - that we do not take the time to consider whether it brings glory to God. Absolutely, positively nothing. Before we eat - do we pray and give thanks to God - giving him the glory for providing the means to eat. The same for our safe places to stay. If we have nothing - do we give Him the glory that he died a horrible death so that we would never have to face the wrath of God? Before we post that snide remark on Twitter, or embarrass another on Facebook, or post a compromising photo on Instagram - do we ask if God will be glorified by this? Do we ask if our actions will uplift another person? The Bible clearly states that nothing is outside the realm of our faith. There is no sacred and secular life of the Christian - only belief. Therefore - everything that we do must reflect that faith - and bring glory to the one who saved us.

This worldview statement even applies to the political realm. About one year ago, several thousand political protesters gathered in Washington DC to make their opinions heard about the results of an election that did not go their way. Now - there is nothing in Scripture that prohibits Christians from getting involved in politics. In fact, John Calvin said that the highest calling for a Christian is to go into politics - and advance the Kingdom of God through elected office.

So - the fact that Christians were at that rally is not really an issue. Christians in this country have just as much political right to protest an issue as non-Christians. We know many Christians who went.

But here are some important questions to ask about this or any other political rally that Christians might attend:

1. Did those Christians who attended spend time and energy in prayer before deciding whether going would bring Glory to God? Not prayer for the event, not for good travels, or for peace - those are all good things. But did they pray that their attendance would edify those around them - and bring Glory to the Almighty?
2. While at the rally - did their actions and words reflect that majesty, power, and peace of Jesus? Did their thoughts stray to the love of our Savior? Or did they perhaps leave that behind - join in with the mob - and be a witness to no one who saw them?
3. Once there - and word of the violence broke out - did Christians immediately realize that there is no way those kind of actions could ever bring Glory to God - and leave? The Christians we know who went did exactly that - they were at the rally until they heard about the violence. They immediately left - not to protect themselves - but because their dedication to being a witness to Christ impelled them. There are times when Christians must resort to violence to bring Glory to God. Those who fought against the evilness of the Nazis, who gave their lives over slavery, or who protected others from the harm of bullies and evil men - these are not what we are talking about. This was a political rally. Violence served no purpose other than to divide and create more hostility.
4. If any Christian was involved in actually storming the capitol - did they stop to think for one moment that breaking the laws that they did and frightening the people in their

way served no heavenly purpose and brought no divine glorification whatsoever? Did they stop to realize that if their faith was found out that the only thing it would do would be to bring derision upon our Savior?

The bottom line is this - had Christians placed their Christian worldview - and a desire to serve our Lord and Savior - than the events of January 6th probably would have turned out much differently. If they had prayed before they went - many Christians probably would have stayed home - realizing that such a large gathering only had the potential for harm and violence.