



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN
LESSON 80 – PERSONHOOD

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 399-451
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – WAYNE GRUDEM, PGS. 439-528

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People are Persons Too

- ▶ Personhood is simply the quality or condition of being an individual person, or an individual being.
- ▶ God, within the Trinity, consists of Three Divine Persons and yet remains One God, these Three being equal in essence and nature.
- ▶ The question of when does personhood begin is answered differently depending upon one's worldview.
- ▶ Within the framework of a Biblical worldview, one becomes a person (an individual being) when they become...when they are conceived.
- ▶ Life begins at conception, when all 23 pairs of chromosomes are complete. Remember, this is the same time at which we become a living soul.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ While we understand why the discussion of persons is critical to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, why is it important to the discussion of humans becoming persons?
- ▶ Because some hold a view that personhood comes into being sometime between conception and birth, and some hold that it is even after birth as personality develops.
- ▶ Consider the development of the newly created human being in the womb: between days 12 and 28 the heart starts to beat, blood cells form at day 17, eyes begin to form at day 19, between weeks 4 and 6 brain waves can be detected. Fingerprints exist at 2 months, and the skeleton, circulatory system, and muscular system are complete by the 8th week.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ The new human being develops rapidly as an individual. But to think that this development from conception through birth, life, and all the way to death is at some point, or points, not a person, is to stumble at the foundation stone of the Roe v Wade ruling that legalized abortion in the United States.
- ▶ In 1973 the US Supreme Court ruled that the concept of “person” as used in the Constitution, applies only at birth. As a result, over 70 million people in the womb have been murdered because they were legally considered to be non-persons.
- ▶ Bioethicist Michael Tooley has argued that personhood does not exist until around 1 year of age when there is some idea of self-consciousness. This is the foundation of the argument for infanticide – killing babies up to 1 year of age.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ In New York, if a baby is delivered alive during an abortion procedure, the doctor is allowed to kill the baby anyway.
- ▶ The truth is that the Bible refers to babies in the womb as persons – living, individual beings, created in God's image and likeness.
- ▶ When Isaac prayer for his barren wife Rebekah, God heard and answered the prayer, and we are told that the result is that she conceived children (Gen. 25:21-22).
- ▶ When Job refers to his conception, that was the moment he became a man, a human being (Job. 3:3).
- ▶ John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit while still in his mother's womb, leaping for joy at the sound of Mary's greeting (Luke 1:41-44).

People are Persons Too

- ▶ A strong example of the unborn being seen as human beings is found in Exodus 21:22 “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.
- ▶ Life for life is the penalty for the death of a baby in the womb.
- ▶ Personhood is not a development; it is an event that occurs at conception.
- ▶ Attempts to separate personhood from biological human life are unscientific, arbitrary, and dangerous.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ Just as the members of the Trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct Persons, so men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood.
- ▶ When God created, He created both male and female in His image and likeness. Men and women then are created equally in God's image and both reflect His character and design in their lives.
- ▶ Men and women are equally important to God and equally valuable to Him. We have equal worth before Him for all eternity. Neither is inferior or superior to the other.
- ▶ When we rightfully recognize the image of God and personhood of each other, men and women are able, with the Spirit's help, to honor and respect one another (Prov. 31:10-, 28-30; 1 Peter 3:7).

People are Persons Too

- ▶ Often, in sinful societies, the division between people groups is couched on terms of certain groups being less than human, or nonpersons. This is used to justify their eradication (genocide).
- ▶ In every community revolution throughout history we see the following progression:
 - ▶ 1. Government overreach – tyranny
 - ▶ 2. Public shaming of specific groups of people
 - ▶ 3. Censorship and propaganda
 - ▶ 4. Shortage of toilet paper (<https://www.qminder.com/queues-in-ussr/>)

People are Persons Too

- ▶ The church does not exist to defend cultural or governmental norms.
- ▶ The church exists to the glory of God, for spreading the fame and glory of His name to the whole world, calling the lost to salvation, warning them to flee the wrath to come.
- ▶ The church then must uphold the value of every person – born and unborn.
- ▶ This affects us in many areas of our lives. Consider:
- ▶ In the 1930s the leadership of the Nazi party in Germany formulated a plan to both use and distract the German people in order to accomplish several goals. The first was to present a group of people to blame as scapegoats for the economic woes of the nation as they struggled to recover from the reparations of WWI. However, when the worldwide economy began to recover and Germany began to prosper and could afford expansion these scapegoats could no longer be blamed. As a result the propaganda ministry began to find other things to blame on this group of people.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ Eventually they were even able to pass legislation to remove citizenship from these people. As non-citizens they had no rights to own businesses or property. They were classified as sub-human. They were less human than the super men of the Arian race. They were labeled as a threat to the population as carriers of disease, mental and physical defects, and in a position to displace the pure race denying them their natural born privilege and rank in society. Violence against these people was sanctioned and supported by the government.
- ▶ Of course we know that this is how Hitler and his followers acted against the Jews. History always repeats itself. There is nothing new under the sun.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ Now in the United States the administration is playing with people as pawns. The political stunts that surround the recently highlighted illegal immigration issues along our southern border find the media warning us about a group of non-citizens who are displacing citizens, preventing their rights from being upheld, harming the economy, and harboring diseases that threaten the population.
- ▶ As people react against the government and against the flood of illegal immigrants the church needs to take note lest we forget that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, citizen or non-citizen. And when the government uses human beings created in God's image as pawns to propagandize the legislative process we, the church, must stand up against this spurious attempt to dehumanize a group of people for political profit.

People are Persons Too

- ▶ Further, when the government denies the church the opportunity to minister to people - any people - in a time of their desperate need, then the government has abandoned the very foundation of our independence, that all man are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights!
- ▶ Let the church take note, supporting the notion that any class of people from anywhere on this earth is beneath us violates the Scriptural injunction to love our neighbor as ourselves and to esteem all others as better than we esteem ourselves.
- ▶ There is no easy answer to the situation, but there is gospel truth that must be applied lest we deny the sacred truths of the value of every person, the worth of every human life in God's economy.