



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 1 - 9/7/2025

Class Introductions

- Share name and why you are interested in this class. What you hope to gain.
- Clipboard for email, for further resources & communication, church center

Class Description – Introduction

Who are we? What went wrong? And what is our purpose?

- Understanding the doctrine of humanity helps us answer these big questions of life.

Goals of this Class

Sunday morning classes:

We seek to have a well-rounded program: helping people grow together (connection) and learn Jesus (discipleship). So we cover a combination of topics from three mega-categories:

- Life, Bible, Doctrine – this class focuses on the Doctrine category.

So, in this class on the doctrine of humanity, I desire us to...

1. Fully grasp the dignity of being created in the image of God.
 - Study the important implications of this doctrine for ourselves, others, the church, and the world.
2. Understand the origin of sin, spread of sin, human depravity, and sin's deadly consequences. We need to feel the weight of sin and its consequences!
3. Worship Jesus for his rescue of us from sin's penalty, for his reconciliation, and for his renewal process within us.
4. Be deeply encouraged in our hope for the future.
 - We are destined to fully image Christ and glorify God forever!
5. Discuss implications of what we have learned for the church, our relationships, and the Christian worldview.
6. Seek to apply the truths of the doctrine of humanity to the issues of our day by applying God's truths in the spheres of personal identity development, gender issues, marriage/singleness, and ethics (IVF, AI, etc.).

Theme of the Class

Humanity – dignity, depravity, destiny

- Dignity - Who are we?
 - Created in God's Image as humans
- Depravity - What went wrong?
 - Humans are corrupted because of sin, deserving death
- Destiny - Where are we going?
 - To glorify God forever, fully like/image Jesus
 - Decision – How should we then live?

The Doctrine of Humanity (theological anthropology)

- Situated within the broader topics of systematic theology.
 1. The Doctrine of the **Word** of God (bibliology)
 - Inspiration, authority, sufficiency, canon (how got Bible)
 2. The Doctrine of **God** (theology proper)
 - Attributes/characteristics, Trinity, Creation, Providence
 3. The Doctrine of **Humanity** – our topic! (anthropology)
 - Also often includes creatures - angels/Satan/demons
 4. The Doctrine of **Jesus Christ** (Christology)
 - Person, work, offices, resurrection/ascension
 5. The Doctrine of the **Holy Spirit** (pneumatology)
 - Person, work, gifts
 6. The Doctrine of **Salvation** (soteriology)
 - Union, election, regeneration, conversion, justification, sanctification, glorification.
 7. The Doctrine of the **Church** (ecclesiology)
 - Marks, offices, government, baptism/Lord's supper
 8. The Doctrine of **Future Things** (eschatology)
 - End times, return, millennium, judgment, new heavens/earth

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."

- So the first phrase, “We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image” (that’s **dignity**),
 - **Image** - (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; James. 3:9).
- The next section says, “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” (that’s **depravity**).
 - **Sin** - (Gen. 3:1-6; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 5:12-14; 16:20; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).
 - **Union** - (Job 14:4; Ps. 51:5; Jn. 3:6; Rom. 3:12; 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:22a; 1 Jn. 1:8).
 - **Nature & choice** (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 5:15; 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-2; 4:17-19).
 - **Alienated** (Rom. 5:10), **under wrath** (Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 3:9-19; 3:23; Eph. 2:3).
- And the final sentence, “Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed (**destiny**).”
 - **Through Jesus Christ** (Act 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5) **rescued** (1 Thess. 1:10), **reconciled** (Rom. 5:1,2,10; Col. 1:20), **renewed** (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2).
 - **BIG IDEA: God’s gospel alone addresses our deepest need!**

Class Outline – Modification from *Evangelical Convictions*

“We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image (dignity)”

The Source of Human **Dignity** – Created in God’s Image

1. Human beings as God’s image.
2. The Significance of Adam and Eve.

The Source of Human Dignity – Created in God’s Image (cont.)

3. Storyline of Scripture and the Image of God
 - a. Primary Image
 - b. Polluted Image
 - c. Progressing Image
 - d. Perfected Image

“Humans 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 (depravity).”

The Source of Human **Depravity** – Our Fall into Sin

1. Tempted by Satan in the garden.

2. The nature of sin.

The Continuing Effects of Sin – Our Union with Adam

1. Sinful by nature and by choice.
 - a. The breadth of sin.
 - b. The depth of sin.
2. Alienation from God.
3. Under God's wrath.

"Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed (destiny)."

Our Only Hope – God's Saving Work in Jesus Christ

God's gospel alone addresses our deepest need.

1. Rescued from the wrath of God in propitiation.
2. Reconciled to God in justification.

Our **Destiny** – Renewed into the Image of Christ.

1. Progressive renewal in sanctification.
3. Permanent renewal in glorification.

Humanity Applied – how then shall we live? (Decision)

Discuss implications, apply these truths...

1. To the Church: Implications for its identity and purpose.
2. To Relationships: Implications for marriage, singleness, family.
3. To Worldview: implications for personal identity and bioethics.

This doctrine deals with some of the most pressing topics today:

- Loneliness epidemic, people don't know who they are. Online lives.
- Gender confusion is extremely pressing, an issue everywhere we turn.
- Rise of technology that presses into how we see people, embodiment, the mind... such as AI or virtual reality.
- People in our society are constantly re-defining their personal identity, in search of their true selves.

What is a human? What is human nature and personal identity?

- Human nature and personal identity consists of five interconnected features.

(1) We are Shaped beings.

- First, each person is a divinely shaped being.
- God is the Creator, and humans are created (Gen 1:1, 27).
- Scripture says God himself “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything,” thus, “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28).
- Genesis 1-2 reveals God as dynamic and active in the shaping of humanity. If you consider the Hebrew words of “make, create, and form” they emphasize God’s “active involvement in the creation of man.”¹
- Each human being is also shaped in God’s very image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). Each human being is wonderfully designed by God as he knits each person together in the womb (Ps 139:13-16).
- Allison describes each person’s uniqueness containing five aspects: (1) mental, (2) emotional, (3) will, (4) moral, and (5) physical. God has shaped each person uniquely in all aspects of personhood. Indeed, every hair on each head is numbered by God (Matt 10:29-31).

(2) We are Unified Somatic Souls.

- Secondly, each human is a unified somatic soul.
- Each element of this three-part definition is vital.

First, every human is unified.

- Human consistency has both a material aspect and an immaterial aspect.
- The Bible describes these two aspects as the body and the soul or spirit (Mark 5:29; Gen 35:18; Matt 27:50).
- Thus each person is a somatic (having a body) soul (having an immaterial aspect).
- But it must be emphasized that this embodied soul is unified.
- John Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, did an extensive survey of the Old Testament words regarding personhood. He found people are a “psychosocial totality,” rather than having a segmentation of body and soul. Cooper adds that people in the Old Testament viewed humans as “holistic single entities” which are “psychosomatic unities” who continue to exist after death, though in a less desirable state.²

¹ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Crossway, 2017), 407-8.

² John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 44, 70, 161-162.

- Grudem says, “God created us to have a unity between body and soul and that every action we take in this life is an act of our whole person.”³
- Erickson “conditional unity” normal state of each person is an embodied unitary being.⁴

Second, each person is a soul.

- Humans as **creaturely** and **divine** because each person consists of a body and of a soul, the soul having a unique connection with the creator.
- The soul cannot be divided, so it is simple and immaterial,
 - with features of independence and endurance over time.
- Scripture describes the soul expressing emotions (John 13:21),
 - ...having the ability to think (1 Cor 2:11),
 - ...and displaying a relationship with God (Ps 25:1, 62:1, 146:1).
- Some theologians have argued humans are a **trichotomy** of body, soul, and spirit using verses such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 suggesting that the soul and spirit are separate.
- Yet the **dichotomy** view is preferred,
 - (1) the soul and spirit are used interchangeably (Luke 1:46-47),
 - (2) both the soul and the spirit depart at death (Isa 53:12; Luke 22:46),
 - (3) man is described as both “body and soul” and “body and spirit” (Matt 10:28; 1 Cor 5:5),
 - (4) both the soul and the spirit can sin (1 Pet 1:22; 2 Cor 7:1), and
 - (5) both the soul and the spirit do the same things such as thinking, feeling, deciding, and relating with God (Acts 17:16; Mark 2:8; Ps 103:1).⁵

Third, every human is a body.

- Our bodies display God...the body makes visible the spiritual realities of God’s nature and love and is the main channel/conduit through which God conveys his means of grace to us. Indeed, the body is vitally important.
- Christians must emphasize the significance of the body because our culture has embraced a **fragmented** and **two-tiered view** regarding personhood.
- Nancy Pearcey, *Love thy Body*, explains this view as “personhood theory” infiltrating our culture.⁶ This ideology separates personal identity, as the authentic self, **from** the body... leading to a host of problems such as abortion, euthanasia, and sexual promiscuity. This is not right.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, Second Edition* (Zondervan Academic, 2020), 601.

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 491.

⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 602-606.

⁶ Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 19, 20-32, 34.

- The human body is greatly valued by God, and should be valued by us as well as each person is the soul expressing itself through the body (Ps 63:1; Prov 4:21-22).

So, when we describe who we are, our second point has been described with three elements, we can say that each person is a unified, body-soul.

(3) We are Sexed beings.

- Third, each person is sexed.
- From the very beginning God created humans as either a biological male or a biological female (Gen 1:27).
- Gregg Allison, in his work on the body, states, “God does not create a generic human being and then add on gender; rather, he creates a human being either as a male person or as a female person.”⁷
- Therefore, being a sexed human as male or female represents “the most fundamental given of human embodied existence.”⁸
- In commenting on Genesis 1:27-31, Allison describes this fundamental foundation of sexed embodiment as very good and “beautiful” as it “gestures beyond itself, prompting belief in the goodness of God its Creator.”⁹
- Gender differences should be viewed as a divine gift to be expressed appropriately in relating to God and others.
- Biological sex determines who we are, is an “essential part” of how we image God. (Sprinkle) “Gendered all way down” (Allison)
- Indeed each male and female expresses gender in wonderful and unique ways.

(4) We are Storied beings.

- Fourth, every human is a storied person.
- Being storied means each person exists within the particular story of his or her ongoing life.
- Elements to a storied life include family history, life events, ethnicity, and context – where we live, work, and play.

⁷ Gregg R. Allison, “Toward A Theology Of Human Embodiment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 6.

⁸ Gregg R. Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 165.

⁹ Allison, “Four Theses,” 164.

- **Christians** in particular, are storied human beings saved by God's grace and united with Christ.
- Each believer exists within a **personal story** of his or her salvation... surrounded by the larger, **Grand Story** of God's redemption in history - story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. Our story exists in God's!

(5) We are Social beings.

- Fifth, each person is a social being.
- Humans are formed for community and relationships.
- God eternally exists in an infinitely happy communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit... and God created humans to experience his love in relationship with him and share it with others (Gen 1:26-28).
- Because it was not good for man to be alone, God created woman to be man's companion and helper (Gen 2:18, 20).
- So together, man and woman, were given the command to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion (Gen 2:18-25). Humans were to multiply and fill the earth with societies enabling them to flourish in relationships as social beings (Gen 1:28-31).
- We are social beings. Covid showed us this.
 - **Intimacy.** Sexual activity of those who are married is the foundation of families and societies. Thus, sexual activity is a part of married sociality.

To Summarize,

- Human nature and personal identity consists of five interconnected features of being divinely shaped, unified somatic souls, sexed, storied, and social.
- Beeke and Smalley, in their theology book, say, "This is part of the wonder of man: he is a creature both physical and spiritual, with feet planted on the earth and a soul that aspires to heaven."¹⁰
- What a grace-filled reality, that the Creator God fashions each human in his image, as a unity of body and soul, each person knit together in the mother's womb, blessed with wonderful uniqueness.

Growth Project

- Read Genesis 1-2. List all the elements of human beings you see. Read Psalm 8 and spend time praising God for his creative handiwork.
- Read Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; James. 3:9. How would you describe the details and elements of humans as made in the image of God?

¹⁰ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2: Man and Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 229.



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 2 - 9/14/2025

Human Origins

The first two chapters of Genesis reveal that humans were created wonderfully by God. We learn that,

Human beings are the crown of God's creative handiwork.

- In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. With his final mighty act of creation God made humans in his image as the pinnacle of his good works, crowning them with glory and honor (Gen 1:27, 31; Ps 8:5).

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:31 (ESV)

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Psalm 8:5 (ESV)

⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

- Beeke and Smalley, in their theology book, exclaim this, "Man is the climax and crown of creation, the centerpiece of God's eternal counsel, the image of God on earth...what a wonder man is!"¹¹
- Thus, the making of mankind is the "highpoint" of the story of creation because man is in God's image, a description shared by no other creature!

¹¹ Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2: Man and Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 131.

Genesis 1-2 reveals three truths about the origin of humans.

(1) Humans are created beings.

- As created beings, humans are dependent on God, made as male and female, and formed as very good (Gen 1:27; 31).
- Genesis chapters 1 and 2 display God as the creator and humans as created. Humans depend on God for life, breath, and everything else (Acts 17:25).
- Genesis 1:27 reveals humans are created beings as male and female. Directly from creation order itself, it is evident humans are sexed beings.
- This gendered quality is foundational to human identity and nature.
- Marriage is a natural outworking of this original design (Matt 19:4-6).

Genesis 2:21-25 (ESV)

²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

- God created woman from man’s body to be his helper (Gen 2:21-23).
- They were united as one flesh in marriage establishing it as creation order (Gen 2:24-25).
- Genesis 1 teaches that humans as male and female are created as the climax of God’s “very good” creation (Gen 1:31).
- This happened before sin entered the world. The order is significant!
 - “sin does not belong to the essence of human nature.”¹²
- **Truth:** Sin has distorted the original design for humans, but it does not change foundational reality of humans as created very good.

(2) Humans are contingent beings.

- Genesis 1-2 also describes humans as **contingent** beings. Totally dependent.

¹² Herman Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God: Instruction in the Christian Religion According to the Reformed Confession* (Glenside, PA: Westminster Seminary Press, 2020), 196.

- Many in our culture may assert they exist without God, as self-dependent beings.... but this does not change the fact that all humans, at all times, in all ages... will always be dependent on God.
- Bavinck again, “The moment God removed His hand and withheld His strength, the creature would sink back into nothingness.”¹³
- **Gen 2:7**,
“Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature”
- Notice! Both **body formed from the earth and spirit as God’s breath** were divinely creative works.
- Thus humans are created complex, with both material and immaterial design.
- This is both, “formation and impartation.”¹⁴
 - By God’s design, body created (**formation**)
 - By God’s breath man became a living, spiritual being by a “second distinct act” displaying humans as created uniquely in God’s image. (**impartation**)

(3) Humans are commanded beings

- Humans are not only created and contingent beings but also **commanded** beings.
- Adam did not invent the commands but “God created them in him and communicated them to him...
- Adam was not to go his own way, but had to walk in the way God appointed for him.”¹⁵

So, what were the specific commands for humanity? Verses from Genesis.

- **Gen 1:28**,
“God said, “**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion...** over every living thing that moves on the earth”
- **Gen 2:15**,
And God “took the man and put him into the garden **to work it and keep it.**”
- **Gen 2:16-17**,
“And the Lord commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die’”

¹³ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 160.

¹⁴ John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 802–3.

¹⁵ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 199.

From these verses we learn **three truths** about humans as commanded beings:

- The command of dominion signifies humans as **corulers (coregent)** with God as he installed us “as living, embodied representatives of his rule and reign.”¹⁶ (viceregents)
- Humans are also commanded to procreate and fill the earth. They are to be **multipliers**.
 - This reflects God who creates, multiplies blessings.
- Humans are also **caretakers** (Gen 2:16-17). Man was to take care of the garden by working it and keeping it. This caretaking task reveals God’s design for humanity as stewards of his creation and as beings created for vocation. So work is an aspect of God’s good design for man.
- God gives the command to **care for** creation but also **to take care!** Bavinck comments, “Man is told that he may not eat of that tree, and that on the day he eats of it he will die (Gen. 2:16-17). So to all that is commanded is now added one thing that is forbidden.”¹⁷

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

- Humans are the **crowning achievement** of God’s creative handiwork.
 - Humans are **created** dependent on God, made as male and female, and fashioned as very good.
 - Humans are **contingent** beings, reliant on God for their every breath and for their complex yet unified makeup.
 - Finally, humans are **commanded** beings to serve God as corulers, multipliers, and caretakers of this world.

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

Key Text: Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV)

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

¹⁶ Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 9.

¹⁷ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 199.

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

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 5:1-3

¹This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

(2) Polluted Image – sin enters the picture

Genesis 9:6

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”

James 3:9–12

⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

- Sin has now corrupted, there's death, murder, cursing of fellow humans.
- Yet not destroyed... distorted, corrupted by sin yes, but humans are all still defined by being “made in the likeness of God.”

(3) Progressing Image

Jesus Christ is the Perfect Image of God

John 14:9

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

- Also 2 Cor 4:4, “Christ, who is the image of God.”

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature”

- Jesus is the perfect image of God, as a human, worthy to be worshipped and emulated. He is the pattern for us as the image of the invisible God.

Those who trust in Christ are made “new creations.”

- They are declared righteous in God's sight, holy and blameless in their union with Christ.
- Yet we are still in the already, not yet times. We're already fully righteous in Christ but not yet fully perfect, we struggle with sin and are called to grow into Christ's image.
- And Christians grow by becoming more like him.

Image of Christ as our goal or purpose (progressing into His image as we grow)

Romans 8:29

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

2 Corinthians 3:18

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Colossians 3:9–10

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Ephesians 4:24

“and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

- God’s plan for us from the beginning, we are in the process of being conformed, transformed into Christ’s image, one degree of glory to another.
- We are to be active, put on, clothe ourselves with likeness of Christ by displaying practices – love, humility, kindness, purity, etc.

(4) Perfected Image – our future!

1 Corinthians 15:49

“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

1 John 3:2

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

- We will be fully conformed to his likeness, free from sin and we will glorify and image him forever!

So when we define the image of God fully,

- We take into account the entire storyline of Scripture
- And it should be explained by a combination of the views.

Sermon – 9/15/2024 – Brandon Levering “The Sufficiency and Supremacy of Christ”
God’s vision for humanity in Creation.

“Humans are made for relationship, made for reflection, and made for representation. God’s vision for creation is to establish his kingdom through a people made in his image who relate to him as Father, reflect his character, and represent his rule on earth.”

My View: Holistic Ontological (essence)

- Each view captures an important aspect of the *imago Dei* but only provides a portion of its full tapestry.
- Humans are holistic beings.
- Thus, the *imago Dei* cannot be condensed to simply a characteristic, activity, or relationship. (these views are oversimplifications & reductionistic).
- Additionally, the image of God defines the very essence of what it means to be human.
- The characteristics, activities, and relationships of a human flow from this essence, but are not the essence itself.
- The *imago Dei* must be defined in terms of ontology, the metaphysical foundation of the actions, qualities, and relationships of a person.
- Essence/Ontology “does not stay still” (Strachan) active, purpose, moral, will. Essence/Ontology “issues forth an active relationship” with God and an ability to reflect God to others and in the world by exercising human capacities and functions while living out human *telos* in daily life.¹⁸

Two main branches to this view: Relating and Reflecting

- Man is the divine image (in his essence)
- It is important to analyze the meaning of “image” and “likeness” in Genesis 1:26 and its surrounding context.

(1) likenesses relate and (2) images reflect.

- Humans relate to God in a love relationship as *his likenesses*.
- Humans reflect who God is by loving others and ruling creation as *his images*. Since humans are God’s likeness they relate to him as “his sons.”¹⁹ Since humans are God’s image they relate to creation as viceregents – others call us “servant kings.” - corulers, dominion, under his authority.²⁰

¹⁸ Owen Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Theology of Mankind* (Fearn: Mentor, 2019), 31.

¹⁹ Stephen J. Wellum, *Systematic Theology: From Canon to Concept*, vol. 1 (Brentwood, TN: B & H Academic, 2024), 407.

²⁰ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 217.

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

So, how are we to relate to God?

- **Worship.**
- A relationship characterized by love is the heart of relating with God as his likeness. Its purpose is to know God more intimately and it is to be displayed in love for God, which is the first and greatest commandment (Deut 6:4-5).
- Therefore, the outworking of the ontological foundation of the *imago Dei* is primarily expressed in relating to God as his likeness through loving him and glorifying his name (Matt 22:37-38). As people increasingly love and glorify God, they center themselves within the human purpose, to image God and glorify him forever (Isa 43:7).

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

- **Discipleship**
- Humanity was told to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28). The human task was to grow in number and to flourish in relationships among humanity. God's love displayed for people should be reflected while obeying this mandate.
- In the NT, multiplying our lives spiritually is the emphasis. Matt 28:18-20.
- **Stewardship**
- When humans take dominion over the earth they reflect God in relationship with creation.
- Human beings are designed as stewards of the world as God's vice-regents, expanding the kingdom of God wherever they go.
- Reflecting God as the Lord in stewardship of creation requires elements of lording on earth.
- Reflecting a God who cares for creation by stewarding time, treasure, and talents for the glory of God and the good of the world.

In summary, the **Image of God** be described in terms of a **vine**.

- The vine is the ontological nature of humanity which provides foundation and nourishment.
- The two main branches are humans **relating** with God and **reflecting** who he is, which further branches to **reflecting him to others** and **reflecting him in creation**.
- The **fruit** of the vine is loving God in worship, loving others in multiplication, and loving creation through stewardship.
- Thus, the overflow of the ontological foundation of *imago Dei* is the fruit of,
(1) **worship** – relating with God in love,
(2) **discipleship** – reflecting love to others and spiritually reproducing by making disciples of all nations, and
(3) **stewardship** – reflecting a God who cares for creation by stewarding time, treasure, and talents for the glory of God and the good of the world.

Growth Project

- Read Genesis 3, Romans 3:9-20, and Romans 5:12-21. List all the consequences of sin. Then, write a summary paragraph describing sin and its consequences.



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*).²¹

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.”

²¹ 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

¹⁴ “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ 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.²²

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.”

²² 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.²³

(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.²⁴

(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.”

²³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Second Edition, 623–27.

²⁴ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 152.

4. The conscience (Titus 1:15).

Titus 1:15 (NIV84)

¹⁵ 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.**”²⁵

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

- Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, makes excellent points on this.²⁶

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.

²⁵ Bavinck, *The Wonderful Works of God*, 225.

²⁶ 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.²⁷

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.

²⁷ Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, Vol 2, 406-409.



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 4 - 9/28/2025

The need to study this topic: Illustrated in the Ligonier State of Theology Survey 2025. One of the most troubling areas of beliefs evangelical Christians have is the doctrine of humanity. 64% believe, "everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God" 53% believe, "everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."

I want to dive into one passage this morning that illustrates the concepts of human depravity that we have been talking about.

- The black cloth which makes the gospel shine.

I have the text printed in your notes in sections, we'll take them a section at a time.

We have three sections, and we'll think of each section as a scene in a courtroom.

- In scene one, the accusation is proclaimed, verse 9.
- In scene two, the evidence is presented, verses 10-18.
- In scene three, the judgment is pronounced, verses 19-20.

➤ So first let's look at the courtroom scene one, the charge,

THE CHARGE IS: ALL ARE UNDER SIN (9)

Verse 9 says,

"What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin."

So, Paul asks the question reflecting on these truths,

- "So when we think about the Jews, what should we conclude, then?"
- "Because of these advantages that the Jews have, are they better off than other people groups in regards to sin and salvation?"
 - "Do Jews surpass other people groups somehow?"
- And the answer is, "No, not at all."

Paul has masterfully laid out the full accusation in the first three chapters of Romans that all, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned.

- So, Jews do not have special privileges, for they are guilty before God too, just like the Roman Gentile world.
- Here in verse 9 is the word, “charged,” which means an accusation.
- It’s the idea that a formal legal charge has been filed to the court.
- In Romans 1-3, Paul has pointed out this charge has been leveled against the Gentiles and the Jews, God’s chosen people. And the creation and the conscience have given testimony this is true.

But here’s the overall point: All people, no matter what social group, are unrighteous and guilty before God.

- That’s the building block in the book of Romans, human depravity, that all are “under sin.”

So, what does this phrase mean, all are, “under sin”?

- Well, this phrase is a powerful metaphor for us to grasp.
- The idea of being “under sin” means that we are not simply people who do bad things from time to time.
 - We are actually subjects of sin; we’re people living under its power.
- The Bible describes sin as an evil, destructive, and enslaving entity, which has a stranglehold on us.
- So that phrase, “under sin” means to be under the authority and control of a king or master. And this is not a good master.
- Think of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. In the *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, all of Narnia was living in an endless cold winter.
- The wicked witch was ruling the land with an evil spell of winter that affected everyone.
 - It was always winter but never Christmas.
- Without Aslan’s power, all Narnians were helpless captives to the evil rule of the witch.
- This evil spell is like being under the power of sin.
- People are helpless captives, living under sin’s cold and bitter rule.
 - And we cannot escape the power of sin on our own.
- Thus, we are slaves to sin, as its evil influence rules over us and inside of us.

➤ Let’s look at the courtroom scene two, which is the case,

THE CASE IS: ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE (10-18)

The second section of our passage is verses 10-18, let's read them again,

¹⁰ "as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

So Paul is making his case here, presenting evidence to back up his accusation that all are under the power of sin.

- And the evidence he presents is a string of Old Testament quotations.
- So Paul is bringing rock-solid, Scriptural evidence to make his case.
- He lists six sections of the Old Testament here, one right after the other.
- Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 5:9; Psalm 140:3; Psalm 10:7; Isaiah 59:7-8; and Psalm 36:1.

Which adds to Paul's case here, all people, Jews and Gentiles, have turned aside.

Now, looking at verses 10-18 again, at first glance, it seems like we have here an unorganized list of Old Testament quotes.

- But when we look closer at the themes, it makes sense why these passages are ordered like this.
- Now, one word the Bible repeatedly uses to describe sin, is the word, "corruption"
- Corruption gets at the idea that sin corrupts a person, it pollutes wherever it goes.
 - Think of rust eating away at metal.
 - Think of a moth eating away at clothes.
- This is how sin corrupts our entire being, sin it eats away at us morally, with the consequences of moral decay leading to eternal disaster.
- So people are depraved, or inwardly ruined, because of sin.
 - They are corrupted to the core.

Paul describes this corruption of sin in three categories using these Old Testament quotes.

First, there is corruption of the entire perspective. Verses 11 and 18.

- The entire perspective of a person's life is corrupted because of sin.

- In other words, the person's worldview does not include God.
 - And what replaces God is self: self-sufficiency and self-determination.
- People have cut themselves off from God, their good Creator.
 - We must define sin with this in mind.
 - Sin is much deeper than doing bad things.
 - It starts and ends when people sever their entire perspective from God.
- Look at verse 11, it says, "No one seeks for God."
- And then verse 18 says, "there is no fear of God before their eyes."
 - So people seek self as the determining factor of their lives, not God.
 - And they don't even fear him, their perspective is totally off.
- This is the root of the tree of sin, it is a corruption, a failure of perspective.
 - Who God is and what he wants is not a part of one's worldview.

So what exactly does Paul mean when he says, "no one seeks for God" or "no one does good." These phrases are a bit curious.

- Does this mean that no one does anything good at all?
- Does this mean that no one has any spiritual interest at all?
- Well, no, non-believers do many good things toward fellow humans.
 - It's one result of God's common grace given to all people.
 - People, made in God's image, and can do good things in sight of men
 - And Jesus said even evil people give good gifts to their children.
- It also seems that people do have a spiritual sense of things, they see God in nature and they discern spiritual virtues through their conscience.
 - They can have a spiritual interest.

So in one sense, people do good things, and in a sense, people seek for God.

- But not in the ultimate sense, not in the way that ultimately matters.
- We see that the problem is, because of sin's mastery and corruption, even all these positives are polluted and tainted!
- They are not done to glorify God, which is the whole purpose of our existence!
- Because the entire perspective of life is polluted, people cannot please God.

Secondly, there is corruption of the entire population. Verses 10-12.

- We see here, sin's mastery over every individual human being.
- Sin is universal, it affects everyone.
- Everyone has terminal heart disease and we cannot cure ourselves.
 - We need a heart transplant or we will die.
- The entire population of the world is corrupted, infected with sin.

- And notice that Paul uses the phrase “all” or “no one” repeatedly.
 - Actually, I counted seven times in just three verses.
- What is the point of this repetition?
- Well it is another way of making the case that absolutely no person, “no one, no one, no one,” apart from Christ, is righteous.

Third, we see that there is corruption of the entire person. Verses 13-17.

- Notice all the various aspects of a person mentioned in these Old Testament quotations: the mind, throat, tongue, lips, feet, eyes.
 - This is a wide-ranging, comprehensive list.
- All these elements are listed to reveal that sin has corrupted the entire person.
 - Every part of us has been infected.
 - We’re tarnished throughout our whole being.
 - That is what sin does to us.

And this entire-person corruption focuses on two areas, speech and actions.

Sinful speech is verses 13-14. Sinful actions, 15-17.

Let's look at some of these phrases.

- “their throat is an open grave”
 - Evil speech is like an open tomb containing decaying, dead bodies.
- “they use their tongues to deceive”
 - This means that through someone’s speech, deceit and dishonesty are realized.
 - Deceit and lying is played out in everyday life through, words.
- “the venom of asps is under their lips”
 - Speech has the effect of deep violence, like a poisonous snake.
 - Paul may even be referring to a spitting cobra. Not pleasant!
 - Like a cobra spitting poison, the venom is intended to harm and kill.
 - This is what evil words can do.
- Verse 14, “their mouth is full of curses and bitterness”
 - “curses” are appeals to the supernatural, appeals to some power, to bring about injury or to seek someone’s ruin
 - And “bitterness” is using bitter, harsh words to affect someone, to hurt them deeply.
 - Its words of hatred and anger that also may come with violence.

- So verses 13-14 vividly explain that sin's corruption shows itself through our words.

Now look at verses 15-16, this is about sinful actions.

- These verses are talking about people's "path" of life.
- That their ways and their conduct are not peaceful.
- They are quick to kill and to spread violence against fellow humans.
- Sin produces evil and violence in society.
- Violence against one another, this is part of the downward spiral when people don't fear God.

So, we see clearly that the entire person is corrupted, especially as it relates to what people say and what people do.

So the court case is strong, Scripture has spoken, "it is written."

- All have turned aside from God, steered clear of him.
- Mankind has lost a God-centered worldview.
- And, apart from Christ, there is whole-person, whole-population corruption.

And now let's look at the third courtroom scene, the conviction,

THE CONVICTION IS: ALL ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE (19-20)

Let's read the third section of our passage, verses 19-20,

¹⁹ "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

This section contains more law court imagery.

- So think of this section as the verdict, the conviction being laid down after the case has been made:
 - All are answerable to God, condemned because of sin.

Once again, Paul speaks here about the Law and the Jews, but he is making a broader point about all of humanity.

- The Jews had the law, but failed to do it. And so they are guilty.
- The law is good, but when combined with sinful humans, it does not provide righteousness, but it only provides the knowledge of sin.

- So the Law cannot not save, it can only bring about condemnation.

The chosen, the people of Israel, had the Law of God in their midst.

- But because they were unfaithful to that Law, they couldn't have a righteous standing before a holy God.
- So Israel is a “case study” for all of us. They had the very words of God!
- If they failed, with all their advantages, we too will certainly fail.
- And we have. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- And because of this sin, no one is justified in the sight of God, the Judge of Judges, who justly punishes sin.

So what is the conviction in our courtroom scene?

Let me organize this conviction section into three truths.

First, no one speaks a defense.

- All mouths are shut on the defense team in this court case.
- “Every mouth stopped” before God, means that people are clearly guilty.
 - No excuses, no reasons, just silence.
- The passage is saying that all people are silent before a holy God who justly condemns.

We also see here, no one escapes judgment.

- Verse 19 says, “the whole world may be held accountable.”
- This means the whole world is liable, subject to legal action, and responsible for the judgment.
- In our world today, it seems like people get away with stuff all the time.
- But, no one will get away with sin, no one will escape its penalty.
- We are all accountable to God on judgment day.

Third, in this conviction section we learn that, no one earns righteousness.

- All the way up in verse 10 it says, “None is righteous, no not one.”
- And at the end here we read, “by works of the law no human being will be justified.”
- The word “justified” here means, no one will be declared righteous.
 - Sound familiar to verse 10? Yep, same idea.
- In God’s court, no one will be declared righteous by doing the deeds required by the Law.
- Because of the corruption of sin, it is simply not possible to do all the works of obedience to the Law.
- Righteousness must come from another source.

So, let's summarize quickly what we learned in Romans 3 as an illustration of human depravity.

- The **charge** has been made; all are under sin. (9)
- The **case** has been argued; all have turned aside. (10-18)
 - Corruption of the entire **perspective** (11, 18) worldview.
 - Corruption of the entire **population** (10-12). All, no one, etc.
 - Corruption of the entire **person** (13-17) - mind, throat, tongue, lips, feet, eyes... every part of us has been affected by sin.
 - That's total depravity, pervasive depravity.
- And the **conviction** has been announced; all are accountable and guilty.(19-20)
 - No one **speaks** a defense. (19a)
 - No one **escapes** judgment. (19b)
 - And no one **earns** righteousness. (20)
 - That's total inability, spiritual inability.

I want to share with you a quote from Douglas Moo.

- He has written some excellent commentaries on Romans.
- His words fit with what we have been talking about.
- He talks about the controlling metaphor or image of this passage. He says,

“The image, then, is of all humanity standing before God, accountable to him for willful and inexcusable violations of his will, awaiting the sentence of condemnation that their actions deserve.”

This quote gets at how this entire section in Romans should land on us.

- All humanity stands before the offended Judge of the world,
- We're accountable before him and we're sentenced to eternal punishment.
- This can be a hard passage to swallow amidst our politically correct society.
 - Sin controls, sin corrupts, sin convicts.
- These are very weighty, heavy truths about humanity.

We need to see and feel this desperate state of humanity without Christ.

- We need to feel the control of sin.
 - People are slaves to its power.
- We need to see the corruption of sin.
 - It has polluted all aspects of every person.
- And we need sense the weight of the conviction of sin.

- The whole world is guilty and answerable to God.

Before we leave this morning, I have a couple principles for application.

First, these truths about sin should drive us to humility.

- Passages like this should rightly humble us. I know that it humbles me.
- As I have prayed about this passage, humility is what has stood out to me.
- When I think about my life, my sins, my connection to corruption...I am humbled.
- Just thinking about this for a few minutes, causes me to feel heaviness.
- I realize that, apart from Christ, I am desperately sick, corrupted to the core.
- And there is nothing I can do on my strength to earn righteousness. Nothing.
- What is more, even though I am a Christian, I am no better than anyone else.
- I can't have pride or boast, all stand guilty and without excuse.
- All I can do is trust in the amazing grace of Christ. He said,
- "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."
- So we don't have to come up with excuses when we sin, we just come to Christ in humility, and he gives us rest for our souls.
- So let's renew our sense of humility before God this morning.

Secondly, these truths about sin should drive us to our knees.

- The eternal consequences of our passage are strong.
- If we take this passage seriously, the eternal state of each person apart from Christ is desperate. Do we remember to see the world in this way?
 - Think about your neighbors, your co-workers, your family members.
- We are driven to our knees in prayer.
- We must ask God to work, to have mercy, and to motivate us to reach out.
- Jesus saw people as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd, steering clear of God, wondering around without hope.
- So, Jesus told us to pray to God, the Lord of the harvest, to send out workers into his harvest field.
- Let's do that, let's pray for more workers, and maybe, just maybe, we will become those workers that we pray for.

Well, we have this bad news, but we know that this is not the end of the legal proceedings. Is it?

- Christ has been sacrificed on the cross.
- The conviction that we deserve fell on him, sin's penalty is death.
 - Christ took the punishment for all who believe.

- This is what Romans 3:25 says, “God put Christ forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” What good news!
- Now a great exchange has taken place before the court.
- Our conviction is been paid for and Christ’s righteousness is given to us.
- We will see all this explained in the next section of Romans. So stay tuned.
 - Justification is “by God’s grace as a gift”
 - Redemption is “in Christ Jesus.”
 - And “the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe.”
- So, we can sing Amazing Grace in the courtroom, because believers stand before a just God not guilty, justified and saved in Christ!

Growth Project

- Read this list of verses and jot down what they teach about the destiny and purpose of humans (Isaiah 43:6-7; 1 Cor 10:31; Rom 8:29; Eph 4:24).



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 5 – 10/5/2025

Human Destiny

What is human destiny?

Or to use a term you might see for this, what is the *telos* of humanity?

- *Telos* is Greek for purpose or design. (40x in NT)
 - Endpoint, goal, final stage, result/end, purpose, outcome
- We can apply this to the idea of human destiny – purpose and end.

My summary statement:

For believers, even as they struggle with sin, humans move toward the completion of their *telos*, to image God and glorify him forever.

I want to focus on each aspect of this definition as main themes for this morning, to image God and glorify him forever. First, let's look at,

I. THE *TELOS* OF HUMANITY IS TO IMAGE GOD FOREVER

Without saying it, in this class, we have been talking about this *telos* in terms of the image of God already.

The *telos*, the design, purpose, and goal for humanity is to image God and glorify him forever. This is the design for human destiny.

- God created humans in his likeness to fully image him.
- How? By living in perfect relationship with him and by perfectly reflecting who he is to others and in creation (Gen 1:26-31).
 - God created male and female in his image, likeness. Multiply. Dominion.

John Frame explains this *telos* of humanity well. He says,

“The goal of human life is to glorify God... Our meaning and significance are to be found in the fact that God has created us in his image and redeemed us

by the blood of his Son... we could not possibly ask for a more meaningful existence.”²⁸

- Frame emphasizes that people are created in the *imago Dei* and that the critical component of redemption is the blood of Jesus Christ.

And so, having been redeemed by the blood of Christ, Christians look to Jesus as their example, for he is the image of the invisible God. (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3).

Colossians 1:15

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”

- Also 2 Cor 4:4, “Christ, who is the image of God.”

Believers, as image bearers, have the *telos*, purpose to become like Jesus.

- We called this the “progressing image of God” in the storyline.

Romans 8:29

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”

2 Corinthians 3:18

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Colossians 3:9–10

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

Indeed, the entire process of sanctification is described as,

- Believers being conformed to the image of Jesus and
- Being transformed into his image from one degree of glory to another (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

Believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit as they walk in obedience, They do this by putting off the old self and putting on the new self, which is

²⁸ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 125.

- “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24)
- And is “being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Colossians 3:9-10).

In the future, there will be a revealing of the *telos*, the purpose for which we are created. Glorification.

- Embodied physical existence is the fullness and future of humanity.

2 Corinthians 5:1–5,

“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”

- We have an earthly body “tent” but we long to put on our heavenly body, “dwelling.”
- We groan in this body, we’re burdened, we’re longing for the future.
- We’ll be further “clothed...mortal swallowed up by life” become immortal.
- And we can take heart, we have the Spirit now to help, and as a “guarantee” that these things will come to pass.
- Notice too the *telos*, purpose, “God has prepared us for this.”

1 Corinthians 15:42–44,

“So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

- **Four aspects:** Imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual

Philippians 3:20–21,

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

- Notice, our bodies will be transformed to be like his body, glorious, we’ll be fully transformed into his image!

1 Corinthians 15:49,

“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

And we will be like Jesus and See him fully as he is!

1 John 3:2–3,

“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

So, at the second coming, believers will bear the image of Jesus and will receive imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:49).

Beeke and Smalley explain,

“The full glory of God’s image is a mystery that will be revealed with the coming of God’s incarnate Image, Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2)... One day the image will be revealed to those who belong to Jesus Christ and – beyond all dreams and expectations – we will share in it.”²⁹

- So, believers, being like Christ’s image, will have the perfected capacity to see Jesus as he truly is (1 John 3:2).
- This is the perfected image we talked about in the storyline.
- This full glory of God’s image will be beyond our dreams and expectations!
- Therefore, for us believers, the image of God is not only, our “created design but also our eschatological destiny.”³⁰
 - Image of God is our created design. Purpose.
 - Image of God is our future destiny. The goal, where we are headed.
- So the telos of humanity is to image God forever, our second point,

²⁹ Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2*, 204.

³⁰ John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed, Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 294.

II. THE *TELOS* OF HUMANITY IS TO GLORIFY GOD FOREVER

What does it mean that we are created to glorify God?

- To live for his purposes, to magnify him, to point to him, to honor him.
- To glorify is hard to define. But we know glory when we see it. When we look at the mountains – glory. When we hear a perfect song – glory. When we see a starry sky – glory. It amazes us, causes us to enjoy it and point others to it.
- The glory of God is the beauty of all his displayed perfections. His fullness his magnificence.
- To glorify him is to live for his name, to exalt in his beauty, to enjoy his majestic perfections.

Two aspects of this for our purposes this morning:

First, to glorify God forever is to enjoy God in all of his glory.

John 10:10

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

John 17:3

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Psalm 27:4

“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”

Psalm 16:11

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

- We enjoy his presence, we enjoy his pleasures for us.
 - God gets glory, we get joy!
 - We glorify God by enjoying him forever.
- So first, to glorify God forever is to enjoy God in all of his glory.

Second, to glorify God forever is to exalt God in all of his glory.

John Piper explains that,

“Man was created from the beginning in God’s image that he might image forth God’s glory... He created us for his glory. God’s great aim in creating and governing the world is that he be glorified.”³¹

This is an amazing concept, it gets at the very purpose of our existence.

“Man was created from the beginning in God’s image that he might image forth God’s glory... He created us for his glory.” (Piper)

Isaiah 43:6-7,

“I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

- God speaks of his people “whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.” We were formed and made by God to bring him glory!

I Corinthians 10:31,

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
o God’s intention for people is to, “do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31).

Rom 11:36,

“for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever”

- o “**From him**” created all, source.
- o “**Through him**” he is the means by which all things are accomplished... he sustains us.
- o But also we are “**to him**” – God is the goal of all things, he gives the purpose to us.
- o This purpose is further explained, “to him be glory forever.”
 - One commentator says,
“The one from whom and through whom and to whom are all things deserves all the glory...God has arranged redemptive history to bring the maximum glory to himself.”

³¹ John Piper, “God Created us for His Glory,” *Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007), Logos Bible Software.

- **Sum:** God is the creator, sustainer, and purpose provider for all things, that might be glorified forever!

So, "God's great aim in creating and governing the world is that he be glorified."
(Piper)

This includes,

All things: Revelation 4:11,

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

All nations: Psalm 86:9,

"All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name."

All people:

- In the end, all people will glorify the name of God,

Revelation 15:4,

"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

All believers, Matthew 5:16, Jesus said,

"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Jesus exhorted people to shine their light so others may see their good works and "give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

- We do good works so that people will be pointed to God, his glory, and praise him, the Father in heaven.

All this aligns with the Westminster Larger Catechism which says,

"Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever."

What will happen in the future for humanity? Where is all this going?

The future of humanity is certain. Jesus will come back, judge all people, And assign humans their eternal states,

- Some to everlasting condemnation in hell, and,
- Some to everlasting blessedness in the new heaven and earth.

(Matt 25:31-46; Rev 20:11-21:4).

God is holy and he is just, he will execute perfect justice. Does it fall upon Jesus on our behalf? Or does it fall on people who do not know him?

Jim Hamilton, in his book *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, summarizes very succinctly the future of humanity. He lays out the events,

1. Jesus, "defeats his enemies (Rev. 19:11-21),
2. Sets up his kingdom (20:1-6),
3. Puts down a final rebellion (20:7),
4. Enacts the final judgment (20:11-15),
 - o Some to everlasting condemnation in hell, and,
 - o Some to everlasting blessedness in the new heaven and earth.

"Salvation has come through judgment for God's glory. God's people worship him for his mercy and justice forever (19:1-3; cf. Isa. 66:21-24)." ³²

5. And finally, Jesus rules with God in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

The final judgment is the future, universal, public verdict rendered by Christ of all humans and angelic beings.

- o Believers acquitted on basis of Christ's work, his justification (Rom 3:21-4:25) and given degrees of reward (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:12-15)
- o Unbelievers, stand condemned already (Jn 3:17-19, 36), some degrees of punishment (Luke 20:47; Matt 11:22,24).

Growth Project

Read Revelation 21-22 and list all the characteristics of the new heavens and new earth, the destiny of humanity.

³² James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment* (Crossway Books, 2010), 548-49.



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 6 – 10/12/2025

What will happen in the future for humanity?

We ended last week by reviewing the events, (laid out by Hamilton)

6. Jesus, “defeats his enemies (Rev. 19:11-21),
7. Sets up his kingdom (20:1-6),
8. Puts down a final rebellion (20:7),
9. Enacts the final judgment (20:11-15),
 - o Some to everlasting condemnation in hell, and,
 - o Some to everlasting blessedness in the new heaven and earth.
10. And finally, Jesus rules with God in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

People are assigned to their “eternal states” - condemnation or Salvation.

The final judgment is the final, future, universal, public verdict rendered by Christ of all humans and angelic beings (Rev 20:11-15).

- Jesus will render this judgment and will be seen as a true and just judge (1 Pet 1:17; Rev 16:7.
“God judges impartially” ... Jesus’ judgments are “true and just.”
- o Believers acquitted on basis of Christ’s work, his justification (Rom 3:21-4:25) and given degrees of reward (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:12-15).
- o Unbelievers are punished, actually stand condemned already (Jn 3:17-19, 36), some degrees of punishment (Luke 20:47; Matt 11:22,24).

I. Eternal Punishment

- Sentence of the unrighteous to eternal conscious punishment in hell.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – eternal

“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

Revelation 20:14–15

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

These are hard realities to get our heads around, eternal condemnation.

- On a gut level it is hard to square with our sense of fairness, equality, God’s love for people and nations.
- So it seems some of God’s reasons and ways here are hard to swallow – we wish we could understand better. But one day we will.

We do know this...

In this salvation through judgment/condemnation,

We have two realities,

- The sobering reality of some being condemned
- And the glorious reality of others being saved

These realities work together to manifest an array of God’s perfections (Rom 9:22-23).

- Mercy and justice, grace and holiness.
- Kindness and righteousness.
- Wrath, power, and glory.
- God shows his plan for all things.
- God shows he is a just Judge and a merciful Savior.
- God manifests his full range of perfections in all this, that his Name might be glorified.

Beeke and Smalley explain, speaking of this human destiny,

“Whether God glorifies himself by saving us from our sins or by damning us for our sins, mankind will glorify God in the end. It is our escapable destiny.”³³

This reality is reflected in Scripture, revealing that every person in heaven and on earth will fear God, bring glory to his name, and confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father (Rev 15:4; Phil 2:9-11).

³³ Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2*, 204.

Revelation 15:4,

“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Philippians 2:9–11

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

II. Eternal Life

- The righteous in Christ receive eternal life in the new heavens and new earth.

The New Heavens and the New Earth

Isaiah 65:17

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Revelation 21:1–4

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- Shows God's desire to be with people, live with them on peace/harmony.
- God will wipe away tears! No death, crying, pain...etc.
- Scan through Rev 21-22 and notice all the glorious elements of the final state of believers.
 - Many themes are started in Gen 1-2, repeated throughout the Bible, and end here with consummation in and through Christ.

According to Schreiner and Morgan, in the new heaven and earth

“humans are blessed beyond description, finally living to the fullest the realities of being created in his image.”³⁴

³⁴ Morgan and Schreiner, *Salvation* (2024), p. 14.

- Eternal blessedness and full human capacities and realities as humans created in God's image.

And so for now, believers share the gospel faithfully.

- And seek to grow in the image of Jesus
- while living within the reality of sin in a fallen world.

Romans 8:18–25

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

- So we live now in this hope, hope of a new heavens and earth. Hope of the glorious telos that God has planned for us!
- We serve in hope, we share the gospel in hope, we grow into the image of Christ in hope, we suffer in hope,
- Knowing that someday we will live in heaven enjoying the fruition of our *telos*, imaging God perfectly and glorifying him forever!

How does Depravity relate to Humans as the Image of God?

What are some words to describe humans as fallen, yet still the created in image of God?

Corrupted, polluted, dimmed, distorted? (doesn't reflect as intended),
Damaged? (ability to relate perfectly), dented, marred,

How about some that may be misleading or inappropriate to describe this?

Destroyed, ruined, devastated,
(believers) we're sinners? Is this accurate to say?
lost, erased, ceased, taken away, negated.

Image of God – has been inspirational yet also twisted for evil.

John Kilner in his chapter of the book, *Created in the Image of God*, describes how views on the *imago Dei* throughout history have inspired amazing stories of liberation, yet at the same time it has been twisted into a justification for great evil.³⁵

- An eye opening and fascinating study to me, applications for our day.

Twisted into justification for great evil.

- If we define image as only a capacity scale we have many problems.
- Someone lower on the scale of ability to reason or righteousness, “scale” they are deemed some less worthy of respect, even sub-human.
 - Some humans are better than others, more superior.
- People with mental, physical limitations and the Nazis.
 - Stronger members of society as stronger images, those weaker needed to be cleansed. Defined a certain ethnic group as superior image.
- Eugenics without image of God, with an extreme anti-God secular worldview, leads to all kinds of compromises. DNA manipulation of those deemed weaker or compromised, etc. i.e. Nazis, extreme feminism, some IVF practices.
- Mistreatment of Native Americans in the name of lesser image bearers.
- Mistreatment of African Americans – they were seen by some as sub-human, not fully reflecting the image. Thus could be enslaved.

Yet the accurate concept of image of God has inspired many stories of liberation, and great good.

- This doctrine helped inspire giving to the poor, freeing people from Roman oppression, rescued babies disposed of in Roman times.
- Inspired people to care for those who are socially estranged, such as HIV patients.
- Inspired people to help needy groups, such as Native Americans.
- Correct understanding of the image of God has inspired freeing of slaves in America... Frederic Douglas spoke of image of God.
- Civil Rights movement with Martin Luther King Jr. – equality and dignity of every human being.
 - He would often appeal to Scripture and the doctrine of the image of God in his sermons and speeches

So, this same doctrine has been used for great good and for great harm.

³⁵ Dockery and McAfee, *Created in the Image of God*, (2023). Kilner’s chapter, “The Image of God and Human Dignity,” pages 19-43.

- Biblical accuracy on the *imago Dei* is essential, that's why we've spent so much time getting it right.

My conclusions about all this:

- Though humans are still the image of God as their essence, Adam and Eve's sin distorted human ability to purely reflect God's image in their relationship to God and to the world.
- Hoekema explains, "Sin has not changed our essence but has changed the direction in which we are moving."³⁶

The image itself is not damaged... or erased the standard of what humans are created to be.

"What has been damaged is the ability of humans to live out God's intention in making them in his image.... Our capacity for relationship with God as damaged by the fall."³⁷

- The image of God in humans is not destroyed or ruined or devastated...
- A certain group of people does not have more of the image of God.
- But, the image of God in humans isn't fully reflecting the likeness of Jesus.
- It has been corrupted or polluted – we can be new creations in Christ! We grow into the image of Jesus, but we are not better than anyone!

Final Class Review

Week 1 - Dignity

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 - Dignity

Human beings are the crown of God's creative handiwork! Humans are created, contingent, and commanded beings – commands/duties are to be corulers, multipliers, and caretakers.

Made in the image of God. Humans are ontologically (essence/core) the image of God, created to relate with God and to reflect who he is in relationships and in creation. We relate to God in a love relationship that leads to worship. We reflect

³⁶ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 169.

³⁷ Hammett and McCoy, *Humanity* (2023), 122.

who God is in our human relationships through multiplication. We reflect who God is in our relationship with creation through stewardship.

Week 3 – Depravity

Sin negatively affected our relationship with God, other people, and creation. The consequences of sin are spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. Humans are sinners by choice and by nature. Humans are in a state of sinfulness with inherited guilt and inherited corruption. This corruption includes pervasive depravity and spiritual inability.

Week 4 - Depravity

We used Romans 3 as an illustration of human depravity. Court room imagery.

- The **charge** has been made; all are under sin. (9)
- The **case** has been argued; all have turned aside. (10-18)
 - Corruption of the entire **perspective** (11, 18) worldview.
 - Corruption of the entire **population** (10-12). All, no one, etc.
 - Corruption of the entire **person** (13-17) - mind, throat, tongue, lips, feet, eyes... every part of us has been affected by sin.
 - That's total/pervasive depravity, pervasive depravity.
- And the **conviction** has been announced; all are accountable and guilty. (19-20)
 - No one **speaks** a defense. (19a)
 - No one **escapes** judgment. (19b)
 - And no one **earns** righteousness. (20)

Well, we have this bad news, but we know that this is not the end of the legal proceedings. Is it?

- Christ has been sacrificed on the cross.
- The conviction that we deserve fell on him, sin's penalty is death.
 - Christ took the punishment for all who believe.
- This is what Romans 3:25 says, "God put Christ forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." What good news!
 - Jesus is the sacrifice of atonement, he was punished so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be made clean, by the blood.
- Now a great exchange has taken place before the court.

Human Destiny – Last Week

My summary statement: For believers, even as they struggle with sin, humans move toward the completion of their *telos* (purpose & future), to image God and glorify him forever.

Application Time!

Let's apply what we have learned about human dignity, depravity, and destiny and the image of God to a few issues of our day.

How does our view on human dignity, depravity, and destiny and the image of God impact how we approach the following issues?

1. Engaging in political debate online or with others you fundamentally disagree with.
2. Relating with transgender ideology in our culture.
3. How you lead your family or lead in the church.
4. The rise of Artificial Intelligence and how we react to it and use it.
5. The abortion debate and euthanasia, beginning of life and end of life issues.
6. Helping the poor and marginalized in society.
7. Relating with people at work and how you view your job.

"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."

(Article 3, EFCA Statement of Faith)