Man's ceaseless attempt to be God
By Charles Feinberg

This study is on man's ceaseless attempt to be God, man's ceaseless attempt to be God by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean Emeritus and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada California. It has been well said that there are three prominent evils of the present hour. They are first of all the humanizing of God, talking about a finite God as though we were man, putting God on the level of man. And the second evil of the present hour is the deifying of man seeking to place man on the level of God. And the third is the minimizing of sin making little of sin. Definitely these are three evils.

Notice the first is humanizing of God and the second the deifying of man. It's that area that we want to center our attention. Man's ceaseless attempt to be God. There are many clear contrast distinctions in the Bible, but I think you'll bear me out when I say that none is greater than that which separates puny man from the infinite God. For instance, in seconds Samuel chapter 14 verse 14 we read these words, "For we must needs die" this is the wise woman of Tocca. Joab sent for her so that she could bear a message to David. Said, "She we must needs die and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again." That's not a very tremendously powerful picture of man is it, "Neither does God take away life but devise a means that he that is banished be not an outcast from him." Second Samuel 14:14. Man [inaudible] frailty in his short span of life is liked and there you'll notice too, water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again.

Another passage that deals with the great distinction between man and his littleness and God in His infinitude is that wonderful eighth psalm, "How oh Lord our Lord how excellent is
Feinberg: Man's ceaseless attempt to be God

thy name in all the Earth" and ends the same way, it's a Psalm of David. In the fourth verse.

David says, "What is man that thou art mindful of Him and the son of man that visited him." He's not much in comparison to the living God. And then in the wonderful psalm which is entitled A Prayer of Moses the man of God the oldest time wise, it's the oldest of all the Psalms because it dates from Moses the man of God. Psalm 90, verse 10 we read, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten." That would be a normal span, 70 years, or even by reason of strength fourscore years, that 80 years, yet is there pride at their very best. These years are about labor and sorrow for it is soon gone and we fly away. Look at that, and notice the difference with, between that and the living God before the mountains were brought forth verse two or ever thou has formed the earth and the world even from everlasting to everlasting. This is not an a proposition of being soon gone and we fly away, no even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. And then those amazing chapters in Job chapter 38 and 39 and 40 and 41 and 42, the last five chapters of that remarkable book.

Think of the grandeur and the majesty and the greatness of God compared with man. Job had a great deal to say and his friends had much to say, but God says, "Where were you when I did this. Where were you when I did that? Where is the wisdom that you believe you have to do a thing like this? Can you duplicate? Can you copy? Can you repeat what I have done in nature?"

Then Isaiah, the Great Isaiah tells us in the second chapter, the last verse, verse 22. "Cease ye from man," Don't spend too much attention to what he can do or what he can do. Cease ye from man, don't put your trust in him. For where in cease ye from man, for his breath is in his nostrils at the very outset of his being. Which of its pinched off his life is ended. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils for where in shall he be accounted off. Then the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, beautiful beyond all computation, saw Isaiah forty verses six to eight. How God is great,
how the nations are just as a drop in the bucket. How Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, all the contrast goes on and on.

Now, does man willingly recognize the wide difference that wide divergence? Well, in order to displace God, he has his own line of attack. How does he do it? He claims there is no God. If there is no God there is a void there and he feels that he must fill it. Does he actually say so? Well Psalm ten verse four tells us the wicked in the pride of his [inaudible] said, "He will not, God will not require" he will not take to mind, he will not bring it to book, he will not call for a balancing of the accounts. God won't even bother with it and all the while why does he say that, "All his thoughts are there is no God"? There is no God. He doesn't believe there's a God at all.

I remember at home, there were seven of us. I had three brothers and three sisters and I remember if any one of them began to take heir's to himself mother father might have been away shopping and father at his work in the downtown area where he had his business in Pittsburgh. If anyone took on special heirs we invariably said, "Who died and left you boss." If God is dead, that, this has a great deal to say about this recent insanity of God is dead. If God is dead somebody wants to take his place, somebody has to be the great administrator and supervisor and director of the universe. Who died and left you boss. They want to do away with God in order that they can say they are God in his place.

Now in order to see this tremendous subject of man's unceasing attempt to be God. In order to see it in its proper proportions and its proper perspective, we must go back before the creation of man, in Genesis. He's created there in the first chapter of Genesis, we have word concerning him in the second chapter, but long before the events of Genesis 1 and 2 the Bible tells us of events before the creation of man, and here we shall find the first attempt. It was an
eternity passed of one of God's creatures in his attempt to be God. It was Satan. It was on the part of Satan who tried to be God. Isaiah 14 verses 12 to 14. He says, "I will ascend to the sides of the North, he is going to do this, he will do that, he will do the other." Some half dozen or more I wills and he winds up with a climax. "I will be like the most high God." In Ezekiel 28th chapter, verses 11 to 19, there is a denunciation on the part of the prophet Ezekiel of a then ruling King of Tyre. But he goes on from that one and says I'll tell you the one who's behind him just as the Lord Jesus saw who it was that was behind Peter when he says don't you go to the cross. He says Satan's speaking behind you, get you behind me Satan, and so, someone's behind the King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28. And it's that one the anointed cherub that was in Eden. Now that couldn't be any King of Tyre obviously and that one was created with great intelligence, beauty, oh how he had all the proper appointments mentally, physically and every way intellectually, but he lifted himself up above the living God.

God gave Satan's superior intelligence and this is how he used it. God gave man intelligence above all creatures. He's called Homo sapiens and that is from Latin. Two words meaning thinking man, reasoning man. God gave man intelligence above all other created beings. And what did he do? He uses it as we shall see shortly. No animal, you may look through the records from one end to another, no animal ever tries to become like God. It's never happened, it never will, but man to whom God gave intelligence he wants to be like God. Let's trace man's ceaseless never ending struggle to be God. I alert you now, in fact I warn you that the record is so amazing, it's so varied, you may have not looked at it in that light in your reading of scripture, but it is so amazing and so very that if it were not in the Bible I honestly declare to you we wouldn't believe it.
First step in the attempt or the first attempt among the steps is this one. When did man first try to be God in Eden? Read Genesis 1. Just a little over thirty verses. Genesis 1 then read Genesis 2. They are an unending ceaseless delight to read and to ponder, and to imagine. All is as it should have been because God did it all. He did it perfectly, he did it gloriously, he did it for his own glory. He prided, he provided for Adam physically in the garden, mentally. He was mentally equipped, you may be sure because he named all the animals as God brought them to him in Genesis 2 and God, we do not read that God changed the name of a single one. Adam was provided for physically, mentally, socially. God gave him a partner to answer to him, to think with him, to feel with him, to love with him, to understand him. Provided for him physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually because God walked with Adam in the cool of the evening. Think of that unbroken blessed spiritual fellowship. Then that vile suggestion of Satan, he starts with a question, yea has God said always watch out when the devil puts a question mark like that over the word of God. And then he says, "Now, when you tell me that God said you shouldn't eat that tree and she added and not even touch it don't you believe it. Nothing will happen to you won't die, but God somehow wants to keep you from what will benefit you the most. God knows that during the day you eat of it you will be as God." Watch it here now. Like God again, like God. Satan's word Isaiah 14, "I will be like the most high God, the vile suggestion you will be as God knowing good and evil." That was a direct invitation, friends, to seek to be as God, not god's. Some translation have small g.o.d.s that is not correct. [Inaudible], I know in some places it means god's, you shall not have other god's, but here it means G.O.D as in Genesis 1:1 in the beginning God. How do you know? Well it's doubtful. If the concept of God's, plural, deities or idols was even known then. Adam and Eve knew only the one true God of creation. Out of that suggestion though, you could be like God knowing good and evil. Out of
this suggestion and yielded to it came the fall of man, the race failed in Adam. Eve was deceived, but Adam went into it with his eyes open. Paul tells Timothy, and Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, "For by one man, not one woman, but by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. So the death passed upon all men for they all have sinned. Out of that suggestion of Satan and yielding to it came the fall of man and the seed, mark this, the seed had permanently been planted, it's with us to this hour friends. The seed had been planted. The virus had been injected into the bloodstream of the human family. What? The concept of being like God.

Now, we turn from this passage in Genesis 3. I'd like for you to see with me the next step in this being like God. In the attempt to be like God. In that we find in the 11th chapter. The 11th chapter of Genesis. Genesis 11 1 to 4. It's at Babel. First in Eden, then at babel. 11:1-4 we read and the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. Wasn't that a marvelous marvelous gift of God? One language, one speech, and it came to pass as they journeyed, men journeyed east. They found a plane in the land of shiner, that's in Mesopotamia, and they dwelt there and they said one to another, "Come let's make brick and burn them thoroughly" and they had brick for stone and slime had mortar. And they said, "Come let us build a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. Make us a name, make us a name" and God said, "Behold there one people they have all one language and this is what they begin to do. And now nothing will be withholding from them which they purpose to do." Define God's announced purpose of populating the whole earth. What do they decide to do? They say, "No, we're going to use this one language and one speech and one people, we are not yet divided into national entities and divisions. No we are going to make a name for ourselves." God wasn't making a turmoil over the building of a tower, we know from archaeology in Mesopotamia that they did build towers.
Ziggurats, Z.i.g.g.u.r.a.t. That was a platform for a deity. It wasn't just the building of a town alone. How far into the sky could a tower go? We talk about skyscrapers in our big cities, especially in New York. I've been in a plane over New York more than one time, many times and trips in our country and then abroad and returning. And I want to tell you that they may be called skyscrapers, but I haven't seen one of them actually scraping the sky yet. There's a lot of room between them and the sky and God wasn't afraid of skyscrapers. God wasn't disturbed that they might reach his throne. Ah but verse 6 tells us, it was the whole scheme behind it that this is just the beginning of, this they have begun to do. Now, nothing will be holding them. They'll think they have a free ticket, a carte blanche. They have an open season to do whatever they wanted that which they purpose to do. Do what? Make themselves as God. And then, if it's bad enough in Eden and then at Babel, no later as Babylon. Think of it in Egypt, Exodus 5. In Exodus 5:2 and 3 and the Pharaoh. And according to Egyptian theology claimed to be God. So in Exodus 5:2 and 3 Pharaoh said when he told the Lord God of Israel says, "Let My People Go, Let them behold a feast and to be in the wilderness." Pharaoh said, "A likely story, who is the Lord that I should harken under his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, after all I'm a deity myself. I don't recognize any such person, I know not the Lord moreover, I will not let Israel go." And they said the God of the Hebrews have met with us. Let's go. Let us go. We pray the three day’s journey into the wilderness and sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Lest we fall upon us with pestilence over the a sword.

There's the claim and you know what the issue was? Very, very clearly, God says in Exodus 4:22, "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Moses’s, you're to tell Pharaoh thus says the Lord Israel is my son, my first born and I said under the let my son go." And then in chapter 5, "Let my people go, let my son go." Who is this son? "Israel let my son go that he may serve me and I
has refused to let him go. Behold I will slay thy son, thy firstborn." You see why the tenth plague had to be, it had to be the death of the first born. Because God said let Israel whom you are enslaved my son my first born let him go. Satan talking through Pharaoh. Pharaoh in his satanic opposition says, "No, I don't know of any such son or first born." God said, "But the time I've finished my plagues upon you, you will certainly know it and not only know it well you will have it clearly etched in your mind throughout all your days because you’re first born, you have no concern for my first born, and before it's all over your first born will be slain." The king himself and his eldest son in their theology claim to be deity in Egypt. We recognize none other we are God. And just to show you that the issue of gods and deity was involved in Exodus 12:12, I will go through the land of Egypt in that night and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt both man and beast, here it is, and against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. It's not just some tempest in a teapot just some little bit of a minor affair. Oh no, this is a warfare between a contest between who is God and who is not. So we've seen it there in Egypt now in Babylon.

In Daniel the third chapter we know from Revelation 19:10 God says, "Through the angel to the apostle John when he has that marvelous revelation all those chapters of the book of Revelation." He fell down to worship that Angel. He says, "See that do it not." He said, "I'm only a fellow servant." He didn't say a fellow believer. I'm a fellow servant. You can't worship me, worship God. You're not allowed to worship anyone else. Worship belongs to God alone and yet in Daniel 3, we find Nebuchadnezzar seeks it for himself. He wants to be God. This was the gratitude that God received, which God was repaid for revealing to him and even forgot the dream. Revealed to him that universal earthly power had been delegated to him. He also considered himself quite the builder and creator and Daniel chapter 4 verses 30 to 34. We read
later in this fifth chapter that there was a feast for thousands of the nobles and their wives and they drank themselves drunk. Yes, archaeologists have found in Babylon areas that could hold well over thousands in such a banqueting. He was a builder Nebuchadnezzar was. And with Jeremih 51:15 trying to say this great Babylon which I built for my glory, for my majesty, for my power and prayer. Not only worship, but prayer must be to God alone. In Daniel six we find that Darius, even after the power of Babylon had been transferred to Mido Persia, usurps divine rights and prerogatives. Well how so? Some are his followers seeking to toady to him and curry favor seeking to entrap Daniel said, "Oh King, you are so worthy you should make a decree that no man shall make a request of any king or any man for 30 days except to you." And he was caught. He was caught because in his pride he accepted that it's the pride of the human heart that will put the human eye before the eternal I Am.

The account is told of what happened at a dinner table of one of the well-known millionaires who had done so much for the public good. I might just well tell his name, Andrew Carnegie, my home city was the one that he made his home city in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. He was from Scotland originally. Was it his dinner table? This well-known millionaire, done a great deal of good in the Carnegie libraries and Carnegie Foundations for other things and there's that institution Carnegie Institute of Technology. During that dinner discussion turned on prayer and the value of prayer. Well it went on for a while. Finally, the millionaire said Carnegie said, "I don't believe in it." They said, "How's that?" Well he said I've gotten everything I've asked for that I've wished, that I've ever asked of the world. He says I've got everything I've desired so there's no need for me to pray to a deity for any favors. They happen to be at the table the principle, we'd say the president of the Scottish university. He was present at the table. He said,
“Sir, there's one thing you might pray for” and surprisingly the host asked, “What's that?” He says you might pray for humility. What a need it is for men down through the ages.

Now let's come to yet another and that's at Calvary. Here, I'm intruding all the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's climaxing in the cross. Here we're going to see such a marvelous display and such a sinister if you will display of the attempt of Satan, you'd think he was beaten there in the time before the creation of the world. I suppose he's smarting from that and he is trying to minister to his wounds, that he will never try it again. Well you might think so friends, but he tries it again. Let's see how he does it first. In Matthew 4:9 at the temptation of our Lord. Remember how he took our Lord Jesus toward exceeding higher mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And what does he say? He doesn't say a prayer to your father in heaven, pray to the living God and he will give them all to you, Oh no no. He said unto him all these things will I give the because God had allowed him to have the rule over the earth. He is the prince of this world because Adam conceded to his claims.

Ah, he said to our Lord Jesus all these things will I give the if thou will fall down and worship the. And the Lord Jesus said, "Get the hand Satan, it's written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shot thou serve." I am by no means going to try to make you God. Satan, notice it now, never learns, Satan's still trying to be God.