**THE MISSION –**

Lesson 8, Part 1

**Review**

Good to be with you again. Hope you’re ready for another session of thinking about the question of mission. I hope you’ve found these lectures useful, in so far that they direct you towards the Scriptures. That's the point that is significant: that you read them and that you absorb, within the structures of what we're talking about, the emphases which each of these sessions of study is seeking to make.

As you know, and as you can see on the slide, we've been working generally from a book called *The Mission of God* by Christopher J.H. Wright, a very fine Bible scholar and someone involved with a thing called the Langham Partnership. The Langham Partnership seeks to provide assistance for people in the majority world, in terms of theological training and written material, and helping people from the majority world who want to write, a Christian leader to do so. So we've actually come to the fourth part of that book, in which he heads the fourth section: “The Arena of Mission.” We’ve been thinking, as we thought of his first section in this part, we thought about the mission of God in relationship to the human role in the earth, and the earth in relationship to God and to human beings. Now we are going to think again about something we’ve touched on before, but it is important, and it has all sorts of implications. And in this section Dr. Wright explores some of the significance of you and I and human beings, being in the image of God, and we ought to proceed with that.

1. We have looked at the past, the fact of whether or not we can know God, and how we know God.
2. We thought about the mission that God has in the world to move from creation to a new creation.
3. We have seen the mission that human beings have and we’re touching a little on that again in this lecture and some of its implications that Dr. Wright spells out.
4. We then thought about the Mission of Israel,
5. and then, about the Mission of Jesus,
6. and finally, about the mission of the Church.

What we’ve been doing, as I’ve said before, and I want to emphasize this, is that we are anxious to help you to grow in your understanding of the Bible and of explaining and using the Bible in relationship to the whole aspect of mission. As I think I said before, we could go to Matthew 28, and so that's all we need to know. “The Lord's last command, is our first concern” and that's appropriate, but it does come within a wider context. And the importance of that wider context ought not to be lost. Indeed, in Dr. Wright's book, which I've been encouraging you to possess and to read, it talks about a mission or hermeneutic; a way of understanding and expounding the Bible that really sees mission as not just expressed in one verse but something which constitutes the whole. And so the mission of God, the mission of humanity, the mission of Israel, the mission of Jesus, and the mission of Church are part and parcel of that total missional reality.

**Mission and God’s Image –**

**I. Humanity In God’s Image**

So we’re thinking today, now again, of mission and God's image. I’m going to be working principally from Dr. Wright’s book himself and from his chapter. So you will have a screen up in front of you with the major points that I will be filling in from some of the material that actually occurs in his book to encourage you to buy the book and read it for yourself and to reflect on it. It’s very significant and important. So let’s turn to this matter now, of “created in the image of God” and back again to Genesis chapter 1:26-28.

We’ve looked at it before, but let's pick it up again to get these fresh emphases and insights that Dr. Wright has for us.

Read Genesis 1:26-28

Verse 26 – Notice it is plural.

Now, in this opening section of his book, Dr. Wright has a subheading to a theme—Humanity in God's Image, created in God's image, as you see on the slide here. And on the slide it says, “The image of God is not so much something we possess, it is what we are”. Its adverbial rather than adjectival, describing the way God made us rather than a quality we possess. Let me actually read to you Dr. Wright’s words to get the point. He says,

“Much theological ink has been spilled on trying to pin down exactly what about human beings that can be identified as the essence of the image of God in us.”

It’s taken a lot of thought and people thinking about it and asking questions and it's, as I think I've mentioned before, it's ranged over a number of things. He goes on to say,

“Is it our rationality,” the way we think, “Is it our moral consciousness?” Since we have a moral conscience,

“Is it about our capacity for relationship?” Our sense of responsibility to God, is this what it is?

“Even our upright posture,” we stand upright, “and the expressiveness of the human face have been canvassed as the likeness of the image of God in humankind.”

What is it? He goes on to say,

“Since the Bible nowhere defines the term, it is probably futile to attempt to do so very precisely. In any case we should not so much think of the image of God as an independent thing that we somehow possess. God did not give to human beings the image of God. Rather it is a dimension of our very creation, it lies in the very fact that we were made initially. The expression “in our image” and this is where the reference to the adverbial comes, “The expression “in our image” is adverbial.”

Now if you had your lessons in language, you’ll know what a verb means, but he says, “That is, it describes the way God made us.” So, “in our image” is an expression that describes the way that God made us. That’s what he means by adverbial. As opposed to what he says, “not adjectival.” that is, if it is simply describing a quality that we possess.

So what is he saying to us? He’s saying that this notion of the image of God, which is so important, has no actual definition given to us in the Bible. I've offered you something like this, that is, it expresses what it is in the role that God has given us, and he has his vicegerents and representatives. But he is encouraging us to see that those range of things probably do pick up things, which are significant, but because it's not defined and it's not a thing, he suggests that we think of it adverbially: that is, that it describes the way God made us. God made us as his representatives, as his image, as his vicegerents. Not so much something that we possess, that we hold something in us, which is the image of God. The image of God is not so much something we possess as what we are.

So you and I are the image of God hear in this present status of creation. When God made the world he made us, and made us in His image. To be human is to be in the image of God. Alright? If you are a human being, you are in the image of God. It's not an extra feature added on to our species, it is definitive of what it means to be human. So what does it mean to be human? It means to be in the image of God. He says “From a missiological perspective”, that is from thinking in terms of missions, “the affirmation that human beings have been created in the image of God along with the immediate context of the creation narrative, that is Genesis 1-3, implies at least four further significant truths about humanity”. So he’s saying the story that we read in the first three chapters of Genesis, gives us some insight into what it means to be those who are the image of God in the world. Here are some of them.

**1. ADDRESSABLE BY GOD**

First of all, all human beings are addressable by God. Dr. Wright says,

“Human beings are the creatures to whom God speaks”.

Being the image of God means He addresses. In the creation narrative, the story of creation, God gives the different orders of subhuman creatures the basic instructions to go and multiply. They seem to need no further encouragement or communication in attending to that task. In the case of a human creature, however, we find God speaking not only words of blessing and fruitfulness but also of instruction, of mission, and prohibition, followed later by questions, judgments, and promises. The human is the creature who is aware of God through rational communication and address. Now the Old Testament goes on to show that this applies to all human beings with no regard to ethnicity or covenant status. God can speak to Abimilech, as in the story of his encounter with Abram, or to Balaam or to Nebuchadnezzar is easily as He can speak to Abraham, Moses, or Daniel. To be human is to have the capacity of being addressed by the living God. And that has significance because it doesn't matter what cultural environment in which we find people. It doesn't matter the level of their education. The fundamental ground of our humanity is that, we can be addressed by God.

Dr. Wright goes on to say that, “the living God of all flesh needs no permission, no translation, no cross-cultural contextualization when He chooses to communicate with any person whom He has made in His own image. To be human is to be addressable by one's Creator.” Granted, of course, as Paul says that in our sin and rebellion we have universally suppressed and perverted this awareness of God. Nevertheless, the word of the Gospel has its life-giving potential precisely because even sinners and rebels are people of God in God's image and capable of hearing God’s voice. And that's a great encouragement. It is, in a sense, so unremarkable and perhaps we sense that, but it means that there isn't any human being to whom God cannot speak and to whom we cannot speak in the name of God, provided we can handle their language.

But that is true; and you will perhaps know, as I have heard, of the way God speaks to people often in visions and addresses them where they don't have access to His word. I had an experience of being told the story of a missionary in Nepal who went into an area, into a village and found a remarkable response to the Gospel. When she got to know people better and could talk about it she asked why they were so responsive, and she was told that two of the women in the village used to go out into a field to work and an old man met them and talked to them about God. He said someone would come one day who would tell them how to know God and how to find God. And so that happened on more than one occasion. When the missionary came they were prepared and they listened to her and responded to the Gospel. When the woman was able to communicate well enough and know, she asked them if he still kept appearing. ‘No’ they said, ‘When you came he didn't come anymore’. Now, it was interesting I told that story in a church one day as an illustration and a man came up to me after and said, ‘That story is true. I know that woman’. He said, ‘I was a missionary in Nepal and I know it's true’. So there we are. God speaks and while His principal agents of speaking to us is His Word, He can address us because we are addressable by Him in a range of ways. He is not limited to that. He can do what He chooses to do.

**2. ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD**

Dr. Wright’s second point that he makes being created image of God is that all human beings are accountable to God, not only addressable by God, but accountable to Him. He said the other side of the coin of being able to be addressed, is accountability. The man and woman in the creation narratives are the creatures who must give an answer when God addresses them. Even in hiding from God, they must answer to God. This too is a universal phenomenon independent of culture and religion.

Read Psalm 33:13-17

God looks down from heaven. He sees all mankind. From His dwelling place, He watches all who live on the earth. He forms the heart of man. He knows man. As Dr. Wright goes on to say, “This is an astonishing assertion: every human being on the planet is known by God, considered and evaluated by God, and called to an account by God”. That is profound isn’t it? There isn’t a human being, because that human being is the image of God, who God does not know. Jesus said, of course, to His disciples even the hairs on our head are numbered. So God's knowledge is infinite.

Dr. Wright goes on to say, “Herein lies the basis of the universalizable Biblical ethics”. He is simply saying that Biblical ethics, the requirements for behavior can be universalized, spread across the world to every human being. It is because of this assumption, that all human beings are accountable to Yahweh, that Amos in the Old Testament can address God’s accusation and punishment to the non-covenant nations around Israel. The nations may not have been taught the laws of Yahweh as Israel had through the great unique revelation of Mount Sinai, but they do know the fundamentals of ethical responsibility to God and one another. And remember when we were thinking about God and we were thinking about in an earlier lecture, about to the comments of C.S. Lewis? How he drew attention to the fact that human beings everywhere have a guilty conscience. They may not have the law of God, but they are aware of a difference between right and wrong. And sometimes that varies as to what it is, not so greatly as C.S. Lewis said. But people, by their own code, know that they have always lived up to it and have a guilty conscience.

So, he said, in thinking of mission there are common ethical bridges to people of all cultures. There is some universal sense of moral obligation that human beings share, which again is an important missiological foundation. That was perhaps C.S. Lewis’ point. We can speak to people knowing that they will have the sense that they are not always right. And we can tell them how they can be right before God through faith in Christ.

**3. HAVE DIGNITY AND EQUALITY**

Dr. Wright’s third point that he goes on to make is that all human beings have dignity and equality. He says,

“Being made in the image of God is simultaneously that which sets us apart from the rest of the animals and that which we humans all have in common. No other animal is created in the image of God. So this forms the basis for the unique dignity and sanctity of human life. So all other humans are created in the image of God. This forms the basis for the radical equality of all human beings, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or any form of social, economic, or political status.”

You know, the sad thing in my country is that, when Western Europeans, when the white people came to our country, many of them considered that the local population was subhuman, and killed them sometimes indiscriminately. It was a terrible tragedy. There is no human being, dead or alive, who was not or is not in the image of God, and therefore, every person, to whatever depths they fall, people say, you know, that they are almost no longer human. That can never be true. Human beings may be terribly degraded and may act as if they are hardly human. There is a saying, “He didn’t act like a human, he acted like an animal”. Well, no animal would act sometimes the way we do, but, that is the dignity and status we have. He said,

“In these affirmations the faith of the Old Testament Israel was quite distinctive from some surrounding ancient near Eastern religions, and enduring religious traditions today, such as Hinduism, in which differences between human beings are not merely cultural or social, but ontological,” having to do with there being.

Christians don't believe that because Christians believe that all people have this dignity and we are called to treat them, because every man, every woman, every child bears that characteristic.

(Read Job 31: 13 - 15)

Job saw he was made of the same stuff and had the same dignity as his manservant and maidservant.

“Christian mission,” Wright goes on, “must therefore treat all human beings with dignity, equality, and respect. When we look at any other person, we do not see,” he said, “a label, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, secular, atheist, white, black, etc., but we see the image of God. We have a dignity.”

That is there. He goes on to say,

“To love your neighbor as yourself is not just the second great commandment of the law, it's an essential implication of our common creativeness, and it is as relevant in mission as in any other walk of life.”

**examples of reaching out in respect and dignity**

He makes two interesting references, about this reaching out, about this reaching out in respect and dignity. One is in Acts 19 and the other is in 1 Peter. Let’s look at those, shall we?

**A. In Acts**

Let’s look at Acts chapter 19, verse 37. It’s part of the ministry of St. Paul. It’s an interesting thing. This is involved in the riot that was caused in Ephesus by Paul's preaching, and Demetrius the silversmith and others created difficulties. And when the magistrates came in they sought to address the crowd, and in verse 37, this is what we read:

we’ll start at 36, we’ll go back to 35…

(Read Acts 19: 35 – 37)

Now the point that Wright is making is that, in his witness in Ephesus, Paul was respectful. He certainly didn't think that Diana was a god or a goddess, and certainly didn't respect the things that went on in the temple. But there was a respectfulness about the way he had obviously proceeded, so that the town clerk who had the responsibility of giving an account to his Roman masters for any disturbance that took place, could say that often he had acted in a respectful fashion.

**B. In 1 Peter**

If you go to 1 Peter, chapter 3, verses 15 and 16, Peter says, starting in verse 13:

(Read 1 Peter 3: 15 – 16)

Being rude and disrespectful to others is no part of Christian character. It is not an expression of love, but is also a recognition that, when we're dealing with other people we are dealing with those who are made in the image of God.

**4. THE BIBLICAL GOSPEL FITS ALL**

OK. So, he says, the fourth point is that the Biblical Gospel fits all. Good point. He says,

“The image of God is not of course the only thing we humans beings universally have in common. We are also all sinners and rebels against our Creator God, a result of which, God's image in us while not lost, (for it is constitutive, it’s part of our humanity) is spoiled and distorted. God's mission includes the restoration of people to that true image of God of which His own Son Jesus, is the perfect model. (We’ve talked about Jesus as the true man, true human) This means that just as our sin is a universal reality, (and as we talked about the universally guilty conscience, experience of a guilty conscience) which underlies the many cultural forms in which it manifests itself, so also the gospel is a universal remedy that addresses human need in any and all cultures.”

So the fact that we share our common humanity as made in the image of God, it means that the gospel we carry will fit everybody. Now it’s true isn’t it, that for people to hear it appropriately it needs translation, and to be lived out it will need to be translated into that culture. There is a writing missiologist from England, David Walls, who talks about the way the Gospel translates itself into all cultures, when it goes. Its scriptures can be translated, as opposed to the Quran which is to be really read in Arabic, the Gospels are translatable and are be translated as is the message is to be carried in a translated form into that particular culture. Why? Because the Gospel is meant to be heard in every culture, in every language and every tongue, in the heart language of every people, because the biblical gospel fits all, and should be heard in all, because all are made in the image of God. He says,

“That is not in any way to ignore the wonderful variety of ethnicity and culture that so enriches the human race. Nor is it to minimize the myriad of ways in which the gospel takes root and is lived out in different cultural contexts,” is Walls’ point. “On the contrary the true richness of the biblical gospel would only be fully seen in all its glory when it shines forth like the many facets of the diamond in all the redeemed cultures of the new creation.”

So, we are made in the image of God and that means that we all are addressable by God, all human beings are accountable to God, all human beings have dignity and equality, and as we reach out in mission, it calls us in our practice to be respectful of the dignity of others. That doesn't mean that we will not in the end, challenge their world views and beliefs, challenge them to turn to the living God, but it does mean that we will do that respectfully. But as sometimes perhaps you have seen, as I have, forms evangelism who don’t necessarily act in a respectful way to other people.

Alright, he goes on then to talk about the fact that not only that, but that in the Jerusalem Gospel fitting all, it was a feature of a story in the New Testament that calls us to see the importance of that Council which was held in Jerusalem in Acts 15. The Gospel had grown up in a Jewish context. The first converts were Jews. And the church in Jerusalem was very anxious to remain as it were, within the structure of Judaism, but to be a group who recognize the Messiah to be as it were, the core of Israel and the call of Israel to that new relationship through Jesus. It was, as you know, when the Christians spread to Antioch, that that’s where they were first called Christians. Christians weren’t first Christians, they were initially the Messiah’s people, within ethnic Israel. But as the Gospel began to spread out into the world and more and more Gentiles came in, the question arose, as it did for the Gentiles if they were going to be followers of the Messiah, did they have to become Jews? And so there was a major consultation about it and ultimately in Acts 15 you remember, that it was resolved that while those believers who remained within Judaism would live in that context and would honor the principles and culture of Judaism but express that as servants of the Messiah. So there were established things that the Gentiles would not need to undertake. There were certain requirements: that they would not need blood, that they would respect the sensitivities of their Jewish brothers and sisters, but that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was the thing to determine their status before God. And so it is in this question of the fact that human beings are made in the image of God, it means that in each culture there will be some measure of adaptation in its application as it moves across ethnic and cultural boundaries. It’s bound to do that.

Now it won't lose any of its major features. It won't lose any of its moral imperatives. One thing it does mean is, probably you won't use the sort of musical instruments in one with country that you might use of another in public worship. It may mean that they'll be certain traditions honored in one country in the way that one prays that are different to another. Those cultural variations will take place, but the Christian faith, inclusion in the people of God, being redeemed, is about faith in Jesus Christ and living out that commitment of love to God and love to others in the context of faith in Jesus Christ in the context in which we find ourselves. And so, that is important.

**5. CREATED FOR ITS HOUSE**

So then, Dr. Wright moves onto another heading which is headed “Created for Its House,” and a reminder that that's why we were created. He says,

“Humanity was put on the earth with a mission,” (Now, we've looked at that, the mission of humanity), “and that mission was to rule over, to keep and to care for the rest of creation. This enables us to see ecological concern and action as a valid part of biblical Christian mission.” (We’ve talked about that already in the previous session. Here we look in with a little more depth at the meaning of the mandate God gave to us and this is what he says.) “God instructed human beings not only to fill the earth, an instruction also given to other creatures but also, to subdue it and to rule over the rest of the creatures.”

Now remember, we've read that as we looked at Genesis before, but in Genesis 1:28… well, let’s turn to that. Genesis chapter 1, because he’s going to say something about some of the words in it, and it’s good to have them in front of us... Chapter 1 verse 28,

Read Genesis 1:28

“He said, “Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness…” and so on. And then in verse 28, He says,

“And God blessed them and God said to them be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Now Dr. Wright focuses for a little bit on two of those words, the word “subdue”, and the word have “dominion” which have two Hebrew words behind it. Let me read what he says,

“God instructed the human species not only to fill the earth, but to subdue it. The word that is translated “subdue”, and the word translated “rule” are strong words implying both exertion and effort, and the imposing of will, of a will upon another. However they are not, as contemporary ecological mythology likes to caricature these terms, terms that imply violence or abuse. (There are people who do say that. There was an interesting paper written a few years ago in which that was a major theme.) “The idea that these words could ever imply violent abuse and exploitation and the implied accusation that Christianity is therefore an intrinsically eco-hostile religion, is relatively recent. By far the dominant interpretation of these words in both Jewish and Christian tradition down through the centuries has been, that they entailed benevolent care for the rest of creation as entrusted into human custodianship. On one level, the first term “to subdue”, authorizes humans to do what every other species on earth does, which is to utilize its environment for life and survival. That is, all species in some way or other subdue the earth to the varying degrees necessary for their own prospering. So we all build nests for places to live in. That, in a sense, is a measure of subduing the earth. This is the very nature of life on earth as applied to humans. In this verse it probably implies no more than the task of agriculture. That humans have developed tools and technology to pursue their own distinctive form of subduing the earth for human benefits is no different in principle to what other species do. They’re clearly vastly different in decree and impact on the total eco-sphere, something to be borne in mind.

The second word, which means to rule, is more distinctive. It certainly describes a role and function for human beings that is entrusted to no other species, the function of ruling or exercising dominance or dominion. It seems clear that what God is doing here, is passing on to human hands a delegated form of God's own kingly authority over the whole of His creation. It is commonly pointed out that kings and emperors in ancient times, and even dictators in modern times, would set up an image of themselves in far-flung corners of their domain to signify their sovereignty over that territory and its people. The image represented the authority of the true king. Similarly, God installs the human species as the image within creation of the authority that finally belongs to God Creator and owner of all. And we’ve looked at that feature before. So even apart from that analogy, Genesis describes God’s work in regal terms, though without the use of the word ‘king’. God’s creating work exudes wisdom in planning, power in execution and goodness in completion. Wisdom, power and goodness, are the very qualities that Psalm 145 speaks of.”

So let’s just look at Psalm 145 briefly. We’ve looked at it before, let's look at it again.

Read Psalm 145:1-7

God’s goodness, God's righteousness is involved in His creating work. He is that sort of king and therefore we are called to represent Him in the same way.

“There is righteousness,” says Wright, “a righteousness and benevolence inherent in God's kingly power that is exercised towards all that is made. These, of course, royal qualities without using the word, the author of Genesis 1 celebrates Creator as king, supreme in all the qualities which belong to the ideal kingship, just as they occur in Psalms 93 and 95 - 100.

We won't consult all those, but we will consult Psalm 93, so let's get back to it I'll get you in your time, to read the ones that we’ve omitted, to look at them and to reflect on them. But let’s turn to Psalm 93. It says,

(Read Psalm 93)

He goes on to say, i

“So the natural assumption then, is that a creature made in the image of his God will reflect the same qualities in carrying out the mandate of delegated dominion. Whatever way this human dominion is to be exercised, it must reflect the character and value of God’s own kingship.

So as you think about this, it's easy, isn’t it, to talk about humankind as a whole. But as you and I think about our place in the universe that God has given us and ourselves as God's image, we are to reflect His godly concern for the world which He has made.

“The image is a kingly pattern, and the kind of rule which God entrusted to humankind, is the proper ideals for kingship. The ideals, not the abuses or failures, not the tyranny or arbitrary manipulation and exploitation of subjects, but a rule governed by justice, mercy and true concern for the welfare of all. Oh, that it were so! So then, human dominion over the rest of creation is to be an exercise of kingship that reflects God's kingship.”

It’s not a license for abuse based on arrogant supremacy, but a pattern that commits us to humble reflections of the character of God.

Okay. So, you can read that when you have the book and reflect on that further.

**6. IN RELATIONSHIP**

Let’s go to his next point, which is, that we were created in relationship. He says,

“Genesis 1 sets human male - female complementarity closely alongside the image of God. ‘God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them,’ (as Genesis 1:27 says, and we’ve just been looking at that, so you will recall it. What else is he going to say? He says,) “The implication from the tight parallelism,” (that's two things that go together), “seems clearly to be that there is something about the wholeness of human gender complementarity and the mutual relationship it enables,” (that is between male and female), “that reflects something true about the very nature of God.” (Significant, isn't it?) “Not that God Himself is sexually differentiated, but that relationship is part of the very being of God and therefore also part of the very being of humanity created in His image.”

And we talked about, didn’t we, the nature of God, triune, that that relationship between the elements of the Godhead, the persons of the Godhead, well, that gets its reflection, in a sense, in the creation of humanity. It’s created in relationship, male and female, they together bear the image of God.

“Human sexuality reflects within the created order something that is true about God within His divine non-created being.”

It’s important to see, isn’t it, that the doctrine of the Trinity that is being formulated, and was formulated later, has been there from the beginning. The reality of God, the “threeness” of God within the oneness of God has been there from the very beginning.

He says, “Genesis 2 on the other hand, sets human gender complementarity in the context of a human task. The sudden admission of something that is not good in God's evaluation of the creation which has been repeatedly described as good and very good, it’s startling.

You have in front of you, the “not good” of Genesis 2:18 more than addressing emotional loneness, it talks about the immensity of the task that man was given. Let me read to you what he says. He’s drawing the fact that after God has said good, good, good, very good, He then says something is not good. So he says,

“What is not good is that the man, the earth creature, should be alone. But in the immediate context, the problem of his loneliness is not merely that he would be lonely in a relational sense,” (that is, he’ll feel alone, and disappointed because he is and none of the animals answer to him), “but God is addressing not merely a psychological problem but a creational problem. The problem is that God has given an immense trust to this creature in Genesis 2:15. He has been put in the garden to work it and to care for it.” (He gave, remember that?) “When he added to the tasks specified in the earlier creation account to fill the earth subdue it and rule over the rest of the animal creation, the human task seems limitless. That is, he is to exercise his care over it all, to work it, and to take care of it.” (It's an amazing responsibility. So he says, the suggestion Wright makes is,) “A man cannot tackle such a task alone.”

That’s not good, God says, that he should. He needs help. So it’s significant that the term used to describe the project God now embarks on is not to find a companion, to stop him from feeling lonely, but to find a helper to stand beside him in his huge task that laid upon him as a servant, keeper, filler, subduer, a ruler of creation.

Perhaps you’d like to turn to Genesis 2 just to look at that. It's quite remarkable, because that word does occur there. Chapter 2 verse 18.

Read Genesis 2:18

And while many expound that in terms of providing someone that is appropriate for him, that fits to him, that meets his need for companionship, Wright’s suggesting that in view of the task that is before him, he is given a helper to help him. He cannot challenge it alone.

“The man must not just need company, he needs help.” (Chuckle) (Well, I know, when it comes to my wife, I need help.) “Male and female are necessary not only for mutual relationship, which they are, in which they will reflect God through certainly, but also for mutual help in carrying out the creation mandate entrusted to humanity.”

So, there’s a significance in that, and in most social relationships. So he goes on to talk, to spread it out in a wider sphere, to say,

“Humanity then, is created in relationship,” (so when God created humanity He created us in relationship) “and for relationship, and for a task that requires relational cooperation.”

I wear a shirt that, well, my wife bought it for me, in the shop. But we get that because there's a whole series of production and manufacturing processes that require relational cooperation. We couldn't live without it. He says

“Not only at the basic biological level, that a man and woman can produce a child in order to fill the earth, but also at the wider societal level, where both men and women have their roles of mutual assistants in the great task of ruling the creation on God’s behalf.”

And so we created for a task but we also are created for relationship.

“God's creative intention for human life right from the start and projected into the new creation includes social relationship.” Loving horizontal relationships between people, starting with marriage and extending to include all other social relationships are part of God's desire for human life. And since the fall devastated that relational dimension of human life, (and did between a man and woman) it is part of God's mission to restore healthy social relationships when they are broken through sin.”

And so you and I have a responsibility in that regard, to do that, and it is part of our responsibility in the task for which we were created. He concludes this session by saying,

“Since relationships from the sexual bond to wider circles of human are included in God's own creative redemption action, they fall within the range of human mission agenda. This is another plank in the biblical foundation for holistic theology of mission. Our missional objective is not limited to the vital and urgent and necessary evangelistic task of helping individuals come into a right relationship with God that will secure their individual eternal destiny, we also share God's passion for healthy human relationships here and now between individuals and families in the workplace through society and between nations.”

We were created for relationships. But as we know, as we're thinking about this question of mission in God's image, the question of human rebellion is accounted for in Genesis chapter 3 and as it fills itself out in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Now I’m not going to ask you now, nor am I going to read to you through those first 11 chapters of Genesis, but it's a story as you recall of the wickedness of humanity which involved the flood, of the pride of humanity which involved the Tower of Babel, and the scattering of humanity and the confusion of languages, those stories… it is the sad, sad story of humanity in rebellion. And so, he wants us to think about that rebellion as we think about man in God's image, and mission in relationship to God's image, and that’s where we’re going to turn.

**THE MISSION –**

Lesson 8, Part 2

**II. God’s Mission – Man’s Rebellion**

**A. SIN AFFECTS EVERY DIMENSION OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

His first point is an important one, and it is listed here on the slide: that sin affects every dimension of the human person. There isn’t a part of us which hasn't been affected by the fall. He says,

“The portrait of human beings that we find in the early chapters of Genesis is an integral single person but with a different dimension of life and relationship. Rather than speaking of the human being having a body and a soul and whatever other parts one may wish to add, it seems preferable to speak adjectivally of human persons as living with a fully integrated combination of different dimensions. At least four aspects of human life are seen in these early accounts. Human beings are physical, they are spiritual, they are rational, and they are social, and each has been affected. The following narrative in Genesis 3, (or the following narrative through those 11 chapters) go on a show however that it is in every way, in Genesis 3 and then beyond, that all these dimensions are affected.”

Let’s think about them. If you read it you'll see how he talks about this as reflected in the account of the garden, I’ll leave that to you to read. But as it's impact, as it flows out to the world, these are the elements that you see listed here.

1. SPIRITUALLY

“First, spiritually. We are alienated from God, fearful in His presence, suspicious of His truth and hostile to His love.

That’s how we are today. Those who are made in the image of God and walked in fellowship with God, the effect of our rebellion was to affect us spiritually, in that fashion, to separate us from God, to make us fearful of God, suspicious of His truth and hostile to His love. How sad. The one who would bestow such love upon us, who created us because He wanted us to experience His love and know love. We have alienated ourselves from Him. So it has affected us spiritually.

2. RATIONALLY

Wright says, it has affected us rationally. We use our minds, like the first human couple, to rationalize sin, blame others and to excuse ourselves. We’ve become darkened in our thinking. And St Paul picks up that note, doesn’t he? We read in Ephesians, he says, yeah, you mustn’t do what the Gentiles do, “they are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God,” and here it is. He’s just picking that up.

3. PHYSICALLY

“We’re affected physically. We are sentenced to death as God decreed and suffer its invasion through sickness and decay even as life itself. Our whole physical environment likewise groans in futility under God's curse.”

And that’s what we looked at in Romans chapter 8. So, spiritually, rationally, physically, and then finally socially.

4. SOCIALLY

“Human life is fractured at every level with anger, jealousy, violence and murder, even between brothers in the story of Cain and Abel escalating into the horrendous social decay that the rest of the biblical narrative graphically portrays.”

That is the dimension of sin. Sin affects human society. Romans 1 and 2. I encourage you to read it. We won't read it now, but Wright says

“Romans one and two is Paul's incisive commentary on the universal reign of sin in human life and society.

Reading his searing analysis there, we can see all of the same four dimensions of human personality involved in sin and rebellion. There is no part of the human person that is unaffected by sin. That is true in us, and it is true in everyone else. That’s where we need the Spirit of God take the Word of God translate it into our lives, so that we think differently, we act differently, we relate differently, and one day, praise God, we’ll be physically different we’ll be raised with resurrection bodies.

**B. SIN AFFECTS SOCIETY AND HISTORY**

He goes on then to say, sin affects human society and history as well as affecting us. He says,

“The individual effects of sin are glaringly apparent in the Genesis narrative. The Bible goes on to a much deeper analysis. There is also what now is called the ‘prophetic perspective’ on sin. In the Old Testament canon the prophets are not merely those whose books bear their name, from Isaiah to Malachi, but they also include those who wrote the historical books, the former prophets.”

These history writers were prophetic because they observe society in history from God's point of view and sought to interpret both in the light of God's Word and purposes. Sin spread through its people and spread through the whole world and God addressed that through His prophets.

“Sin spreads horizontally within society and sin propagates itself vertically between generations. It thus generates contexts and connections that are laden with collective sin. Sin becomes endemic, structural and embedded in history. The Old Testament historians observed how whole societies become addicted to chaotic evil as the book of Judges proclaims. Isaiah attacks those who legalized injustice by passing laws that give structural legitimacy to oppression. And Isaiah 10: 1 & 2 says, ‘Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice for the oppressed of My people.’

There are certainly witnesses to that everywhere, and we’re not necessarily always free of it ourselves. As I mentioned about my own country it was only after a referendum later in the history of Western society in my country, that the indigenous people were given the right to vote. So those things happen. They spread in that fashion and send effects across all the aspects of human society. And so we find in human society the very environment in which life takes place, it is there. You may recall that in Ephesians Chapter 6, Paul talks about putting on the armor of God in light of the way that evil enters the world, and the need to do it, and the powers that impact upon the lives of the Christian. Some people have expanded, for the modern times those powers being seen in the institutions that we build. And endemic evil gets built into them and it's not unusual to find that someone will go to work in a major organization that has particular moral values, and the culture of the organization because of what one wants to achieve, mulls those values and they change. They become, sometimes, less honorable. Some of you may recall the book, and the movie made of the book, *The Lonely Garden,* …I don’t know quite the title of it, but it’s talking about the drug companies trialing drugs in Africa. I just can’t think of the first word of the title, but those of you who know the book will be able to fill-in the title for me. But it is indicative of the fact, of the way organizations, corporations, human structures can develop morals, moral outlooks which are less than acceptable. So it touches all our institutions and that's why it's often said that in the Reformation in a place like Geneva, they built a system of government and would have checks and balances. We have that in Western democracies where we have checks and balances because human beings do the wrong thing, and the structures do the wrong thing. So we seek to establish accountability instructions to make sure that that is kept as a check. So there we are. Sin affects human history, and he goes on to say that sin affects the whole environment of human life. Let’s look at that for a moment. This and what he says,

**C. SIN AFFECTS THE WHOLE ENVIRONMENT OF HUMAN LIFE**

“When human beings choose to rebel against their Creator, their disobedience and fall affect the whole of their physical environment. This is immediately clear from God's word to Adam, ‘Cursed is the ground because of you.’ But in view of the connection between human beings and the rest of creation it could not have been otherwise. Richard Baucom, (who is very good scholar and is quoted here by Chris Wright says this in this fashion, about the inevitability of evil effects). He says, “How does the fall affect nature? Is it only in human history that God's creative work is disrupted, necessitating a redemptive work whereas in the rest of nature, creation continues unaffected by the fall? This cannot be the case because humanity is part of the interdependent whole of nature. So the disruption in human history must disrupt nature. And since humanity is the dominant species on earth, human sin is bound to have very widespread effects on nature as a whole. The fall disturbed humanity’s harmonious relationship with nature, alienating us from nature, so that we now experience nature as hostile and introducing elements of struggle and violence into our relationship with nature as it was predicted in Genesis 3:15 and in 17 to 19, and in 9:2.”

There it is…the fall disturbed humanity’s harmonious relation with nature.

Now I mentioned in the last lecture, because I had this in my mind, what Dr. Wright had to say about the human experience of HIV and AIDS, and he relates that to the church mission. Let me pick that up again and give you a little more detail as it comes from his book. He says,

“Unquestionably the greatest emergency facing the human family (and this book was written in 2005, published in February 2006) today is HIV / AIDS virus. It is devastating human life on a scale that can scarcely be graphed. Imagine 20 Boeing 747 airliners crashing on earth every day killing all it’s passengers. At least that many people approximately 7 to 8000 die every day from AIDS-related illnesses. (It’s a terrible scourge, isn’t it?) The great majority of these are in sub-Saharan Africa, home of over 70% of all HIV AIDS cases, deaths and new infections. Scale is a difficult concept in itself. The world was horrified by the attack on the Twin Towers, the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001 in which some 3000 people died. Africa suffers the equivalent of two 9/11’s every day. (That’s startling, isn’t it?) The tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004 carried off 300,000 people in a single day. HIV inflicts the equivalent of a tsunami on Africa every month. (It's a dimension of a problem which is truly immense. He says,) “Globally it's estimated that at least 46 million people are infected. There are 16,000 new infections daily. 20 million have already died of AIDS and at least 65 million will have died by 2020. And whereas past great pandemics in human history such as the outbreaks of the plague, the Black death in Europe, tended to carry off mainly the weakest in society, the very young and the very old, HIV-AIDS by contrast is most devastating among the young adult population, so that the surviving young and old, suffer even more.”

And perhaps you know, as I know, relatively young children and certainly people, care for dozens of young people in Africa, made homeless in this fashion. Young people caring for younger siblings, parents taking into their homes children who'd been made off. It’s a terrible scourge. He says,

“It carries off the working child-bearing generation leaving behind precisely the very young and the very old to cope without those who would normally care for them both. HIV-AIDS is hollowing out whole communities in Africa throwing grandparents and very young children together in a struggle for survival, creating vast numbers of the most vulnerable people of all, widows and orphans. A new AIDS orphan is created every 14 seconds. Add three more since you began reading this paragraph.”

Why does he pick up this? He picks it up to draw attention to the challenges that the fallenness of the world presents, as he’s thinking under this heading of sin affects our whole environment. And it fashions our relationship to our environment and all that is in it. I can only say, it affects everywhere, but Africa is such a sufferer and we should pray and do what we can to help. He said,

“I've been moved to reflect on the critical nature of HIV-AIDS in relation to mission by two things. One, an article by Ken Ross, “HIV-AIDS Pandemic: What is the State for Christian Mission?” in which he argues passionately that there is a redefining moment for the church and mission in this terrible phenomenon, and the stakes are high. The other, was the deeply moving gathering of the mission leaders forum at the overseas missionary study Center in New Haven, Connecticut in December 2004, in which HIV-AIDS was the main topic. Presentations were made by people deeply involved at considerable personal cost at the cutting edge of the problem in Africa and China. It seems to me that HIV-AIDS sucks into this horrible vortex almost every dimension of evil that we face. The Bible alerts us to and at the same time calls for every dimension of mission that the Bible portrays. For in using HIV-AIDS in this way, as a kind of case study of paradigm people, I want to make it absolutely clear that I am not, unequivocally *not*, suggesting that HIV AIDS sufferers are themselves embodying evil or sin in any way that is not common to the rest of the human race. Nor do I accept the idea that HIV-AIDS is a specific judgment of God on its victims, even if we acknowledge that sexual promiscuity is a major cause of infection, and so some people reap what they sow. There are just far too many people, especially women and children, even the unborn, who become infected or affected by the disease through no fault or sin of their own. Nor is their suffering to be regarded in any sense, as Gods direct judgment on them. Indeed, there are many have been infected by doing what is pleasing to God, caring for the sick, tending to their wounds, both medical workers and family caregivers. Many young children are tragically infected as a result of the loving and intimate care they give to dying parents. Sadly, the opinion that the disease is the direct judgment of God they suffer for their own sins, whether externally inflicted or internally accepted, is itself an added ingredient in their isolation and suffering.”

So, it’s a dramatic expression of what it is that we’re to live for in the world.

“The dimensions of evil,” he says, “is mysterious in its causation, it invades life, delivers inevitable death, it produces prolonged physical suffering, anxiety, pain and decay, it spreads in many ways, but primary one is through human sexuality, it thrives on the gender imbalance between dominant males and exploited females, it says something that we learn from Genesis 3 as a result of the fall. in southern Africa 60% of females have their first sexual experience in the context of coercion. (Isn’t that sad?), and in 40% of cases, it is from a man in superior social employment, or familial position. HIV-AIDS further preys disproportionately on women. In Africa, women and teenage girls are 5 to 6 times more likely to become infected than men, mainly because of their low economic and social status and lack of control over their sexual practice. (Isn’t that a sad expression of what sin is and how different from how it was in the garden? He goes on to say,) It’s no respecter of the innocent. A high degree of infected women have been faithful to their husbands but suffer from infection in that it is transmitted to them after promiscuity elsewhere. (I’ve seen that myself in Africa.) It creates widows and orphans at a frightening pace, and the very fact that these people are cast in those positions, it throws, as we’ve already said, a terrible burden of those who remain. It destroys the future and removes hope from individuals and communities. Young lives with high expectations are suddenly handed an imminent death sentence. It generates massive psychological trauma: fear, denial, pain, guilt, self-hatred, anger, violent revenge, despair, and of course, like all evil, it raises acute spiritual questions as well as about the goodness and fairness of God. It both causes and exploits poverty. HIV-AIDS reveals the fracture, stresses and strains in society, exploiting disorder, inequality, and poverty. It also exposes the inequality in the world between the rich and poor nations. If you contract HIV-AIDS in a Western society, the availability of antiretroviral drugs at affordable cost will mean that you can expect to live a relatively normal life for many more years, with not much more, according to one expert, than the dangers and inconvenience of diabetes sufferers. In most majority world countries however, such drugs that are available are priced beyond the dreams let alone the needs of most sufferers. The battle against shamefully reluctant pharmaceutical companies to address this injustice is one of the many tragic sagas of the disease. (So there is a justice issue also. He goes on to say that,) It induces reactions among others both outside and inside the church that vary from denial to deceit, and condemnation to the victim, to false representation of the ways of God. It gets locked into the corruption of pride in politics, where concealment, denial and power, struggles over resources, foreign funds and so forth, compound the problem and delay it’s remedy. It’s a disease that affects every facet of human condition on earth: labor, productivity, procreation, pleasure, faith, education, physical health, mental health. And confronting this is such a comprehensively devastating phenomenon, it is surely no exaggeration to say that in HIV-AIDS we are looking into the distorting, devouring, and diabolical face of an evil that tears at the very heart of human life on God's earth. As an expression of the way that sin affects its environment, it is a powerful expression.

The dimensions of mission, (he says) in response to this, and let me touch on them quickly. He says, “Such holistic evil demands a holistic response. Thankfully many Christians worldwide both in government and non-government organizations, take this matter very seriously. Indeed, even though one is saddened to hear of churches that ostracized the infected out of a false assumption of God's judgment on sin, the Lausanne statement on the matter makes the following crucial points: (and you need to notice this. It says) HIV-AIDS is a complex and multifaceted pandemic with a wide variety of interacting courses, sustaining factors and impacts. Therefore this pandemic demands a holistic mission response from the churches. We must make our contribution to fighting this disaster by drawing on a Christian worldview that seamlessly unites the material, the psychosocial, the social, the cultural and political and spiritual aspects of life, a worldview that unites evangelism, discipleship, social action and the pursuit of justice.”

And as we've looked at these things and we’ve looked at the various elements of the mission of God, it has been to remind us that there is a totality in which we are engaged. Those of us who are in here have a particular focus in sharing the gospel, and that's right. We need to keep at that and doing it. But in our lives we need to see that it is part of a wider mission that we have responsibility as those created in the image of God, those called to love God and to love our neighbors, we spread out as those who've been given the mandate of caring for the world and caring for one another, of dealing with an issue like this, and this is not the only issue. Chris Wright chooses this because of its immensity and its virile nature, and it’s vast in its impact. As an expression of a sin or of our sinful condition within the world, of a result of sin, that can be reflected in other forms of injustice, and we have a responsibility to do it.

I have a relative of mine who is deeply involved in the question of social justice in relationship to trafficking in women. I worked in Africa or in the slums of Africa with an Australian doctor who see the injustice in the way in which products are handled, made and marketed, in what it used to be called the First World, in the Western world, at the expense of the workers. So he labors with those who seek to involve themselves in fair trade to make sure that people who produce these products that we enjoy get a fair return for them.

“So such a holistic missional response to HIV-AIDS it would seem to me must include at least the following elements”: (and here as we’re thinking about mission as a whole, let’s listen to him)…

1. “Sheer compassionate care for the sick and dying. No disciple of Jesus should need to be persuaded of this.
2. More extensive care for those whose lives are devastated in multiple ways by the effects of the disease in their country, whether personally infected or not.
3. Generating employment and caring for widows and orphans. One of the most prominent of all biblical commands, from Exodus to the letter of James, all the way through, we cannot avoid that responsibility.
4. Education of the infected, the affected, the churches, the pastors, the local civil leaders, and all who have a chance of influencing attitudes and behavior, especially women.
5. Tackling and condemning cultural and religious practices that make the suffering worse, such as stigmatizing and ostracism, gender prejudice and oppression.
6. Engaging in the struggle to find the right balance in allocating resources for the prevention of infection on the one hand and treatment on the other, (of already infected on the other).

There are medical, political, economic, cultural and justice issues that divide. Sometimes I put up my hands and think ‘What can I do?’ But we do have a responsibility. We can't shrug it off.

1. Offering and providing training for psychological and spiritual counseling and support for people in every stage, from a positive test result to the moment of death. The support of the bereaved.
2. Encouragement in the economic and political dimensions of the issue for those whose calling is in the political sphere.
3. Sensitive evangelistic witness to the new and eternal life can be ours in Christ, the forgiveness of sin, the hope of resurrection and the certainty that death will not have the final word.”

It is here that we carry a message to the world and to those particularly suffering from this infection that there is a word of hope, there is redemption, there is forgiveness of sin where sin is involved. There’s the overcoming of this failure and there is this opportunity to once again experience ultimately the hope that Jesus has given us a new heaven and a new earth.

So let me read it as he concludes this section. He says,

“ From all that has been argued in this book so far, it should be clear that all of these and doubtless many other aspects of our missional response are integral parts of the holistic way in which we seek to embody the mission of God in His decisive conflict with people.”

We have this responsibility in our churches we should take it seriously, we should be praying about this. Sometimes I listen to the prayers in church, offered in church, and I don't want to be judgmental and I hope I'm not being but sometimes I hear, “Lord, give me a good week and let me have a happy holiday and, let me get a good job”, well there’s nothing wrong about praying those things. The brothers and sisters, as those who are created in the image of God, as those who are created to be God's representatives, Gods vicegerents, Gods images in this world, we have a much broader responsibility in our churches. And our prayer life… well, shouldn't it reflect these deep concerns, and this sense that we are called to be that, right across the board of human realities? Yes, we must pray and beseech God for the spread of the gospel as Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him that he may be given boldness to speak, to see what to do. We must do that. But we must not do it at the expense of forgetting that not taking our responsibility in the other areas seriously. He says,

“No single approach constitutes an adequate missional response to itself, to an evil like HIV-AIDS. And the evil it embodies is just too big for one-line answers. If God created and cared for every dimension of human life, then God's mission is the final eradication of everything that attacks every dimension of human life. Since HIV-AIDS attacks everything, it must be confronted on the broadest possible front. Only a holistic, visceral approach even begins to address the issue.”

That is, as God's representatives we have to take upon ourselves that our mission involves something that *is* holistic, something that takes up the whole of life, and we’re to have a care for it. You remember how it was said of Christians in the early days, that the oppressed people said, “See how they love one another.” I understand that sometimes it is used as an expression of the fact that they *weren’t* being loving to one another. But those in those early days, you remember, that perhaps in Roman society particularly, when a mother gave birth to a child, the child was laid in front of the father. If the father accepted it, it was accepted. If it wasn't accepted it was cast off. It might be adopted somewhere, it might have been cast on the rubbish heap. Particularly, that was the fate of girls, but Christians would go around and collect those children. Others would go around and collect them and make them slaves. But Christians would take them and turn around and care for them because they saw that as an evil. Since they had learned the ways of Christ they learned it was an evil and therefore they wanted to do something about it.

I have a son who heads up an organization, a Christian organization that provides care for the aged. It began as some people, some lay people, as we saw the needs of some of our poor and depressed parts of our city many years ago, and thought something ought to be done about it. And so they employed a woman to go around and care for these people, a nurse. They finally had two, and as these women went around and cared for people who were suffering in that section of our city, they began to feel that there was a need where these people who could no longer look for themselves, where they could put them, they’d be graciously cared for with Christian care. And so a whole network of places called Chesalon, which means I think, a safe place or a place of refuge, was created and operates today. Because a group of people saw a need, with a holistic view of mission, and in these facilities the Word of God is made known and people seek to win them to Christ, but they are cared for, because of that motivation of a holistic view of mission. And that's happened time and time again. The difficulty there is many an organization in our country have accepted government funds and become dependent upon them and as those funds, as they inevitably do, get reduced there is the pressure to reduce the quality of care. Christian organizations try to resist that and try to find ways to keep up the quality of care because they want their care to reflect the nature of their mission - that they are God's people caring for people in the name of God. So it becomes a challenge for them. But, there we are.

Many stories can be told of organizations that are started. One of the things I think is most marvelous is the story from another century of George Mueller. George Mueller was a German, he was converted, and when he wanted to raise some funds, in the first place, I believe story goes, he sort of bought a ticket in the lottery. When he didn't win he realized that that wasn’t the way that God wanted him to go. He came to the United Kingdom, to England, and he began, as you probably know, caring for orphans. He cared for thousands of them. The unique thing about that was, one, he took that up as a missional concern, caring for orphans, he sustained a quite extensive concern for mission organizations and was supportive of Hudson Taylor who went to China. He didn’t minimize his evangelistic concern and he taught in his local assembly. He was a very able Bible teacher and his library consisted of a range of Bibles in different languages, in Hebrew, Greek, German, English, and I think there were others, but he was a very able man. But one of the unique features is that he decreed for himself that he would never tell anybody else about the needs of his orphanages. He never did. The staff would gather together to pray, and in a little book that I put together called, *Grain*, the story is told of how he entered in his diary an entry of when he felt laid upon his heart by God to create a new orphan home, he prayed to God for it, asking God to answer his prayers, and that he wrote in the diary, “and I receive the first shilling towards the house.”

So, it's been it's been the pattern of some of our most honored Christians to see that they combine their evangelistic work with caring. And in the case of my own country, when Western Europeans came to Australia, we were convicts in the beginning, and you can still see the blue ankle marks there where they took the shackles off. We began as a convict settlement, sent out by the English government to get rid of people in their prisons, in their prison ships, they were so overcrowded. It was a group of Christians, the Clapham Sect, members of that including William Wilberforce, who persuaded them to send a chaplain. Richard Johnson came out to be a care-er, and to be a proclaimer of the Gospel. And the chaplaincy came out subsequently, to work in the colony. They helped with schooling, they helped with hospitals, they also were responsible for the administration of justice in some places, and that gave them a bad name. But they cared in a holistic way as well as seeking to win people to Christ and to build them up. So it's nothing new, it’s something that we are committed to.

He then moves on to consider, as we think about this, and I made this point in and the last lecture, but he wants to express it here. Indeed I think, as I was giving the last lecture, this filtered into my mind for this lecture. He has a heading called *The Ultimacy of Evangelism* *and the Non-ultimacy of Death*, that is, evangelism is highly significant and death as well, limited. This what he says,

“Within that biblical holism the necessity of sensitive evangelism is clear and nonnegotiable.” (Alright? That’s a strong statement. There it is before you, clear and nonnegotiable) “I put it as our final item on the list decidedly not because it's the last thing we need to do it, but because it is the ultimate thing, the thing that holds all the other imperative responses together within a truly Christian worldview in which death is not the ultimate thing. The most unavoidable thing (he’s back to AIDS) is that it spells inevitable death. That is also its most damning fingerprint of evil for death is the great evil, the last enemy to be destroyed. (as the New Testament says). Of course death faces us all, but AIDS accelerates the process and hurls our last enemy right up in our face. It raises acutely right here and now all the issues that people tend to postpone in life simply because life is now to be cut tragically thought. What is death? What lies beyond death? Is their hope in the face of death? So while AIDS raises an exhausting list of temporal issues that must be addressed as part of our commitment to God's compassion and justice, medical, social, psychological, sexual, cultural, political, international, it also raises for the Christian the ultimacy of evangelism, for however devastating the effects on people's lives here and now, there is also an eternity question."

He quotes Richard Baxter, who said,

“I preach as though nare to preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men.” Richard Baxter was a great reformed pastor in England. He says, “Perhaps no sentence captures better the stark reality of the position in which the church finds itself in the midst of communities devastated by HIV-AIDS and other forms of evil too. This dread and inexpressible disease will rob a precious human being of their expected span of life and will wretch them from the normal blessings meant to be enjoyed on earth, God's earth, all the blessings of productive work and so on, and brings them to death. I say only the Gospel has this ability to address this in a double dimension, a double intention, to deal with the fact of the concern, the actual issue, but to provide people with the salvation.”

One writer said, “On a theological level salvation is not whenever you want to call it, the fulfillment of every deed, or the compensation for every lack. Salvation in the Bible is a promise that God offers the world on the horizon of our expectation of personal and universal death. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation because it promises to break open the vicious cycle of death. Death is the power that draws every living thing into it its circle. We gain the partial salvation we are willing to pay for, but none of these techniques of salvation can succeed in buying off death. Only the Gospel.”

**D. SIN AFFECTS WISDOM AND CULTURE**

OK. Now we come almost to the final element of what we’re looking at, and that is, wisdom and culture. He says,

“So far in chapter 12 we’ve scanned the broadest horizons of the great mission field of God, the earth and the human race. We observe here how wisdom-thinkers and writers in Israel participated in a very international dialogue with an openness to discern the wisdom of God in cultures other than their own.”

And he goes on to make the point that we can find common ground as we move across the world in the ways that the wise think, in the good elements that go to make up human culture everywhere. The Old Testament speaks of Solomon's wisdom as he quotes it saying that, “His wisdom was greater than the wisdom of Egypt, he was wiser than any other man including Ethan the Ezrahite, wiser than Heman, Chacol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame spread to all the surrounding nations.” That’s I Kings 4: 30 – 31.

Read I Kings 4: 30-31

1. Wisdom as a bridge

We find wisdom in God's Word but it has, as he calls it, an international bridge. It spans across cultures and we find commonalities of thought we can use to move across cultures. So we search the word of God for wisdom, for the wisdom of God's Word, we welcome wisdom where ever we find it, true wisdom in other nations for knowing ultimately that all wisdom comes from God, that we have the result, we have the outcome, or the need of critiquing the wisdom that we find the world, by the wisdom that we find in the word of God. And so while we will move amongst nations with the Gospel and will adopt ways of life and ways of doing things that are part and parcel of it, we will always be bringing to that test in our own culture, which sometimes where I am, becomes far less and less Christian than it was, far less. We need to be critical of that by the word of God, critical of the wisdom of the world wherever we find it, but not to despise either the wisdom of the Scriptures, or the wisdom that we find. And where we find commonality we can use that as a bridge of crossing over.

He talks about the fact of generating common concerns and they are common concerns across nations everywhere that we can use as bridges. He speaks about welcoming the wisdom of nations because we can find common ground with that. The need to critique the wisdom of the nations but wisdom is a bridge. It’s not a redemptive bridge as we share one another's insights into what is good and true and right, but it does provide a bridge over which we can move to share the Gospel.

1. A Creational Ethic

His final thing is about a creational ethic and with that we draw towards a close. Under creational ethic, he says,

“When the enemies of Jeremiah quoted what was probably a common saying as an excuse for getting rid of him, they referred to three distinct professional roles within the Israelite society. ‘The teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, (this is Jeremiah 18:18), nor will the counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.’ The priests were responsible for handling the teaching of the Torah, the prophets were expected to bring direct revelation of the word of God into given situations or into it (the Torah), and the wise were to be interpreters of that wisdom literature and applying it to it. For example, where the law is most likely prescriptive, wisdom is more expansively reflective.

So he’s saying that a creational ethnic, an ethic that allows us to function within the society in which we find ourselves, needs to draw on all the resources that we have from the word of God, from the law, from the teaching, from wisdom, that we can create ethics that function within that part of society, that part of creation in which we exist.

1. An Honest Faith

He closes with a comment in this context of what he calls an honest faith. And by that he means, as we deal with the issues in our creation, as we struggle with HIV-AIDS and a range of other things, and we’ll need to call upon the wisdom of the Word of God and the wisdom that we learn in research and all those sorts of things. It raises questions, and he says,

“Our faith needs to be an honest faith.”

By that he means, it's a faith which will recognize difficulties, which will be prepared to say, “I don't understand,” “I don't know,” “I haven’t got a word on this,” that it will be honest because honesty has its own integrity and where we can speak clearly on the basis of the Word of God, we will speak, where we don’t have answers or we don't know, we need to acknowledge that, and use the best resources that we have with a mind inspired by the Word and will of God.

So, there we are. Wisdom, a creational ethic, as we consider what it is to be in God's image in this world. Let me encourage you, for those of you who have the book to read that through carefully. I’ve skipped over all sorts of sections of it. Read it carefully. Work the questions. To those of you who don’t have the book, work the questions that I gave you, but see if you can get it. Thank you very much. Bye!