



Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.

August 2015

“The Right to Define Who You Are”

Articles are flying around the web. Churches are scrambling in response. Recent Supreme Court rulings have redefined the legal definition of liberty. Here’s a quote from an article I read on Newsmax.Com. <http://www.newsmax.com/Newsfront/samuel-alito-supreme-court-same-sex-marriage-ruling/2015/07/21/id/658271/> . This article covered an interview with Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito.

He argued that in Obergefell v. Hodges, the marriage decision that the Supreme Court was ruling on, that liberty was defined as a guarantee under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution to be "the freedom to define your understanding of the meaning of life."

Couple this with recent “dignity” and liberty issues.

“The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity.”

That quote comes from the Obergefell v. Hodges Decision written by Justice Anthony Kennedy. In the 1992 Casey decision, upholding the core of Roe v. Wade, we have this:

Our law affords constitutional protection to personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education ... These matters, involving the most intimate and personal choices a person may make in a lifetime, choices central to personal dignity and autonomy, are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/the-dangerous-doctrine-of-dignity/391796/>

All this gives the right to define one’s own identity, within a legal realm, and a right to personal dignity and autonomy. Of course, it is difficult to define “dignity,” and whose dignity may have priority legally, but we can address the issue of how God defines us according to the Scripture, as is His right...just to keep perspective.

Believers in the Bible as being the Word of God, as having supreme authority over all matters pertaining to life and godliness, and as being inspired and infallible, would say that God through His Word defines one's identity. We are the person God says we are.

I. God defines us according to our relationship with Him, either as Creator, or as Creator/Redeemer. God relates in the context of covenant. In the original creation event God made man in His own image. The Glory-Spirit (Genesis 1:2) hovered over that which was without form and void, lifeless and in deep darkness, and sovereignly brought the world into life: Let there be light. From the beginning, God separates the light from the darkness, both in the physical sense and in the spiritual sense. The Holy Spirit is the Life-Producer. He breathed life into man such that man became a living soul. Man was given dominion over creation, not for domination and to abuse, but to nourish, protect, and tend the Garden. He was given a moral image, to reflect the Glory-Image. And he was to live in the Glory-Presence.

II. God defines us more according to function than according to description.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

Adam and Eve and all humankind were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, having a purposeful and meaningful life as God in His sovereign goodness and love intended.

By virtue of the Creator-creature relationship alone, God is due perfect, personal, perpetual obedience. God instituted what we call the Covenant of Creation, or the Adamic Covenant, or the Covenant of Works. Adam had but one stipulation, to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But he ate. With this turning to hear and obey another wisdom, that of the Serpent (Satan), humankind was plunged into the estate of sin and misery. God showed up in the Garden in judgment and cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden, while at the same time giving the promise of salvation in the seed of the woman, namely Christ. Genesis 3:15

This begins two spiritual lines, the seed of Satan and the seed of Christ. Spiritual warfare continues and God continues to relate now to His people in a Covenant of Grace. God separates what He defines as Light, His children, and what He defines as Darkness, not His children. So we find a distinction between "the righteous and the wicked." God grants special grace in salvation that believers in Christ might obey through faith which works by love. Nevertheless, God demonstrates common grace and goodness to all His creation.

III. God defines us according to the nature of our hearts. It is out of the heart that the mouth speaks. It is according to the bent of our hearts that we choose. The Bible distinguishes between the natural man (those not having been born out of God, born of the will of God, born of the Holy Spirit) and the spiritual man (those born out of God, born of the will of God, born of the Spirit). John 3; John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:9; 1 John 5:18.

The one who practices sin [makes a practice of sin] is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin [keep on sinning], because

he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:8-10

The common grace and goodness of God affords the natural man freedom to choose consistent with his conscience and his choices and deeds will be judged by the Living God. (Matthew 12:31-37; Luke 6:43-45; Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:16; Revelation 20:12) The natural man and his conscience, though not informed by the Word of God and its truth, is, nevertheless, owing his Creator obedience by virtue of being created in the image of God for God's purposes and in accordance with His plans and sovereignty. Those born of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, by the electing love and grace of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9), have their consciences informed by the Word of God and its truth, owing their Creator/Redeemer out of supreme loyalty and attachment to Him, obedience.

The heart is desperately wicked. God in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, turns the heart and thus moves a person to faith in Jesus Christ, the Glory Incarnate, and repentance, both of which are gifts of God. Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Timothy 2:25, 26.

IV. God defines us according to our deeds. What we think is influenced by the nature of our hearts. Thoughts become words and deeds. A good work is one wrought or coming forth from God's holy, pure, good, and loving heart; the seed and root of a work of righteousness wrought in Him. All others are not of Him and therefore not good, for who is good but God alone?

Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right. Proverbs 20:11

Thus believers in Jesus Christ, out of supreme loyalty and attachment to Him, give Him obedience, having been given electing grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, which works by love. (Acts 5:32; Galatians 5:6) This faith without works is dead (James 2). The deeds done in the body will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-12). This faith is called to demonstrate itself in word and deed. (Galatians 5; Ephesians 4:17-32, John 14:15, 23); to be "kept," and to be lived in accordance with the Word of God, the final authority on matters of life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

Salvation rests in Jesus Christ alone, and believers in Jesus Christ are called to maintain the integrity of the Body of Christ as those called to be holy as God is holy; to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures; and therefore, to "put on the new man" in Christ through ongoing repentance and deliverance from the penalty, power, and ultimate presence of sin as redeemed. (Romans 6-8; Ephesians 4:17-32; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

V. God defines us according to our "father." Those whose Father is God by the Spirit of adoption have been born out of God and are children of God. (Romans 8) Relationship with the Father is restored through the believer's relationship with Christ, who indwells him by the Holy Spirit. A person is defined as to whether one is "in Christ" or "of the devil." (John 8, 10) If our Father is God and Jesus is our Lord and Savior, then we are called to be as He is. 1 John 4:17. Thus we will reflect the holiness, goodness, purity, and love of the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, every person, saved or unsaved, should be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity by believers on the basis of the outworking of the common grace of God, and through believers as they interact with the world and unbelievers. (Genesis 39:5; Psalm 145:9; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:35f) However, it is important that a clear distinction between common grace and special grace of God be defined.

VI. God defines us according to the grace He gives. Common grace is an operation of God the Holy Spirit whereby, He, without renewing the heart, exercises a moral influence on man such that sin is restrained, order is maintained in social life, and civil righteousness is promoted. (Gen. 20:6; 31:7; Romans 13:1-3) But common grace does not effect any spiritual change in the heart of man, so that it does not enable him to perform any spiritual good, or enable him to turn to God in faith and repentance. (Romans 1:24, 26-32)

In distinction from common grace, special grace of God works in a spiritual way, renewing the whole nature of man; leads to repentance and salvation; and leads to the production of spiritual fruit. (Romans 6:6; Gal. 5:24 f.; Heb. 9:14; Titus 1:15 f.; Col. 3:10) While common grace is resistible and is more or less resisted, special grace is irresistible, changing a man so that he willingly yields to its operations, which endow man with a capacity to understand God's revelation and to respond appropriately to it. (1 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:20 f.; Acts 7:51)

In contrast, common grace does not remove the guilt of sin and therefore does not carry pardon with it, and it does not lift the sentence of condemnation of God, but only postpones its execution, thereby giving time for repentance. (Isa. 63:10; Romans 3:1-12; 5:12-14; Mat. 13:30; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Peter 3:7) Therefore, all believers are to extend common grace to all those persons out of obedience and service to God as an exercise of living faith in the hope that those God has called unto Himself might come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ into an eternal relationship of reconciliation with God. (1 John 1:3; John 10:28-30; Rom. 11:29; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:18)

VII. God defines us according to LIFE. In Jesus Christ is life, and that life is the light of all people. The Holy Spirit is the Life Maker. Jesus Christ came that His own might have life, eternal life. He came in the power of an endless life to merit life through His obedience and grant eternal life to all those who believe in Him. Believers have dignity and worth because of the One who loved them and gave Himself for them, who "owns" them, and who as LORD, controls their destiny. (1 Corinthians 6:9-20). Ultimately, this is what will define us:

And the testimony is this; that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 1 John 5:11, 12
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For His Glory,

Mary Craig

Mary Craig, D. Min.

For you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Lord;

Walk as children of light. Ephesians 4:8

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I have added for you an exercise that allows you to discover for yourself who one is in Christ:

<http://www.marycraig.org/NewsViews/WhoIAmInChrist.htm>

and a handout developed by Rev. Jim Craig on "The Seed of Satan."

<http://www.marycraig.org/NewsViews/TheSeedOfSatan.htm>

Hope you like the Word of God!