



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

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## You Are a Created Person

You are Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

How one understands the origin of the human race determines one's understanding of the value, dignity, purpose and destiny of the human race. Today, in the typical high school or college classroom, when it comes to a discussion on the origin and development of a human being, this proposition is placed on the table: Human beings are a cosmic accident; there is no design or purpose to the origin of life on this planet; all life, including human life, is a product of vast periods of time + the impersonal force of natural selection + random chance. The subsequent challenge for this hypothesis is how do you assign value to something that is a product of randomness? What is the actual worth of a human being? Why should we treat human life with dignity and seek to preserve that life at all costs? How can a civilization that assigns value to a human life, justify killing that same life while in its mother's womb? How can a civilization arbitrarily determine that a life outside the womb is of more value than a life inside the womb? How can a civilization that says it values human life make a distinction about the value of that life based on the color of one's skin, the ethnic background of that life or the place that life has on the socio-economic ladder of society?

This sermon series will rely on God's Word to answer these questions and to provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the value and worth of all human beings. You will be introduced to concepts such as humans are "created persons;" are created in the image of God; and that a human being has a body and a soul, both of which are eternally significant to God. You will learn that humans are "fallen creatures," a doctrine that has profound implications for the entire realm of God's created order. You will also be refreshed by the doctrinal certainty that God uniquely loves humanity, despite its fallenness, and for that reason sent His Son Jesus. Humans are the crown of God's creation and all humans will live forever— with Him or separated from Him forever in a place called hell. Finally, you will be introduced briefly to several key ethical concepts all of which flow from the image of God concept.

### INTRODUCTION

The deep-seated commitment to the pursuit of personal autonomy, the vital center of the Postmodern, Post-Christian America, has yielded confusion and discord: Who decides questions of truth? Who defines the boundaries of human rights? In a pluralistic culture, who defines the standards of behavior based on these rights? Answering these questions is no longer easy. There is no foundation for our civilization, no agreed-upon set of ethical standards, and no transcendent authority to which to appeal. We are at the mercy of a

dangerous relativism. Human autonomy is a given and the boundaries to that autonomy appear limitless.

For example, consider the language of sexuality. The term “homosexuality” is rarely used in our culture anymore. The preferred language is “LGBT”—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (or Transsexual). “Queer” is sometimes added to LGBT, for those who are “Questioning” their sexual identity. An “A” is also added to LGBT for “Asexual,” for those who find their sexuality ill-defined by the existing heterosexual or homosexual categories. An “I” is occasionally added to include “intersex individuals,” a small but growing number of people whose bodies are “born gender-ambiguous.” So, when it comes to human sexuality, we now speak of the LGBTQIA coalition. Andy Crouch of Christianity Today has made a perceptive observation: “What unites the LGBTQIA coalition is a conviction that human beings are not created male and female in any essential or important way. What matters is not one’s body but one’s heart—the seat of human will and desire, which only its owner can know.” In our culture, as normative sexuality has been redefined, “from an essentially exterior reality uniting male and female bodies to an essentially interior reality expressing one’s heart, the charges of bigotry have been heard more fiercely against those who hold the traditional Christian view. How dare we Christians speak against any person’s heart?” But to genuine biblical Christianity, the body matters; it is of supreme importance. As Crouch argues, “both male and female bodies are of ultimate value and dignity—not a small thing given the continuing denigration of women around the world.” It is a central axiom of biblical Christianity that sexual differentiation “(along with its crucial outcome of children, who have a biological connection to two parents but are not mirror images of either one) is not an accident of evolution or a barrier to fulfillment. It is in fact the way God is imaged, and the way fruitfulness, diversity, and abundance are sustained in the world.”

The 21st century’s sexual revolution is not about birth control, sexual promiscuity, or “free love.” This sexual revolution argues that your identity as a human being is tied to your sexuality, and, in the spirit of Postmodernism, it is up to you to decide. Gender and sexual choice are now fluid terms, which necessitate the re-definition of words, and sensitivity to the choices people make in these areas of life. There are no absolutes when it comes to gender decisions or sexual choice. The LGBTQIA movement is upending what for centuries was thought nailed down. The result of just this one example is utter confusion and discord. The church stands for that which is authoritative and that which is absolute—the Word of God. It is only that Word that can end the confusion, discord and dysfunction. So, let’s get started.

## YOU ARE A CREATED PERSON

The concept of a Created Person means that humans are both dependent on God (created) and relatively independent (person). Humans are both a creature (dependent) and a person (independent). Genesis 1-2, part of the Creation Ordinance of God, stipulates that God intentionally created human beings as the crown of His creation: Humans have dominion authority over His creation—to “subdue and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28, ESV). Humans are God’s theocratic stewards. Human beings are not the product of a random, impersonal force. Humans are the product of a direct, intentional act of Almighty God, with the command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (1:28).

Human beings are creatures of God, who manifest a profound dependence on Him. Consider these Scriptures (ESV):

· Nehemiah 9:6: "You the LORD, you alone. 'You made the heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them.'" That God preserves all his creatures, including humanity, implies that they are dependent on Him for their continued existence.

· Acts 17: 25, 28: "In him we live and move and have our being." Humans owe their very breath to God; we exist only in Him; in every move we make we are dependent on Him. We cannot lift a finger apart from God's will.

Yet, human beings are also persons, who manifest a degree of independence, a degree of responsible freedom. To be a person means to be able to make decisions, to set goals, and to move in the direction of those goals. Humans possess the freedom to make responsible choices; we are not robots governed by an outside source or power. We have the power of self-determination and self-direction.

Therefore, to be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God; to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I move them and that when words are uttered by my lips, I utter them. Theologian Robert D. Brimstead writes: "The creaturehood and the personhood of [the human being] must be held both together and in tension. When theology stresses creaturehood and subordinates personhood, a hard-faced determinism surfaces and [the human being] is dehumanized . . . . When personhood is stressed to the exclusion of creaturehood, [the human being] is deified and God's sovereignty is compromised."

How does the Created Person concept affect our doctrine? Consider these three aspects of historic biblical Christianity:

1. The doctrine of justification by faith: Since we are creatures enslaved to sin, we can only be saved by grace (Ephesians 2:1-10). We are utterly dependent on the grace, mercy and love of God (e.g., the election and predestination of God detailed in Ephesians 1:3-5). Yet, we are not saved like some robot whose activities have been programmed by a celestial computer; we are a person who makes responsible choices. Human beings must choose to accept the plan of salvation laid out in Scripture. We must choose freely to accept the gift of salvation in Christ.

2. The doctrine of sanctification: Sanctification is that process by which God the Father conforms us into the image of His Son by means of the Holy Spirit. Since humans are creatures, God the Holy Spirit must sanctify them; since humans are persons, they must themselves responsibly choose a life of loving obedience in the process of sanctification. Philippians 2:12-13: "work out your salvation [i.e., your sanctification] with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (ESV). Or Philippians 1:6: "he began a good work in you [i.e., justification] will bring it to completion [i.e., sanctification] at the day of Jesus Christ [i.e., glorification]."

3. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (i.e., that God will keep us secure in Him throughout our lives): Since we are creatures, God must preserve us and keep us true to Him (see John 10:27-28; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 1:3-5). But, since we are persons, we must persevere in the faith (Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 16:3; Hebrews 3:14; Revelation

3:11).

Let me illustrate using the analogy of railroad tracks: The right side of the tracks represents the divine sovereignty of God; the left side of the tracks represents the responsible freedom of the human being (human responsibility). Both are true and operative according to the Bible (e.g., Matthew 26:23-24).

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