

Classic Sermon: In HIS Image

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Bible Text: Genesis 1:26-27

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Take your Bibles and turn to Genesis chapter one verses 26 and 27. As a matter of fact, I have four passages, four different passages I'm going to read from and so we put that sermon notes in your bulletin each Sunday. You might want to write those passages down which I'll be using and hopefully that will be a help to you. The first passage that I want to share with you this morning is Genesis 1:26 and 27.

And there we read:

And 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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.¹

Now, my next passage is Genesis chapter five and verse one.

“This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.”²

Now, my next passage is Psalms chapter eight verses four and five.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.³

And now my last passage is Hebrews chapter two, verses six through nine.

But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all

¹ Genesis 1:26-27.

² Genesis 5:1.

³ Psalm 8:4-5.

things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.⁴

Now, shall we pray?

Father, we want this message to be exactly what you want it to be. We want to say exactly what you want us to say. I pray that the power of God would permeate through this message. Lord, this message is to combat heresy. As myself, I cannot do that, but I know the Holy Spirit can through the preached Word, and I pray that that will be exactly what happens today. And, again, we ask for the salvation of any lost soul that may be here, in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

There's a doctrine today that says that some men are chosen to go to hell since before God even created the worlds. And what he means, they're chosen already to go to hell, is that no matter what they do—they may decide that, hey, "I want God," they may even seek God with their whole heart—but if they're predestined to go to hell, they're going to hell, no matter what. But then he says there are those that are predestined to be saved. And those that are predestined to be saved, they can be the most wicked people in the world, but somewhere, just before they die, they're going to get saved. And those are those that are elected to salvation. Now, they would say you're in one of two groups: you're either predestined to be saved or you're predestined to go to hell. And you have no choice in it. God already made the choice, and so you're either going to heaven or you're going to hell. One way or the other.

I listened to one pastor during this past Christmas season, as he preached. He took Matthew chapter one verse 21, and said that Jesus, his name would be called Jesus, "to save his people from their sins."⁵ And he went on to say, "his people". In other words, Jesus didn't die for all the sins of all time. He only died for the sins of those that he has elected or chosen. And he didn't die for anybody else's sins outside of that. And so, they say, "his people from their sins."⁶

Now, aren't you glad for passages like 1 John 2:2, that says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."⁷

Not just the chosen; the whole world. It's reported that 30 percent of the graduates coming out of Southern Baptist seminaries are Calvinistic, and that's what this doctrine is called: Calvinism. There are many in our so-called fundamental Baptist groups that are also being taken in by this heresy. You'll see the names they'll use as Reformed Baptists, Covenant Baptists, Sovereign or Sovereign Grace Baptists, and they'll use names as this

⁴ Hebrews 2:6-9.

⁵ Matthew 1:21.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 1 John 2:2.

to describe themselves. Most often this doctrine is associated with Presbyterianism and Reformed groups.

About every two or three years I try to preach an entire sermon on this subject, although I'll mention it from time to time as we go throughout the year. But I feel that because this is a point of attack now from the devil trying to bring false doctrine into the churches around I've decided that, yes, I've got to stand up to the devil in the power of God against the very areas that he attacks and so that's the purpose for this message. Now, as I did before, I'm going to give you definitions of words and then I'm going to add another element that might help you to understand our texts better.

If you want to, you can turn to Ephesians chapter one in the New Testament, because Ephesians chapter one is often used as a proof text for Calvinism. Now, if you'll read Calvinistic writers, for an example, some of you that are more knowledgeable in the things of theology, you know Arthur Pink writes a lot of books and Arthur Pink is a theologian and a very well-versed man. Yes, he's a Calvinist, and about any book that you read of his, he'll try to weave Calvinism into his books.

And so it's something that's very prevalent and it's attacking throughout Christianity and it's the area of attack, so that's the area we are going to address. Now, let us first see some of the terminology of Calvinists. The first term I want to use is the word "adoption".

Let me give you a definition for the word "adoption". Adoption is the divine act of God, not man, the divine act of God, not man, whereby God sets a goal for the believer. The proof text for that is found usually in Ephesians one three through seven. We're going to look at verse five, where he says, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."⁸

And so they use this idea of a predestination to adoption.

Well, in regard, then, for using the word "adoption" for "predestination to salvation", I think it's important to see how the Bible defines adoption. Because it does. Now, you can have a thousand theologians together and you ask them to give you a definition of adoption, and they'll give you many. They'll almost give you a thousand different definitions. But if the Bible gives you a definition of the word, then that's the definition of the word, okay? When the Bible says, "This is what I mean by using this word," then that's what the Bible means by using this word. Doesn't that make sense?

Now, adoption, in Romans 8:23, is used for us. We see here, it says, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves [within ourselves], waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."⁹ Now, "to wit" means "which is". He says, "The adoption [which is] the redemption of the body."¹⁰ So

⁸ Ephesians 1:5.

⁹ Romans 8:23.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the Bible definition of “adoption” is “the redemption of the body”. And that’s telling us, then, from the Bible viewpoint, adoption is the rapture of the body when our bodies will be changed and fashioned like unto his glorious body. And we all have that ahead of us that are in Christ Jesus. And so the goal that’s set for the believer is the Rapture. That’s set for us.

This is a Bible definition. This is the Bible saying what it means by the word. And you have to decide, “Do I accept the Bible definition, or do I accept man’s definition?”

Now, the second word I want us to look at is “predestination”. We read, “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”¹¹ And when we see the definition of “adoption”, that means that he’s predestinated his people to be destined to the Rapture.

Now, let me give you a definition of predestination. The divine act of God, not man—we have nothing to do with it—whereby God makes that goal, that is adoption, certain for the believer. In other words, God guarantees it. Now if God guarantees it, then it’s good as done. What God guarantees, he guarantees the Rapture for the saved people. Now, again, for predestination, we see how the Bible uses the word. If the Bible uses the word this way, then that’s the way it needs to be used. Romans 8:28 and 29:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.¹²

Romans is written to Christians. Predestination is not about unsaved people being predestinated to being saved; rather, it’s about saved people being predestinated to something and that is to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

We read in Ephesians 1:5, where he said that he was predestinating us. “Us” is not speaking of unsaved people. He’s speaking of saved people. And it’s saved people that are saved unto the Rapture that he is conforming to his image now.

When you read the eighth chapter of Romans, oh, you have some important verses there. Romans 8:18, where he talks about that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. And then verse 28, that we read just before, verse 29, where he said that all things work together, all these things that seem so hard, but it works together for good. Well, why is that? How does it work together for good? Because God is using all these things to conform us to the image of Christ.

If you’re saved, and those hard things enter your life, oh, yes, they’re hard. But understand, the Lord is using those things to conform you to the image of Christ. In other

¹¹ Ephesians 1:5.

¹² Romans 8:28-29.

words, he's just preparing you to make your heaven all the better. That's what he's doing.

Paul, in Philippians three eight through ten, spoke of knowing him. Not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. He wanted to be conformed to the image of Christ, be like Christ. And that's the idea of our salvation. The Lord is now working in our lives, even now to conform us as we press towards the Rapture when God calls us to be his at home.

Now, the next word I want us to look at is the word "election". This is also a term that Calvinists like to use. And that's in Ephesians chapter one verse four. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."¹³

"Chosen us" is the word they use for "election". Well, what is the definition, then, of this word "election"? The divine act of God, not man, whereby God sets aside my first nature—in other words, my old nature—and elects my new nature. Now let me say that again. The divine act of God, not man, whereby God sets aside my first nature and he elects my new nature, that he gave me at salvation.

Again, he said, "hath chosen before the foundation of the world".¹⁴ And so the Calvinists like to say, "You see? Even before he created the heavens and the earth, he had this election and elected some to be saved, and he elected some to go to hell. And you're in one group or the other."

Well, just think about salvation. Isn't salvation by the shed blood of Jesus Christ—his death, his burial and resurrection, amen? Amen, yes. That's the way of salvation. If Jesus died for you and me, two thousand years ago, does he have to be crucified afresh? Does he need to be re-crucified again? No, no. That one time, once for all, that did it. The crucifixion was Almighty's outpouring of wrath on sin. That took place two thousand years ago. But we weren't there. Some of you look like you might have been, but we weren't there, okay? We weren't. So we had not sinned yet. So how could that be for us, when we had not sinned yet, when we had not even lived yet? How could that be for us?

Well, that act took place, the cross took place two thousand years ago, but it is appropriated to us by faith. The blood was shed then, but it's appropriated by faith. In like matter, before the creation, God had election. And it is appropriated to us by faith, just like the blood is. When we receive Christ, then that is appropriated to us, and at that point, God sets aside my old nature, and elects my new nature. In other words, that election is an open election. God knew that I would make a decision, one way or the other. And he said, "This designation is for those who receive Christ as Savior."

¹³ Ephesians 1:4.

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:4.

Yes, he did know about your salvation, ever before you were born, even before he created the heavens and earth.

But that brings us to another words, and that is the word “foreknowledge”.

We read from Romans 8:29, “whom he did foreknow”.¹⁵ And we told you that always applies to the saved. But understand, foreknowledge is not an act of God. Foreknowledge is something that is always active with God. In Acts 15 verse 18 it says, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”¹⁶

We call that the Eternal Now. By that, it is meant that God sees clearly—just as clearly as you’re sitting right here, and you’re aware of what’s going on—God sees just as clearly this moment, one billion years into eternity. He sees just as clearly as he does this moment.

Or he sees just as clearly back to before the creation of man. We call it the Eternal Now, known unto God. Nothing else has to be had. There’s no new knowledge God will ever gain. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”¹⁷ He’s omniscient. He’s all-knowing.

Because he knows what’s going to happen, that does not mean that he makes it happen. For example, I’ve had men tell me, “Pastor, I’m going to start a business, and this is the business, and I’m going to start it at such-and-such a time, such-and-such a place, but please don’t tell anybody right now. Just pray for the business.” And so that’s what we do. Now, I had foreknowledge. I knew the business was going to start. But just because I had foreknowledge, and I know all about it, does not mean that I make the business happen. It does not mean that I made it start. I just knew that it was going to happen.

And that’s the idea of foreknowledge as it ties into election. God knew who would, but he did not say, “All right, I’m going to elect some people before I create them, just to go to hell, because I enjoy it. And I’m going to elect some to go to heaven just because I want to frustrate people that really wanted to be saved.”

You see, God does not work that way. God knows that you’ll receive or reject him, but it doesn’t mean that he makes it happen. Second Peter 3:9 says it this way, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish.”¹⁸

He said, “not willing that any elect should perish?” No, he said he’s “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Romans 8:29.

¹⁶ Acts 15:18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Now, my friends, when he says all, he means all. God's will is that all people be saved. Will all people be saved? No, but that is his will. First Timothy, chapter two, verses three and four. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."²⁰

The Lord wants all men saved. As a matter of fact, he wants we who are saved to take that Gospel to the lost and share it with them.

Now, I've given you those definitions, but I want to share another reason I believe in free will as taught in the Scriptures, and that's why I read the text with you that I read today. Because it teaches that we were created in his image and in his likeness. Now, when Adam and Eve were created, they both were given a body. Their bodies did not look like God, okay? So that's not what he meant by "in his image", that their bodies would look like him. God is a spirit, the Bible tells us. And they that worship him, worship him in spirit and in truth. Let us not forget that God is a spirit and he made us spirit beings. We are spirits and souls possessing a body, not a body with a spirit and a soul.

Satan is a person. As a matter of fact, Satan is a spirit being. When you're born into this world, because you're born with a sin nature, you're born belonging to Satan. Yet we read of people that have been demon or devil possessed. And they've done strange things, amazing things, sometimes miraculous things. Now, Satan does not possess all unbelievers. And the idea is that we think of demon possession, and you'll understand what I mean by that in a few moments. Satan is only one person, by the way, so he can only possess one person. But his devils can possess others. They really can.

Free will prevents this possession of our will. The so-called demon possessed are people who have voluntarily surrendered their will to Satan in return for something. I believe Adolf Hitler did that. I believe Joseph Stalin did that. I think Mao did that and you can go on down through history with people who have done that, surrendered their will to have certain things for this life.

Christians also have a free will. Some Christians surrender completely to the Lord Jesus Christ their will. They totally entrust everything to him by the Holy Spirit. I think the apostle Paul is a good example of that. Peter, John, on we could go. But Calvinism says you do not have a free will. Everything is foreordained and you simply cannot prevent it.

Well, the truth is, those without free will are those who actually exercise their free will to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ or to surrender to Satan, as the case may be. In salvation, or in rejection of salvation, God allows a person to retain their free will. When you got saved, you prayed and you asked God to forgive you of your sins, and to take it from you, and to save your soul. That was salvation.

However, completely surrendering to him, his will, whatever is consecration. We grow in sanctification. We grow in holiness. We grow in righteousness as we totally submit our will to his will, until his will takes the place of our will.

²⁰ 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

Not every saved person is a saved person who has given their free will to Christ. As a matter of fact, most of them have not. That's speaking of consecration. It is a voluntary act. It is something that each Christian should do. Not every unsaved person, most unsaved people, are not demon possessed or devil possessed. But they exercise that free will and that free will gives in to the temptations of the devil. Just like a Christian, when the Holy Spirit convicts you of something, the free will that is there, that you still hold on to, says, "That's right, I need to take care of that."

You still have the free will and man, that's one reason why man is without excuse when he stands before the Lord at the judgment. Now, so God is a person. And we keep that in our mind. The spirit of man does not involve a semblance to the body, the human body, but rather to the spiritual nature of God. Animals are not said to be made in the likeness of God. As a matter of fact, angels are said to be ministering spirits. They're greater in power and nature than man, but they have spirits only, not souls.

As a matter of fact, Genesis 2:7 says, "The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Angels don't have souls. They have spirits, but they're not souls. They desire to look into the things of this.

God is a person. He has personality, he is a supreme intelligence. He's free. He makes decisions. He makes decisions as creation. That was of his free will. Devising the way of salvation before the foundation of the world; all of those were acts of free will. Man has a conscience, and he's been endowed with intelligence, rationality and freedom. All of that comes from God. When God created man, in our text, he made him to have dominion over all his creation. That was lost when man gave in to Satan and sinned. And that dominion was surrendered to the devil.

That's why, today, we can't do what Adam did. There are animals—I'm not willing to get into a cage with a lion, okay? We may have superiority over the lions, but I'm not getting into a cage with a lion because I don't have dominion. We may have superiority, but I don't have dominion to get in there alone. Adam could have done that. He could do it. He had dominion. Man was created in innocency, without an inherent tendency to sin. But when man was tempted, he fell by free choice. And relinquished his dominion to Satan.

When man, who is saved, dies and goes to heaven, he doesn't become an angel. People say, "Oh, my little one died, my loved one died, and he went to be an angel."

Don't say that about me. I don't want to be like an angel; I want to be like him. That's what the Bible promises me. Why would I want to take something less? Angels have spirit but not soul. They don't die, they don't marry, they don't reproduce. Angels can't be saved. Every one of them is a separate creation. Man is procreation. We reproduce. That's why in Adam all sinned, and all die. Angels, each angel, is a separate creation. For each angel to fail with Satan, each angel would have to have a spiritual death by

Jesus Christ to count for them. If there are a billion angels, Jesus Christ would have to go through a billion separate spiritual deaths.

So that's not what it's about. You see, man is a race. Not angels. The soul is the point of union between the spirit and the new nature that we receive from him. The latter parts of our text show that he was not completely devoid—that is, man was completely devoid of the image of God. He still has the free will. What is man? He was made a little lower than the angels. Jesus becoming a man, the son of man, is to show that his association with man created in his image, was so that he could buy them that. Why? Because God made them in his image. And he wants you. He wants you, but he does it by free will. He doesn't force it.

We know that one of the cardinal virtues of God's moral excellence is love. That's why John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever [whosoever's elect? No.] for whosoever [anybody], for whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."²¹

We did not retain our innocence, but we did retain his image, which has a free will to act on his offer to be saved from sin. Now, you can decide by your free will, "I want to keep my sin. I don't want my sin taken away. I'd like to go to heaven, but I want my sinful ways unabated." You have a free will to do that, but you're not saved until you're willing for him to cleanse you by the blood of Jesus Christ. And I trust that you'll do that today.

Let's bow our heads, please.

Father, I pray now as we sing "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me," if there are any that are unsaved here, Lord, I didn't see any hand go up to say, "I'm unsaved," but, Lord, I pray that if there are any here, that they might come. I pray for Christians, Lord, that they would get the burden for the lost. You're not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance. You would have all men to be saved, and you want to use us to do that. Lord, I pray that each one would see that you want to use them, and they would take advantage of that opportunity. In Jesus' name, amen.

²¹ John 3:16.