



The Return to Divine Revelation

Selected Scriptures

June 6, 2021

Alright, let's, let's open in a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for a wonderful day that we have had in your presence and with one another. It is such a joy to see the life of Christ in each and every one of us as we fellowship around the word and as we share life together. We thank you for this hour that we get to come together and think deeply about the things of you about theology and we just ask that, that tonight's lesson, what I've presented here.

Father, that you would make this useful to us and help us to ground ourselves with, with deep conviction in your word. Help us to see you as our soul authority. Help us to view your word as the, the lens through which we look at everything in life. And I pray that we would find all the different ways that we are, we succumb to the pressures of worldly authority, and we would turn away from that. Identify those things, repent of those things, and, and give ourselves wholly and completely to you. Thank you again for your kindness to us in Christ. Thank

you for the salvation that we share in him. Thank you that we represent his name now, what an honor and a, a joy it is for us to do that. We offer this time to you to be used for your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

Okay, last time we took up the question that David Wells asked in the sub-title of his book *No Place for Truth*. And the sub-title, the question in the sub-title is *Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology*. It's a good question and tonight we're going to get into the issue at the heart of David Wells concern there about whatever happened to evangelical theology.

At the heart of David Wells' concern is the church's need to return to the divine authority of the scripture. So, that's really what we're going to talk about tonight is the need to get back to divine authority. We're going to talk; toward the end we're going to talk about general revelation and then next week we'll start working our way through special revelation.

But we need to get back to divine authority and understand the authority of God, his right to tell us how to think. His right to, because he sustains us, and he's created the world in which we live and the air that we breathe, and he created the

rules that govern this physical world. He also gave us a book to interpret all that we live in and all that we understand. So, it is his right and it's our privilege to ground ourselves in the scripture's authority.

So, as I said, in *No Place for Truth* and other books that David Wells has written at the heart of his concern is our need, is the need of the church, the Evangelical Church to return to divine authority and particularly divine authority in the scripture. To return to a weighty view of God. And that's, that's in a time when God's word has become, in our day just, and this is even among, not just among the world, it's among Evangelicals, a time when God's word has become just one option among many. And a time when God, himself, has become weightless or David Wells' word is inconsequential. God rests too inconsequentially upon the church is what he said.

So, Wells answered that question: Whatever happened to evangelical theology, by identifying and, and tracing the impact of modernization. Modernization, we didn't go into great detail. I'm going to kind of unpack it just a little bit tonight. But modernization, he describes as a secularizing force that has been reshaping the world over the last century and it's



reshaping the world according to ideals of the enlightenment. Enlightenment understanding, enlightenment ideals. Wells describes four forces of modernization which you'll, immediately as I say them, you should recognize them. You probably will recognize them as benefits in our world.

So, four forces that are forces of modernization that reshape the world in a secular direction. And yet we find great benefit from them. Capitalism, technology, urbanization, and telecommunications. These are things we live in and they're part of the warp and woof of our life. They're part of our culture, part of society, we've benefited greatly. And yet, they are shaping influences. They, they create a culture for us, they shape the way we think, they shape our assumptions and our presuppositions.

Capitalism has reshaped the world to create this massive integrated system of, that supports growing commerce all around the world. New technology, over the past century or so, has accelerated industry and productivity in industry, that's the supply side. It also creates or enables private owners to distribute goods to new markets and new customers. So, that's the demand side and that's not only in the state and the country

but this technology has allowed capitalism to reach all around the world. Technology that, that upholds and strengthens capitalism. Technology brought new energy into that symbiotic relationship between buyer and seller and increasing supply and meeting demand. So, the growth of capitalist economies is dependent in large part on the advancement of technology to increase that productivity. And transportation technology in particular, shipping, railroads, automobiles, airplanes, all that has enabled the wide-spread, world-wide distribution of, of goods.

That productivity and industry has centers, urban centers. And so that's urbanization the process of concentrating large numbers of people in small areas. Obviously, that started with factories and industry as more and more things are being built and more people coming into small areas, coming into cities. All the finance and banking and everything that, that, that supports that and builds off of that. That's accelerated, obviously, over the past century and it's driven by economic and financial interest and financial opportunities. We get that.

Telecommunication. Those technologies, they overcome limitations of, of space and time increasing connectivity. So,

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we think about going all the way back to when we just had rotary dial phones and wires or you can take even go further back than that, the telegraph. How it connected people with communication and news spreading at a fast rate. But all that has increased as we have cellular phones and internet technology and all the rest.

So, that joins together people, businesses, regions, nations. Creates an international world like what David Wells called a world cliché culture. As culture spreads all around the world and you can find kids in Samara and kids in Ethiopia and kids in South American and North America and Asia, you can find them listening to all the same tunes and repeating all the same lyrics, having all the same heroes, Lebron James and all the rest. All around the world.

So, we tend to see those features of the world, capitalism, technology, urbanization, telecommunications, we tend to see them as, as gifts to us. Gifts to the world, not threats, but gifts. All those things enter into our lives with a coming, frontloading the list of advantages that they're going to offer to us. Showing us all the ways that they're going to improve and simplify and reward our lives and they do that. There's a

simplification, there's a connectivity, who, who doesn't want to be in one location and be able to connect around the world with your grandkids in some other part of the world? We really appreciate that. Over time though, we can start to discern the darker side of all these forces. For example, we tend to evaluate the world in economic terms.

We see productivity and efficiency and profitability as the most important measures of value and we assign that even to people. We don't think of people as people, we think of them as producers or are they productive, are they efficient? That's how we judge people. We value things that get big, things that grow, things that have success, things that make money. We even, we even bring that idea into the church, as if the bigger the church, the more money flowing through the church, the more successful it is.

God, though, he values what is faithful. He values fidelity to the truth, and faithfulness, and fidelity to the truth are missed and passed over in a busy, productive, success-oriented world. Consider how production technology can undermine faithfulness. There's an increase of, of goods, there's the power of modern marketing that taps into human covetousness,

fanning the flames of discontent. Whenever Melinda's reading a catalogue or surfing online, I say, you're practicing discontentment right now. You know that? And using my credit card to do it, so.

But, we've become, in this, in this production and in always releasing new things, new, new products, new versions, updates, we've become biased against what is old. We always prefer what is new and improved and, sadly, that same attitude governs what many churches do these days. It governs how they think, it governs their ministry philosophy. They try to be innovative and keep up with a changing world all the time rather than just going back to old truths and preaching the scripture.

Transportation technology, the automobile in particular and just pick on that one, that, that can undermine the discipline of the church. I mean, think about it this way, if I don't like what the elders say, if I want to avoid accountability and shirk the judgement of a church, I can just get in my car and drive to another church. I can pass that church by and never think about it again. So, what authority, then, does the local church have over people with cars? And many people think like that today. They just assume that. If they, if things get, start getting too

difficult in a church, they're gone. They're out the door and you never see them again.

Telecommunications technologies means we're, we're more connected than ever. We search the world for answers that come from outside the Bible and we're used to that, we're used to looking to other's authorities. Local churches then become host to an increasing, increasingly distracted audience. An audience with their, many people that come in, with, with different voices in their heads. With different voices on their phones, telling them that they need to listen to this expert and that expert and, and submit to that authority and this authority and follow that guru. They're used to the mediums of communication the connect, the connectivity of the tech giants that, this technopoly industry that we're finding ourselves entering into. They're used to all that and they bring those assumptions into the church.

Urbanization, that other force, that brings different people together, different kinds of people from all different tribes, tongues, nations, creeds, all different belief systems, all different worldviews. It engages all of them in a single enterprise, using them for productivity, economy, industry. All

of them combined, joining forces together to work toward a common goal, to increase the bottom line of a company or produce something together. There is a kind of unity in that and we, we rejoice in that, we appreciate that. It appears to be, on the surface, very useful, very productive. All that comes though, by, if you think about it, setting aside the deeper theological and worldview divides that lie beneath the surface of each of those individuals. You have Hindus and Buddhists, Muslims and Catholics, and all those coming together, and they can accomplish something together without having to get into any theology, any doctrine. Well then didn't they just prove what they can accomplish without actually dealing with theology? Doesn't that create a sense of unity on the surface. That is very misleading but tends to, in public they ignore those questions, don't have those discussions anymore and they privatize their religion.

That's very difficult to pastor through, I can tell you. We begin to see the, the values of diversity, tolerance in society. We've seen pluralism, relativism, subjectivism, all that seems to win the day and as David Wells said quite literally, "There is no place for truth." Truth doesn't win anymore in the public square.

So, all that is just a very brief overview to, to, to explain, to try to get you to see that the challenges we face on this issue of authority are deep and they're systemic and they're somewhat invisible to us. Like the fish swimming in water doesn't feel wet or us, when you know, when we come into an area with a bad smell and then we stay there for a while and our olfactory nerves, you know, kind of ignore that and teach us to ignore it and we get used to the smell. We don't even notice it anymore.

It's the same thing. We've all grown up in the modern world. We've all come to depend on and appreciate the gifts that modernity has brought to us. And in those four forces of modernization, they're so effective in shaping the modern world and giving it its culture and setting its agenda; Sets its expectations, directs ambitions, it puts boundaries about, around what is acceptable thought and what is forbidden thought in the public square.

All this has been so effective and so successful in large part because its influence is invisible to us. The forces of modernization hide behind its gifts. If I ever challenge anybody

about their cell phone use or anything or their, you know their internet use, or whatever, they tell me, immediately, well, you know how many sermons I listen to. You know, so, again, the, they're ignoring what repeated usage of a medium like that is doing to their mind, is doing to their brain, how it's creating different assumptions, different expectations.

So, the point tonight is not to get into all that but it's just to say that this world that we live in, all the gifts that it provides us, it also comes with a darker side. It comes with, behind all those gifts is an agenda. Behind all those offerings are something that we buy into subtlety and without even thing about it. What is chiefly at stake in this, in this, in all that I'm describing here is this fundamental matter of authority and the question always is going to be, what voice will we listen to? What voice will we obey?

I think many churches face this during the time of the pandemic when the public health officials are saying, shut down your church. No singing. Public health is at stake, at stake. Wear masks. Socially distance. Shut, don't even come to church, it's dangerous. You're not loving your neighbor if you do that. So, what voice are we going to listen to? What voice are we

going to obey? God's voice or the constant stream of information that comes to us from the world around us.

That's how David Wells describes some of these challenges. James Boice, we talked about him last time. He, he, he's watched the effect. Or he did watch the effect of that modernizing influence in the protestant mainline denominations and he was seeing the same thing happening in evangelicalism in the 1990s, that happened to the protestant mainline denominations when the Presbyterians and the Lutherans and Methodists all went Liberal. He saw that and then was very concerned to see the same signs happening in Evangelicalism in the 1990s.

Evangelicals had not learned any lessons from the Protestant mainline churches. They were following the same course. As he put it, they became enamored with the world's wisdom. They embraced the world's theology, followed the world's agenda, and employed the world's methodology. It was happening big time in the seeker sensitive movement. Also, you can see it in the emergent church movement, and you can see it in liberalizing elements in the church today as well.

Wells described all of this as a struggle between Christianity and modernism. Boice talked in terms of liberalism. And liberalism had embraced modernity. And it opposed fundamental or reformed Christianity. So, Boice and Wells they were seeing the same problem, they were just considering the nature of the problem from different perspectives. Boice described the changes in Christian churches from within Christendom. And Wells described the changes as consequence of fundamental changes in the modern world.

We could add to that the critique that came I believe it was in 1992 from John MacArthur. He dealt with the problem of the worldliness in the church. In a book that maybe some of you who have attended one of our conferences have, have received. It's called *Ashamed of the Gospel*. Sub-titled *When the Church becomes like the World*. David Wells looked the problem historically and philosophically, talking about the forces of modernity. James Boice looked at the problem theologically, looking at the forces of liberalism and John MacArthur addressed the problem pastorally and ecclesialogically; thinking about the forces of worldliness that were setting the agenda for the church.

At the heart of each man's critique is this fundamental matter of authority. What sets the direction for us as Christians? What sets the direction for the church? Who commands the conscience? What methods are we going to employ in the church? What agenda are we going to follow? That's always the question at the heart of every matter.

I want to speak a little bit about modern authority, the world today. It was the secular humanist, Aldous Huxley, who wrote a book back in 1931 called *Brave New World*. Has anybody, how many of you have read that? *Brave New World*? That's good. Okay, this side, you guys are readers, this side, okay, one over there. Alright, hands are going up, okay good. You just didn't want to be proud, so you let them be proud.

Brave New World offered a, Huxley offered a futuristic vision of a utopian society. He described a, a perfect world of eugenics where from childhood, children were basically farmed, and they were produced like on an assembly line. And they were produced to perform certain functions in society, based on certain chemicals introduced to them in the womb, and in, or not in the womb but in the, in a birthing lab. In a, you know, a nurturing process and turned them into different levels of, you

know, people who ruled the world and people who just served them and got things done and all the rest.

So, perfect world of eugenics, a world of unhindered promiscuity, all that inculcated in children from youngest ages. There was unrestricted access to all kinds of entertainment and diversion and when none of that would keep you feeling happy, there was a safe medication you could take to make the blues go away called soma. The fear of getting down, quick pop a soma.

One of the characters in the book, a world controller at the top level of society, is a figure named Mustapha Mond and he thinks, quote, "That there quite probably is a god, but did he manifest himself in different ways to different men. In premodern times, he manifested himself as a being that's described in these books." And by these books he's pointing to the bible, other supposedly holy books. "But now" Mustapha Mond says, "he manifests himself as an absence. As though he weren't there at all. Called the fault of civilization. God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness."

That's happened in our modern world. It's not that, I mean, that, that those who are like rabid atheists, that's a very small minority of society. In most of society, God, he may be tacitly acknowledged, but he's wholly ignored. They don't mind his presence because, really, he's there and he's just, they just have faint memories of a pre-modern world that people, people, used to believe that kind of stuff and now it's quaint, outdated, outmoded. They just ignore him.

Huxley, in the voice of Mustapha Mond, almost a hundred years ago now, he's been very clear laying down the options. There are two choices before us. They are always two choices. One is to keep listening to that old, antiquated voice of divine authority. But in today's world and in the modern mind, that's no choice at all. Because all divine voices have been rendered obsolete by civilization. Served by its machines and science and technology and medicine. All designed to provide happiness to all, after all isn't that what religion is for. Isn't that what gods are for, to pray for them so you can get the stuff you need so you can be happy. Well, that's all been replaced because of civilization, because of progress, because of technology, because of advancement.

Huxley really put his finger on it, or his pen. He put his pen on the heart of modern idolatry. And at its heart, modern idolatry is the rejection of divine authority. A heart of, of, of idolatry is finding a god substitute to exchange the creator for the creature, preferring the creature, the creature over the creator. Since we can't manipulate the creator and his inflexible book, we abandon him, we abandon his word and find a more malleable god that will give us what we want. And in that sense, you can see how the part of modern idolatry, it really isn't all that new. It's not really that modern, it's actually as ancient as the world is.

Paul wrote in Romans 1, "This is the very heart of idolatry, the exchange of the God the creator to worship what he created." It's the rejection of the authority of God's word and an embrace of a more malleable, less, not, well not inflexible word of all, at all. That's the word of mortal man. We see how the word of mortal man is changing all the time.

So, the pre-modern, superstitious world, and the modern anti-supernatural, secularized world they really are one and the same in that regard. Pre-moderns trusted in gods represented by statues. People of the modern world trust in the god of

progress, man's reason, scientific discovery, medical advances, technological development. It's as Immanuel Kant said about the enlightenment: Modernity is about having the courage to use your own understanding, quote "without guidance from another."

Courage to be a maverick when it comes to God and his word. It's not courage, it's rebellion. In the words of the serpent, it's about having your eyes opened, becoming like God, making your own judgements about good and evil. Again, it all comes down to a matter of authority.

And so, that's why it's important as we start to endeavor on this, on these theology, this theology series on Sunday nights. It's so important that we start right here with the issue of divine authority. We'll talk about God's authority in general revelation. We're going to cover some of that tonight, but it's primarily as we think about special revelation.

As we think about *Sola Scriptura*. The first thesis of the *Cambridge Declaration*, I mentioned that last time, *Cambridge Declaration*. That first thesis is about a return to Biblical authority, because the *Cambridge Declaration* follows the five *solas* of the reformation and that first one is *Sola Scriptura*; formative principle of the reformation.

This is what the *Cambridge Declaration* says in that first thesis. "We affirm the inerrant scripture to be the sole source of written, divine revelation. Which can alone bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin. And is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council, or individual may bind a Christian's conscience. That the Holy Spirit speaks independently of, or contrary to, what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation." That's an affirmation and denial from the *Cambridge Declaration*, first thesis.

So, the reformers referred to that idea as *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture Alone. No councils, no popes, no ecclesiastical authority above them, no state authority could command the conscience of an individual, only the word of God can command the conscience. That's, they called that the formal principle of the reformation. Not formal as versus informal, but formal in the sense of formative. They're talking about the authoritative source of reformation theology, foundation of the church, and what forms the boundaries around that reforming work.

God's revelation of himself, it sets the boundaries of our thinking. God's revelation of himself creates channels of thought, into what we're supposed to stay in. Lanes in which we're to, to, to drive in, to move through. So that we know him because that's the point of all this, to glorify God and that we enjoy him forever.

So, it's to ensure that we know him, know him in all of his glory and that we're able to investigate the world that he made for the most benefit to us and, again, to bring him glory. Because if we think with a biblical lens and then we go out and do our science or our medicine or our technology or whatever it is in the world, if we think with a biblical lens, then we're driving down the lanes that he has established for us, we're staying within his boundaries, and it leads to the greatest benefit for us, and it leads to bringing him more glory because we see him as he is. We don't go veering off, falling over cliffs and doing what's destructive for, for ourselves or others.

So, God's special revelation, the scripture sets the boundaries for God's general revelation; for everything we see in creation, in the world, in conscience, all the rest. *Sola*

Scriptura, therefore, is the formal principle it gives formation for all of life. It's formative.

So, the contrast between Christians and the unbelievers of this thoroughly modernized world is clearest in this fundamental matter of authority. For us, it's *sola scriptura*. For them it's *sola sui* or s-u-i, the self alone. *Sola sui*. As Mustapha Mond said in Huxley's *Brave New World*, "God isn't compatible with machinery, scientific medicine, universal happiness. You must make your choice." Our civilization, we chose the machinery, medicine, happiness. Immanuel Kant said it in his way, "It's about having the courage to use your own understanding without guidance from another." That's their formative principle, *sola sui*. They've chosen to believe in the unaided use of reason. They've chosen to use their minds unhitched from any consideration of divine authority.

You can hear that same rebellious spirit captured in that famous poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley. It ends with this stanza, "It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll." In other words, he's saying, I'm not interested in passing through the narrow gate. It's a reference to the King James Bible, the straight gate. It says, "I'm not

afraid of the divine punishments recorded in holy scrolls of scripture. Matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul."

What mister Invictus and his fellow moderns fail to realize is that the world they intend to navigate their vessels through, each one of them, by the way, is masters and captains, this world belongs to God. The world that they navigate through, it's his. He created the world; he continues to govern the world according to laws he established from the very beginning. The world is not the atheist's playground. It's not floating around in some sphere of existence that's completely apart from God, detached from his authority, where the unbelieving modernists, scientist, rationalist, skeptic is free to investigate it all in a neutral environment, making their own path, choosing their own course. The world is God's revelation of himself to mankind. Which means the world has an essentially moral nature to it. Even general revelation, the creation, even the things that God has made and put out there for us to view, has a moral element to it. It's moral by design.

So, for the rest of our time, we're going to talk about divine revelation. Starting with what we call, general revelation. Go to Romans 1 in your bibles and verse 18. We're pretty familiar with this Romans 1:18 and following. Where Romans 1 through 3, Paul is laying down the foundational doctrine of total depravity. As the basis for understanding the gospel, what we're saved from. That all the world has fallen before a holy God, transgressed his law and deserving of punishment.

So, Paul starts out in Romans 1:18 like a prosecuting attorney. He's making his opening statement and when he makes his opening statement, he's not making it to a courtroom, he's not making it to the jury, he's not making it to the judge, he's making it to the defendants. Sitting in the defendant's seat are all those who share the views of Mustapha Mond and Immanuel Kant and William Ernest Henley, all the leaders of today's technocracy, all the unbelieving. They're all on the defendant's stand and Paul's opening statement, Romans 1:18, begins the warning because he's already read the judge's condemning verdict. He's got a bible.

Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth." For why did you, why did you say that, Paul? Why did you say that suppress or hold down the truth? The truth that's all around them and that keeps on coming up to the surface, why do you say they are holding it down? How can you say that? You don't know every man?

Well, it's because God says, "What can be known about God" verse 19, "is plain to them, because God is shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived. Ever sense the creation of the world and the things that have been made. So, they're without excuse." They're condemned, they're without excuse. The world that they've been placed into, that they were born into, the world that, where they think they're the captain of their fate and the master of their soul and all that stuff, it's a moral world. It has moral requirements. The, the world around us demands that we bow and repent and turn our face to God and worship him and honor him and give him thanks.

So, God holds all humanity accountable for what they do with his revelation. In this case, with this general revelation.

And that leads us to a, a need for a definition. What is general revelation? What do we mean by general? How to we distinguish general revelation from special revelation? I like Bruce Demerest's definition. He says, "General revelation is the divine disclosure to all persons at all times and in all places by which humans come to know that God is and what he's like." I'll repeat that. Demerest says, "General revelation is the divine disclosure to all persons at all times and in all places by which humans come to know that God is and what he's like."

So, that term that he uses disclosure. Notice disclosure is not necessarily speaking. Disclosure, especially in general revelation, it's not a matter of words, it's a matter of what can be perceived. General revelation refers to what God has revealed about himself externally through the created world and then internally in each person, in the heart, by the conscience. It's called revelation because it's revealing something about God and God is doing it. God is in charge of it, he is revealing him, something about himself. It's called general because it gives a general knowledge of God in a general way.

General refers in, in general revelation, general refers most, mostly to its universality. It's general in the sense that

it's universal, it's available. As the definition states, "to all persons, at all times, and in all places." The Bible, by contrast, the bible's not like that it is? You see what I mean when we describe the nature of general revelation, but the bible is not available to all people, at all times, and in all places. We know places on earth right now, they don't have the bible in their own language. That's why we send missionaries to do translation work and so that we can put a spoken language into a written language and then teach them their own written language and then work through the bible and translate the bible from the original languages into a written language so they can have it. So, we know that the bible isn't available to all people, at all times, in all places. General revelation is.

So, let me talk about the nature of general revelation in three points. Talk about how it's general by virtue of its reach, its location, and its substance. Starting with its reach. General revelation in its reach is universal. For this I'd like to take you to Psalm 19. Psalm 19 and this is a Psalm by, of David that is, it gives both general revelation and special revelation and shows, basically, the need for special revelation. It's a very powerful, powerful Psalm. General revelation, universal, Psalm 19:1 to 6.

A Psalm of David, it says, "The heavens declare the glory of God. And the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. There's no speech nor are there words whose voice is not heard, but then their voice goes out through all the earth. Their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent with a sun which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his," its chamber, "his chamber. And like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from one end of the heavens and its circuit to the end of them. There is nothing hidden from its heat."

So, there are four aspects there of the universal reach of God's general revelation. Illustrated there in the created world. In verse 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork." That shows that these truths are universal. The heavens, who among us is not under the heavens. The expanse of the heavens, everything below them. There's facts there, they're observations, evidences. There's mathematics that govern it, laws that govern it. We see all that. So, the heavens declare, the sky above proclaims. They don't proclaim with words, they don't declare with sentences and phrases, they declare just by being there and the fact that

we're all underneath them, those truths that they proclaim are universal. We're all underneath them.

Verse 2, notice that it's universal, the universal reach is universal in the sense of time. "Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge." There's never a time that any human being born on the face of the earth is transported like in Star Trek to a parallel universe where there is no such thing as God's creation. We're all here and day after day it's pouring forth speech. In the sense of information is being downloaded every day, all the time, 24/7, every minute, every second, day after day, night after night. Whether it's day or night, there's something coming forth. Continuous, non-stop display of God's glory, God's power throughout all time.

Also, universal reach of general revelation is universal in its accessibility. Verse 3, "There is no speech nor there are words, their voice is not heard." That is to say, you don't have to speak the language in order to get the information. It doesn't matter where you are on earth, what culture you grow up in, whether you are able to speak or you're not able to speak, whether you're deaf, whether you speak in whatever language, it does not matter. It's accessible to everybody on the, on the

face of the planet. Everyone has access to creation and to conscience.

And then in verses 4 to 6 you can see the location is universal. It's the whole word. You see that imagery of the sun's circuit. That means that wherever you are in the world, wherever the sun strikes, general revelation discloses the glory and the power of God.

So, again, contrast that with special revelation, the Bible. Special revelation also discloses God but it's specific and it's direct and it comes in written form where it can be read. But it's not available as we said, it's not available to all persons, at all times, in all places. God has chosen to give his word to certain people, at certain times, in certain places. Special revelation is not universal in its scope. General revelation is.

So, the general of general revelation refers to the nature of its reach. General revelation is universal. Now let's consider the, the location of general revelation. General revelation is located most basically, you can talk about it in

terms of its where it's located externally or external to us and internally, internal to us. So, outside of us and inside of us.

First, externally, we just saw that in Psalm 19:1 to 6 but we're talking about creation and providence. We saw in the previous point we can observe, what we can observe in creation. Providence, that's how God governs his creation. We can also observe that. Providence is God's superintending activity. Whereby he governs and cares for both the created order and our own individual lives all according to his will, to reach his ultimate ends and purposes.

So, creation is not a static thing that God wound up and walked away like the deists say. It's dynamic and God is always involved in its activity in the world very clearly every day. In fact, just to see a little bit of that, go to Psalm 104. I love this Psalm, it's a, a beautiful praise and worship of God for how he cares providentially for the entire earth. Psalm 104:10 to 11, we'll start there. Just sort of, of at a place, you can read the whole Psalm, but we just don't have time for that.

But he says in verses 10 to 11, Psalm 104, "You make springs gush forth in the valleys, they flow between the hills,

they give drink to every beast of the field, the wild donkeys quench their thirst." So, there are beasts in places, animals in places that we don't even see, we'll never see throughout our entire life, no one will ever see them. God takes care of them.

Verses 14 to 15, "You cause," it's not just the animals he's concerned about, "You cause the grass to grow." But then he's concerned about the animals because he gives it to the livestock. "Plants for man to cultivate that he may bring forth food from the earth. Wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, bread to strengthen man's heart."

Look at verses 20 to 22. "You make darkness and its night. When all the beasts of the forest creep about." The young lions, "the young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they steal away and lie down in their dens."

Verses 27 to 30, "These all," creation basically, "look to you to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up, when you open your hand, they're filled with good things. When you hide your face, they're dismayed. When you take away their breath they die and return to their

dust. When you send forth your spirit, they're created, and you renew the face of the ground."

That's God's providence in caring for the earth. Caring for its beasts, its animals, its birds. Making the, the waters gush forth and water the valleys flowing between the hills. God does all of that all the time and that's a testimony to his general revelation. How he reveals himself to all people, at all times, in all places. That's externally.

Internally, what's the location of general revelation within ourselves? Here we're talking about several things. The *Imago Dei*, the image of God in us. We're talking about what Calvin calls the *Sensus Divinitatis*. We're talking about the law of God and the conscience, that's the law of God written on our heart and the conscience that convicts us or excuses us on the basis of what the law of God says.

First, we'll talk about the *Imago Dei*. Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image according to our likeness." So, since God created us for relationship with him, since he created us to have the honor of exercising his dominion over the earth and being created in his image means that we, who are

composite beings made out of body and soul, having a material and an immaterial part, we make the invisible God, visible. Adam sinned and so, the *Imago Dei* in him was irreparably damaged. Handed down to us it's distorted in us. There are vestiges of God's image in us, even in the unbelieving. They still have a body; they still have a soul that animates that body. Internally, they still possess mind, will, emotions. Mankind is rational, volitional, emotional creature.

But as we learned this morning, apart from the life of God, the *zoe*, the *Imago Dei* is distorted by spiritual death. That was the judgement for transgressing his law in the garden. So, it's in Christ, who is the very image of God, that the *Imago Dei* is perfect. The *Imago Dei* is restored, such that Paul tells us "Christ is," Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God." Christ fulfilled what we, in Adam, failed to do. He made that invisible God, visible. So, only he could accomplish that. "No one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side, he has made him known." And we, being in him were restored back to that intention, in, in, that, that initial purpose.

So, internally God's disclosed, disclosed himself to all in the image of God being in us. Also, number two in the *Sensus*

Divinitatis. John Calvin called it that. It's, it's referring to the sense of God that everyone has. It points to Romans 1:21, "For even though they knew God" That's the sense of God right there, *Sensus Divinitatis*. "Even though they knew God, they didn't honor him as God, give thanks. They became futile in their speculations; their foolish heart was darkened."

Calvin goes on to say, "There within the human mind and indeed by natural instinct is an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. God himself is implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. Ever in doing its memory, he repeatedly sheds fresh drops. This conviction that there is some god is naturally born, inborn in all. And is fixed deep within. As it were in the very marrow. From this we conclude that it is not a doctrine that must first be learned in school. But one of which each of us is master from his mother's womb. And which nature itself permits no one to forget." End quote.

Again, this *Sensus Divinitatis* is universal. Every single one of us born into this world, this discloses, discloses truth about God to all people, at all times, in all places. We all have this sense.

Third, there is general revelation in the moral law and the conscience. Romans 2, if you want to look at that, Romans 2:14 to 15. Paul writes about the moral law. The moral law that is then, the, the conscience uses as the standard by which it accuses or excuses. So, he says this when Gentiles who do not have the law, he's talking about, don't have a written law like the Mosaic law code. "But when they do instinctively the things of the law, these not having a written law code, are a law to themselves in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

So, again, this is God's universal disclosure of himself in every heart, that we all have this sense of God, and we have a, an understanding of his law innately. You don't need to teach kids; they understand this innately that, about God's law. When you catch them stealing from their brother or sister, they feel immediately shameful, ashamed of it. God hardwired his moral law in each man, each woman, each boy, each girl. He stamped it in, indelibly on their heart. He coded it into the mind so they can never live without it. And then he placed a conscience within



each one of us to hold us accountable to that moral law stamped on our hearts.

Again, it's not, it's not there in words, it doesn't come into our minds in formal expressions and language, it's a sense we have. Moral law is that standard it's written on the heart and the conscience is like the nerve of our soul. The nerve of our immaterial self, a nerve ending. And it feels just like when our hand, our physical hand gets too close to flame and we, the nerve endings say, pull your hand away, stupid. You're about to burn it off. And so, we pull our hand away. The conscience is the same way. We start approaching and coveting something that doesn't belong to us. We approach it and want to take it for ourselves, the conscience says, warning, Will Rodgers, danger, danger, pull away, back off. This is bad.

But we train ourselves from a very young age to roll right over that, don't we? It's interesting we don't train ourselves to roll right through the flame and burn our hand off. But we do it with the more important of the two, don't we? The more important warning we ignore.

So, the conscience, it senses when we're about to violate the moral law and it alerts us, bothers us. Sometimes the conscience never leaves us alone and so, some people try to quell and overcome the conscience by drinking or by taking drugs or by getting involved in ambitions and all the rest. They have all kinds of ways of trying to silence the conscience. Every individual man, every woman, every boy, every girl, in every culture, in every place in the world, at all times senses this law and senses this conscience.

We all understand justice to some degree. We've a sense of right and wrong, good and bad. Maybe warped and perverted because the conscience has been so seared that it just ignores certain things. But it forms a different standard so that it can adjust to it. We have standards none-the-less. Where did those standards come from? God. Our conscience bothers us when we violate the standard.

So, general revelation is general in nature because of its universal reach, its external, internal witness. So, what's the substance of it? What's the content of general revelation? The substance is about the glory of God. His nature. His, you can go back to Romans chapter 1 because it says it there. Unless you've

got that memorized. We've kind of covered that a lot. Josh, I remember, seems like every time you were doing a Wednesday night, you were going right back to Romans 1, as well you should. But Romans 1, we should all have this memorized by now.

The substance of general revelation is God's nature, his invisible attributes, his eternal power of divine nature. All that's made know and what God has created. It says in Romans 1:19 to 20, "What can be known about God is," plain to all, "plain to them because God has shown it to them." So, that shows, that, that reveals God is given, had an active role in general revelation. He's showing it to them. "For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever sense the creation of the world and the things that have been made." We think about eternal power, we think about omnipotence, we can think about the word eternal means eternality. His divine nature, he's invisible. He is spirit. He is simple spirit, non-composite. God is all of his attributes. He's immutable, unchanging. He's infinite.

We organize all that by saying general revelation manifests something about the person of God and the power of God. The person of God, God is transcendent, he exists, he's self-

existent means he's completely independent, he had no needs, he has no unfilled, unfulfilled desires, no want, no lack. He's complete and perfect, in and of himself. God is invisible, pure spirit. He's infinite, eternal. He's living spirit. God is sovereign. He's in complete and total control of the universe that he made.

He's also imminent, he's near. He draws near to his creation by his good and wise providence. Like we read in Psalm 104, that whole chapter is like that. Inherent goodness manifest in his abundant thoughtful provision for every single creature, everything he has made. He's conscience of it, he's aware, he cares. And not only by what he made do we see his nature, but how he made it. The, the, the order and the wisdom that go into what he made in Genesis 1 is just incredible. How he governs it ever since.

God is good, he's intelligent, he's all-wise, from the smallest bits of matter that's known to me are sub-atomic particles, they're probably discovering more smaller sub-sub-atomic particles or whatever, but to the largest galaxy in the universe there's such complexity in what God creates and

sustains. Such order, such design, such purpose. Created, sustains it, takes care of all of it.

So, we learn about the person of God by general revelation. That's part of the content of it and also, about the power of God. God's power is sufficient to produce the sum total of all he's made and all the individual parts of everything he's made. So, whether you look at the universe as this huge complex thing or you look at an individual part and see what makes it up, everything he's made his power is evident and resident there. Talk about even spitting an atom, causing quite an explosion, making a big mess, there's power in the smallest things and power in the most giant things as well and God is the cause of it all.

He has power to control the oceans, the tides, the stars, the sun, gravity. He's also able to hold mutually destructive forces from undoing one another. He keeps power in equilibrium, he controls it, so that it's productive, it's useful to mankind. All this he does for, and I marvel at this, all this he does for disobedient, rebellious creatures. Who don't honor him as God or give thanks. He does this all the time. He's doing it now. I'm breathing air because he's gracious to me.

So, in the parts, God possesses power to be the necessary cause of each and every individual part in all creation. We are a complex of parts. Compounded with material and immaterial. They're individual attributes that make us, us. They're cells, atoms, we have emotions, thoughts, ideas. We have tangible parts, intangible parts. God is the only sufficient cause and explanation for all of those parts.

So, in the whole and in the parts, God is God and that's what all this creation reveals. There's obviously so much more we could say, but that is just a summary of the reach, location, substance of general revelation. General revelation is sufficient for what God designed it to do to disclose his glory. It's sufficient to hold men accountable. Reveal himself but also hold them accountable. General revelation is, is authoritative.

In the sense, like we're seeing this now, aren't we, with the, the whole transgender challenge. This transgender revolution where they're saying, you can choose to be a different thing than what you were born. They talk about the sex that you were assigned at birth as if a doctor and your mom and dad just kind of got together and said, I know, let's call it a

boy. Or I know, let's call it a girl. As if that's arbitrary and they can go either direction. The one who assigns sex at birth, is the one who assigned it at conception, who assigned it from before the foundation of the world. It's his world and so there is an authority to the sex assigned at birth and to violate that is to sin against creation and conscience. It's a sin against general revelation. It's a sin for which men and woman will be held accountable.

So, general revelation fulfills its purpose, it's sufficient for what God designed it to do, disclose his glory, his eternal power and divine nature. It's also sufficient, on that basis, to hold man accountable. General revelation is not sufficient to save and sanctify sinners. And that's why David moves from general revelation and, go back to Psalm 19, he moves from general revelation in Psalm 19:1 to 6 and he moves to special revelation in verses 7 and following.

Let me just read the whole thing so, "The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech. Night to night reveals knowledge. There's no speech nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out throughout all the earth, their words to the end

of the world. In them he is set a tent for the sun which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber. Like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens and its circuit, "circuit to the other end of them and there's nothing hidden from its heat."

You can imagine this coming from the thought of David the young shepherd boy who spent so much time out with the sheep observing this very thing. Day and night seeing God reveal himself in the world that he lived in. And so, as he observes this and as he gives glory to God in general revelation, in nature, in what he sees all around him, other thoughts come into his mind. Troubled conscience, sins that he committed, dishonor of father or mother, times that he took the Lord's name in vain, times he wasn't faithful, times he violated the God's Ten Commandments in covetousness or maybe some type of a flash of anger that was a precursor to murder.

And as his thoughts troubled him, he realized that nothing in heavens above or on the earth beneath him or all around him, none of that could actually salve his conscience. Nothing could quiet his conscience, nothing could take away his guilt, nothing could cover the shame that he felt in sin. And so, then he comes

into verse 7 and he switches and he starts talking about special revelation.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul." There reviving is probably not, that, that kind of gives the idea that the soul was alive before and it just need to be revived.

Probably the better term there would be converting the soul.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Causing the soul to be born again and to a new life.

"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous all together. More to be desired are they then gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them there is great reward."

Things that he finds in general revelation like gold, much fine gold, honey, sweet honey from the drippings of the honeycomb cannot compare to what he gets from words. Written words, law, testimony, precepts, commandments. All summarized in

the fear of the Lord, rules of the Lord, statutes. These things in written language, language he can read and understand that go into the mind and instruct him and teach him. Cause him to go from simple to wise. That is what we need and that is those, it's those written words, it's special revelation that gives us the grid through which we can see the world around us, interpret it rightly and come to truly glorify God and benefit for ourselves.

That's where we're going to stop tonight. Next time we'll come back and talk about the insufficiency of general revelation and along these lines and then we'll get into special revelation.

Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We thank you so much for this world you've placed us in, for making us who we are and for bringing us to salvation in Jesus Christ because now we, we can see all things clearly. We can understand your word by your spirit, by your grace. And we can see that you have been so good and wise and kind to us. Help us to understand the world that we live in, your word more clearly. That we may glorify you,



worship you, find all joy, all satisfaction, gratitude,
contentment in you and you alone. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.