

How are we? What we need to talk about today is big because it's going to require us to shift how we think about the world around us. And when I say "shift," I'm not speaking of someone outside of Christ shifting inside to Christ. I'm talking about those of us who grew up in church. We need to shift how you think and see certain things for us to get to where we need to go. So let's look at Genesis 1. When I say the word "creation," it's been my experience that we immediately think of the natural sciences. We think of the stars in the sky, mountain ranges, the life cycle of a plant and the building instinct of a beaver. You think of getting up in the morning, getting your coffee, sitting on the porch, looking at your 8 1/2 foot private fence and marveling at God's creation. We think of those times we went camping. We think of those moments where we got to go the the ocean and stand in front of the ocean and marvel at God's power and His might in creation. I would say it this way. You think of the eight "let there be" statements. You think of "Let there be light. Let there be an expanse in the heavens. Let the waters pool up into one. Let the seas and oceans be filled with swarms of creatures. Let the fields be filled with all manner of beast and animals. Let the air be filled all manner of birds. . . ." There are eight "let there be" statements in Genesis 1 that culminate in, "Let us make man in our own image" and He created male and female. And that's how the bulk of us think about creation, and we're not wrong to think that. The Bible is unbelievably clear that everything that exists everywhere is God's. Not only did He create it but He holds it together by the word of His mouth. But during creation, there are these other things created, things that Colossians would call "invisible things." And it's that that we've got to get our head and our mind around today for where we're going the next couple of weeks.

This idea is going to start with, not the eight "let there be" statements, but the four "let us" statements. Theologians call this the "cultural mandate." So you've got the eight "let there be" statements, and then the writer of Genesis is going to shift into the four "let us" statements. So let's look at them in Genesis 1:28. "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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."" And if we kept reading, He's going to say, "Look, all these birds are yours, all these animals are yours and all this land is yours." And this is the cultural edict or the cultural mandate. Let me explain it like this. God says, "Let there be. . . Let there be. . . Let there be. . . Let there be. . ." And then He no longer says, "Let there be," and He comes to man and turns creation over to man and says, "You are now My viceroys of this creation, and I want you to and to build." So God created, He comes to man and woman and says, "Be fruitful, multiply, marry, have children, fill the earth and subdue it." Now if I could simplify that and say it in language that we would grasp in 2009, I would say that the Scriptures just said, "Find a wife, marry a wife, have children, create art, build businesses, become an architect, get involved in the law, build systems of governments, create cities, develop agriculture. . ." On and on I could go. It's called the cultural mandate. It is not a coincidence that the Bible starts in Genesis with a garden and ends in Revelation with a city. How do you get from a garden to a city? You build, you cultivate and you create.

So if there's one thing I'm eventually going to try to save us from here, it's the really bad theology that one day a trumpet is going to sound, you're all going to get sucked up into the air and then God, like Luke Skywalker, is going to drop two torpedoes down into the Death Star and blow it to pieces. Now I know some of you are going right now, "Now wait a minute, Chandler. Peter clearly says that God will destroy the earth by fire." I would agree with you, but I would like to make an Old Testament reference. Has God not already destroyed the earth once? And He did it with water. Remember? You tell that story to your kid as you tuck him in at night. "Man went bad, and so God drowned all of them but Noah and

his family. Goodnight, buddy." And then you're like, "No no no, rainbows! Rainbows are God's promise that He's never going to do that again. Rainbows are promises." So God destroyed the earth, and in so doing, He simply purged from the earth what was sinful and wicked, correct? So later on, He goes, "I'm going to do it again and destroy it again." Here's my contention. God already destroyed the earth, but my house is actually built on earth still. Where I live, it's on earth. And I got in my car and I drove on earth to the parking lot that we have here that is actually on earth. So God purged from the planet what was sinful and wicked and then began to rebuild. And Revelation says that there will be a new city one day that is filled with the glory of the nations, not the glory of a nation but the glory of nations and that the rest of the earth will have been purged by fire. And that's why I always joke around and say things like, "Some of you are going to be in there and you're going to smell like smoke. Because you haven't grown in the fullness of Christ, you haven't pursued the Lord like you should have. And so you just smell a little smoky in the new heaven and new earth."

So there's this cultural mandate on you that says, "Men, find a job, get married, build a business. . ." Men are by creative order cultivators. Which is why a man, when he decides he wants a new hobby, he'll immediately go and buy the most expensive gear he can even though 90% of the time that stuff just ends up in his garage three weeks later. So what happened? That's a "We're going to build, we're going to make, we're going to create. . ." This is what we do. Women become help mates in that. We've been designed to create.

So what this means is not a sacred/secular divide. Work is sacred, art is sacred, family is sacred, politics are sacred. Now not all forms of politics are sacred, because there are some forms of politics that are going to be burned up, such as tyranny and oppression. Those things will burn up, but politics aren't secular. They are sacred. They were designed and created by God. Let me show you this in a little bit more forceful way. Let's go to Isaiah 28. We're going to start in verse 23, and I just want to point out to you something very simple in regards to this cultural mandate that was also woven into the creative order. I want to show you these invisible things that I'm trying to get you to see and understand today. Here's what it says, "Give ear, and hear my voice; give attention, and hear my speech. Does he who plows for sowing plow continually? Does he continually open and harrow his ground? When he has leveled its surface, does he not scatter dill, sow cumin, and put in wheat in rows and barley in its proper place, and emmer as the border? For he is rightly instructed; his God teaches him." For those of you who aren't farmers in here, let me just unpack very quickly what he is saying here. He's saying that there's a right way and a wrong way to plant wheat. If you plant it the right way, it works, and if you plant it the wrong way, it doesn't. And this was God's design. It's His design that you put wheat into rows. No one who knows what they're doing plants wheat in any other way, because God designed in the domain of agriculture for wheat to be planted in rows. It's an invisible law. Let's keep going. "Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge, nor is a cart wheel rolled over cumin, but dill is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod. Does one crush grain for bread? No, he does not thresh it forever; when he drives his cart wheel over it with his horses, he does not crush it. This also comes from the LORD of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom." He's saying that within the domain of agriculture, whether you're a believer in God or not, there are invisible boundaries. There is a way that things just are. And it doesn't matter if you're in India, it doesn't matter if you're in Africa, it doesn't matter if you're in the United States, in the domain of agriculture, there is a way that things just are. This is how it works. And you can try it outside of that, but you'll never produce the amount of dill, cumin and wheat that you would have if you would have just done it the way it was designed to work. And if you're confused about my use of the word domain, sociologists would say that there are seven domains of society. Agriculture, education, government, science, art and business are the domains I can name off the top of my head. There are these seven domains in every society. And God is involved and cares about each of these domains. God cares about agriculture. It's not secular to God, but He, in the creative order, designed farming to work a certain way for man's joy and His glory.

Okay, now go to Romans 2, starting in verse 14. "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law. . ." The law was simply what was given to the nation of Israel to unpack for them how God designed the universe to work. So although we look

at the law very negatively, in the Old Testament, they look at the law very positively. In fact, Psalm 119 is nothing but a long praise of the law. "I love Your law. . . I delight in Your law. . . I think of You law in the watches of the night. . . I wake up in the middle of the night and think about Your law. . . I wake up in the morning thinking about Your law. . . I wrote Your law on my hands. . . I put You law as a frontlet on my forehead so wherever I look, I see You law. . ." He's saying, "Praise God that He didn't abandon us, but He showed us how He designed things to be." So the law is not viewed negatively; it's just God unpacking how He designed things to work. Now look, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." So four weeks from now, I believe I'm going to teach on Sabbath and solitude and its role in our health, both spiritual/emotional and mental health. As I was researching for that, I found an article from two years ago in the Wall Street Journal from a group of secular sociologists who have come together and decided through their research that for us to function optimally mentally, emotionally and physically, there must be at least one day a week where we unplug from everything, don't do anything and simply be rather than do. Now that sounds familiar to me. I feel as though I have read something about that before. In fact, I believe that in Kindergarten it hung on the wall (before we pulled it off the wall). It said, "Remember the Sabbath." So this is those without the law lining themselves up with the law without knowing why. You see, nowhere in that article did they say, "The Bible is right." Nowhere in that article did they say, "The command was correct." They didn't say that. They were like, "Look what we've discovered. And sure, they have. Modern research says that God was right all along when it comes to our emotional, spiritual and mental health. We need a day where we just be instead of do. We need a day where we are disconnected from our tasks. So this would be an example out of the book of Romans of what happens with humanity. Humanity everywhere will simply do things that line them up with what the law teaches just because it's how God designed the universe to work.

I'll give you one more to prove my point. Go over to Proverbs 8. Now I don't know how much you know about the book of proverbs. Let me unpack it for you. Basically the book of Proverbs says that wisdom stands in the streets and she yells, "How long will you simple people love your simple ways?" And then what wisdom wants to do is unpack for you how God designed the universe to work. And there's some really funny and true things in the book of Proverbs. I believe it's Proverbs 24 that says, "It doesn't matter how nicely you greet your neighbor, if you greet your neighbor too early in the morning, they'll view it as a curse." Isn't that true? It doesn't matter how sweet you are, if you're doing it too early, it will be viewed as a curse. There is a ton of others. A fool returns to his folly like a dog returns to its vomit. It's just true. And what he's saying there is it truly is a fool that continues to do the same madness over and over and over again. And it's this book that was written with no sacred/secular divide. Because as you can see, the proverbs I just told you, they don't have anything to do with church. There's another proverb that says it's better for a man to slowly die in the desert than to live with a contemptuous woman who continually emasculates him. That doesn't have anything to do with church. On and on we could go. There are proverbs about business, there are proverbs about economics, there are proverbs about children and their parents, there are proverbs about rest and business, there are proverbs about money, and on and on we could go. So it seems that God doesn't buy in to the sacred/secular divide, but rather all things are sacred, specifically the domains. There's not a domain to God that's not sacred. It's not like God goes, "Church is Mine, but business is what you humans do before I destroy you. . . Church and morality are Mine, but rest and productivity, I don't want anything to do with that. One day I'm going to burn that all up." That's not how God sees things. There aren't domains of society that are intrinsically evil. They were all given by God. Art was given by God. That's God's stuff. Business was given by God. You're a part of a sacred thing when you get up in the morning, put on your clothes and go to work. That's sacred. And just because you're not wearing a "I heart Jesus" shirt at work doesn't make it less sacred.

So look at what the Bible says about this wisdom, whether it's in the domain of business or education or government. Proverbs 8, we'll pick it up in verse 22. "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth." Now this should pop something in your brain

here. He just said, "Before I began to design the earth, the design of how business, agriculture, education and the other domains was wired into what would be before I created anything." He's saying here that there would be right ways and wrong ways of doing marriage, there would be right ways and wrong ways of doing education, there would be right ways and wrong ways of planting crops, there would be right ways and wrong ways of setting up systems of government, there would be right ways and wrong ways of figuring out economic structures, there would be good and bad art and there would be good and bad music. Now I'm not talking stylistically here. Because some people find certain styles of music beautiful that other people find painful. I have made no secret of my absolute despising of country music. I've been very honest and forthright that I believe it will not be in heaven. It is a part of the Fall that will be redeemed moving forward. I have made no secret about that. But that's not what this is talking about. In fact, I think that the new city will be filled with every type of music imaginable. Good music and bad music means when you don't obey the unwritten, invisible laws of music, it sounds bad. Think of your nine year old learning the clarinet. Think of a butchered version of When the Saints Go Marching In over and over and over again. So there are rules to playing the clarinet, so when they hit the wrong note, everyone goes, "That was wrong." Nobody goes, "What an artistic expression." That's not how it works. We go, "You hit the wrong note. That's wrong." And no one anywhere goes, "I don't think so. I think it was designed to work that way." So I'm not talking about style; I'm talking about form and function, invisible realities, here are the laws. And God wove those into the creative order before the eight "let there be" statements.

Let's keep going. Verse 23, "Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man." So these unwritten laws, this right way and wrong way to do things within all domains of society were woven into the fabric of the universe as He was creating. In fact, they were there before He began to create.

That means two things that I need you to hear me say. There first one is there is not a sacred/secular divide. Something unfortunately happened in the 50's, 60's and 70's that had us believing that there were certain things that were sacred (church and Bible study) and there were some things that were secular that Christians should avoid (art, styles of music). Like Rock-n-Roll was wicked music in the 50's according to the church. The church would look at that style of music and call it wicked, and they were wrong. Now every one of the domains can have sinful perversions of how God designed things to be, but the domains themselves are not evil. It is not a wicked thing for a man to be extremely successful in business. It's not a wicked thing for a man to be involved in politics. Now there are wicked men in politics, are there not? You see them all the time. Most of the time, they fight really powerfully for moral legislation while they're sleeping with their aide or secretary. So there are definitely evil men in music, there are evil men and women in politics and there are evil men and women in education. There are men and women who pervert what God made to be sacred and beautiful.

Did you know that the Bible says that God cares about the life of your mind? In 2 Corinthians 10:5, he says that you should "take every thought captive to obey Christ?" Now I'll show you where I think your head immediately goes because we've got this sacred/secular divide that we've been pummeled with all these years. I think we immediately went to, "How do we fight lust?" I think you immediately went to, "I need to read the Bible more," instead of going, "How do I take every thought captive to Christ in business? How do you take every thought captive to Christ in the domains of society that you dwell and work?" I'll give you a few more that we don't normally think of. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says, "women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works." So let me chat here for a

second. I always giggle a little bit at the literalist on this one. The literalist says if a woman has braided hair and wearing a gold ring right now, she's some sort of trollop and should be branded with the crimson A. He's saying here that a women should adorn themselves in such way that their spirit and their mind are respected and seen and not try to get attention with their body, because it will attract the wrong kind of attention. So listen, I don't want to argue about what you should or shouldn't wear, here's what I want to say to you. God cares about how you dress. Isn't that crazy? Like who thinks of that? Nobody goes to their closet and goes, "God says that there is a right way and a wrong way to dress, and my role as a believer is to line myself up with how God designed things to be for my joy and His glory. Which means I clothe myself in good works and won't use my body to get attention." Now in the same way, I think God very much would be in the domain of fashion and creativity. So I'm not telling you to wear a Snuggie® around town. I'm not saying that. We're not throwing on the burka or the leopard print Snuggie® to prom this year. That's not what I'm talking about. That's now what He's talking about. He's speaking into the soul of a woman and saying, "Sweet daughter of Mine, what you desire, what you want and what you need will not come if you flaunt your external beauty. What you want, what you need, what you desire, what will bring you joy will come when you clothe yourself in righteousness and what draws the attention of men to you is your godliness and your righteousness, not the curves I gave you." Who knew that God cared how you dressed?

God cares about your relationship with money. Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity." So God's saying, "If you love money, you're going to pursue something that can never be grasped. That's now how I designed money to work. Don't get outside of how I designed money to work. If you get outside of how I designed money to work, it goes bad.

God cares about your marriage. Hebrews 13:4, "Let marriage be held in honor among all." God cares about your relationship with your children. "Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). And here's one that we talked about just a little earlier. Exodus 31:13, "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you." So how do you not become boastful and proud in your progression in regards to morality and sanctification? You take Sabbath. Because on the Sabbath day, you'll be reminded that it is the Lord and the Lord alone that sanctifies you.

I literally could go on for hours here and say, "God views this as sacred. . .God views this as sacred. . .God views this as sacred. . ." Things that we don't think sacredly about, we think secularly about. This divide has got to be crushed. There is no sacred/secular divide. If you're a man in here and you're getting up early in the morning, you're going to work, you're loving your family, instructing your children and you're wooing, and encouraging and loving your wife, that's sacred, it's not secular. If you've ever tried to figure out the Bible Belt (where hundreds of thousands of people go to church and very few people seemed marked by it at all), what's happened is we earnestly think that there are things that God's into and He likes and that rotates around church, and all of this around here is ours. It's ours because we created it, we sustain it and we do it. And I'm telling you that you're wrong. It's not true biblically.

And then the second thing I would need you to hear in addition to the fact that there is no sacred/secular divide is that the commands of God (all of them) do not rob us of freedom, but they enable us to walk in freedom. Everything has boundaries. Even the most creative artist cannot argue the fact that his art has boundaries. If he's a painter, it's a canvas. If he's into shaping with steel, there are certain things steel will do and certain things steel will not do. There are rules around it, and if they operate within the rules of how steel functions, they can create really beautiful things. If they go beyond the rules, it breaks down. The commands of God, the law of God is not about robbing from you freedom and joy. Our culture believes that freedom is only ours when we're 100% autonomous. That's incorrect. It is in subjection to the law of God, being under the law of God that we that we actually are able to walk and rule in freedom.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You that we can be actively involved in politics and that be godly and good. I thank You that we can be artists, writers, filmmakers and actors and that be godly and good. I thank You that we can be economists, farmers, businessmen, teachers and historians and it be good. I thank You that we can be mathematicians, fathers, mothers, husbands and wives and be good. I pray that there is no domain of society that You don't stand over and above as the Author and Perfecter. I thank You that there are invisible realities in every domain of society, that there are right ways and wrong ways to operate and do. I pray that You would give us wisdom and a knowledge of the Scriptures that would enable us to tap in to how You designed the universe to be. I pray that we might pursue lining ourselves up with how You've created it to function. Help us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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