

## **Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 15**

**Genesis 3:22**

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Well, let's open our Bibles if we could, to Genesis 3:22. And we're continuing our look into Calvinism in a series called "Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible." So we're in Roman numeral five, where we're going to spend most of our time, looking at the Calvinistic acronym or mnemonic device "TULIP."

"T" in the Calvinistic system stands for Total Depravity. As we've tried to explain, this is the starting point of their theology. Because if you believe what they're saying here, it's easy to believe everything else. And then, number two, where we talked about our understanding of total depravity. It doesn't mean man is as bad as he can possibly be. It doesn't mean that human beings have indulged every sin that can be indulged. What it means is total, meaning two things: every human being other than Jesus is affected by this. And then number two, total in the sense that sin has corrupted all of my being. And so you have to understand total depravity in order to understand why we need Jesus as a Savior. This is our condition in original sin.

And as much as it's easy to get upset about some kind of disease in humanity—let's say cancer that takes people's lives—there's a much more serious disease in the human race. It's called original sin, and it's one hundred percent lethal. The mortality rate is one hundred percent, unless you're Enoch or the Rapture generation. So that's a pretty good working definition of total depravity. Calvinism, by definition, says, "No, total depravity means inability." And I gave you all the quotes last week to show you that I'm not misrepresenting anybody. They teach that you're a rock and you have no more ability to come to Christ than a rock does. You can't even believe. So God has to do some kind of work on the front end. Some teach Regeneration first so that you can believe. Or He's got to impart the gift of faith or else a rock couldn't believe. So that's how they understand total depravity. And the only people that get those works are the elect. The small fraction of the human race, that's elected unto salvation. Everyone else, that grace passes over and they go into hell, with no choice, because they're nothing more than a rock. So, I gave you a lot of different citations showing you where you can find that teaching, in their various authors.

So with all of that foundation being laid, we're going to conclude here with the depravity section. We won't conclude it today, but we will be explaining how Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism has overstated total depravity. They've overstated total depravity in four ways:

- a) They have confused intensity with extent.
- b) They've set up something where God is operating outside of man's design.

- c) They've misdefined death. Countless youth, when they go to Calvinistic schools are shown Ephesians 2:1, and then the teacher will say, "What does that say?" "Well, it says, 'We're dead in our trespasses and sins.' " And then they read in a 20th century interpretation of death from the medical world, meaning nonexistence. And so once people buy into that, then they say, "Okay, since you're dead, you're like a rock. God has to regenerate you on the front end so that you can believe, He has to impart the gift of faith." And all of that comes from a misunderstanding of death. Death, as I'll show you in the Bible, never means nonexistence. Rather, what it means is separation.
- d) I'll show you how Calvinism underestimates what the lost man can do. The lost man can do a lot of different things. He can't do anything to merit God's salvation, but he can do a lot of things, including believing when he comes under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, something that Calvinism denies.

So let's start here with letter A. The first problem with the Calvinistic understanding of total depravity is, there is confusion over intensity of sin versus extent. And they have this mindset that people are as hardcore, rotten, in their trespasses and sins as they can be. Now some of these texts I've shown you before. But what they're confusing is the meaning of total, meaning extent with intensity. They think people are as rotten as they can possibly be. So notice a few verses that would refute that. Notice Genesis 3:22. This is Adam and Eve in their fallen state. And this is what God says right after the Fall:

*"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.' "*

So notice that right there at the beginning God says man knows good from evil. He can't do anything to merit God's favor, but he has a basic understanding of good and evil. So that doesn't communicate at all that man is like a rock and can't respond to God at all. He does know the difference between good and evil, and the reason he does evil is not because of inability; he does evil—Romans 1:18 and following—because he takes truth and holds it down in unrighteousness. He makes a decision, but that is more of a problem with man and his volition than it is man with his ability. Notice Matthew 7:11. I've shown this one to you before as well. It's Jesus talking about how we ought to ask the Father for good things. And in the process of that, Jesus in Matthew 7:11 says,

*" 'If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!' "*

So obviously, we ought to ask God to give us good gifts, because we know how to do that with our own kids, right? How much more will our heavenly Father, who's untainted by a sin nature, know how to bless His children than us? And we already naturally know how to do that. So notice that man in his fallen state knows how to bless his children. He knows how to save for their college tuition and put a roof over their heads and those

kinds of things. So this idea that man is as bad as he can possibly be and is like an insensate stone, it just doesn't fit with these Biblical texts.

Notice, if you will, Romans 2:14-15. This is speaking of something called conscience, which is inside of every single human being, saved or unsaved. Paul says,

*"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience"*

—that's the legal barometer that God puts in every person, whether they're a Christian or not—

*"their conscience is bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."*

So every single human being has the law of God, a knowledge of the law of God, whether they go to church or not, whether they know Jesus or not, whether they open a Bible or not. It's something called conscience that God has put in every person. It's the meaning of Genesis 3:22, which we read a second ago, where God says, *"the man has become like one of us, knowing . . . good and evil."* So even in our fallen state, we know the difference between good and evil, and we constantly make decisions. I make decisions that can violate my conscience, and conscience will internally accuse me, or I can make a decision to honor my conscience, honor the law of God within me and my conscience within me will excuse me. So every human being goes through that. So that's why all of us are basically in our lives sometimes law keepers and sometimes law breakers, and conscience is really good at alerting us to that fact.

So you'll notice that people, even in their fallen state, have this ability to know the difference between good or evil. That was the whole basis of the Nuremberg trials. You remember, the Nazis were put on trial post-World War II for what they did, and a lot of the Nazi soldiers were put on trial. And one of their excuses was, "I was just following orders. I was involved in the Holocaust and the persecution of the Jews, etc., because my higher ups told me to do that." And the Nuremberg ruling was, "That's not a sufficient excuse, because you have something called conscience. You know the difference between good and evil, and your actions are guilty because you violated your own conscience, in throwing Jews into the Auschwitz ovens and all of those terrible things, that happened."

Unbelievers know how to apply the brakes in the crosswalk, right? I was applying the brakes when I saw pedestrians in the crosswalk long before I knew Jesus. Not that long before, by the way, because I got saved at age sixteen. But I had my driver's test, and it's not like I got saved and say, "Oh my goodness, there's people in the crosswalk! I better put the brake on," because I had something even before I was a Christian called conscience. Unbelievers know how to give to the cancer research society. You don't have to be a Christian to know how to do that. So unbelievers can do an awful lot. They can even respond to God in their fallen state when the Holy Spirit convicts them. So

unbelievers can do many, many good things, at least in the eyes of their fellow man, although they can't do anything to merit God's favor. So what you're starting to see, hopefully, is how Calvinism has taken depravity and overstated it.

And just so you don't think I'm crazy, here's a statement from Henry Clarence Thiessen in his lectures in systematic theology. He writes,

"The Scriptures speak of human nature as totally depraved. However, the doctrine of 'total depravity' is easily misunderstood and misinterpreted. From the negative standpoint, it is important to know both what it does not mean and what it does mean. This does not mean that every sinner is devoid of all qualities pleasing to men; that he commits or is prone to every form of sin; or that he is bitterly opposed to God, as it is possible for him to be. Jesus recognized pleasing qualities in some individuals."—

Like His dealings with the rich young ruler when He looked at him and He loved him.

—"He said that the scribes and the Pharisees did some things that God demanded."—

So Jesus, in His condemnation of the scribes and the Pharisees, pointed out some of the things that they were doing right.

—"Paul asserted that some things Gentiles 'do instinctively the things of the law' (Romans 2:14); God told Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites would grow worse (Genesis 15:16)."

In other words, when God spoke to Abraham in that passage, He says, " *The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.* " These people are bad, but they're going to get a lot worse. And He wouldn't have made that statement if they're already as bad as they could possibly be. And it actually took them 400 years to reach a point of what I would call maximum degeneracy, where judgment finally was demanded. And Paul says that *"evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse."* Yes, it's going to get bad, but it's even going to get worse. 2 Timothy 2:3.

One of the things that's interesting to point out is that Satan is not a Calvinist. And let me show you why he's not a Calvinist. And the Anti-Calvinists are saying, yes, he is a Calvinist, but that's another issue. Second Corinthians 4:4, notice what Satan does. It says,

*"in whose case the god of this world"—that's Satan—"has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*

Notice that Satan is at work blinding the minds of people. Now, Satan wouldn't have to do that, would he? If the mind was automatically blinded. So this is what makes evangelism so difficult. Many times you're not just dealing with a depraved nature in someone, you're dealing with Satan doing things, I think largely on a temporal basis to

prevent the person from seeing the gospel. But there would be no point in Satan doing this if the Calvinists' understanding of man is as they say it is, an inability. I mean, what would you think of me if I brought a rock up here and said, I'm going to put blinders on this rock? You would say, well, that's a waste of your time. So Satan would be totally wasting his time if people were already in this insensate state. Matthew 13:19 describes the activity of Satan. It says, in the parable of the sower,

*"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom the seed was sown beside the road."*

So the gospel is preached. Jesus says in the parable of the sower, in the inner Advent age, that it's going to fall on four types of hearers, and fruit will be born depending upon how the soil is prepared. And He talked about certain seed that was sown beside the road. And He talked about how what that means is someone hears the Word of God, and Satan comes in and snatches away what was sown. Why would Satan have to do that if they if the unbeliever can't understand it because they're in a state of inability? See that? 2 Timothy 2:26, it says, *"and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."* Why would Satan hold certain people captive? Doesn't even say here he holds everyone captive, but he holds certain people captive to do his will. Why would he do that if people are as wicked as they can possibly be and have no capacity to respond to God? So that's what I mean when I say, Satan himself, the way he operates doesn't operate according to Calvinistic assumptions.

So one of the problems with Calvinism's definition of total depravity is they've confused intensity or depth with extent. A second problem with Calvinism's definition of total depravity is it operates outside of God's design for man. God designed man in a very particular way. Three things: the first one here is God designed man and woman, humanity, as image bearers of God. And we see that in Genesis 1:26-27, don't we? It says,

*"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them.'"*

So that's what's unique about us, is we are image bearers of God. Now, what does that mean? An image bearer of God? Well, it means we have value; we're like no other creation that God has made; but the other thing it means is we share in some of God's attributes. God has attributes that are communicable, meaning His creatures share in those attributes. Communicable. Shared. Now, there are some attributes of God that are incommunicable, that God alone possesses. Or else God wouldn't be who? He wouldn't be God. Examples of His incommunicable attributes would be omniscience. The three "omnis". He knows everything, His omnipresence (He's everywhere at once), His

omnipotence (He's all powerful). So we don't share in those things. Unless you're omniscient. And if you are, I want you to sign my Bible at the end of this session. Who would want to be omniscient, to be honest with you? Would you want to know everything? Think of the burden that would be. So I can know some things, but I can't know everything because I'm not God, and God doesn't share all of His attributes.

But because we're image bearers of God, there are some things, some attributes that we have that we share with God, communicable attributes. An example is intellect. God is a thinker. You're made in His image, you have a tremendous intellectual capacity. Another example is emotions. I believe that God has emotions. He was sorry He made man, those kinds of things (*"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit"* who is within you); and we have emotions, too. We're not just intellectual beings, we're emotional beings. And then here is probably, in my view, the most powerful thing that you have that's a communicable attribute of God. Because we're made in His image, we have a will. We have the capacity of choice. Which means I can make a choice against God. And I think God will convict me of that choice. But if I'm resolute in my choice, God will respect the choice. And the reason He respects the choice is if He didn't respect the choice, He would be dealing with me outside of how He's designed me.

So when you get into this theology where people have no choice whether they're going to trust Christ or not, the elect are automatically going to trust Christ because they're given the gift of faith; the non-elect are going to automatically not trust Christ, because God's grace passes over them and leaves them in an insensate state. Do you see what's happening here with Calvinism? They're coming up with a theology that's dealing with man in a way that man is not designed. Man has to have some sort of choice in the matter; if he doesn't have some sort of choice in the matter, he's not really an image bearer of God. So God, when He created us, gave us this image bearing status. He didn't make us AI—artificial intelligence. He didn't make us computers or robots, because that's not true love, right? True love always has to have a choice.

If God didn't make us with choice, He could have just created a computer system where He'd push a button and someone would say, I love you, Jesus. But it really isn't true love because it's just a computer talking to you. When an image bearer says, I love you, Jesus, I worship you Jesus, now that means something because that image bearer made a decision in that sense. So, when I married my wife, beforehand I had a choice in the matter. She had a choice in the matter. And would you really want to marry someone that had no choice in the matter at all? They're coerced into it? God help us—what happens with these Islamic child brides and these kind of things. You're involved with someone that was forced into it, and you have no idea whether they love you or not because they were given no volition in the matter.

So this is why humans always have to have volition. And this becomes the significance of the tree of knowledge in the garden. There had to have been a Tree of Knowledge in the garden. People ask me that all the time. If God knew what was going to happen, why put a Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden at all? He could have just gotten rid of the tree, and all of these problems that we have wouldn't have existed. Well, if that had

been the case, then God would have had a bunch of people that really weren't experiencing true love with Him because they had no choice in the matter. So the moment God said, "Man is made in My image and woman is made in My image, there has to be a Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, because there has to be an avenue for rebellion, if the human race chose that route. If the avenue for rebellion wasn't there, then man would be nothing more than artificial intelligence with no true volition, and God would be spending eternity with beings, who knows whether they love God or not? See that? So this becomes the significance of Genesis 2:16-17. It says,

*"the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.' "*

So if man and woman are made in God's image (Genesis 1), you've got to have a tree of knowledge in Genesis 2, because there has to be a choice. You can't have a true choice unless there is an avenue to express rebellion against God. So what you'll see in Calvinism is this whole concept is denied. No choice at all. In fact, they think that if man is given any kind of choice, in their minds, it subtracts from God's glory. And I'm trying to show you where man has to have a choice. If man doesn't have a choice, God is not respecting the unique design of man made in His image, sharing in one of His very powerful communicable attributes. The attribute of will, which must involve choice.

And because Calvinism doesn't give man choice, you ask them, "Why did man fall? Why and how did man fall if man doesn't have a choice?" And the answers you start getting are really troubling. What they start saying is man fell because God orchestrated it that way. Now, this is something in the Calvinistic system that is very different than the omnipotence of God, which is something I believe in. God is all powerful. But when they start talking about the omnipotence of God, I'm going to substitute another word that they use to, in my opinion, overstate the omnipotence of God. They believe in something called omni-causality. Not just omnipotence, but omni-causality. Not just God is all powerful, but God causes everything. So the running joke is, the Calvinist trips down the stairs and falls down the staircase, and then he gets up and dusts himself off and he says, "Wow, I'm glad that one's over with," because God caused him to fall down the staircase. Basically what they're saying is God causes everything.

Now, is that going to work in the counseling sessions when someone has some terrible thing happen to them, a crime or a rape or something of that magnitude, are you going to be able to look them in the eye and say, "God caused that for His own glory?" I believe in omnipotence, but I do not believe in omni-causality. I believe that God does not cause everything. I believe that the things that are happening in our world that are negative can largely be traced back to the bad choices of the human race. But God never designed the world to be that way. And so they believe in this thing called omni-causality. And so if you ask them, "If man has no choice, why did the Fall happen?" Genesis 3. The basic answer is God caused the Fall. Adam and Eve did not choose sin, but God chose sin for them. If Adam and Eve did not choose sin, which is what you start hearing in Calvinistic circles, then God forced the Fall.

Now let me give you some quotes from them just to show you that I'm not just making this up. This is something John Calvin himself said in a couple of places. Calvin said,

"The fall of Adam was not by accident, nor by chance, but was ordained by the secret counsel of God."

And they talk a lot about the secret counsel. Because, how do you explain God causing evil? And they say, "Who are you to question God? That's a secret known only to God. You're just a rock. You can't think the way God thinks." He also said that,

"The first man fell because the Lord deemed it meet that he should."

In other words, God caused the Fall. Here's a quote from Edward Palmer, Calvinist, in Edward Palmer's book "The Five Points of Calvinism,"

"God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen... Even sin..."—

If God causes sin, doesn't that make Him a sinner, when you think about it?

—"God ordained sin and unbelief."

Why does sin happen? Omni-causality; God caused it. Why do people stay in a state of unbelief and never trust the Savior? God caused that to happen and He's doing all of these things for His glory. And then you say, "Well, how can God be glorified in someone going into hell with no choice in the matter?" And the answer is, "Well, who are you to question God? This is done in His secret counsels." So secret counsel is like a code word that's used when people don't understand this very diabolical morality. Here is R.C. Sproul Jr., (probably not the R.C. Sproul, I think this is his son) who says,

"God desired that man would fall into sin..."

And then he goes on in this quote. And there's the citation where you can find it at the bottom: "God created sin." Arthur Pink, in a very Calvinistic book called "The Sovereignty of God", wrote,

"That God decreed sin should enter this world through the disobedience of our first parents, was a secret hid in his own breast."

So why did the Fall happen? God ordained it. Why did God allow that to happen? How does that fit with God's nature? It's inexplicable. So they throw up this secret counsel idea again. It's something that you can't understand or know.

So, is this true? Did God cause the Fall? I would like to see a verse that says that, because there is no verse that says it. What the Bible says over and over again is the reason we're living in a fallen world is humanity, through Adam and Eve made a decision to rebel against God. Romans 5:12 says, *"Therefore, just as through one man."* Doesn't say through one God. It says, *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world,"*



*and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."* And you better get this down. And let me explain why you need to get this down: you're going to have opportunities to evangelize lost people. And almost the number one question on their mind is, "If you're talking to me about a God of love, how do you explain my granddaughter that just got hit in a crosswalk? How do you explain my mother or my father that just died of cancer? How do you explain that?" And you actually have an answer for that. It's not a complicated answer. Doesn't need to be complicated, but there's an answer.

And the answer is, this world was not created the way God intended. These things are happening in our world because of our collective decision to rebel against the Creator. So the unsaved person always wants to put God on trial. And what the Bible is doing is putting man on trial. Now the Calvinist, what's he going to say in this evangelistic conversation? "God caused the mayhem." And the unbeliever is going to think to himself, "Why in the world would I ever come to a God like that? That's so cold and unloving but here in Romans 5:12, it's very clear that sin entered the world through one man. There's a similar passage in Romans 8:19-22. It says,

*"For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."*—

So part of the answer to the unbeliever who's always asking, "How can I believe in God when all of these evil things happen?" Part of the answer is God didn't originally cause it. And number two, God has a plan to get rid of it. Things right now are not as God designed. The creature rebelled against the Creator. Verse 22. But there's a consequence in that,

*—"For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers . . . the pains of childbirth together until now."*

We woke up the last few days and turned on the news and Southern California (about twenty-two miles from where I grew up), was on fire—the winds, all of these things that are happening where this fire—I don't know what its state is today, but they're using non-containment language describing it, that every minute it burns somewhere between five to six football fields. It's something completely and totally out of control. Well, that's what Paul is saying here. The creation is in a state of travail. These things are the consequence of man's initial decision to rebel against God. God, when He created this world, it wasn't His intent to have a fire out of control, destroying people's lives, livelihoods, properties, etc. and who subjected creation to all these things? It was him who subjected it, which I believe is a reference to Adam, Adam being a theocratic administrator at that time, governing for God. Isn't that what Genesis 1:26-28 says?

*"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds...of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' "*

Adam is placed in that position of authority. He was to govern creation for God, and he did, until he started listening to creation, started listening to a talking snake. And our forebearers listened to that talking snake. Eve, and Eve listened to Adam, and that's the cause of the Fall. It's this awesome thing called will or choice that God gave man as an image bearer of His. God respected the choice, even though there would be horrific consequences to come. And if God were to just jump in at the last minute and not respect the choice, He would be defying how He's manufactured man. Not as a robot, not as artificial intelligence, but as an image bearer. So that becomes a much better explanation for sin and the Fall, than God caused it in His secret counsels. Because the moment you start saying God caused the Fall, you're attaching God to cooperating with evil.

James 1:13 says, *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God';" You know what a temptation is: it's a solicitation to sin designed to destroy us. And James 1:13 says God doesn't do that. Satan does it; the sin nature does it; but God doesn't do that. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."* So to make the statement that God orchestrated the Fall or caused the Fall would violate James 1:13, would it not? And how in the world could God orchestrate sin and cause the Fall when God's character is perfect? 1 Timothy 6:16 says of God that He alone *"possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be...honor and eternal dominion! Amen."* You mean the One who's *"clothed in unapproachable light"* caused the Fall? Through the doctrine of omni-causality?

For about God 1 John 1:5 says, *"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."* So if there is no darkness at all in God, and if He's clothed in unapproachable light, and if He can't tempt solicitation to sin in order for people to self-destruct in sin, then God did not cause the Fall. Man caused the Fall. You know, I don't have to be so zealous for the sovereignty of God that I take away from man any choice. Because if I take away from man any opportunity to choose, then the only explanation I'm left with is God caused evil. If man had no choice, explain evil. Well, man caused it. Why would you believe that? Because God is not just omnipotent, He's involved in omni-causality. I believe in omnipotence, but I don't believe in omni-causality, because omni-causality is an attack on the very foundation and character of God Himself. There are certain things that God can't do. Did you know that? Hebrews 6:18 says, *"It is impossible for God to lie."* Numbers 23:19, *"Who is God that He should lie?"* Titus 1:2 says, *"God...cannot lie."*

Unlike the Islamic god, whose very name means deceiver, our God cannot lie. It's impossible for Him to lie, because if He were to lie, that would violate His character of who He is. And people ask these sorts of questions. "Well can God make a rock so big that He can't move it?" And there's an easy answer to that, and the answer is no. And

the reason the answer is no, is that God is always sovereign over His creation. So He can't create something in creation so big that He's no longer sovereign over it. There are certain things that God cannot do, and one of the things He cannot do is orchestrate sin. So who caused the Fall? Man caused the Fall. God gave man the opportunity, that's as close as God got to the picture, and He had to give man the opportunity for rebellion, in chapter 2, or else He wouldn't be respecting how He's manufactured man as an image bearer in Genesis 1.

So Calvinism is operating according to man's design—contrary to man's design. Calvinism doesn't understand that man is an image bearer of God and what that means, it doesn't understand the difference between omnipotence and omni-causality. And here's the deal. Even in our fallen state, we still must be given a choice. Now, why is that? The answer relates to the fact that the Fall of man, Genesis 3, merely effaced rather than erased, man's status as a divine image bearer. In other words, what the Bible teaches is that even in their fallen state, even post Genesis 3, man and woman still retain their status as image bearers. The Fall of man did not erase man's status as an image bearer. Effaced it? Yes. Vandalized it? Yes. Perverted it? Yes. Distorted it? Yes. Got rid of it? No.

And because we're still image bearers of God in our total depravity, the same choice that He gave Adam and Eve pre-Fall, He's got to give to us post-Fall. So let me give you some verses that indicate that man, even in His fallen state, continues as an image bearer of God. Genesis 5:1 (and this one may refer more to pre-Fall) but it says in Genesis 5:1: *"This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when...God created man, He made him in the likeness of God."* That's who man is. He's an image bearer of God. Now notice that by the time you get to Genesis 9:6, not only has the Fall happened, Genesis 3, but so has the Flood. So the Fall of man happened, and then man became so wicked, maximum degeneracy, that God brought the global Deluge, the Flood. Eight people saved in the ark: Noah and his wife; Ham, Shem, and Japheth, Noah's sons and their respective wives, and those three sons with their wives got out of the ark and repopulated, ultimately, planet Earth. All of humanity owes its origin to either the lineage of Ham, Shem or Japheth.

But notice what it says here in Genesis 9:6, as God sets up a institution called the institution of capital punishment, meaning the government now comes into existence with the power to take life. Why does the government now come into existence with the power to take life? As a deterrent, so humanity would not be rolled back to maximum violence and degeneracy, which existed pre-Flood. So this is your whole basis for government, capital punishment, and things of that nature. And as these things are coming into existence now post-Flood through something called the Noahic covenant, which is something different than the Abrahamic covenant, which is redemptive. The Noahic Covenant is for all of the human race. And it's not redemptive, but it's designed to restrain evil. It's to prevent the maximum degeneracy of the pre-Flood world; that's what it's designed to do. It says this: *"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man."* Not by God, but by man.

In other words, we have a separate institution coming into existence now to hold back man's propensity for violence, because human nature didn't change, right? The outside world changed. The Nephilim were cleansed from the earth in those days. But the nature of people never changed pre-Flood post-Flood. So why don't they just go back to the wild, wild West scenario in the pre-Flood world? Well, government prevents that. If you don't want to do the time, don't do the crime. And I have to admit that many times I want to drive into this church from my house at about eighty miles an hour, but I don't. And it's not because I'm such a great person and thinking about societal well-being. I don't do it because I know I'm going to probably get a ticket if I do. And so there's a check on my impulse towards self-centeredness with the threat of some kind of external pressure, some kind of external force that keeps me in line. That's why God gave us the institution of human government. *"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed."*

In other words, if you take someone's life through premeditated murder, then the state has the right to take your life. Deterrence. The nice thing about capital punishment is it works every time it's used. Every time it's used, it works. Because the guy that took someone's life isn't around to kill anybody else, right? Well, just throw them in prison forever. Well, what if they kill a cell mate, a security guard? What if it's like the Texas seven that broke out of prison? What if we had a situation like what happened in California where a guy was in prison for murder. And if you're in prison for murder, and that's the worst thing that can happen to you, then why not just kill somebody else in prison? See that? There was a guy in prison that was actually plotting his next murder from his jail cell. Because somehow he was connected to the mob and all of these kinds of things in the outside world. So that's what I mean. When capital punishment is used, it works every time. The guy's not around to kill anybody else. And then other people will say, "Wow, look at what the state just did for taking someone's life! I'm going to think twice before I take someone's life." So this is how God, through this divine institution, keeps things in check and prevents it from rolling back to pre-Flood wild, wild West.

But the reason God did this and set up this restraint is because life to God is precious. God does not like it when hands shed innocent blood. We're going to use this verse in the sermon coming up: *"There are six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven."* Does it say? And one of them is hands that shed innocent blood. Why is that? For in the image of God has God made man. Man is still an image bearer of God, even in his post-Flood, post-Fall state. See that? And then from there you move into the New Testament. This is long after the Fall. James 3:9, which says, *"with it"*—the tongue, that two by two slab of mucous membrane between the gums, the tongue—*"we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God."* So James is saying, don't go around verbally assassinating people, because you're verbally attacking someone that bears God's image.

So even in our fallen state, we're still image bearers. See that? Another really good verse on it, which I don't like to use because it involves head coverings, whenever I use it, someone wants to talk about head coverings in church. So just forget the head

coverings, okay? 1 Corinthians 11:7 says, *"For 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."* So there again is another New Testament verse that teaches that we are image bearers of God. And as image bearers of God, we have to have the same exact choice that Adam and Eve had in Eden.

Now in our depraved state—John 16:7-11—God, through conviction will bring us to the point of decision. He will do that over and over and over again in your life. He comes (the Holy Spirit) to convict the world of *"sin, righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me."* So every single day of a person's life, they're convicted, you need to trust in Christ for salvation. But you notice that that verse does not say God will believe for them. Because if God were to say, "I will believe for you, I will take your will and override it, through the impartation of the gift of faith," which no verse of the Bible teaches. When we get into that area, I'll show that to you. But for God to override free will would be for God to disrespect how He made us as image bearers. And our image bearing status does not just relate to pre-Fall, it relates to post-Fall as well.

And so, all of these things are lost in modern-day Calvinism, where they have a scenario in place where people are given no choice. And I'm here to argue that that takes man and puts operations in place which are contrary to man's design. And so the next time we reconvene, we'll be dealing with the subject of death—Ephesians 2:1, *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins."* What exactly does death mean? Calvinism says it means nonexistence. I'll show you that that is a twenty-first, twentieth century definition of death that's a medical definition of death, but the Bible nowhere defines death as nonexistence. Death is always defined as separation. And so if my spiritual life, my spirit, exists but is separated from God when it comes under conviction, it can still make a choice. If it doesn't exist, it can't make a choice at all, because it's like a rock. So that's why that whole conversation about what death means in Ephesians 2:1 becomes a big deal.