



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 3 - 9/21/2025

## Scripture and Prayer

- Psalm 51:1-6

## Quick Review

### WEEK 1 – Defining a Human

Human nature & personal identity consists of five interconnected features: 1) Shaped by God, 2) Unified Somatic Souls, 3) Sexed, 4) Storied, and 5) Social.

### WEEK 2 - Human Origins & Image of God

the Bible reveals a good and glorious account of human origins.

**Human beings are the crown of God's creative handiwork!**

- Gen 1:27, 31; Ps 8:5.

**(1) Humans are created beings.** Gen 1:27; 31; 2:21-23.

**(2) Humans are contingent beings.** Genesis 1-2.

**(3) Humans are commanded beings.** Gen 1:28; Gen 2:16-17.

- The command of dominion signifies humans as **co-rulers** with God.
- Humans are also commanded to be fruitful and fill the earth. They are to be **multipliers**.
- Humans are also **caretakers** (Gen 2:16-17). Man was to take care of the garden by working it and keeping it.

### What does it mean to be made in the Image of God? Views of the Image of God

#### (1) Substantival

The substantival view defines the image of God as what a human **IS**, a unique quality such as reason or will.

#### (2) Functional

The functional view defines the image of God as something a person **DOES**, such as exerting dominion over creation. A clear command by God in Genesis.

#### (3) Relational

The relational view defines the image of God as the ability to **RELATE** with God and others. This sets us apart from other creatures.

#### **(4) Teleological**

The teleological view defines the image of God as what humans were created **FOR**, the goal or purpose of life. Live for God's glory, to give lives to Christ.

#### **(5) Christological**

The Christological view emphasizes Jesus Christ as the image of God on earth. He is who the theme points to - the fulfillment of the theme. He is the person we aspire to be like. Thus we need to focus on him, He the pinnacle of what it means to be made in God's image.

### **Image of God in the Storyline of Scripture**

#### **(1) Primary Image**

- Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 5:1-3.

#### **(2) Polluted Image – sin enters the picture**

- Genesis 9:6; James 3:9-12.

#### **(3) Progressing Image (we are being transformed, conformed to Jesus' image)**

- Jesus Christ is the Image of God - John 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3.
- Imaging Christ, our goal/purpose - Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:9-10 Eph 4:24.

#### **(4) Perfected Image – our future!**

- 1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:2.

**My definition:** Humans are ontologically the *imago Dei* created to relate with God and to reflect who he is in relationships and in creation.

### **Holistic Ontological (essence)**

Two main branches to this view: Relating and Reflecting

- Man is the divine image (in his essence)  
(1) likenesses relate and (2) images reflect.

So, how are we to relate to God?

- Worship. "Love God the Lord your God with all your heart"

And so, how are we to reflect, mirror God?

- Discipleship "be fruitful and multiply. Make disciples" and
- Stewardship "have dominion...work/keep the Garden"

## People around you: Discussion on Implications of the Doctrine of the Image of God

- What are some negative consequences if we lose this idea of people being created in the image of God?
  - Mistreatment of people is justified.
  - Lose the sanctity of life. Abortion, etc.
  - We become our own god, severed from God.
  - We lose hope and a sense of purpose.
  - No moral compass.
  - Evil/sin against people is justified.
- How should the doctrine of the image of God impact our relationships, work life, ethics & morality, and our worldview?
  - Work has inherent dignity, purpose.
  - We have a purpose in life.
  - We are connected to a worldview filled with strong identity.
  - We treat everyone with respect/dignity
  - Sense of justice.
  - We're more patient with non-believers.
  - We're humbled.

## Article 3 of our Statement of Faith (SOF has 10 articles):

“We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.”

**Why talk about Depravity anyway?** Morbid, isn’t the gospel good news, etc. But we **must grasp** these truths about sin and feel the depth of our problem.

- It is only then we can see how much Christ has done for us!

I call talking about depravity as the black backdrop that makes the good news sparkle.

- It is like a black cloth that the jeweler puts down, so that the diamond can shine all the more brightly.
- When we talk about depravity, we’re considering the black cloth.
  - Part of the essential gospel foundation.
- And when we get to the next section of destiny, the good news shines.
- So the good news of the destiny in Christ is right around the corner.
  - And it will sparkle brightly!

## Depravity – What went wrong?

So, if sin's corruption is the reality of humanity living in this fallen world, how did sin affect everything so comprehensively?

**Genesis 3** describes the Fall.

[Read Gen 3] – what do we see?

## The Consequences of Sin

- Adam and Eve sinned against God and immediately experienced the consequences of their sin.
- The originally pure reality of life became corrupted by shame, fear, blame, and ultimately death (Gen 3:7-8, 10, 12-13, 19).
- Also, Adam and Eve's sin created lasting consequences still in effect today.

Their sin negatively affected three spheres of relationships (categories from MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*).<sup>1</sup>

Sin affected human,

### (1) Relationship with God (Gen 3:8; Rom 5:10).

Romans 5:10 (ESV)

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

### (2) Relationships with other people (Gen 3:16),

Genesis 3:16

“To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

### (3) Relationship with creation (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 8:19-22).

Bavinck describes the consequences of sin upon humankind,

“The whole history of the world is proof of the fact that mankind, both in its entirety and in its individual membership, is guilty before the face of God, has a morally corrupted nature, and is at all times subject to decay and death.”

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 458–61.

The consequences of the punishment of death upon humanity were also threefold.

**(1) Humans would experience spiritual death (Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1, 5).**

**Romans 5:12**

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

**Ephesians 2:1, 3**

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.”

**(2) Humans would experience physical death (Gen 5:5; Ps 89:48).**

**Ps 89:48 (NIV)**

“What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?”

**(3) Humans would experience eternal death (Rev 20:14-15).**

**Revelation 20:14–15**

<sup>14</sup> “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The EFCA statement of faith says, “human beings are in a state of sinfulness by nature and by choice.” Let’s unpack what that means a little more.

**“Sinners by choice” (SOF)**

What does it look like, how manifest?

- Many ways are described, some of which are, Disobedience, faithlessness, abomination, transgression, autonomy, missing the mark, pride, rebellion, indifference, injustice, and hopelessness.<sup>2</sup>

**Mark 7:21–23**

“For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

**“Sinners by nature” (SOF)**

Humans are born in a state of sinfulness (Ps 51:5).

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

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<sup>2</sup> Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith*, 138.

## Sin is a Universal Problem

### **Romans 3:23**

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

### **1 John 1:8**

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

- We, by nature of our fallen humanity into sin, inherit this state of sinfulness.

This state of sinfulness includes two concepts.<sup>3</sup>

**(1) Inherited guilt** - all people are condemned before a just God.

- The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)

**(2) Inherited corruption** - all people have a sin nature and a tendency toward evil.

This guilty and corrupted condition includes two aspects.<sup>4</sup>

**(1) Total depravity** - sin extends to every aspect of human nature.

**(2) Total inability** - a person is unable to meet the necessary requirements to gain God's approval or work out of this sinful state.

Scripture describes the many areas of the human person that is affected by this pervasive sinfulness. Sin corrupts...

**1. The heart** (Jer 17:9; Mark 7:21-23).

### **Jeremiah 17:9**

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

**2. The mind** (Rom 8:7).

### **Romans 8:7**

“For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.”

**3. The will** (John 8:34).

### **John 8:34**

“Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.”

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<sup>3</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Second Edition*, 623–27.

<sup>4</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 152.

#### 4. The conscience (Titus 1:15).

##### **Titus 1:15 (NIV84)**

<sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”

#### 5. The body (Rom 6:13). “parts of body instruments of wickedness”

Bavinck explains the pervasiveness of sin,

“This taint or pollution not only spreads itself out over all men but it also saturates the **whole of the individual.**”<sup>5</sup>

Now, some **clarifications** on what “total depravity” does *not* mean.

- Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, makes excellent points on this.<sup>6</sup>

**Pollution** - the corruption of our nature that is the result of sin and produces sin. This has to do with our **moral status**.

We talked about above, two aspects of original pollution, our corrupted condition, total depravity and total inability.

**Total depravity** – pollution of sin extends to every aspect of person.

Hoekema, “There is not present in man by nature love to God as the motivating principle of his life.”

\*\*This term does *not* mean:

- That every person is maximally/extremely depraved, as bad as possible.
- That sinners don’t have a conscience to discern good and evil.
- That a sinner will indulge in every form of sin.
- That sinners are unable to do good and helpful things in this world, in the sight of men.
  - Because of all this, Hoekema prefers the term, “pervasive” depravity.

**Total inability** – unable to totally meet God’s standards in the law & unable to change basic direction of life from sinful self-love to love for God.

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<sup>5</sup> Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 225.

<sup>6</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 150.

\*\*This term does **not** mean:

- That a sinner unable to do any kind of good at all... i.e. we're all "terrible, horrible sinners." People can do nice things.
  - God gives "Common grace" to all which allows unsaved people to display virtues, do good things.
  - Furthermore, people are created in the image of God, as we have seen, and so they have inerrant dignity and can display virtues toward other people, they can do good things in the sight of men.
  - However, all these deeds are not prompted by love of God or in obedience to his will. Which is the major problem, its spiritual.
  - Because of this, Hoekema prefers the term, "spiritual" inability.

Keeping in mind spiritual inability,

Beeke and Smalley, in their Systematic Theology work, list 11 areas of human spiritual inability, cannot ultimately please God, meet his requirements.<sup>7</sup>

Some of which are, (5 here)

- The inability to speak what God counts as good (Matt 12:34).
- The inability to obey God's law and please God (Rom 8:7–8).
- The inability to spiritually perceive or enter God's kingdom (John 3:3).
- The inability to receive truth revealed by God's Spirit (1 Cor 2:14).
- The inability to bear good fruit that glorifies God (John 15:5).

### Growth Project

- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Write out everything you learn about the sinful condition. Also jot down God's remedy and all that it entails.

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<sup>7</sup> Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol 2, 406-409.