**Maintaining a Theocentric Perspective**

**Introduction**

1. It seems needless to say that a Christian’s view of life, and everything, must have God at its center.
   1. This is the thought of theocentrism.
   2. Theocentric – having God as the central focus. (New Oxford American)
2. However, society has been inundated with humanism, and/or anthropocentrism.
   1. Humanism – devotion to human welfare; a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values. (Webster’s)
   2. Anthropocentrism – regarding humankind as the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God or animals. (New Oxford American)
3. God’s people need to be careful that these perspectives do not warp the Biblical perspectives God calls us to have.
   1. The effects of such worldly perspectives on Christians are hardly ever drastic enough to fully side with the world.
   2. The Devil is cunning and has used these societal changes to produce negative effects in the minds of Christians that aren’t always easily discerned.
   3. We need to make sure we aren’t as frogs in a pot being slowly brought to a boil.
4. Theocentrism vs Anthropocentrism
5. God Focused vs Man Focused
   1. Theocentrism subscribes to the thought that the beginning of everything is God.
   2. Anthropocentrism subscribes to the evolutionary thought which places man as the pinnacle.
   3. The Christian realizes their origin lies with God, and there finds their purpose.
   4. Whereas one with an anthropocentric perspective, viewing themselves as the height of material existence, finds their purpose in the material. (Which can never be truly satisfied.)
   5. Man is made by God, and in His image – **Genesis 1:26**
   6. Solomon’s conclusion came from weighing at least a variation of these two thoughts – **Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:13**
      1. The reality is that the innermost longing of man, that which is always seeking purpose and fulfillment, is found in God.
      2. This is because man came from God, and truly God is the focus of life.
      3. Therefore, the greatest fulfillment and elevation of man is actually humility and service before God.
6. Spiritual Mindedness vs Materialism
   1. Theocentrism requires a spiritual mindset which has an inherent characteristic of focus on God who is Spirit (**John 4:24**).
   2. Anthropocentrism prohibits spiritual thought in its purest form because the mind focused on the spiritual will inevitably make decisions contrary to material, or physical well-being or interest.
   3. The Christian understands that the material is far inferior to the spiritual, and lives life accordingly – THIS ONLY COMES FROM A THEOCENTRIC FRAME OF MIND.
   4. Realizes the eternal nature of man that returns to God without anything material – **Ecclesiastes 12:7; 1 Timothy 6:6-7** (comes from Godward – godly – mindset)
   5. Focuses on what is truly substantive – **1 Timothy 6:17-19 (**spiritual, not material – ultimately God, **v. 17** – spiritual riches are matters which pertain to God)
7. Spiritual Health vs Physical and Psychological Health
   1. Theocentrism is concerned with spiritual health as it is a product of a relationship with God.
   2. Anthropocentrism is ultimately concerned with physical health, a great deal of that which relates to the psyche of man.
   3. The Christian realizes their mind is not a product of material phenomena but is the image of God with which he was created.
   4. The greatest health concern, then, is not how one views themselves, or how they are viewed by the world, but where they are in their relationship with God – are they in fellowship with Him?
   5. The Christian is willing to jeopardize his physical health to save His soul – **Mark 8:35-37**
   6. The Christian realizes his worth to be in God, not self, or others – **Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:21**
8. A Theocentric Perspective
9. While the previous considerations are obvious, logical, and discernible, when we get into specific spiritual subjects the Devil is crafty about influencing our views of such with the societal norm of thought. If such is the case, the matters revealed by God in scripture are minimized, and warped through such perspectives. We must be careful this doesn’t happen to us.
10. Faith
    1. If we aren’t careful, faith can become wholly subjective.
       1. IT IS subjective in the sense of it being our own faith.
       2. But it is based on objective things.
    2. **Romans 10:17** – true faith’s origin brings the focus on God.
    3. **Hebrews 11:1, 6** – involves evidence, and substance; believing God is, and He rewards diligent seekers.
    4. We must remember that faith has God as its focus.
    5. Faith is not:
       1. A matter of self-esteem – faith in self.
       2. Being true to yourself.
       3. Simply a matter of pure conscience. (**cf. Acts 23:1** – good conscience doesn’t mean pure faith)
       4. Simply a good feeling.
    6. Faith is about FIDELITY TO GOD – **1 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Timothy 2:11-13** -faithfulness to God.
    7. Requires the guidance of God’s law – **1 Timothy 1:5**
       1. Requires distinction between TRUTH and ERROR, and SIN and RIGHTEOUSNESS.
       2. Requires BOOK, CHAPTER, VERSE teaching.
       3. **Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5** – faith is in the power of God displayed in the message of the cross.
    8. Don’t fool yourself into believing you are faithful. Rather, examine yourself in comparison to the object of faith – **2 Corinthians 13:5**
       1. Faith is observable by an objective standard.
11. Sin
    1. Similar to faith, in today’s climate sin has become about a failure, or shortcoming in being the best YOU. In doing so, it truly makes YOU the victim.
    2. Sin is not:
       1. An assault against our conscience. (Certainly, going against the conscience is sinful, but that is not what makes sin so bad – **cf. Romans 14:23**)
       2. A sickness which negatively affects MAN. (Yes, sin kills man’s soul, but that is not the overriding focus, but a consequence of something greater.)
    3. **1 John 3:4** – sin is lawlessness.
       1. This makes sin rebellious in nature.
       2. SIN ISN’T SOMETHING THAT FALLS ON THE INNOCENT, BUT IS THE PRODUCT OF THE REBELLIOUS.
       3. **Romans 7:19-20** – Essentially saying that he knows what the law said he should do, but because of his fleshly lusts he decides to do what he knows is wrong. (**Romans 7:7-12** – personifies sin, and shows what Paul is saying – was told something was wrong, but was urged to do it anyway by sinful passions.)
    4. **Romans 3:23** – sin is falling short of GOD’S GLORY.
       1. It is an assault on God – not man’s glory, but GOD’S GLORY.
       2. Made in God’s image – made to live to glorify Him in this regard.
       3. GOD IS THE VICTIM.
       4. **Cf. Genesis 39:9** – Joseph, “How can I sin against God?”
       5. It is so bad for man because his entire purpose is wrapped up in God – but sin is ultimately an assault on God.
          1. Example with sexual immorality.
          2. **1 Corinthians 6:18** – sins against own body.
          3. But why? – **1 Corinthians 6:13, 19-20** – because body is for the Lord – OFFENSE WAS AGAINST HIM, BUT WAS BAD FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE FOR HIM.
12. Salvation
    1. Even salvation cannot become about ourselves and maintain its true Biblical sense.
    2. Salvation is not:
       1. A sense of personal wellness – I feel good, therefore I am saved.
       2. A measure of success – ex: financial security.
       3. A conquering of self-doubt – I can do.
    3. Salvation is FROM something TO something:
       1. Salvation from sin and death – **Romans 6:20-23** (Slave of sin; spiritual death)
       2. Now a slave of God – everlasting life.
       3. A PERSON CAN FEEL WELL, BUT BE IN DESPERATE NEED OF SALVATION – **Revelation 3:17** (church of the Laodiceans)
    4. Salvation is a reconciliation to God through Christ:
       1. **John 1:1, 4** – in Him was life.
       2. **John 6:68** – has the words of life.
       3. **John 14:6** – is life.
       4. Because of these facts about Christ – **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** – reconciled to God in Christ. (**cf. Romans 5:9-10** – saved from wrath, reconciled to God)
       5. To know God is to have life – **John 17:2-4** – in an intimate sense of relationship – this is to God’s glory.
    5. Man is benefited from salvation from sin, but it is because he is back to where he belongs – God.
       1. Salvation is a reclamation by God of what is properly His – man of course benefits from this.
    6. Salvation is still a focus on God – TO HIS GLORY – **Ephesians 1:3-6, 9, 12, 14** – TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY.
       1. **1 Corinthians 6:20** – body and spirit belong to God, and are made to glorify Him.
       2. The Christian is one who is redeemed from sin, and therefore can glorify God again. (**cf. Ephesians 2:10** – created in Christ for good works)
       3. Salvation from sin is not a ticket of freedom to do as we please in the flesh, but a redemption to God to follow His ways – **cf. Galatians 5:13 (slaves of sin – free from righteousness; freed from sin – free to bear fruit of righteousness)**
13. Worship/Preaching
    1. The warped view of faith, sin, and salvation has led to a warped view of worship, and what preaching should be all about.
       1. Worship has become a platform for promoting a sense of wellness for the worshippers.
       2. Preaching is about a positive message that makes the hearer feel good.
       3. The focus has been placed on man, and God is left out of the picture.
    2. This is certainly understood as we look at the denominational concept of worship and preaching, but there are undertones of this that can even be seen in the church.
       1. Is our singing about God, or about us?
       2. Is our preaching God focused, or more philosophical, and psychological?
       3. Do we measure worship and preaching by how enjoyable it was, or HOW SCRIPTURAL IT WAS?
    3. **John 4:23-24** – worship is TOWARD GOD, thus, true worship is DEFINED BY GOD.
       1. The inconsistency of unscriptural worship – **Luke 6:46** – Lord, a term of reverence, without subsequent obedience.
       2. The consequence of unscriptural worship – **Matthew 7:21-23** – lawlessness.
       3. Worship to God without divine pattern is similar to idolatry:
          1. **Hebrews 8:5** – make all things according to pattern, from days of Moses to NT church.
          2. THE WORSHIPPED PRESCRIBES IN DETAIL THE WORSHIP.
          3. Idols – made by man, thus man decides how that god is to be worshipped.
          4. WHEN WE IGNORE GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP, AND WORSHIP HIM HOW WE WANT, WE FOLLOW IDOLATROUS WAYS.
          5. He made us, so we worship Him according to His standard – **Psalm 100:1-3**
    4. **1 Peter 4:11** – preaching must be from God’s utterances.
       1. **1 Corinthians 2:11-12** – we can only know God’s will by God’s Spirit revealed word.
       2. **Colossians 2:8-10** – anything not according to Christ, i.e. the word of Christ, is empty.
       3. **Acts 20:27** – Paul’s goal was to declare GOD’S whole counsel.
          1. Preaching is meant to glorify God by proclaiming HIS WORD.
          2. This is to equip man to further glorify God by submission to HIS WORD. (**cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17** – every good work, i.e. those prescribed by God to His glory.)
          3. THIS ONLY HAPPENS WHEN HIS WORD IS PREACHED.
       4. IT ISN’T ABOUT SIMPLY MAKING US BETTER HUMAN BEINGS. IT’S ABOUT SERVING AND GLORIFYING GOD.
14. Judgment
    1. Judgment is not going to be about how good of a person you were.
       1. It won’t be about whether you were true to yourself.
       2. It won’t be about how you treated other’s according to societies’ standards.
    2. These ideas of judgment come from improper ideas of religion – that all religion is equal, it’s just about promoting a general welfare of humanity.
       1. This can be said for modern denominationalism – those who call themselves Christians.
       2. Not all equal – not simply about being good people.
       3. ABOUT GLORIFYING GOD.
    3. JUDGMENT WILL BE CONCERNING HOW YOU LIVED BEFORE GOD – **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – did you fulfill your created purpose?
    4. **John 12:48** – Jesus said His word will judge us.
    5. What Jesus said about the greatest command – **Matthew 22:36-40** – Love God, second like it, love neighbor.
       1. Modern approach to Christianity – about treating each other with love and respect, not about “rule following.”
       2. Downplay of doctrine – God will not judge us on specific doctrinal matters?
       3. **(v. 40)** – hang all LAW and PROPHETS – **John 14:15; 1 John 5:3** – loving God involves keeping commandments – NOT JUST THOSE THAT PERTAIN TO OUR NEIGHBOR, BUT ALL!
       4. **Romans 2:12, 16** – judged by the law – judged by the gospel.
    6. Doctrine will be the factor of judgment – **2 John 9**
       1. EX: church in Pergamos – **Revelation 2:13-16** – haven’t denied the name of Christ outright, but hold the wrong doctrines.
    7. Judgment will be concerning our life lived in relation to the word of God – **Revelation 20:12-15**
       1. Books – PLURAL.
       2. God’s word – **Hebrews 4:12-13** – will cut through any façade and show our true self in relation to God’s will.
       3. Book of life – God’s roll of righteous people – as they are judged to be by God’s word.
15. Hell
    1. Many people who claim belief in God and Christ do not subscribe to the belief of hell.
       1. They don’t want to think there is a place so terrible.
       2. They don’t believe God would send anyone there, but that ultimately, unless you are a terribly evil person (subjective thinking), you will be in heaven.
    2. Ideas of hell:
       1. Used loosely to describe frustrating or undesirable things on earth. (From every day matters to things like war.)
       2. Psychological view – hell is the loss of self-esteem.
    3. Hell is eternal punishment for the wicked (anyone disobedient to God): (NOTE: this is how God views sin)
       1. Some think of hell as a place for only the worst of the worst.
       2. Hell is a place of punishment for disobedient – **2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6** – lawlessness, not keep proper domain.
          1. **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9** – not obey the gospel.
          2. AGAIN, LIKE WITH JUDGMENT, MISUNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S VIEW OF SIN – any disobedience is deserving of hell.
          3. You do not miss hell for being a “good person.”
    4. Hell is the absence of God:
       1. **2 Thessalonians 1:9** – from His presence.
       2. **Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30** – outer darkness. **(cf. 1 John 1:5** – God is light – in hell there is no light, God is not there)
       3. While on earth:
          1. God not far from us – **Acts 17:27**
          2. Good gifts from Him – **James 1:17**
          3. Even for those who are evil – **Matthew 5:45**
          4. But for those who did not obey – **Matthew 7:23** – DEPART FROM ME!
    5. Some choose not to even believe in hell. However, one cannot believe in Jesus or God and not believe in hell – **Matthew 5:29-30** – Jesus spoke about hell many times, and warned us not to go there.
    6. Requires the fear of God – **Matthew 10:28** – fear and keep commandments or else.
16. Heaven
    1. Heaven is one of the most cherished subjects of those who claim to be followers of God.
    2. However, Heaven is one of the most abused, and misunderstood topics of the bible.
    3. Heaven is not:
       1. About getting to do your favorite thing for eternity.
       2. About reuniting with family to spend eternity with them. (although this is certainly an appealing aspect – i.e. to see loved ones again)
       3. About anything physical at all. (all of the physical will be burned up)
    4. Heaven is about rest from a life of work – **Hebrews 4:9-10** (**cf. Ephesians 2:10** – works of God) (For the obedient.)
       1. Rest from temptation to sin – **2 Peter 3:13** – righteousness dwells there.
       2. Rest from the problems of life for the faithful – **Revelation 7:16-17**
    5. Heaven is about being with the Lord for eternity – **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17** – we will always be with the Lord.
       1. Jesus’ promise to the disciples – **John 14:1-4** – Father’s house, where I am, you will be also.
       2. What makes heaven so great? GOD IS THERE!
    6. THE PICTURE OF HEAVEN IS THEOCENTRIC:
       1. Throne scene – **Revelation 4:2-11** – God in center, 24 elders surrounding, 4 living creatures surrounding.
       2. Those redeemed there – **Revelation 7:9-17** – redeemed by the blood of the lamb, worshipping God for eternity – God at center.
    7. IF WE MAKE OUR LIFE ABOUT GOD, THEN OUR ETERNITY WILL BE BEFORE GOD.

**Conclusion**

1. We need to be careful about the influences of our secularized society.
2. We must maintain a theocentric perspective.
3. This must certainly be the case as we approach scripture.
4. Spiritual subjects cannot be compromised and warped by worldly perspective, but we must be able to see the spiritual significance of God’s law.