

THE DIGNITY OF BEING A HUMAN BEING

Introduction

- A. Text: **Psa. 8:3-5**.
- B. Sometimes we excuse things we should not have done by saying, "Well, I'm only human" — as if being only human were less than one might wish for.
 - 1. A little boy was beaten up by a girl on the playground. When his father expressed shock that he would let a "mere girl" whip him, he said, "Dad, girls are not as 'mere' as they used to be."
 - 2. Similarly, when we speak of a "mere man," are we not selling ourselves short?
- C. Do we not from time to time need to be reminded of just who we are in God's scheme of things?

I. THE QUEST TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A HUMAN BEING IS UNIVERSAL

- A. In various ways, all people show an interest in knowing what are the purposes, if any, for which we exist, and how, if possible, we may realize our potential. Cf. **Eccl. 1:3**.
 - 1. Most of us spend most of our time working out our own answers to these questions.
 - 2. Whether we recognize the search for what it really is, we spend our lives experimenting with one thing and another trying to pin down the meaning of our existence, i.e. what is "the whole of man." Cf. "man's all" (**Eccl. 12:13**).
- B. Those who are prone to contemplation and analysis delve into these matters theoretically, while those who are more actively inclined approach them practically, probing life's meaning by doing things.
- C. But all of us, willy-nilly, are engaged in the business of learning all we can about what we are as human beings and what is best for us to do with ourselves.

II. WE LIVE IN AN AGE THAT DEGRADES MAN

- A. So-called Humanism, the going philosophy of our day, actually de-humanizes man.
- B. Humanism (and evolution, its handmaiden) reduces man to the chance product of impersonal forces — e.g. Stephen Jay Gould's book, *Wonderful Life* (1989), in which he argues that the preeminence of *homo sapiens* is merely fortuitous.

III. AGAINST THE THINKING OF OUR AGE, THE BIBLE ASSERTS THE GLORY OF MAN AS A BEING CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

- A. The religion of Jesus Christ acknowledges and affirms that human beings are the highest and noblest creatures in the temporal cosmos.
 - 1. Jesus implied that the human being is worth more than the sum total of the non-human universe when He asked, "What is man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (**Mt. 16:26**). Cf. **Mt. 6:26; 10:31**.
 - 2. The Old Testament asserts that man is created "in the image of God" (**Gen. 1:27**).
- B. Man has a higher nature than the animals, and hence a greater capacity for harm if he prostitutes his abilities.

- C. A lesser being cannot sink to the depths a human being can, but neither can it soar to the heights possible for a human being when he fulfills his true destiny.
- D. The glory and dignity of mankind is beautifully expressed in **Psa. 8:3-9**.
 - 1. The Hebrew writer quoted **Psa. 8** in **Hb. 2:6-9**.
 - 2. The ultimate fulfillment of **Psa. 8** is in Jesus Himself, who, while fully God, was so fully and perfectly human that He was rightly designated the "Son of Man" (**Mt. 16:13**).
- E. In Jesus, one learns what a human being is — He is for all time a living definition of the term "man."

IV. TO THE EXTENT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT WE REALLY ARE, WE WILL LIVE AS WE OUGHT TO LIVE

- A. Most people have long understood that self-concept is an important key to conduct.
 - 1. The way we see ourselves strongly affects what we do.
 - 2. Cf. Jesse Jackson's admonition to young people: "You are somebody!"
- B. The problem the Christian has sometimes is that he understands who he really is, but often does not act consistently. Have we partially "bought in" to the view of man that surrounds us?
- C. Parents sometimes plead with their children to "stop acting like a bunch of animals!?"
 - 1. We urge our older children to "act your age."
 - 2. Paul admonished his readers to "quit you like men" (**1 Cor. 16:13 KJV**).
- D. May we not need a similar admonition: quit you like human beings?

Conclusion

- A. To be a human being is "wonderful," in the most literal sense of that term.
 - 1. There are no "ordinary" persons, no unimportant or insignificant individuals.
 - 2. Every single example of man-kind is endowed with the awesomeness of a person-ality.
- B. More like the Creator Himself than anything else in this world, we have the highest of potentials and the grandest of destinies.
- C. But we only reach this destiny if we seek our fulfillment in our Creator.
- D. Only God can help us repair the damage of sin.
- E. God calls us to be, in Him, all that we were intended and created to be.
- F. To be human is to be capable of:
 - 1. Having true fellowship with God - **1 Jn. 1:1-4**.
 - 2. Sharing His own nature - **2 Pt. 1:4**.
- G. Lord, help us to SEE ourselves as You see us and LIVE accordingly!