

## ***Imago Dei: The Heights of Humanity, the Depths of Depravity: Life-Work - Part Two***

**Genesis 1:26-28**

**Scripture Reading: Psalm 8; Ecclesiastes 5:11-22**

### **Introduction**

What is man that God is mindful of him? The question is not merely *What is man*, but *What is man* - that is, what or *who* is man, and what is his significance? The question longs for immediate answers – we ask this question repeatedly in one form or another!

We search all our lives for *significance* because we truly long to leave behind a heritage. We long to be remembered after our flesh has again turned back to dust. We want a legacy to leave behind after our deaths. How much should a man (using the term generically as in Genesis 1 to refer to humanity by the way), focus on himself for answers

Is man worthless, merely a worm, or is he valuable, sufficient unto himself (i.e. *Man the Measure*)? How do we understand man between these two polar extremes? When we consider this question, in this way, we are getting close to what Blaise Pascal wrote in His *Pensees*:

*What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, feeble earthworm, depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error, the glory and the shame of the universe.*

As we learned last week, all men are made in God's image, and therefore there is only one way to find our significance and dignity - to know God our Creator and what he has revealed about himself and us. Here in Gen. 1:26-28, we have the apex, the pinnacle, the culmination, and the ultimate moment of God's creation: God creates man his Prince. The Prince will rule as Vice-Gerent over God's creation by ruling or having dominion over the creation. Man is personally in communion with his Great and Sovereign Creator - there is no relational distance between them, only the ontological distinction between THE Creator and his creature. Today, we want to consider our Life-Work under the continuing study of *the heights of our humanity and the depths of our depravity!*

Our Calling is our Life-Work because the Lord created all men in his image to have dominion over the creation. At its basic, most distilled form, this is an understanding as a creature of the gracious Creator that all that we are, all that we do, and all that have is to be devoted to our Sovereign God and Father. Yet this is part of the terrible consequences of man's fall: He does not live for his calling, he devotes all that he is, all that he does, and that he has to the glory of man. In other words, fallen man does what is right in his own eyes!

What is calling? And how can Christians have a right understanding of having dominion over the creation? There are many areas that we could concentrate, but let us look at this from four perspectives or *four Ps*. Calling is important as well as liberating for Christians as they rightly serve the LORD God their maker. Part of what we want to appreciate is the significance and dignity of man because he has been created in God's image and called to display God's glory in the creation. Our call in life is part of man's having dominion over

the creation, or ruling as the Prince of God, the Vice-Regent of God! Life should be understood as *Life-Work*, for you are working for the LORD God Creator who teaches us Providence, Purpose, Priorities, and Potential. Because of this, life is more than Shakespeare describes in his play *Macbeth*:

*Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing!*

In Genesis 1:26-28, God gives man his call to rule as Prince or Vice-Regent in his dominion over the creation:

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; **let them have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

27 So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Our concern today is to appreciate the varying perspectives on this call from God to have dominion over the creation.

## I. Calling:

### A. What it is not... Two distortions

1. **Roman Catholic distortion (from Greek dualism):** sacred/secular. Eusebius argues that Christ gave "two ways of life" to his church: one is the *perfect life* (spiritual life usually in a monastery) and the other is the *permitted life* (making shoes, government, farming, etc). All of life is lived for God in *all that we are, all that we do, and all that we have* - for God's glory!
2. **Protestant distortion (another form of dualism):** *Full-time Christian service*. This is the myth that handing out tracts out at a computer company are more important than working on the computers on which you were hired to work.
3. **It is not merely a job, a career, a profession:**  
Today, we have many people who enter a college, enter a professional field, or seek education in order to make a living! This is not the Biblical teaching on calling or vocation. A vocation is not merely a job, it is a calling of God (to serve him and neighbor). We have many technical schools, graduate schools to teach people how to make money. This is wrong because it has not asked the questions: "How has God gifted me?" "How can I take all that I am, all that I do, and all that I have to serve

God?" Rather, the question asked by both believers and non-believers is: "How can I make the most money with my education so that I can die with the most toys and be the most comfortable person in the world, etc?" This is blatant idolatry and must be avoided by Christians.

### **B. What it is...**

- Ultimately it is a life lived wholeheartedly in obedience and service to the Creator. It is to commit *all that you are, all that you do, and all you have* to serve the LORD your God, your Creator with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself! In other words, it is a call *to be* as much as a call *to do*.
- In the words of Herman Bavinck: "The service of God, the love for God, fellowship with God is not a superadded gift but originally and integrally human. God claims all of man- - mind, heart, soul, body, and all his or her energies- - for his service and love. The moral law is one for all humans in all times, and the moral ideal is the same for all people."
- It is to "follow God" and to "serve God". As the Apostle Paul would write: *Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all unto the Lord*. We shall examine the four Ps of calling in light of our being made in God's image and therefore we have significance and dignity. We shall examine these four Ps of calling in light of the call or commission at creation to all creatures – the call and the commission of all of God's creatures! The four Ps are: *Providence, Purpose, Priorities, and Potential*.

#### **1. Providence-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have is preserved and governed by the LORD God your Maker.*

- Providence and potential are similar - -but I want to treat separately. All of the four Ps actually are intimately related to one another!
- Man's first call as a creature was to *have dominion over the earth*. That is to rule over the earth on behalf of God. This call to serve God and neighbor was given to God as gift to his creature man. None of the other creatures had this kind of *high* calling. It brought ultimate fulfillment in man and he found the ultimate fellowship in the LORD his God! Adam's first assignment in his calling was to gain knowledge of God's creation and till the garden of Eden.
- Let us appreciate that search for the knowledge or man's significance and dignity must first begin with understanding our calling from God. God calls us as Jesus called his disciples by his Spirit: "Follow me," Christ says to us. He raises our dead hearts and we are called by God to serve him in *everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have!* After we are called as Christians, we ought to seek God to know how he has uniquely gifted us

providentially, so that we might use our gifts in service to God and neighbor.

- In other words, as Christians, and what we must teach new disciples of Christ, is that our providential calling 'precedes' all of our service in God's Kingdom. For instance, God calls plumbers as well as politicians to serve God and neighbor. He calls homemakers and medical doctors to serve God and neighbor. Providentially, he places us in certain circumstances, certain times, certain families with certain abilities and gifts (even though these gifts may be perverted, misused, or cause idolatry), so that this makes each person unique. Calvin called this a *station* or a *sentry post* to which the LORD assigns us the task of being faithful at our stations and posts.

When the Apostle Paul visited the Greek *Areopagus*, he gave them a short lesson on the true significance for which they were searching in their lives and through their philosophy. He also taught them the foundational truth of providence in all of their lives:

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

- Understanding providence helps us as people not to compare ourselves in our brain-power, in our pocket-book, or in our gifts. It reminds us that we have been called by a gracious God who has made us unique! This is an important message for the Church and for young people. More about this when we look at *potential*.
- Think about providence and our service to God and neighbor in our calling in this way: In Luke 21, Jesus did not say to the poor widow with her measly two mites that you must go and get more money, then come back and serve me! He accepted it and it was a great gift to Jesus because he knew how valuable it was to her in her particular and providential circumstance.

Luke 21:4 "for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

- Contrastly, he accepted Mary's expensive nard or ointment that she poured on his feet, because providentially she had been provided that ointment. Nowhere does the Bible compare the widow and Mary because both of them are the subjects of God's providence in particular circumstances, times, and families! Both are given as illustrations of how we all must serve God and neighbor with what we have been given.
- In the parable of the talents in Luke 17, Jesus teaches us that it is not *how much one has* (think about the talents in terms of brain-power or intellect), it is *what one does with what he has been given!* In reality, we may not be called to be doctors or lawyers or such, we may be called to be cowboys, play guitars, and drive them old trucks (as the country song goes ;- }).
- Calling by God's providence means to teach the Church and our children the importance of offering up *all that we are, all that we do, and all that we have* as Christians to the service of our God!
- **Illustration:** Think about Matthew 2 and the famous Christmas song *The Little Drummer Boy*. The Magi's brought the most expensive gifts from the East because they were kings. They brought the goods of God's creation back to the Creator of the Universe who had taken on the human flesh of an infant. There was the infant in the manger receiving back the potentialities of his creation (as the LORD of LORDs will receive in the renewal of all things recorded in Revelation 21). They brought the best of what they could afford according to God's providence.
- On the other hand, in the song, there is a simple and poor Little Drummer Boy. He has no expensive gift, *but he gives all that he is, all that he does, and all that he has to Jesus the Christ.* He gives *Pa-rum-pa-pa-pum*. *Pa-rum-pa-pa-pum* is all that God has providentially given to him, but he gives it back to our Great God and Savior in humility! What a wonderful song of the testimony of God's grace...Remember the line: "And he smiled at me...pa-rum-pa-pa-pum...me and my drum." It seems to me that the Church and our children must learn how to offer up "me and my drum" (or "we and our drum") to Christ. It necessarily may not be the "gifts of the magi" but if it is done in service to Christ to the best of our abilities, it is putting God's providence first in our calling. Whenever we consider the pursuit of the knowledge or man's significance, it must be in submission to our calling from God! It must be in submission to God and in service to our neighbor, for that is the sum of the commandments. This is also our *ultimate purpose*, and this leads us to the second P: *Purpose*.

2. **Purpose-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have is given for the purpose of glorifying the LORD God your Maker and enjoying him forever!*

*Purposive origin + purposive destiny = meaningful life; meaningless origin + meaningless destiny = meaningless life.*

- Many Christians do not know what the purpose of their calling ultimately is. They make comments such as: "I am working hard in my job, getting paid well, getting good reviews, but something is not right- - I am empty!" Many Christians, although they make good money, and have great success and a good reputation, fail to find their callings and remain discouraged. Life has its problems, but some are so confused about *where they ought to be and what they ought to be doing*, that their job takes up a great deal of time for them in concerns. They are even challenged to focus on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word because they're always preoccupied with their job. Some Christians spend all of their waking hours thinking and worried about work. But we must understand work and purpose in light of our calling.
- Purpose is knowing the end for which one is called. That is, it is the end, purpose, or *telos* of why someone works, and how he or she is serving God and neighbor.
- **Illustration:** I once had a friend who quit his Liberal Arts education, because he heard that he could get Microsoft certification quicker, and as well it paid better wages! One time, I asked him what was his purpose in doing this? He said in order to make more money and be influential (amazing how some are extremely honest)! I said then you have not asked God to help you to examine the gifts you have been given so that you may serve him with *all that you are, in all that you do, with all that you have*. He replied in the negative. I told him that his problem was that in not considering the end or purpose in her work, he had failed to keep Christ first and it would not bring as much fulfillment in his service to Christ.
- You see, calling and purpose help us to understand that the CALLER (God) calls his people to serve in a particular place that may not be as glamorous or influential as our idolatrous hearts would like. The callings range from wiping off messy tables at a diner to wiping messy baby mouths, cleaning up months-old fish sticks left behind the couch to rot, going to the "rat race" of the grocery store, and trying to pass on wisdom to children. It is not always a "pretty existence" as they say!
- The problem of many Christians is that their lives orbit around their job rather than around service to God and neighbor. I would challenge anyone who entered whatever field of knowledge, that as Christians, they must ask themselves *why* they are there, and what it is they are pursuing (hopefully it will be more than a paycheck)! Calling is not concerned with salary but with purpose. The good news is that our callings usually

provide us with just the amount of salary that we need - -and all this from a gracious God!

- We want to prayerfully examine the gifts God has given to us, examining the circumstances and times in which we live, and examining the natural love for something that God has "built-in" to us! It may be that we are called to get Microsoft Certification and build and support the computer industry, but the call will encompass the cash when we consider the tasks.
- God has given us all unique gifts, we should be concerned about teaching the Church and our children to be looking for these, so that we can direct them to serve God and neighbor. By young people knowing the purpose for knowledge and education, I think this would impart to them an understanding about themselves and their lives that would hopefully keep them from the blatant idolatry of choosing a profession because they can "make money". This is such an empty pursuit!
- I would encourage you to continue to prayerfully discern your natural loves and passions and gifts that you and your children have for doing certain things. If you understand God's providence in calling, as well as the purpose for which we work, then this will help work against our tendency to idolatry. All we have is a gift of God; all we do is an acceptance of those gifts; all that we are has been given to us by God. In humility, we submit this back to our Creator in our service to him! But in order for us to understand these things rightly, the Church and our children must have the right priorities! Thus, the third 'P': Priorities.

**3. Priorities-** *To give all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have to the LORD God your Maker.*

- Our Lord Jesus taught us a lot about priorities. He called his disciples to himself and jealously (in the good sense) guarded their hearts and minds from the corrupting influence of love of self (narcissism). He told the rich young ruler that it was not evil that he had money (the LORD had given to him), it was that the money *had him* (to use perhaps a well-worn phrase).
- The money, that is the gift of God, had taken first priority in his life. God should have been there, but the money (the gift of God) was his idol! He went away sad when he had to part with his idol! Jesus told others that if you are not ready to put God first as your priority even to the point of leaving your own family, you have mixed up the good gift of family, with the right priority of putting God first. He said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom and all its righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you!" Let's consider the 'all these things' of which Jesus spoke.

- Jesus says "All these things" must be placed second to God and his righteousness. What were "these things"? Well, notice they were good things: food, clothing, and essentials of life. However, if "these things" are first, then we do not have our priorities straight. We have "mixed-up priorities". We are not seeking after evil in needing food, clothing, and the essentials of life, any more than to love our families, or to have money (as the above scriptures illustrate), but it is when "these things" take the pilot's chair and we truly do shove God in the "co-pilot" seat! What does all this teach us about the idolatry of knowledge? Well, in Christ's Church and to our children, we must stress the importance of right priorities. Let me give you an example of wrong priorities.
- **Illustration:** Margaret and I know a family where the mother lives her life 'vicariously' through her two daughters. They claim to be a Christian family but we do not see fruit in their lives or in their conversations to us. The mother has always been rather obese and insecure about life. So, what does she do to overcome this obesity and insecurity? She makes idols out of her children, then causes their priorities to be skewed, as they become idolatrous as well! The mother was never a cheerleader because she did not have a "good image" so she wants to make her daughters good cheerleaders, pretty, smart, and secure in life. The ironic thing is that although the daughters are now in state and even national championships as cheerleaders, they are not serving Christ as their first priority. They have been taken up with Vanity Fair- -they are all very concerned about their bodies (because their mother told them never to be overweight even though some people have a natural tendency toward obesity (such as myself), and that makes a person feel like a failure for eating a Twinkie). The girls are not evidently secure on the surface, but they are more insecure than their mother is, we would argue. We see how the mother has instilled in them this displacement and insecurity about life, placing vanity and security in worldly things first. Margaret and I do not know if these daughters know Christ, it is not evident.
- Now, this family call themselves "Bible-believing Christians". The mother has probably been doing her best to raise the girls (in her estimation), and although we see her living her life vicariously through these daughters, she would be amazed if one told her this truth!
- Many parents vicariously try to live their intellectual lives (or lack thereof) through their children. If they were slow in learning, they will try to push their children to extremes to be quick. If they were quick in learning, there will never be any excuse for failure! In fact, there will usually be a built-in "understood" that whatever profession or calling Father or Mother had, this will be their calling as well. Think of the famous story of the father who longs for his son to be an attorney, although he loves art. The Father says "all that I have is yours" *if* you will follow on in my footsteps (take the family business, be a Pi Kappa Alpha like your old

man, pursue law or the medical profession, etc)- - if you become an artist you will get nothing! In a recent humorous movie, a young man named 'Billy Elliot' decides against all the odds and conformities of his time, that he will be a ballet dancer, because this is what he loves and believes God has gifted him to do.

- In all of the above examples, no one has placed God first in their priorities. You see, the mother who vicariously lived through her daughters, or the Attorney Father who threatens his son with perpetuity in his profession, both have the wrong priorities in teaching their children about seeking "these things". Both have neglected to tell their children the importance of placing service to God and Christ first! Both have neglected to put God and Christ first themselves in their understanding in their calling as parents! These sins of idolatry "rub off" to the children, even to the third and the fourth generation.
  - Unfortunately, in our culture education is regarded so highly that everyone is giving out degrees these days because in a therapeutic culture, education is one way of making sinners feel like their lives have meaning. Education and knowledge belong to God and are good things, but they can be abused when our priorities as Christians and parents are not right! Ultimately, the pride of parents for, and of their children will not have their sons and daughter working as plumbers in our culture, nor merely fixing hardware on PCs, nor painting houses, nor becoming artists.
  - In many ways in our culture, the parents have taken the place of God (at least from the perspective of our callings). They have become the new pantheon of the gods that we must seek as children to propitiate and serve - - wholeheartedly fulfilling their wishes and desires so that we can "make them proud!" Think about these comments that reveal a nasty and unprioritized heart: "No son (or daughter) of mine is going to be a carpenter!" "No daughter of mine is going to marry a plumber- - is there not a dentist you like better?" Our culture's priorities are so messed up today that people are constantly trying to prioritize their time, but they cannot see their lives unraveling before them!
  - Oftentimes in our culture, the job, the degree, the profession, and let's face it (the bottom line) the pocket book is how we measure success, and how we measure who and what we are! The job, the degree, the profession, and the pocket book are to be used for God's glory, but we have confused our priorities and made these the end, rather than the means to the end of serving God and neighbor. We must call for repentance in the Church and we must preach this to our children. This brings me to the final 'P', or point on potential.
4. **Potential-** *To know that all that you are, all that you do, and all that you have has been given to you as steward of the gifts of the LORD God your Maker.*

- As God's creation holds the potential for all knowledge, so we all as creatures of God (made in his image) have been given a potential to serve him and our neighbor in all we do. The Apostle Paul said that comparing oneself with another was unprofitable. In fact, he taught that if you want to truly serve God and neighbor ("bearing each other's burdens), you were to get your perspective straight and get your focus off yourself! He taught that as servants of God with varying potentials and gifts, we are called to have a "prospective perspective" that is, a perspective that is not inward looking to ourselves, but outward looking to the example of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:1-11). Our potential for the service of God is because by grace we have been granted certain potentials!
- We have been raised in certain environments, we have been providentially provided for with a certain amount, we have been gifted in a certain way, we can do some things better than others, and some things we cannot do better! All of our lives hold particular potentials for serving the LORD Christ! Our potentials are unique, just as the pear tree can only bear pears, the lioness can only give birth to lion cubs, so we as God's highest creatures made in his image, can produce what is unique to humanity. But more particularly, as humans we are made differently. For us to sit around and compare our weaknesses with other's strengths, or our own strengths with other's weaknesses are a form of idolatry itself. In that idolatry ultimately means taking your eyes off Christ and his grace and placing them on yourself and 'what you can, or cannot do'. When we do this, we discover that we have robbed God's providence of his control; we have reduced our purposes to our own; we have set ourselves and our strengths or weaknesses as our ultimate priorities. We must seek all things in light of God and his revelation of grace in Christ!
- This misunderstanding of potential under the heading of providence is the reason for the myth of *equalitarianism*, *egalitarianism*, or *democratization*. We are all equal in being or *ontology*, but it is just not true that we are equal in our station or posts in life. *Democratization* has fed the idea that every man should have equal of what everyone else has...If everyone is equal in every way, then no one is unique in any way at all!
- This leads to what (of all people) Nietzsche called *Ressentiment* (not resentment, not strong enough - *Ressentiment*). It is described thus:

“Ressentiment has its origin in the tendency to make comparisons between the attributes of another and one’s own attributes- - wealth, possessions, appearance, intelligence, personality, friends children...Ressentiment ‘whispers continually: ‘I can forgive everything, but not that you *are*- - that you are *what* you are- - that I am not what you are- - indeed that I am not *you*’. The other’s very existence is a reproach.”

- As Christians, we need to believe that whether we have been given a potential for service in one area of God's Kingdom, or a weakness in service in one area of God's Kingdom, we have been called by God, gifted for particular tasks of service, and we need to be prayerfully focusing upon these. We want to understand God's providence in our day-to-day lives, including our learning and education. There will always be people who are smarter than us, but they are unique people God has made, not a standard by which we judge ourselves. We want to remember God's purpose in all that we do. Our work has been given to us to serve God and neighbor so that whatever we do in word and deed, we do it all to the glory of the LORD...giving thanks to him.
  
- Truly, people of God, how can we be thankful when we are worried about what God has given to someone else? How can we be thankful for our uniqueness and gifts when we are constantly comparing what we have (or have not) with what other's have? (this is a form of breaking the tenth commandment). How can we constantly be concerned about other's sinful hearts and not our own sinful hearts? How can we be concerned about the way that Satan and unbelievers (as well as some well-meaning Christians) abuse education, knowledge, etc. when we can begin to change things ourselves because God has uniquely and graciously made us aware of these problems?
  
- **Illustrations of Potential:**
  - a. Not a lot of people know this, but Martin Luther was not an 'A' student...in fact, he was slow. Furthermore, he discounted his father's wishes to be a lawyer in order to serve God in an Augustinian Cloister. God made him unique and uniquely gifted him to serve God and neighbor through the potentials that he had been given. He was an earthy man, who was from Coal-miner stock, who probably would not have been featured on 'Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous' nor a guest on 'Ted Koppel's 'Nightline' (perhaps the *O'Reilly Factor*, but who knows?)! However, God gifted him and in God's providence, he knew his purpose of reforming the church, of using his gifts and talents for the Church, he knew his priorities of putting Christ first and God through this little man's potential, literally "rocked the world"!
  
  - b. There was another student prior to Luther in the 13th century, who was laughed at by the other children in school because of his "dumbness" (or slowness). In fact, he was called the "Dumb Ox" by classmates. But this "Dumb Ox" wrote arguably the most influential and lengthy systematic theology in the history of the church and went on to educate many church leaders who would push for the reform of the Catholic church years before Martin Luther was born. Yes, St. Thomas Aquinas was not perhaps 'as gifted' as the other students, but he had potentials that God had given to him and he used them

for the service of God and of his neighbor. Incidentally, until Karl Barth in the 20th century, no one had taken upon himself the mammoth task of writing over 13 tomes of theology! His mammoth work is called, of course, his 'Summa Theologicae' (or summary of Theology). Potentiality, right priorities, purpose, and God's providence made a "Dumb Ox" into one of the most influential leaders in the history of the Church.

- c. On the other hand, there were two other gifted men who abused and worshipped their minds prior to their conversion. These two both taught false teaching and philosophy and led many astray in their doctrines. Both of these men persecuted the Church to the point of killing those who loved Christ! Both of these men had made idols of their brains, their minds were full of poison and lies, and they used their quick-wittedness in service to themselves rather than to God! However, in God's grace and with all their potentialities as great thinkers, God took them in their deplorable and depraved conditions and made them into two of the most important men who have ever walked the face of the earth (besides Jesus of course!).
- Upon conversion, both of these men used their minds, their past education, the circumstances and experiences that they had, and the additional good gifts God had given to them in order to serve God and the Church! One man's name was 'Paul', known as the 'Apostle Paul', and the other is Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (Better known as 'St. Augustine')! After conversion, these men both had wonderful and powerful minds to think, but both said that they were willing to part with all that for the sake of Christ's Church and the evangelism of the lost. God did not require such a dichotomy however. God did not require that they leave their minds behind, that he had providentially given to them (even though they had formerly abused them). He required them to allow his Word to renew them in order for service to him and the Church! They were not required to leave their good minds and education behind any more than we are required to leave the hands and the tongues that were given to us by God, that at one time we used for evil.
- Both of these men taught the church that knowledge for the sake of knowledge is futile! We have knowledge that is revealed knowledge in order to serve God! It humbles us to know and to think, and additionally, it teaches our hearts to fear God and love our neighbor. Both of these men were passionate in their love for Christ, Christ's people, and reached out to the lost! They both preached "Christ and him crucified" and gave the practical applications of this truth to the cultures that they confronted. There is no dichotomy between heart and mind. We cannot love or have passion for Christ, for his sheep, or for the lost, without the true knowledge of the True God! On the other hand we cannot know,

have knowledge of Christ, for his sheep, or for the lost without the true love of the Loving God! We must balance these two and see them as potentials for service!

## **II. Man's Fall:**

### **A. Adam followed the call of his own desires:**

Ecclesiastes 7: 29 Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright...But they have sought out many schemes."

### **B. Man sought his own dominion over the creation, which became domination over his Creator and other human beings:**

- a. Rather than **providence**, man seeks his own way! He prefers to do it "his way" as it were, to assert his own rulership over our lives and world. Man fails to see the hand of God's providence in every aspect of their lives and so they live idolatrously serving self and dominating neighbor.
- b. Rather than a **purposeful existence**, man lives for himself and for this moment. The only purpose he has is found in putting himself first and looking out for # 1! Some men find that because there is no end to what they do, who they are and they fail to find significance, so life is indeed meaningless. If a meaningless origin, a meaningless destiny, then necessarily man will lead a meaningless life! According to Ecclesiastes, the way of Jean Paul Sartre and Ernest Hemingway, is actually the obvious conclusion for living in a *world without windows* among *people without souls* (shadow-people), for life *under the sun* is no "picnic" and purpose evades them!
- c. Rather than right **priorities**, man has placed himself first. Man's cares, wants and desires must come first! A man's priorities are found in what he spends most of his time doing!
- d. Rather than **potential**, man seeks equality! Fallen man will do anything in his power to destroy she who is smarter, prettier, wealthier, etc. *Resentment* will destroy man in the end as he seeks constantly to belittle and destroy his neighbor!

## **III. Christ's Call:**

### **A. Christ calls all men to "follow him":**

But for all of us who have been like the above, Christ graciously calls us to "follow him". Man is a *work in progress* and so many of us still have many of these attributes above. As we submit to Scripture and as God continues to work in us what is good and pleasing to him. So, we begin to be conformed more and more into the image of God, which is Christ!

- B. Christ comes in the likeness of man to obediently serve God and answer his call!
- C. All that he was, all that he did, and all that he had was done on our behalf because of our sinful failures:
- D. Christ commissions us to call other to be reconciled to God in all that we are, all that we do, and all that we have!

**Final Quotation:**

Elizabethan sailor and adventurer Sir Francis Drake said:

*O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavor any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same to the end, until it be thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory; through him who for the finishing of thy work laid down his life, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.*