

Male and Female He Created Them, Part 2

Genesis 1:27 and Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, we return this morning to a second sermon on the issue of transgenderism. Last week, we came to the third phrase of Genesis 1:27, to hear of the third most fundamental concept concerning man's identity, which is our **gender**. The very next thing that is said about mankind after we're told that we are image-bearers of Almighty God, is that we bear His image together in the beautiful distinctiveness of being male or female. Gender—and, in particular, the gender binary—our maleness or femaleness—is fundamental to the biblical doctrine of man. It is deeply connected to our identity. It runs to the heart of who God has made us to be.

And we saw last week that because what it means to be a creature made in the image of God is to be *either* male *or* female, that therefore, any attempt to change male *into* female—and certainly any attempt to find a space in *between* male and female—is not only a fundamental attack on the authority of God, but it's also an attack on one's own humanity. It is the creature's attempt to escape from the accountability of being a creature, made in the image of God, as male or female as God has determined it. But the attempt to escape creatureliness is an attack on one's own creation. It is an attempt—wittingly or not—to uncreate oneself. Transgenderism is suicidal self-exaltation. “*I will create male and female, in my image!*” Or: “*I will be neither male nor female, and therefore I will undermine my very humanity itself!*”

And that's not just theoretical. This is not just rhetoric. When I say that transgender ideology is wreaking havoc in our culture, I don't just mean in the structures and systems of our society. That's true, and those are real consequences. But I also mean it more personally. Transgender ideology is the perverted credal confession of a death-cult, whose high priesthood has infiltrated pop-culture, mainstream media, and the educational system, and who *mercilessly* destroy the lives of the victims they're able to woo into their coven. It's enough to bring you to tears when you see these precious people willingly mutilate themselves in search of a quasi-salvation that never comes. You see the forearms of young women, whose muscle tissue has been harvested in order to create fake, non-functioning male parts, and it's enough to make you weep. And that's not the half of the literal carnage we could describe, but mention of other such things wouldn't be profitable.

But I will tell you, as an illustration, of a twenty-two-year-old woman named Cari, who sought to “transition” to being male as a teenager by taking testosterone and having a double mastectomy. A few years later, she recognized the mistake she’d made and decided to de-transition—to get off the testosterone and begin living as a woman again. And she gives the following testimony. “I’m a real live 22 year old woman with a scarred chest and a broken voice and a 5 o’clock shadow because I couldn’t face the idea of growing up to be a woman” (Anderson, 56). That’s a real person, made in the image of God. And she goes on to lament the likelihood that she’ll never be able to have children. Another detransitioner, who calls herself “Crash,” says, “There is a very deep, painful symbolism behind losing your original voice and having no way of getting it back. For many of us it is not the physical changes themselves that are troubling but what they represent. ... they remind me of what I did to myself, how I rejected and betrayed myself, how deeply I took other people’s hatred into my own body. My body is now marked forever by that hatred and that can be a lot to carry. Many of us have struggled with feeling like we have ruined ourselves” (Anderson, 74–75). Precious people are the collateral damage of the transgender death-cult.

But such are the consequences of the denial of the existence of objective truth, the rejection of God, and the rejection of man’s creation in the image of God. Man destroys himself, in the name of expressing himself. In the name of being true to his “authentic self,” he mangles himself. He ruins himself. “*I feel* therefore I am,” as we mentioned last week. And if your feelings *are* your identity, then any contradiction of those feelings is a received as a threat to your very person, your very existence. And if that’s the case, then the facts of your name, the pronouns you use, even the physiology of your body itself must be changed to suit your inner sense of self. You speak yourself into existence. Self-creation! The absurd delusion of the trans-cult!

Well, what is our response to all this? As we said last time, the only response to the deception and the lies of the culture is to proclaim the truth. And for the truth, we have turned to the *God* of truth, who has spoken to us in the *Word* of truth: the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God: the Bible. And we began last week searching out **five truths** the Scriptures teach us **about gender—truths** we must learn and live by, as we seek to live in faithful obedience to the Lordship of Jesus in the present moment. And we got through three of them last week. And we’ll review just briefly.

Review I: Granted by Our Creator

And that **first truth** is that gender is **granted by our Creator**. Again, Genesis 1:27: “...male and female He created them.” And Acts 17:24–25: “The God who made the world and all things in it, ... He is Lord of heaven and earth.” He made it, and so He is Lord over it. The Creator is the Owner of His creation.

And that means: so long as you did not self-create, you are not free to self-identify—as anything, least of all your gender. You are not free to forge your own identity. God has created you male or female in *His* image, and therefore you are what God says you are, and you must conduct yourself in the way God says you must. There is only One who gets to say, “I am who I am,” and it is the One who really did speak the world into existence—the only One who says, “Let there be,” and it is so. And since all of God’s image-bearers are God’s possession by virtue of creation, He has the prerogative to declare to us, “You are not your own; therefore glorify God in your body.” There is a very real sense in which God, by virtue of having created you, points to your body and says, “*My* body, *My* choice!”

And so gender is not determined by the feelings, self-perceptions, or preferences of the creature. Gender is **granted by** the sovereign prerogative of **our Creator**.

Review II: Grounded in Biology

A **second** truth, we found, is that gender is **grounded in biology**. When God created mankind male and female, He formed the male out of the dust of the ground and called him “Adam,” and “the man.” And then He formed the female, Eve, out of the man’s body, and Adam named her “woman.” Manhood is inextricably linked to maleness, and womanhood is inextricably linked to femaleness.

And more than that, the “woman” was designed by God to be, Genesis 2:18, a “helper, suitable” for Adam—his *‘ezer kenegdo*, one who was corresponding to or complementary with him—one who suited him as a fellow human being in a way none of the animals did, but who also suited him by being distinct from him in a way that she could genuinely help him fulfill the task that God had commissioned man with: to “be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth,” Genesis 1:28. The only creature suitable for man is woman, because only the union between man and woman—alike in their humanity, but distinct in their gender—could result in the fruitfulness of reproduction. This means that the complementarity of man’s and woman’s bodies are absolutely essential to their identity as man and woman. **Gender** is fundamentally **grounded in biology**, because maleness and femaleness are designed by God with an eye to reproduction.

And so, gender is not a social construct grounded in the creature’s mind. Since the same terms are used of animals as well as humans—and since of course animals don’t have gender identity distinct from their biology—it’s plain that “gender has a biological component firmly rooted in the physical body.” That is clear indication that, according to Scripture, God has designed each person’s gender to correspond with his or her biological sex (Beeke & Smalley, *RST*, 2:210). Again: what it means to be man and woman—male and female—is inextricably **grounded in biology** and irrevocably and immutably binary, by God’s good design.

Review III: A Gift of God’s Loving Care

And then the **third truth about gender** that we examined last week was that **gender is a gift of God’s loving care**. And for this we turned to Psalm 139:13–15, where David praises God for how intentionally, carefully, and purposefully He fashions each individual image-bearer in their mother’s womb. Each and every one of us was “fearfully and wonderfully made”—“skillfully wrought” by the infinitely wise God and the abundantly loving God.

And I made the point that it would be unthinkable for a God so wise, and so skillful, and so full of **love and care** for His creatures, to err—to make the mistake of fashioning the wrong body for any soul. And that means that the body is God’s kind and gracious revelation of our gender. You see? Our gender isn’t declared *by* us; it is revealed *to* us, in the body that was skillfully wrought and wonderfully made by our loving Creator. God could have left us to blindly grope about through the inner recesses of our wicked and deceptive hearts, in search of our “true selves.” But instead, in His great kindness, He revealed this key aspect of our identity to us, in the objectively unmistakable fact of our gendered body.

And if our God has fashioned each one of us so carefully and purposefully, our response must be to receive that identity as a gift from Him, rather than to argue with Him about it—to give thanks to Him, as one fearfully and wonderfully made. Because God is our Creator and we are His image-bearers, He has the authority to declare to us our identity, and we do not. Because God is perfect in wisdom, He knows what is best for us, whereas we must confess our ignorance and finitude. And because God is perfectly trustworthy—compassionate and gracious and abounding in lovingkindness—we can trust Him to want what is best for us, even more than we can trust ourselves, we whose hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked.

IV. The Goodness of the Body

And with that recap of where we’ve been, we come this morning to a **fourth truth about gender** that Scripture reveals to us. And that is, number four, **the goodness of the body**.

I mentioned last week that transgenderism shares a fundamental affinity with the second-century heresy of Gnosticism, a Greek philosophical school founded upon a radical dualist cosmology. Gnostics taught that the spiritual is inherently good and the material is inherently evil. And as a result, they taught that the body was a tomb—a prison that incarcerated the spirit, which was the true self, and that the ultimate goal of life was to have the spirit liberated from the body in death.

Transgenderism is a species of that kind of thinking. The fundamental premise of transgender ideology is that our real self is found within us. The external, material reality of my body is only accidental to the real me. My body is not me; my identity—my authentic self—is my internal

feelings. I happen to possess a body that can be wielded as the instrument of my internal self, but if the body is an impediment to the expression of what's inside, then I should feel perfectly free to alter my body—even through crippling hormones and mutilating surgeries—in order to make it match my feelings. As I mentioned last time, one commentator rightly observed that “the foundational ontological assumption undergirding transgender ideology is a low view of the body.”

And it's not a mystery as to where this worldview originates. It originates in pagan denials of the biblical doctrine of nature, of creation. That was so for second-century Gnosticism, which was itself pagan philosophy. But it was also true of 19th-century Darwinism. The creationist understanding of nature is teleological; the creation is ordered and reflective of the Creator's purpose. Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (ESV). Romans 1:20: God's “invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made.” The creation embodies meaningful order and reveals truth about God to man. But Darwin's rejection of the Creator and His creation in favor of evolutionary theory led to viewing the creation as purposeless and random. As a result, the natural world can no longer be trusted to reliably reveal the character and will of God to His creatures.

Nancy Pearcey explains the consequences of that line of thinking. She writes, “The next step in the logic is crucial: If nature does not reveal God's will, then it is a morally neutral realm where humans may impose their will. There is nothing in nature that humans are morally obligated to respect. Nature becomes the realm of value-neutral facts, available to serve whatever values humans may choose. And because the human body is part of nature, it too is demoted to the level of an amoral mechanism, subject to the will of the autonomous self. If the body has no intrinsic purpose, built in by God, then all that matters are human purposes. The body is reduced to a clump of matter—a collection of atoms and molecules, not essentially different from any other chance configuration of matter. It is raw material to be manipulated and controlled to serve the human agenda, like any other natural resource” (*Love Thy Body*, 24).

And so, it's this atheistic view of nature that leads to the dichotomizing of the body and the soul, a dichotomizing of the body and the person. The body is demeaned as that which is extrinsic, or accidental, to the person—rather than an essential component of the person and a key piece of our identity. And so when it comes to our sexuality—our understanding of ourselves as male or female, as well as our understanding of our orientation to others—if our sexuality is not derived from the objective testimony of the body, which, as an aspect of a meaningful, purposeful, ordered cosmos, is a reliable revelation of ourselves from God to us, then it will become something we impose on the body (Pearcey, 31). And this is where we get transgenderism.

But the biblical worldview stands in stark contrast to this view of the body, precisely because the biblical worldview sees nature as purposeful and ordered by God, and sees the body as part of nature that reveals God's purposes. Christianity has an exceptionally high view of the spiritual and the physical, of the soul and the body. It regards man as the complex, integrated unity of body and soul. Surely this is how Adam and Eve were created. God created the first man and the first woman as body-soul entities. They had a physical, embodied existence on Day Six of Creation—before the fall, before the curse brought on by sin. And in Genesis 1:31, God pronounced these first people “very good.” Humanity is at its purest in Eden, and yet the man and the woman are embodied souls.

And the rest of Scripture underscores that “very-good” view of the material body. For example, 1 Corinthians 7:34 speaks of holiness “both in body and spirit,” using a term for both the material and immaterial aspects of man to refer to the whole person. Second Corinthians 7:1 is similar. Paul says, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” In Psalm 63:1, David says, “O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.” Both soul and flesh—material and immaterial aspects of man—long for communion with God. And so Joel Beeke says, “We must view man as a living unity. God did not make man to be a personal soul that merely inhabits a body, but a person who consists of a united body and soul” (*RST*, 2:233). And that is so important. Because of the influence of the materialist worldview that denies the existence of the soul—that says we're nothing *but* a body—we've often heard Christians say something along the lines of, “You *have* a body, but you *are* a soul.” While that was designed to fight against a real error, in reality it's actually a swing of the pendulum in the direction of the opposite error. You are not a soul that *possesses* a body; you are a body-soul composite, a psychosomatic unity. The image-bearing human being is a person who consists of a united body and soul.

So much is that the case that when the soul is separated from the body in death, Scripture speaks of the soul as if it's in an unnatural scenario. In 2 Corinthians 5:1–4, Paul calls the soul's existence without the body *nakedness*. He says, “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down”—that is, if we are separated from our body in death—“we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” In other words, we look forward to our glorified body at the resurrection. “For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.” He goes on to say, “I don't want to be unclothed but to be clothed.” Paul's saying, “Look, I'm happy to go to heaven whenever the Lord calls me, but if I could survive until the rapture so that I won't have to be separated from my body in the intermediate state, I much prefer that!”

In fact, John Flavel, in his study on the human constitution, defines the soul “a vital, spiritual, and immortal substance, endowed with an understanding, will, and various affections; *created with an inclination to the body*, and infused therein by the Lord” (*Pneumatologia*, 2:495). And I love that: the soul is created “with an *inclination* to the body.” The soul is not the enemy of the body, and the body is not the prison of the soul. The soul is positively inclined to the body, and the body is the natural home of the soul.

And so Scripture places an exceptionally high premium on the body with respect to the Christian life. In Romans 12:1, Paul urges believers to “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.” This, he says, is “your spiritual service of worship.” In 1 Corinthians 6:15, he says to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” He doesn’t just say that *you* are members of Christ, as if to say your *souls* are the mystical members of Christ’s body. He says your *bodies* are members of Christ. And so much is that the case that if you unite the members of your body to a prostitute, you have united Christ to a prostitute. The way you conduct yourself in your body is of immense consequence. A few verses later in verse 19 he says, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” What a statement! Take that in. The eternal, immutable, omnipresent, holy God takes up residence in the believer’s *body*. And therefore, verse 20, we are commanded to glorify God in our bodies. A little earlier, in verse 13, Paul puts it plainly when he says: “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord.” So far from a Gnostic dualism that dichotomizes the soul and the body and demeans the body, Scripture teaches that the body is immensely important in the Christian life.

And then when you consider that it is not only we ourselves that are body-soul entities, but that Christ our Savior Himself also became a body-soul entity when *He* took on human nature in the incarnation, then you really begin to behold the exalted place the material has in the Christian worldview. John 1:14: “The Word became *flesh*.” Colossians 2:9: “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in *bodily* form.” First Peter 2:24: “He Himself bore our sins *in His body* on the cross.” And of course 1 John 4:2, where John makes the physical, bodily incarnation of Jesus an explicit test of orthodoxy. He says, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh* is from God.” And in 2 John 1:7 he puts it negatively: “For many *deceivers* have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the *flesh*. This is the *deceiver* and the *antichrist*.”

And then when you consider that Jesus not only lived and died in the flesh but that He was also raised bodily—and how Scripture makes the bodily resurrection of Jesus a fundamental doctrine of the faith—the case is only strengthened. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, [and] your faith also is vain.” A few verses later, he says, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” And so the bodily resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of Christianity.

And His bodily resurrection is the ground of our bodily resurrection. Our bodies will not be finally cast off to rot, or be left behind as the soul's prison. No, Romans 8:23 says we are "waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the *redemption* of our *body*." Philippians 3:20–21 says Christ "will transform the *body* of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." And beyond that, we will live in that embodied existence for eternity on a renewed and restored physical new earth. Scripture does not describe our eternal life as a disembodied spirit in an ethereal spiritual realm. It tells us of a new earth, with a new Jerusalem; with walls and gates and foundation stones; with streets and rivers and trees (Rev 21–22).

And so, all of that is to say: there is no such spiritual-physical dualism in Christianity. The biblical teaching is not that man *is* a soul but *has* a body. It is that man *is* a soul and man *is* a body. We are a body-soul composite—a psychosomatic unity—from the beginning in the Garden of Paradise to the end in the New Jerusalem.

That man was created male and female and pronounced very good means that embodied sexual differentiation is a good gift of God's design for mankind. Since nature is the work of a purposeful God, and since our bodies have always been a part of that nature, "there is a purpose in the physical structures of our bodies that we are called to respect" (Pearcey, 32). Not to manipulate, as if our bodies were an impediment to our self-expression. Not to medicate, and mutilate, and amputate, and castrate, in an attempt to subjugate our bodies to our feelings and desires. But to receive as a blessing—as a kind revelation from heaven that testifies truthfully to our own God-given identity. To steward and care for. To employ as a vehicle of accomplishing the will of God, so as to testify to the truth of His character as His image-bearers.

V. The Glory of Our Distinctiveness

And so gender is granted by our Creator; it is grounded in biology; it is a gift of God's loving care; and it testifies to the goodness of the body. We come now to a **fifth truth** about gender. And that is: **the glory of our distinctiveness**.

And for this I want to go to two main passages. The first is Deuteronomy chapter 22 and verse 5. And in this section of the law, it's not always easy to see a unifying theme to the commands. Several make the observation that this section seems to be a transition between Moses' exposition of the sixth commandment—"You shall not murder"—and the seventh commandment—"You shall not commit adultery" (Kelly, 299; Merrill, 297–98). In other words, it's a section about the preservation of life—don't ignore a straying beast, verses 1–4; build a parapet on your roof so people don't fall off, verse 8—together with laws of sexual immorality: verses 13 and following. So, in a flash-point between those two, we get a comment about the preservation of life by *means* of avoiding sexual immorality. Verse 5: "A woman shall not

wear,” literally, “a man’s things,” or “that which pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God.”

Now, there are several things to observe from this passage. The main point, on the face of it, is that there are styles of dress and items of clothing and accessories that distinguish men from women. There are “things which pertain to a man,” and there is “clothing” that is recognized as “a woman’s,” consistent with the cultural expressions of the time. Now, the text of Scripture never gives lists of precisely what clothing items “pertain to a man” versus a woman, because those things do change according to time and place. Thirteenth-century Scottish warriors wore *kilts*; twenty-first-century western men wear *pants*. You say, “Are you saying women can’t wear pants? Are you some kind of fundamentalist?” No, in our culture, women can wear pants without anyone being confused about whether they’re a woman. There are definitely female pants! The point isn’t: these particular clothes are manly and these other particular clothes are womanly. The point is: you all know what clothes, in your time and place, pertain more to a man and more to a woman, and you need to maintain that **distinctiveness**.

Men and women are different. That difference is grounded in their biology, as it was granted by their Creator according to His good design, and it is properly expressed in the **distinctive** ways men and women dress. God is saying: abide by those distinctions. Old Testament scholar Jason DeRouchie summarizes it well. He says, “Thus, two things appear to be at stake in this law: [1] Everyone needed to let individual gender expression align with one’s biological sex; and [2] Everyone needed to guard against gender confusion, so that others would not wrongly perceive a man to be a woman and a woman to be a man based on dress” (*How to Understand the Old Testament*, 446). In other words, men glorify God in obedience to this law in accordance with God’s design when they look and speak and behave like men. And women glorify God in obedience to this law in accordance with God’s design when they look and speak and behave like women.

Failure to do this, Moses says, is “an *abomination* to Yahweh your God.” And this is a severe word in the Hebrew: *tōēvah*. It’s a term that is reserved for especially grave offenses against God. In Deuteronomy 13:13–14, it refers to *idolatry*, as the text speaks of “worthless men [who] have gone out from among [the people of God] and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods.’” That is an “abomination [that] has been done among you,” and it merits the death penalty. In chapter 18 verses 10 to 12, it’s used of *divination*, *witchcraft*, and *sorcery*: “whoever does these things is detestable [or abominable] to Yahweh.” It’s used of *homosexuality* in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, of *adultery* in Deuteronomy 24:2–4, of *temple prostitution* in Ezekiel 16:22 and 58, and of *incest* in Ezekiel 22:11.

Of course, all sin against God is offensive to Him and violates His character of perfect holiness. But it seems abominations dishonor Him in a special sense. It’s a contravention not only of His

will, but of His very nature—given what He has designed His creatures to be (Strachan, *Reenchanting Humanity*, 173). When men present as women or women present as men, it is an abominable attack on God’s design for mankind to rightly represent Him to the world as His image-bearers, in their **distinctiveness** as male and female. And if that is true of cross-dressing—just wearing the *garments* of the opposite sex—how much more is it true of transgenderism, where God’s image-bearers chemically and surgically alter their very bodies so as to undermine God’s good design!

And lest you think this is just an Old Testament principle applicable only to Israel, turn with me to the second text: 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And I’ll read verses 3 to 16. Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. ⁵But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. ⁶For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. ⁷For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake. ¹⁰Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. ¹³Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.”

Now, there is a lot in that passage—many complexities that could take us weeks to iron out. But the main point is plain enough: men and women honor the glory and beauty of God’s good design by presenting their own physical appearance in accordance with the **distinctiveness** of their biological sex. Paul uses the length of hair as an example in this passage, and says nature—“the regular, established order of things” (Naselli, 110)—nature teaches them that it is “disgraceful” for a man to wear his hair in a way a woman does, and for a woman to wear her hair in the way that a man does. Men ought to carry themselves in a masculine way and not an effeminate way. Women ought to carry themselves in a feminine way and not a masculine way. God has built this into nature, so that it’s proper for men to feel shame when they embody feminine characteristics, and proper for women to feel shame when they embody masculine characteristics (Naselli, 110). And the androgenizing of our culture—even when it stops short of transgenderism—is nevertheless a concession to this attack on God’s design.

Again: men glorify God by honoring His good design when they look and speak and behave like men. And women glorify God by honoring His good design when they look and speak and behave like women. And this **distinctiveness**, as I say, is **glorious**. It's *beautiful* for men to act like men. And it's *beautiful* for women to act like women. It's part of the beauty of God's design. You can appreciate the *skill* of an orchestra when it plays a magnificent piece of music in unison. But you know something of the true *beauty* of music when you hear that orchestra play that masterpiece in *harmony*. There's something about the unity *in* the diversity—the unity *in* the **distinctiveness**—that moves beyond skillfulness and into beauty.

And that's because that unity-in-diversity represents something of the identity of God Himself. As we've said before: God exists in the unity of His singular nature while at the same time in the plurality of the three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Triune God is Himself the beauty behind all beauty! And I think that's one reason that harmony is more beautiful than unison. It's why there is **glory** in unified **distinctiveness**. And we, as God's image-bearers, magnify and display that **glory** when we honor the **distinctiveness** of the gender boundaries.

To the Unbeliever who Struggles

And so, if I can speak a bit more practically, and even personally—especially to those who may struggle with feelings of gender dysphoria—let me say this. I can't imagine the weight and the burden and the fearfulness that comes with the feelings that you're trapped in the body of the wrong gender. I am genuinely so sorry for the turmoil that you're experiencing. But I want you to know, with 100% certainty, that if God your Creator has made you a man, He did it on purpose, according to His wise and loving design. And because of that, it is a glorious and beautiful thing for you to be a man. And if God your Creator has made you a woman, He did it on purpose, according to His wise and loving design. And because of that, it is a glorious and beautiful thing for you to be a woman. Even if it feels like certain things don't fit! Even if you're a man who feels like certain stereotypically masculine things are unnatural, it doesn't mean you're not a man. Even if you're a woman who feels like certain stereotypically feminine things are awkward and strange and out of place, it doesn't mean you're not a woman.

All of life, friend, is about honoring and glorifying and worshiping God. It's about *His* glory, *His* esteem, *His* fame, and not yours. Satisfaction and fulfillment and lasting pleasure are found only in exalting Him. And only you can glorify and exalt God the way He made you. He means to get glory from you in the precise way that He made you! as a man or a woman. And so you cannot honor Him as He's designed by seeking to alter your gender. Men can only glorify God as men. And women can only glorify God as women.

If you hear that and your heart cries out, "Oh how I want that! Oh what I wouldn't give to lay hold of that!" I've got good news for you, friend. You may lay hold of that very freedom! It is

wrapped up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! As we said last week, Jesus calls those wearied by sin to Himself: “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest*.” You who languish under the unbearable burden of your sin, come to Christ for rest! Elsewhere He says, “If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” You *are* a sinner. You *have* offended God. You *do* come short of His holiness. You *don’t* deserve to go to heaven. But Jesus is willing to have you, if only you turn from your sin, and put all your trust in Him! He has lived, and died, and risen again so that sinners may find rest, and forgiveness, and cleansing, and righteousness in Him. Come to Christ and live.

“Lord, I am so conflicted! I feel like I’m in the wrong body! Your Word tells me that this is who I am to be, and yet it seems *so* unnatural. But Lord, to whom else shall I go? You alone have the words of eternal life. You can make me free! You can break the chains of bondage! You can give me that sense of myself that is true as You see it, and not false as I’ve been deceiving myself into seeing it. I turn from it. I confess it as sin. I repudiate it. I want nothing to do with it. And I trust You to give me grace to follow after You!”

Helping Children

You say, “Mike, I don’t struggle with temptations to transgenderism, but my children do.” Well it’s all the more important in the case of counseling children for them to know that it is good for boys to be boys and girls to be girls. Sometimes, if a boy is sensitive, gentle, and emotional, other kids make fun of him for his being “girly” and start saying he’s gay, or even that he’s really a girl at heart. If a girl is rough, resilient, and assertive, she’s told she’s a tomboy or butch, and that maybe she’s really a boy inside. Those are lies. There may be aspects of their character that need to change. Boys may need to be encouraged to rule their emotions and cultivate strength. Girls may need to be taught to be more deferential and cultivate a softer disposition. But no one needs to conform their bodies to match their inward feelings. If anything, they need to conform their feelings to match the outward, objective fact of their body. You tell them, “Jeremiah 17:9 says the heart is deceitful above all things and is desperately wicked. That means: it’s not your body that’s lying to you; it’s your heart. Don’t attempt to construct a fantasy life by trying to change objective facts to suit subjective feelings. Receive the revelation of objective facts and bring those facts to bear on your subjective feelings.”

And do you know something? When that happens—especially for children—the feelings of gender dysphoria tend to subside naturally. According to the DSM-V—sort of the authoritative textbook for clinical psychology—“as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty” (American College of Pediatricians). Which means the last thing anyone ought to consider doing, is let children take puberty blockers, or to let them take any steps to live in ways out of accord with their God-given gender, or to “affirm” their gender nonconformity! Children need to be told

that it is glorious that God made them a boy or a girl, that they are beautiful as a boy or a girl, because they can glorify God uniquely in the way He made them.

Preferred Pronouns

Another question that comes up is: “Should I use someone’s preferred pronouns if they do not accord with their actual gender?” and “Should I refer to someone by a name that is contrary to their actual gender?” My answer to that is: Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:8, “We can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth.” And to use preferred pronouns that are out of accord with someone’s actual gender is to lie to that person. It is to affirm them in their delusion and their rebellion. And it is to positively reinforce that which must be confessed as sin, repented of, and forsaken. It is to act against the truth. And so those actions cannot be squared with Christian conviction.

You say, “But wait a second. Don’t people have the right to go by whatever name they want? I mean, your name’s Michael but you go by Mike. Other people go by their middle name. Still other people go by a nickname that has nothing to do with their first *or* middle names. Some people even legally change their names to something totally different. If we can call others by a preferred name, why not a transgender person?” Well, my answer to that is: even if an individual has legally changed his name, if the intent behind the name change is to obscure his God-given identity as a man, to use a female name is to lie to him, encourage him in his rebellious delusion, and to act against the truth. Again, Paul says in Colossians 3:9, “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.” These are evil practices, and the Christian must put those evil practices to death.

What about Love?

But you say, “What about love? Isn’t the primary Christian virtue love? Didn’t Jesus say they’ll know we’re His disciples by our love?” Yes, but biblical, Christian love is not unconditional affirmation! First John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world.” If you do, the love of the Father is not in you! James 4:4 says, “Friendship with the world is enmity with God.” Ephesians 4:15 says we are to speak the truth in love. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:6 that love “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.” All of this means that you cannot love people by lying to them, or while you help them lie to themselves and others. As has been rightly said, “To affirm a sinful lifestyle built on lies is not love; it is cowardice” (*Right Thinking for a Culture in Chaos*, 116).

Love cannot affirm what harms and destroys. In his excellent book, *When Harry Became Sally*, Ryan Anderson recounts the story of a woman who calls herself “Crash,” who started taking testosterone at 20 years old and then detransitioned at 27. And what’s so striking about her

testimony is how clearly she's realized that those who affirmed her in her desire to transition had harmed her, even though they were trying to be helpful and affirming. She says, My doctor, "hurt me, helped me hurt myself. That definitely wasn't her intention but that's still what happened. This contradiction is difficult to face and understand. She treated me like I wanted to be treated at the time. She was supporting me and helping me do what I was convinced was best for me and I appreciated that a lot. ... And now when I look back I'm horrified and creeped out. There's something disturbing about doing something you think is good for yourself but that turns out to be really self-destructive and it's even worse when so many other people were helping you and making it easier for you to do it. It's hard enough taking in how I managed to hurt myself when I was trying to find happiness and express my true self. How am I supposed to deal with how all these people in my life were trying to be helpful but were actually enabling? ... I did trust my [healthcare] providers (as much as I can trust any medical professional) and they helped me destroy myself. ... You thought you were doing good but you were giving me tools to hurt myself. I thought I needed to come to you to get what I needed to be happy but I was wrong. We both had no idea what we were doing, what was really going on. Your good will didn't end my suffering, it increased it. ... Your kindness led to more scars, not less" (60–61).

This testimony illustrates the profound point that love is not unconditional affirmation. Even if someone believes she's pursuing her greatest self-fulfillment, it is not love to affirm her in her delighted self-destruction. True love seeks the objective benefit of the beloved. And sometimes what is good for someone is plain contrary to what they want. Let us be courageous enough to love well, even when it means crossing someone's deeply felt desires.

To the Believer who Struggles

And to the believer who struggles with these desires—who knows that they are sinful and incompatible with following Jesus, and who aches to be rid of them—hear the good news that it is finished (John 19:30). Such *were* some of you, but you were *washed* (1 Cor 6:9–11). That may have been your identity in another life, but if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Cor 5:17). You have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer you who live, but Christ lives in you (Gal 2:20). *Christ* is your life (Col 3:4)! *He* is your identity now! And there is grace enough in Him to subdue every sin! to *defang* the most devilish lust! Listen to Galatians 5:24: "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Romans 6:14: Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under the law that keeps you in bondage! You are under the grace that frees the captives from their slavery!

Yes, you were born into this *curséd* world with fallen and corrupt desires. But friend, if you're a believer in Jesus, you were born *again* from the *blesséd* world above and made alive in Christ! And though your progress may feel painfully slow, you are being transformed into the image of

Christ, day by day, hour by hour, as you fix your eyes on Him and behold His glory, and make war on the fleshly desires that remain, and put to death what is earthly in you. So that as those sinful thoughts and desires rise up in you, you seize them, confess them as sin, bring them to the Lord and to this Gospel, and turn away from them.

“Even so, consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). “No! This is not *me!*” “What do you mean it’s not you? This *is* who you are! I’m your internal voice! I’m more you than any *part* of you!” “No you’re not! You’ve been *crucified!* And I’ve been given a *new* identity! I consider myself to be dead to that and alive to God! This is not who I am. This is not who I’ve been recreated to be. Lord, give grace, that I might walk in the strength of what You’ve purchased for me. Give me grace to bring my practice in line with my position.” You go to war and you fight. And there is grace in Him for victory.