

“Our Biblical Worldview”
(4) Men and women as the image of God

In the first three messages in this current series, “Our Biblical Worldview”, we emphasized that the study of this subject is best begun with God having revealed Himself as the Creator of all things. It is in the record of God’s act of creation that the elements and the nature of a biblical world view are revealed to us. In Genesis 1 and 2 we learn first and chiefly what God is like and how He relates to His creation, but we also see how His creation, particularly the pinnacle of His creation—mankind-- is to regard and know Him and how He would have them relate to His creation and to one another as His creatures. Our biblical worldview is not solely a matter of our understanding who God is and what He is like, as central and foundational is that truth. Our biblical worldview must also focus carefully on who we are as God’s creation and the purpose for which our Creator brought us into existence. We will begin to give our attention to this matter this morning. And so, let us turn again to the creation story of Genesis 1 and give our attention to the sixth day of creation, the day on which God created all of the land animals and He created human beings. Here is Genesis 1:24 through 31:

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. ²⁵And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

²⁹And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. ³⁰Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so. ³¹Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Gen. 1:24-31)

Several weeks ago we considered the biblical truth that the entire creation is a revelation of God to people throughout the world. Romans 1:20 reads, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” God reveals Himself not only through the physical geology and geography of this world but also through the observation and our contemplation of celestial bodies of the universe. But it is in the living creatures that God formed where His glory is more fully manifested. And in the record of God’s creation in Genesis 1 we read the sequence in which God formed creatures that display the glory of God. After God created the heavens and the earth (v. 1), then He called forth light to be divided from darkness (vs. 2-5). He formed the sky, the waters, and the earth (vs. 6-10). God then created plant life and trees on the third day (vs. 11-13). On the fifth day God created the birds of the air and all sea creatures (vs. 20-23). All that He had made “God saw that it was good.” But it was on the sixth day that God created the creatures of the earth, which is recorded in the verses we read above (vs. 24-25). It was on this sixth day that after divine deliberation that God created human beings. Man (mankind) alone is then declared to be made in His image, not as the animals, made “according to their kind”, but made according to His “image” and according to His “likeness.” This shows that mankind is unique in all of God’s creation. Although all created things display His glory, mankind displays God’s glory most clearly and most fully. As one once wrote:

The entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of His attributes and perfections. Every creature in its own way and degree is the embodiment of a divine thought. But among the creatures, only man is the image of God, God's highest and richest self-revelation and consequently the head and crown of the whole creation.¹

I. The creation of mankind (men and women)

Let us read again Genesis 1:26-28.

²⁶Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

When we turn to Genesis 2, we read of more detail of God's work of creating Adam. Genesis 2:7 records, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (KJV, "soul"). And so, the Holy Scriptures record God creating Adam ("man") and that He created him so that he had become a living soul. It can be said, then, that man is both a *creature* of God, and that he is a living soul, or a *person*. These two ideas suggest two major aspects of the identity of a human being. Every individual is both a creature as well as a (living) soul. Each of these suggest the nature of every individual who has lived in this world.

A. Man as a creature of the Creator

We are to see ourselves as creatures, having been created by God. This suggests and reveals to us that we are dependent on God for not only the beginning, but also the continuance of our existence. We as human beings are, as all other creatures in God's world, totally dependent upon God our Creator. We not only owe our origin to Him but we owe our ongoing existence to our Creator. Nehemiah 9:6 states this spiritual reality:

You alone are the LORD;
You have made heaven,
The heaven of heavens, with all their host,
The earth and everything on it,
The seas and all that is in them,
And You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You.

Paul expressed it this way on Mars Hill in Athens: "in Him

"Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

¹ Herman Bavinck, **Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation** (Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 530f.

Acknowledging that God is our Creator and we are His creatures should be accompanied with our recognition that nothing happens to us or nothing we might think or do is independent or in isolation of Him. God our Creator is in control of His creation; He rules over, that is, He governs in providence all of His creatures, including all human beings that have lived in His world.

The Scriptures declare this truth repeatedly. **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952) set forth this matter in the third chapter of his classic book, *The Sovereignty of God*:

Two alternatives confront us, and between them we are obliged to choose: either God governs, or He is governed; either God rules, or He is ruled; either God has His way, or men have theirs.

And is our choice between these alternatives hard to make? Shall we say that in man we behold a creature so unruly that he is *beyond* God's control? Shall we say that sin has *alienated* the sinner so far from the thrice Holy One that he is *outside* the pale of His jurisdiction? Or, shall we say that man has been endowed with moral responsibility, and therefore God must leave him entirely free, at least during the period of his probation? Does it necessarily follow because the natural man is an outlaw against Heaven, a rebel against the Divine government, that God is unable to fulfill His purpose through him? We mean, not merely that He may *overrule* the effects of the actions of evil-doers, nor that He will yet bring the wicked to stand before His judgment-bar so that sentence of punishment may be passed upon them--multitudes of non-Christians believe these things--but, we mean, that every action of the most lawless of His subjects is entirely beneath His control, yea that the actor is, though unknown to himself, carrying out the secret decrees of the Most High. Was it not thus with Judas? And is it possible to select a more extreme case? If then the arch-rebel was performing the counsel of God is it any greater tax upon our faith to believe the same of all rebels...

"In Him we live, *and* move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). What a sweeping assertion is this! These words, be it noted, were addressed, not to one of the churches of God, not to a company of saints who had reached an exalted plane of spirituality, but to a heathen audience, to those who worshipped "the unknown God" and who "mocked" when they heard of the resurrection of the dead. And yet, to the Athenian philosophers, to the Epicureans and Stoics, the Apostle Paul did not hesitate to affirm that they lived and moved and had their being in God, which signified not only that they owed their existence and preservation to the One who made the world and all things therein, but also that their very actions were encompassed and therefore controlled by the Lord of Heaven and earth.

When the Word of God is sets forth a person to be a creature of God, it will commonly depict him as "body and spirit." "Spirit" carries the nuances of the soul's derivation from God, dependence on Him, and distinctness from the body as such."² We are utterly dependent upon God and He has determined the entirety of our existence and He is directing us according to His sovereign will. "He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings" (Acts 17:26). The Genesis account of creation shows that to be a human being is to be a creature of God.

B. Man as a living being, or soul

But the Genesis account of creation not only sets forth Adam as a creature of God, but Adam is also declared to be a "living being" or "living soul." Again, Genesis 2:7 reads, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (KJV, "Soul"). This sets forth every human being as a created *person*. This does not emphasize man's identity chiefly as a creature living in dependence of God and fulfilling His eternal decree respecting him and the mode and manner of his living. This speaks of a person's individualism and his independent decision-making quality. **Anthony Hoekema** (1913-1988) contrasted the ideas of man as a creature and as a person:

² Theological note in R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., **The Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 798.

Man is not only a creature, however; he is also a person. And to be a person means to have a kind of independence—not absolute, but relative. To be a person means to be able to make decisions, to set goals, and to move in the direction of those goals. It means to possess freedom—at least in the sense of being able to make one’s own choices. The human being is not a robot whose course is totally determined by forces outside of him; he has the power of self-determination and self-direction. To be a person means, to use Leonard Verduin’s picturesque expression, to be a “creature of option.”

In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a *created person*. This, now, is the central mystery of man: how can man be both a creature and a person at the same time? To be a creature, as we have seen, means absolute dependence on God; to be a person means relative independence. To be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God; to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I move them, and that when words are uttered by my lips, I utter them. To be creatures means that God is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9:21); to be persons means that we are the ones who fashion our lives by our own decisions (Gal. 6:7, 8).³

II. Mankind as the image of God in creation

In verses 26 and 27 we read that God first planned and purposed, and then He made male and female in His image.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Actually two words are used to describe man. He is both God’s “image” and God’s “likeness.” Although there have been many efforts to distinguish between these two words showing that two different aspects of man’s essence are described, there should probably be little or no difference in meaning. As one wrote, “While the two words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ are certainly not identical, there is no essential material distinction to be made between them either. They are used interchangeably, and alternate for no good reason.”⁴ Here are the comments from The Reformation Study Bible:

That the Bible says we are created in the image and the likeness of God has led some to conclude that there is a difference between being in the image and being in the likeness of God. But the structure of the biblical language indicates that image and likeness refer to the same thing. We are the icons of god, creatures made with a unique capacity to mirror and reflect the character of God.⁵

A. What does it mean to be the image of God?

First, recognize that man as the image of God distinguishes man from all other creatures and exalts mankind above all other creatures for man alone was created in the image of God. All other animals were not. Man is distinct. He is not an animal. He is a wholly different creature from the animals, and should be regarded as such. Man has a dignity and worth that far surpasses any other animal in creation. God created mankind to serve Him in this lofty role as bearers of His image.

Second, man as the image of God suggests certain *characteristics*. (1) Man is a living soul, or spirit. This is seen in that he is a *personal being*. He has a *self-consciousness* with respect to himself. He is able to contemplate and act upon his reflection of who he is and what he wills to do. He is able to acquire knowledge and to reason based on acquired knowledge. Animals do not have self-consciousness. They are

³ Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (William B. Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 5f

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 532. “Both occur in Genesis 1:26 (cf. 5:3; but in 1:27 and 9:6 (cf. Col. 3:10) only the image is referred to, and in Genesis 5:1 and James 3:9 only the likeness.”

⁵ Theological note in R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 14.

unable to think upon their past, wonder and meditate on their identity and capabilities, or plan and improve their condition in life. Animals operate on the principle of instinct, not from a principle of self-awareness. Man was created with the ability to reason, to contemplate, to create and develop things within his environment.

(2) Man is a *moral being*. He has a conscience that governs his thoughts and actions. Animals do not have conscience. Your dog does not feel guilty because he remembers having chewed your best boots when he was a puppy. Conscience is an aspect of the image of God stamped in human nature.

(3) Man has the ability to *communicate* and to develop and maintain a *relationship with others and with God*. Animals do not have relationships based on communication of values and ideas. Animals do not commune with or pray to God. They are incapable of entering into contractual arrangements of privileges and responsibilities. This is a part of the divine image that is man.

(4) Man is capable and qualified to *rule or to have dominion over creation* on behalf of His Creator. He is able to receive instruction, consciously understand, devise plans, execute his plans and solve problems along the way.

(5) The *human body* is an aspect of the image of God. Through this body we are able to relate to and manage the world in which we were given rule.

(6) God has given to man the capacity for *eternal life*. God created him alone, of all the creatures of the earth (excluding angels), to live forever. “Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?” (Ecc. 3:21).

(7) But perhaps most importantly, God has made male and female persons in His image *enabling them to reflect and display Him*, in whose likeness they have been made. This is the primary purpose for which God created you and me.

B. Being God’s image in His world.

We were all, male and female, created in the image of God. As God’s image we are to reflect the glory of Him in whose image we were made. As a *mirror* reflects the image of the one standing before it, we should reflect the image of Him before whom we are always standing. This means that we are to so live that when people watch us, they may understand better the God whom we represent and display before them.

Perhaps a better illustration than a mirror is that of a *coin*. The Lord Jesus Himself is described in language depicting the stamp of a coin’s image. As a Roman coin bore Caesar’s image that was stamped upon its face, so Christ bore the image of God. Hebrews 1:3, “He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature.” To see Christ was to see God displayed. We, too, are made in the image of God. And although through the fall of Adam that image was marred terribly, in Christ that image is being restored. When people see us they should see Christ in us.

Our lives should make known the glory of God. Now, of course we are finite, and our God is infinite. We cannot reflect the full glory of God perfectly; only God’s Son is able to reveal the Father fully. But in our own small way we are capable to reflect and should reflect the glory that is God’s. This is what it means to “live to the glory of God.” The finite *wisdom* that we have should be an indication to others of the nature of God’s infinite wisdom. The *justice* we manifest should reflect in a measure the nature of God’s justice. The *love* that we show to one another, although certainly flawed, nevertheless should reflect the infinite love that God has for His people. When Christians do good toward others, may they see the source of our good works in that we are fashioned after the image of God and thereby glorify our Father which is in heaven. This is what the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

C. The high regard for every human being as the created image of God

We are to show high regard for all people because every human being bears the image of God. There is an inherent dignity that every human being possesses, which we should recognize and we should show regard in the way that we relate to them. Regardless of either gender—male or female, regardless of age, race or ethnicity, stature in society, possession of wealth or position of power and influence, every human

being is of equal worth and is to be regarded with the highest dignity as bearers of God's image. Clearly God regards all people as made in His image, thus all people everywhere have dignity and are to be shown regard and respect.

We affirm that every human being is the image of God. Some might only regard our first parents, Adam and Eve, of deserving of such dignity. After all, God Himself assumed the role of the potter who fashioned Adam out of the dust (clay) of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. And God Himself had caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and then He removed a rib of Adam's to fashion Eve, the mother of all living. But all of their offspring are also the image of God, not just our first parents. We read of this in Genesis 5:1-3:

This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, *He made him in the likeness of God*. ²He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. ³And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son *in his own likeness*, after his image, and named him Seth.

God had made Adam in His image and in His likeness, and here Seth is born in the likeness of Adam. Just as Adam was the image and likeness of God, so was Seth his son.

We also see this in Genesis 9 after Noah had come forth from the ark with his family after the flood waters had dissipated from the earth. We read in Genesis 9:5f: "From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

Many argue that they are against capital punishment because all human life is sacred and God created human beings in His image. They reason, therefore, capital punishment should be abolished. But the Word of God affirms, even commands the use of *capital punishment* in crimes of murder *because* man is made in the image of God. When one raises his hand to slay another, he is striking at that which God has created and commissioned to bear His image in the world. It warrants the forfeiture of one's own life. God instituted the death penalty for murder. The reason for capital punishment is because of the high, exalted value and position that he has conferred on humanity. To kill the image of God is to strike out at God the Creator who made him. Murder is not just an assault on a man, it is an assault on God who made man and gave him his dignity and stature. Here are the words of **Anthony Hoekema**:

The reason that murder is here said to be such a heinous crime that it must be punished by death is that the man who has been murdered is someone who imaged God, reflected God, was like God, and represented God. Therefore, when one kills a human being, not only does he take that person's life, but he hurts God Himself—the God who was reflected in that individual. To touch the image of god is to touch God Himself; to kill the image of God is to do violence to God Himself.

Interesting, a similar basis of argument is made by James in the New Testament. James declared that we should not speak evil of others because they are made in God's image:

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in *the similitude of God*. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:8-10)

Here human beings are described as in "the similitude of God", that is, in His image, in His likeness. Just as in Genesis 9 when murdering a man was a great crime because it was assaulting God Himself whose image

was the murdered man, here, the one who is cursed is the image of God, so to curse another human being is in effect cursing God whom he represents and reflects.

In verse 9 James points out the inconsistency of which people are guilty when they use the same tongue to praise God and to curse men. Why is this such an inconsistency? Because the human beings whom we curse—note James' use of the first person—are creatures who have been made in the likeness of God. Therefore, to curse men means, in effect, to curse God in whose likeness they have been made.⁶

The Lord Jesus treated people with dignity and courtesy. He never had a patronizing spirit, acting and talking as if He were superior to others and that He would have them know it. A patronizing spirit is an alienating spirit. It conveys to others that you are better than they, or so you think. Jesus, though He was the Son of God did not treat people in this manner. He did not look down on people, nor did they sense that kind of spirit of Him. People are created in the image of God and therefore, even those that some would consider the most despicable of persons in behavior, should be *treated with respect and courtesy*. All human beings, rich or poor, male and female, Jewish or Gentile, educated or illiterate, should be regarded as possessing dignity because they are a creation of God made in the image of God.

We are to view people as having *great potential for glorifying God in their lives*. This is the end to which God created us all. There is an inherent capacity that every individual possesses to glorify God in his/her life. We should see this potential in people and work with them toward its realization through their lives. Moreover, when we look upon an individual, *we should view him/her as a redeemable, eternal soul*. For such ones the Second Person of the Blessed Holy Trinity became man, in order to redeem fallen, but eternal souls from their sin.

But we should also understand that to be the image of God brings great responsibility and accountability before God. We should view people as greatly *accountable* to God because of who they are--image bearers of God--having been created by God to this end. We should not think that because people are the image of God that somehow lessens their guilt or accountability before God. In actuality it aggravates their condemnation. Look who they are! Look at what they are capable of doing and becoming! But look what they have become! To squander one's high position and opportunity is to incur God's great wrath. We should view people, who only live to themselves rather than to God who made them, as ones who are under great guilt and condemnation unless they experience the forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ.

Finally, because all people are God's image bearers, we should *desire the end to injustice and inhumane treatment of human beings*. When we see or hear of injustice or cruelty inflicted upon others, we should have a holy zeal to see its end and resolution, as well as justice rendered. Why? Because to afflict a human being with injustice is to strike at God whose image has been disregarded and destroyed.

II. Mankind as the image of God after his fall into sin

When sin entered the world, man fell from his noble state. The image of God was terribly marred, but it was not extinguished. Some have taught that when Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God that had characterized them was extinguished. They say that salvation recreates the image of God in Christ. But this is not biblical. Even fallen man in his sin is the image of God.

In the fall of mankind, something ghastly happened. The image of God was severely tarnished. Our ability to mirror His holiness has been greatly affected so that now the mirror is fogged.

The fall, however, did not destroy our humanity. Though our ability to reflect God's holiness was lost in the fall, we are still human. We still have a mind, heart, and a will. We still bear the mark of our Creator upon ourselves.⁷

Consider the great precipice from which Adam fell from his former estate. It has been said of Adam

⁶ Hoekema, pp. 19f.

⁷ R. R. Sproul, gen. ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Reformation Trust, 2016), p. 14.

He is the prophet who explains God and proclaims His excellencies; he is the priest who consecrates himself with all that is created to God as a holy offering; he is the king who guides and governs all things in justice and rectitude. And in all this he points to One who in a still higher and richer sense is the revelation and image of God, to Him who is the only begotten of the Father, and the firstborn of all creatures. Adam, the son of God, was a type of Christ.⁸

But through his sin Adam was spoiled to his privilege and purpose. But thankfully God has purposed and promised to restore this image in us through Jesus Christ, the express image of the Father.

III. Man as the image of God through redemption in Jesus Christ

When the sinner comes to faith in Christ, God begins the restoration and renewal of His image in that person's life. Regeneration, or becoming born again, begins the process of restoring God's moral image in our lives. This is solely and wholly the work of God the Creator upon His creatures, who are governed by Him. We respond to Him in repentance and faith because we are living souls, persons who are capable and responsible before Him.

This restoration and fulfillment of God's image in us occurs through the work of God's grace of sanctification, as we become more like Jesus Christ, God's Son, the true and full image of God. He is God Himself who assumed a human nature, becoming one of us. Now certainly, we will not reflect God perfectly in thought and action until we are fully sanctified and glorified. Only when we are glorified, standing before God on the day of the resurrection that we manifest the fullness of God's design for us. We will then be like Christ fully, manifesting in our glorified humanity the life that was illustrated and demonstrated through the life of the incarnate Son of God (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29, 46).

But even now in this life this process is taking place in the lives of Christians. God had purposed in eternity that believers in Jesus Christ would become conformed to His image. He is fulfilling that purpose in the life of believers. Romans 8 declares this:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30)

We see here that God's love for His people is from eternity--"He foreknew" them before creation. Furthermore, we see that the ones He foreknew, "He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." What does this mean, to be conformed to the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ? It means we become like Him in at least four ways.

A. God has predestined that we will be like our Lord in His *relationship* to the Father--He has predestined that His chosen people would be His *adopted children*.

B. God has predestined that we will be like our Lord in His *character*. Because of the love that God has for His people He has predestined that they would become *holy*, like His Son.

God treats us as if we were righteous, when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our righteousness; this is what the Bible calls our justification. And then, through the gift and the power of the Holy Spirit He begins to make us righteous; this is our sanctification. Salvation involves God not only treating us as if we were righteous (our justification); salvation involves God making us righteous (our sanctification). God has predestined that this will be so.

⁸ Herman Bavinck, **Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation** (Baker Academic, 2004), p. 562.

C. God has predestined that we will be like our Lord in His *suffering*. As Jesus Christ bore a cross, so He would have us bear a cross after Him. Our Lord Jesus said, “If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). This is the calling of all true disciples of Jesus Christ, that is, all true believers. What this means is that God has appointed His people to suffer as His Son suffered. To be conformed to the image of God’s Son in a fallen world is to suffer as did His Son in this fallen world.

D. God has predestined that we will be like our Lord in His *resurrection glory*. Suffering is a prelude to glory. One leads to and results in the other. The context of Romans 8 from which we read speaks of suffering and its relationship to our future glorification. Romans 8:18 reads,

For I reckon that the *sufferings* of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the children of God.

Suffering assures us that we are the children of God. We have the promise of 2 Timothy 2:12 (and elsewhere), “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” As we have born his image in this life, we may be assured we will bear His image in eternity.”

God is forming the fullness of His image in us as we conform to the Lord Jesus, in whose image we are being fashioned. This is a foundation and principle for how we are to live and how we are to treat others. Here are Paul’s words to the church at Colossae:

But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to *the image of Him who created him*, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (Col. 3:8ff)

IV. The implications of our world view in today’s world

The truths that we hold as Christians who believe and embrace the truths of Holy Scripture are increasingly becoming unpopular and denigrated in our present culture. In fact, some of our beliefs, if expressed or even discovered, result in sanctions and financial penalties, forfeiture of hiring and/or advancement, and even the possible loss of employment. And in some cases our biblical convictions are becoming criminalized with possible consequences of imprisonment.

What are some of these biblical convictions that are placing us in difficulty in our culture? From the passages that we have considered today we could cite a couple of matters. We affirm the following as universal truths according to the Word of God and we resist any pressure and reject any course of compromise regarding them.

A. God has created two genders, male and female. We have arrived to a place in our culture over the past two decades in which it is commonly believed that gender is a fluid matter, something that can be chosen and changed according to one’s own preference. This is a failure to acknowledge God the Creator and to rebel against His good design and purpose. It is to usurp the place of God the Creator when someone desires and attempts to recreate himself or herself into that which God did not ordain and create. Nevertheless there are demands upon us to affirm their views and practices, forcing and coercing us to use their preferred pronouns. For us to do so may be regarded as our denial of the truth of the Word of God and

it would be a failure to bear faithful witness to those who believe a lie. No doubt it will only get worse for us.

B. God has equal regard for both male and female genders. This means that we reject on the one hand what some refer to as toxic masculinity, but we also reject radical feminism. Not only has God created mankind with two and only two genders, but He has given specific and distinct roles for males and for females that are to be manifest both in families and churches. We have not addressed this yet, but will.

C. Racism and/or a caste system is evil. Our nation has had a history of racism, of which we are all aware, as has been the case with most nations through history. Great injustices have been perpetrated upon peoples because of their race or their country of origin. In other nations the sinful hierarchy of social status and privilege has characterized them. These notes will be read in India in which there has been and is still entrenched a four tiered caste system that has resulted in great injustice to many and unjust privilege granted to others. There is no place for racial or social animosity or distinction especially in the churches of Jesus Christ. We are all one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:28).

D. God is the Creator of all human life, whether born or not yet born, and it is to be highly regarded and always preserved. No human being should be marginalized or devalued due to mental deficiency or physical deformity, and certainly life should never be terminated because of the difficulty in raising that child. Abortion is great sin. With over 60 million abortions in this last generation, there are multitudes of guilty souls who will give a reckoning to God whose image He has created, but they have extinguished. They claim that it is the woman's right to choose. We would say that was made when she chose to engage in behavior that resulted in her pregnancy. Then her (and the father's) responsibility to her child took precedence, for which God will hold her (them) accountable. But not only are the ones who have been directly involved in the act of abortion are guilty before God, but our entire nation has the guilt of shedding innocent blood by allowing and promoting a culture of death. Our land lies under great guilt before God who sees all and judges nations within history according to their values and behavior. Now thankfully through Jesus Christ there is forgiveness of sins and the fullness of salvation available to the greatest of sinners. But we will not lessen our conviction regarding the gravity of the offense and the culpability that not only individuals but as a nation for which accountability before God is great.

May our Lord help us to take to heart these biblical truths. May He enable us to see the world from the lens of Scripture that He has given us. And may each of us, all of us, display the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to the world in which He has placed us. Let us be prepared with the gospel of the forgiveness of sins and new life in Jesus Christ for all who humble themselves, turn from their sin and believe and submit to Jesus the Lord.
