

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

Systematic Theology Series

ANTHROPOLOGY

The Doctrine of Humanity

Created, Fallen, and Redeemable — What It Means to Be Human Before God

UNIT 8

The Unity of the Human Race and the Headship of Adam

Lesson 25

The Fall Anticipated

Anthropology as the Stage for Hamartiology

“How the Doctrine of Man Prepares Us for the Doctrine of Sin”

Key Texts: *Ephesians 2:1–7; Romans 5:20; 8:29–30; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18*

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ... But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.”

Ephesians 2:1, 4–5, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Twenty-four lessons have built a theological portrait of the human creature whose richness and comprehensiveness the curriculum has been designed to achieve. We have studied the human creature in its creation (Units 1–3), its constitution of body and soul (Unit 4), its original righteousness and covenantal accountability (Unit 5), its creaturely identity in gender and marriage (Unit 6), its vocation in the created order (Unit 7), and its solidarity in Adam under the federal headship that makes the entire human family simultaneously the object of the condemnation in the first Adam and the potential object of the justification in the Last Adam (Unit 8). Lesson 25 does not introduce a new doctrinal topic; it performs a different and equally essential theological function: it gathers the full weight of everything the series has established about the human creature and holds it before the abyss of what the fall has done to that creature, so that the student who enters the doctrine of sin (Hamartiology) and the doctrine of salvation (Soteriology) in the next series of the curriculum will enter it with the full theological context that makes both doctrines intelligible, urgent, and doxologically powerful.

The specific theological function that Lesson 25 performs is the function of preparation: it prepares the student for the doctrine of sin by establishing with full theological clarity what it is that sin has damaged, what it is that the fall has destroyed, and what the height is from which the human creature has plunged. The devastation of the fall can only be measured against the standard of what was lost, and the standard of what was lost is the entire portrait that the preceding twenty-four lessons have drawn. If the student does not know the height of the human creature's original dignity, the specific content of the original righteousness, the specific character of the imago Dei, the specific richness of the pre-fall relationship with God, she cannot appreciate the full catastrophe of the fall's devastation. The fall was not a stumble from a neutral standing; it was a plunge from a glory that the Anthropology series has been describing for twenty-four lessons.

The lesson proceeds in six sections, each one gathering a specific dimension of the Anthropology series' content and showing how that dimension illuminates a specific dimension of the fall's devastation. We begin with the height from which humanity fell: the specific content of the pre-fall state that the fall destroyed. We then examine the breadth of what was lost: the comprehensive reach of the fall's damage across every dimension of the human creature's existence. The third section examines the depth of human misery: the Pauline account of the fallen human creature as dead in trespasses and sins, not merely sick or struggling. The fourth section addresses the necessity of redemption that the Anthropology series drives us to: the specific way in which the doctrine of man, rightly understood, drives every thoughtful student to the foot of the cross. The fifth section presents the hope of restoration: the Pauline account of the abounding grace that exceeds the abounding sin, and the eschatological vision of what the restoration in the Last Adam provides. We close with the forward look: how the completed doctrine of man prepares the theological ground for Hamartiology, Soteriology, and the entire forward movement of the systematic theology curriculum.

This lesson is written with a specific pastoral tone that the penultimate position in the series warrants: it is the lesson that gathers the harvest of the series' twenty-four lessons of careful theological cultivation and offers it to the student as the framework within which the most personally urgent questions of the human condition are to be understood. The student who has worked through all twenty-four preceding lessons and now stands at Lesson 25's threshold is standing at the edge of the most important question that the doctrine of humanity raises: given everything that man was made to be, what has become of him? And given what has become of him, what hope is there? These are not merely academic questions; they are the questions that drive the deepest human longings, and the answers that the biblical testimony provides, through the hinge of this lesson and the doxological conclusion of Lesson 26, are the answers that the entire Anthropology series has been building toward.

I. The Height from Which Humanity Fell: The Pre-Fall State Revisited

A Plunge from Glory, Not a Stumble from Neutrality

A. *What Adam Had: The Specific Content of the Original Dignity*

The doctrine of sin's full devastation cannot be appreciated without a clear account of the height from which the fall came. Hamartiology, the doctrine of sin, is not a doctrine about the human creature's failure to live up to a merely modest standard; it is a doctrine about the catastrophic fall from a glory that the preceding units of this series have described in some detail, and the devastation of that fall is precisely proportional to the glory that preceded it. The higher the creature was made, the more catastrophic the fall; and the Anthropology series has established that the creature was made very high indeed. Let us gather the specific content of what Adam had in the pre-fall state, so that the Hamartiology series that follows this lesson will have the standard against which to measure the fall's comprehensive damage.

Adam was created in the image and the likeness of God, the royal, representational, relational, and functional image that the whole of Unit 3 examined in its richness and its comprehensiveness. The image of God in Adam was not a capacity for rationality alone, not a legal status alone, not a social function alone, but the integrated whole-person bearing of the Creator's character in the creature He made to reflect, represent, and respond to Him. The specific content of the image included the knowledge of God that Paul identifies in Colossians 3:10 as the image's true knowledge dimension; the righteousness and holiness of God that Paul identifies in Ephesians 4:24 as the image's moral dimension; and the lordship and governing capacity that Genesis 1:26–28's connection between the image and the dominion commission establishes as the image's functional dimension. Adam was made in God's image and therefore participated, in a creaturely way, in God's own character: his knowledge was genuine and accurate, his righteousness was real and unforced, and his capacity for the governance of the created order was the full expression of the vice-regal commission that the image implied.

Adam was created in original righteousness, the specific moral condition of the pre-fall creature that Lesson 14 established in full. The original righteousness was not the righteousness of the confirmed and glorified saint whose obedience has been permanently secured by the beatific vision; it was the righteousness of the creature who stands upright, who has not yet sinned, who possesses the full capacity for obedience, and who is in the specific condition of the one whose moral standing before God has not been compromised by any act of transgression. The Scholastic tradition's formulation of the original righteousness as consisting in the soul's harmonious governance of the body's appetites, the intellect's accurate knowledge of God and the moral order, and the will's free and unforced inclination toward the good captures the integrated character of the pre-fall human creature's moral condition: every faculty was properly ordered toward its proper end, every appetite was properly subject to the governing intelligence, and the governing intelligence itself was properly ordered toward the God whose image it bore. This is the condition from which the fall's devastation came; and the devastation can only be appreciated against the standard of this condition.

B. *What Adam Enjoyed: The Pre-Fall Relationship with God and the Created Order*

Beyond what Adam was, the character, the image, the righteousness, there is the question of what Adam enjoyed. The pre-fall human creature lived in a relationship with God, with the created order, and with the other human being that the fall has so thoroughly disrupted that the contemporary human creature can barely imagine what that relationship was like. The relationship with God was the unmediated, uninterrupted, unashamed communion of the creature with its Creator, the walking with God in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8) that the very phrasing of Genesis 3's account of God's post-fall appearance implies was the normal condition of the pre-fall relationship. The creature could stand before the Creator without shame, without fear, without the hiding that the post-fall creature's instinctive response to the divine presence produces. The fall's disruption of this communion is the most fundamental dimension of the fall's damage: the estrangement from God that produces the specific form of spiritual death that Ephesians 2:1 describes.

The relationship with the created order was the joyful, fruitful, unstressed stewardship of the creature who governs a creation that responds to its governance with the fruitfulness the Creator designed for it. The *abad* and the *shamar* of Genesis 2:15, the cultivation and the keeping of the garden, were, in the pre-fall condition, activities characterized by the joy of fruitful engagement rather than by the toil, the frustration, and the mortality that the fall's curse on the ground introduced. The vocational life of the pre-fall human creature was the life of the one who works in the context of the creation's cooperation, whose labor is met with the creation's responsive fruitfulness, and who finds in the work the specific satisfaction of the one who is doing exactly what she was made to do in the exactly right conditions for doing it. The fall's introduction of toil, thorns, and futility into the vocational life is the disruption of this joyful fruitfulness, and the disruption can only be fully appreciated against the standard of what the pre-fall vocational life was like.

The relationship between the man and the woman in the pre-fall state was the relationship of the ordered complementarity that Lesson 19 established: the servant headship and the intelligent submission that display, in the domestic sphere, the character of Christ's love for the church and the church's trust in Christ. In the pre-fall condition, this relationship was practiced without the power struggles, the resentment, the self-seeking, and the mutual exploitation that the fall has introduced into the male-female relationship. The Genesis 3:16 word to the woman, "Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (NASB 1995), is the curse's specific disruption of the pre-fall ordered complementarity: the desire becomes the desire to usurp and to control, and the rule becomes the domination that Lesson 19 identified as the patriarchalist distortion of the servant headship. The fall turned the beautiful ordered complementarity into the power struggle that characterizes so much of the fallen human community's experience of the male-female relationship.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air."

Ephesians 2:1–2, NASB 1995

II. The Breadth of What Was Lost: The Fall's Reach Across Every Dimension of Human Existence

From Mind to Will to Body to Relationship to Vocation to God, Nothing Was Left Untouched

A. The Fall's Damage to the Mind, the Will, and the Affections

The breadth of the fall's damage is precisely the breadth of the human creature's existence: every dimension of the image-bearing creature's life has been affected by the fall's comprehensive reach. The doctrine of total depravity, which Hamartiology will treat in full in the next series, is not the doctrine that every human being is as sinful as possible; it is the doctrine that the fall's damage has extended to every dimension of the human creature's existence, leaving no faculty untouched, no capacity unaffected, and no dimension of the image bearing creature's life immune from the corruption that the first transgression introduced. The breadth of what was lost is the breadth of what was had, and the Anthropology series has established the breadth of what was had across every dimension of the human creature's existence.

The mind, the intellectual faculty whose pre-fall condition included the accurate knowledge of God and the moral order that the image's knowledge dimension implies, has been darkened by the fall's damage in ways that the Pauline letters describe with forensic precision. Romans 1:21–23 traces the idolater's suppression of the knowledge of God that the creation plainly provides, through the darkening of the foolish heart, to the exchange of the glory of the incorruptible God for images of corruptible creatures. Ephesians 4:17–18 describes the Gentiles' walk "in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart." The mind that was made to know God

accurately and to govern the created order wisely has become the mind that suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, that exchanges the truth of God for a lie, and that generates the idolatries and the intellectual distortions that characterize the fallen human community's engagement with every domain of the created order. This is not the failure of an imperfect faculty to achieve an impossible ideal; it is the perversion of a faculty that was designed for accurate knowledge of God, distorted by the fall into the engine of idolatry and self-deception.

The will, the faculty whose pre-fall condition included the free and unforced inclination toward the good that the original righteousness required, has been brought into the bondage of sin that the Reformation theology described as the *servum arbitrium* (the enslaved will): not the abolition of the will's freedom in the sense of the elimination of voluntary choice, but the bondage of the will's inclination to sin as its natural orientation, so that apart from the grace of regeneration the fallen human creature consistently chooses what is evil because her will is inclined by the fall's corruption toward evil as its natural direction. The affections, the emotional and relational capacities of the human creature that in the pre-fall state were directed toward God as their proper object and toward the neighbor in the genuine love that the image's relational dimension requires, have been corrupted by the fall into the self-love that redirects the human creature's affective energies toward the self and away from the God and the neighbor that the affections were designed to embrace.

B. *The Fall's Damage to the Body, Relationships, Vocation, and Communion with God*

The body, the material dimension of the whole-person human creature whose goodness the series established in Unit 4 and whose eschatological resurrection the series has consistently pointed toward, has been subjected by the fall to the mortality that the covenant of works' sanction threatened. The body that was designed for the whole-person expression of the image of God is now the mortal, decaying, suffering body that Romans 8:23 describes as groaning inwardly, awaiting the redemption that the resurrection will provide. The body's mortality is not merely a biological fact; it is the embodied expression of the forensic reality of the condemnation that the federal headship has imputed to every member of Adam's race. The death that the body undergoes is the death that the covenant of works' violation incurred, now expressed in the gradual deterioration and the final dissolution of the material dimension of the whole-person human creature.

The relationships, the full range of human relational life, from the marriage covenant to the family to the wider human community, have been disrupted by the fall's introduction of self-love, power struggle, exploitation, and estrangement into every dimension of the human community's relational life. The male-female relationship that was designed to display the ordered complementarity of servant headship and intelligent submission has become the site of the power struggle that Genesis 3:16 describes. The family that was designed to be the primary context of the human community's flourishing has become the site of the jealousy that produced the first murder (Genesis 4:8), the polygamy that distorted the creation ordinance of marriage (Genesis 4:19–23), and the full range of the relational distortions that the entire history of the fallen human family's domestic life has produced. The wider human community that was designed to exercise the cultural mandate together has become the site of the violence, the injustice, and the oppression that every human civilization's history has displayed, in the comprehensive expression of the fallen human community's relational corruption.

The vocation, the specific expression of the cultural mandate's commission in the daily labor of the image-bearing creature, has been subjected to the toil, the frustration, and the futility that the fall's curse on the ground has introduced into every dimension of the vocational life. The communion with God, the most fundamental dimension of the human creature's existence, the relationship with the Creator for which the creature was made and from which every other dimension of the creature's flourishing flows, has been broken by the estrangement that the fall produced: the creature who was designed to walk with God in the garden now hides from God among the trees. The hiding of Adam and Eve after the fall (Genesis 3:8) is not merely a narrative detail; it is the theological symbol of the fall's most comprehensive consequence: the estrangement of the creature from the Creator, the broken communion, the spiritual death that Ephesians 2:1 describes as being dead in trespasses and sins. This is the bottom of the fall's devastation: not the loss of any particular capacity or any particular relationship, but the

loss of the relationship with the God for whom the creature was made and from whom, separated, the creature cannot truly live.

III. The Depth of Human Misery: Dead, Not Merely Sick

Ephesians 2:1–7 and the Pauline Account of the Fallen Creature's Condition

A. Dead in Trespasses and Sins: The Meaning and the Magnitude

Ephesians 2:1–7 is the New Testament's most concentrated single account of the fallen human creature's condition and the grace of God's response to it, and its theological precision rewards careful exegetical attention: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (vv. 1–3, NASB 1995). The passage opens with the most radical possible account of the fallen human creature's condition: not sick, not struggling, not wounded, not impaired, but dead. The *nekroi* (dead) of verse 1 is the category that the entire doctrine of total depravity rests on, and it is a category that the natural human intuition about the human condition most consistently resists.

The natural human intuition about the human condition tends toward the account of wounded but recoverable humanity: the human creature who has been damaged by sin but who retains, in her undamaged rational and moral core, the capacity for genuine virtue, genuine self-improvement, and genuine movement toward God. This is the account that every form of Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, and Arminianism in the broad sense produces: the wounded but recoverable creature who needs grace but who also contributes to her own salvation by the exercise of the faculties that the fall has damaged but not destroyed. The Pauline account of Ephesians 2:1 stands in categorical opposition to this intuition: the fallen human creature is not wounded but recoverable; she is dead. And the dead do not contribute to their own resurrection; they are entirely passive before the act of the One who raises them. The "But God" of verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ", is the grammatical and the theological pivot of the entire passage: the initiative belongs entirely to God, because the dead can take no initiative of their own.

The specific features of the Ephesians 2:1–3 description of the fallen human creature's condition deserve careful attention for what they contribute to the full picture. The walking "according to the course of this world" (v. 2) establishes that the fallen creature's behavior is not the expression of an autonomous self-determination but the expression of the spirit of the age, the corporate orientation of the fallen human community toward the values, the desires, and the directions that the world system dominated by the prince of the power of the air produces. The "living in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (v. 3) establishes the fallen creature's inward orientation: the appetites and the cognitive desires of the fallen nature drive the behavior that the walk according to the world expresses outwardly. And "children of wrath by nature" (v. 3) establishes the fallen creature's standing before God: not the standing of the moral failure who has disappointed a patient teacher, but the standing of the child of wrath who, by virtue of the nature inherited from the first Adam's transgression, stands under the just condemnation of the holy God whose law has been violated.

B. The Three Enemies: The World, the Flesh, and the Devil

Ephesians 2:1–3's compressed account of the fallen human creature's condition identifies three enemies whose combined force holds the dead creature in its condition of spiritual death: the world ("the course of this world," v. 2), the devil ("the prince of the power of the air," v. 2), and the flesh ("the lusts of our flesh," v. 3). The tradition's summary of the fallen creature's enemies as the world, the flesh, and the devil is drawn precisely from this passage, and the three-fold account captures the comprehensive character of the bondage in which the fallen creature lives. The world is the corporate, social, cultural, and historical environment of the fallen human

community, the structures, values, and directions that the spirit of the age impresses on every individual who is formed by it. The devil is the personal, spiritual enemy whose malevolent agency works in the children of disobedience and whose lying deception was the instrument of the original fall. The flesh is the internal enemy: the corrupted nature that the fall has produced in every member of Adam's race, which drives the creature toward sin as naturally and as consistently as a corrupted spring drives water in the direction of corruption.

The significance of the three-enemy account for the understanding of the fallen human creature's condition is the significance of the comprehensive bondage it describes. The creature who is held by all three enemies simultaneously, by the world's cultural formation from without, by the devil's deception from above, and by the flesh's corruption from within, is not a creature who needs a little help to find her way to God. She is a creature who is comprehensively held in a bondage that only a power greater than all three enemies combined can break. The grace of God that Ephesians 2:4–7 announces, the rich mercy, the great love, the making alive together with Christ, the raising up and the seating in the heavenly places, is the power that breaks the bondage of all three enemies simultaneously: the regeneration that breaks the power of the flesh's corruption from within, the truth of the gospel that breaks the power of the world's deception from without, and the victory of Christ's resurrection and ascension that has broken the power of the devil who once held the children of disobedience captive.

The pastoral significance of the dead-in-trespases-and-sins account of the fallen human creature's condition is the pastoral significance of the diagnosis that determines the character of the treatment. If the fallen creature is merely wounded but recoverable, the treatment is encouragement, moral instruction, and self-improvement programs that help the wounded creature draw on her own remaining resources to find her way back to health. If the fallen creature is dead, the treatment is resurrection, the sovereign, gracious, initiating act of the God who "made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5, NASB 1995) before we could take any initiative of our own. The difference is not merely a theological nicety; it is the difference between a gospel that supplements the creature's own recovery effort and a gospel that replaces the creature's own recovery effort with the sovereign act of the God who raises the dead. The Anthropology series' account of the human creature's original dignity, the height from which the fall came, is the specific measure of the magnitude of the resurrection that the gospel announces.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ."

Ephesians 2:4–5, NASB 1995

IV. The Necessity of Redemption: Anthropology Drives Us to the Cross

The Doctrine of Man, Rightly Understood, Leaves No Room for Self-Salvation

A. What the Anthropology Series Has Established About the Creature's Inability

The cumulative effect of the Anthropology series' twenty-four lessons, held against the abyss of the fall's comprehensive devastation, is the most powerful possible demonstration of the creature's inability to save itself. Every dimension of the human creature's existence that the series has established as very good in the pre-fall state, the image of God, the original righteousness, the covenantal accountability, the communion with God, the vocation in the created order, the ordered complementarity of human relationship, has been damaged, disrupted, distorted, or destroyed by the fall's comprehensive reach. The creature whose image-bearing dignity is the ground of her infinite worth before God is the same creature whose image has been marred by the fall's corruption. The creature whose original righteousness placed her in the condition of genuine moral goodness before God is the same creature whose will is now in the bondage of sin and whose nature inclines toward evil as its natural

direction. The creature whose communion with God was the unashamed, unmediated walking with the Creator in the garden is the same creature who hides from God among the trees, estranged from the One for whom she was made.

The specific content of the inability that the fall's comprehensive damage has produced is the most important theological datum that the Anthropology series' confrontation with the fall generates. The fallen creature cannot restore her own image to the true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness from which the fall has departed, because the very faculties, the mind, the will, the affections, that would need to be employed in the restoration have themselves been corrupted by the fall and are therefore incapable of producing the restoration. The mind that has been darkened cannot illuminate itself; the will that is in bondage cannot free itself; the heart that is inclined toward evil cannot incline itself toward good by an act of the will that is already captive to evil. The fallen creature's attempts at self-improvement, moral reformation, and spiritual self-elevation are the attempts of the dead to raise themselves: they express the deep human longing for the restoration of what the fall has destroyed, but they lack the power to achieve the restoration, because the power that could achieve it is the power that the fall has corrupted.

The specific implication for the preaching and the pastoral care of the church is the implication that the Westminster Larger Catechism captures in its account of the misery of the fallen creature: the fallen human creature, in the state of sin, is "subjected to the guilt of sin, the displeasure of God, the curse of the law, and the terrors of conscience; and, in the inward man, an entire want of original righteousness, a most corrupt disposition, inclination, and working of all the parts and faculties of soul and body to sin." The pastoral response to this condition is not the moral exhortation that calls the dead to exercise faculties they have lost, and not the therapeutic comfort that minimizes the gravity of the condition. The pastoral response is the proclamation of the gospel that announces the sovereign, gracious, merciful act of the God who raises the dead, who made us alive together with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. The gospel's power is precisely the power of the resurrection that addresses the condition of death: it is not the supplement to the fallen creature's own efforts but the replacement of those efforts with the sovereign initiative of the God whose grace is sufficient for the condition of death.

B. *The Cross as the Only Answer to What Anthropology Reveals*

The Anthropology series drives the student to the cross not as a conclusion drawn from a series of arguments but as the only answer that is adequate to the question the series raises. The question that twenty-four lessons of careful theological description of the human creature's creation, dignity, vocation, and solidarity in Adam raises is the question that the fall's devastation makes urgent: given the height from which the human creature has fallen, given the breadth of the fall's damage across every dimension of the creature's existence, given the depth of the misery in which the fallen creature stands, dead in trespasses and sins, a child of wrath by nature, held by the world, the flesh, and the devil in a bondage that her own resources are entirely inadequate to break, what hope is there? The only answer that is adequate to the question is the answer that the gospel provides: the God who made the creature in His image, who established the covenant of works in which the creature's representative failed, who subjected the creation to futility and the creature to the bondage of sin, has done what the creature could not do for herself, He sent His Son as the Last Adam, who fulfilled the covenant of works' condition that the first Adam failed, who bore the covenant's sanctions for the guilt that the first Adam's transgression incurred, and who secured by His representative obedience the righteousness and the life that the covenant of works promised to the one who would obey.

The cross is the answer to what Anthropology reveals because the cross addresses the specific problem that the Anthropology series has defined. The problem is not merely moral failure that needs forgiveness; it is the comprehensive alienation from God that the fall produced, including the forensic dimension of the imputed guilt that the federal headship doctrine established and the experiential dimension of the spiritual death that Ephesians 2:1 describes. The cross addresses both dimensions: the forensic dimension through the imputation of Adam's

guilt to the Last Adam who bore it in His own body on the tree, and the experiential dimension through the resurrection that makes the dead alive together with Christ and seats them in the heavenly places. The cross is not the supplement to the Anthropology series' account of the human creature; it is the answer to the question the series raises, the solution to the problem the series defines, and the hope that the series' honest reckoning with the fall's devastation makes urgently necessary.

The preacher who has worked through the Anthropology series and who now stands in the pulpit to preach the gospel has the specific theological resources to preach the cross with the full weight of the anthropological context that makes the cross intelligible and necessary. The person in the pew who has been formed by the Anthropology series' account of the human creature's original dignity and the fall's comprehensive devastation is the person who is most prepared to receive the gospel's announcement with the specific combination of urgent need and doxological wonder that the gospel deserves: urgent need, because the fall's devastation is as comprehensive as the series has established; doxological wonder, because the grace of God that addresses the comprehensive devastation is the "much more" of Romans 5:15–17 that abounds beyond all the damage that the fall has done.

V. The Hope of Restoration: Grace Abounding Beyond the Fall's Ruin

Romans 5:20, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and the Eschatological Vision of the Restored Image

A. Where Sin Abounded, Grace Abounded More: Romans 5:20–21

Romans 5:20–21 provides the most concentrated single statement of the hope that the gospel announces against the background of the fall's comprehensive devastation: "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (NASB 1995). The specific theological claim of the passage, that grace abounds all the more where sin has increased, is not a naive optimism that minimizes the fall's damage but the specific theological assertion that the magnitude of the grace is precisely proportional to and in excess of the magnitude of the sin. Grace does not merely match the fall's damage; it exceeds it. The "much more" of Romans 5:15–17 reappears here as the grace that "abounds all the more" where sin has increased: the Last Adam's provision is greater than the first Adam's failure, the eschatological state of the redeemed exceeds the Edenic state of the pre-fall human creature, and the wisdom of God that has used the fall's devastation as the occasion for the display of the grace that "reigns through righteousness to eternal life" is the wisdom that turns the greatest catastrophe in the history of the created order into the occasion for the most magnificent display of the divine glory that the created order will ever witness.

The specific content of the restoration that grace provides, what the fallen creature receives through the Last Adam's representative obedience that she lost through the first Adam's representative transgression, is more than the mere restoration of the pre-fall state. Romans 8:29–30 describes the chain of the predestined believer's eschatological destiny as moving from foreknowledge through predestination through calling through justification to glorification: "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (NASB 1995). The destiny toward which the chain of grace is moving, conformity to the image of His Son, the bearing of the heavenly man's image that 1 Corinthians 15:49 promises, is not the restoration of the Adamic *imago Dei* in its pre-fall condition but the eschatological perfection of the image in its conformity to the image of the incarnate Son whose human nature is the perfected expression of the image of God in the conditions of the eschatological state.

The hope of restoration is not the hope of returning to what was; it is the hope of arriving at what the creation was always moving toward: the eschatological state in which the image-bearing creature's conformity to the image of the Son is perfected, the communion with God is unmediated and unbreakable, the vocational life is unfrustratable, the relational life is undistorted, and the bodily existence is glorified beyond the mortality that the

fall introduced. This is the “much more” of the gospel’s hope: not the restoration of the garden but the arrival of the new Jerusalem, not the return of Adam’s original righteousness but the reception of the Last Adam’s eschatological righteousness, not the recovery of the first creation’s very good but the reception of the new creation’s more than very good that the God who declared the first creation good will declare of the second creation when His purposes are complete.

B. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and the Progressive Renewal of the Image

2 Corinthians 3:18 provides the New Testament’s most concentrated account of the process by which the fallen creature’s damaged image is being progressively renewed toward the eschatological perfection that Romans 8:29–30 promises as the end of the chain of grace: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (NASB 1995). The passage identifies the agent, the means, the process, and the goal of the image’s renewal with theological precision. The agent is the Spirit, “just as from the Lord, the Spirit”, whose work of renewal is the specific application of the Last Adam’s representative work to the individual believer’s life and being. The means is the beholding of the Lord’s glory, the transforming encounter with the revealed character of the God whose image the creature bears, whose glory is mediated through the gospel’s proclamation and the Scripture’s revelation. The process is the progressive transformation from glory to glory, not a sudden, complete restoration of the image in a moment but the gradual, progressive renewal of every dimension of the image-bearing creature’s existence toward the goal of the eschatological conformity. And the goal is the “same image”, the image of the Lord whose glory the believer is beholding, which is the image of the Son in whose likeness Romans 8:29 says the predestined are being conformed.

The significance of 2 Corinthians 3:18 for the student completing the Anthropology series is the significance of the continuity it establishes between the present experience and the eschatological destiny. The image renewal that the Spirit is performing in the believer’s present life is not a process unrelated to the eschatological glorification that Romans 8:30 promises as the end of the chain of grace; it is the same process in its present, progressive, still-incomplete expression that will be brought to its eschatological completion in the glorification. The believer who is being transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit’s work is the same believer who will be glorified in the eschatological state; and the transformation that is presently occurring is the anticipation and the beginning of the glorification that is coming. The Anthropology series’ account of the image of God, its original richness in the pre-fall state, its persistent bearing through the fall’s damage, and its progressive renewal toward its eschatological perfection, is thus not a closed doctrinal account but an open theological narrative whose completion lies ahead, in the glorification that the Spirit is moving the believer toward with every transforming encounter with the glory of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:49’s promise, “Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” (NASB 1995), is the Pauline statement of the eschatological destination of the image’s renewal that both the Anthropology series and the redemptive journey are moving toward. The earthy image that the first Adam’s bearing posterity presently bear, the mortal, corruptible, marked by the fall’s comprehensive damage, is not the permanent condition of those who are in Christ. The image that they will bear, the image of the heavenly man, the Last Adam whose resurrection body is the prototype of the eschatological existence that all who are united to Him will share, is the image toward which the Spirit’s transforming work is moving them, and it is the image that the Anthropology series’ account of the original dignity has established as the standard against which the fall’s damage is measured and the Last Adam’s restoration is assessed.

“Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 5:20–21, NASB 1995

VI. The Forward Look: Anthropology as the Prologue to All That Follows

How the Doctrine of Man Sets the Stage for Hamartiology, Soteriology, and Eschatology

The Anthropology series has been, from its first lesson to this penultimate one, the prologue to every subsequent series in the systematic theology curriculum. Every doctrine that the curriculum will examine in the lessons and series to come, Hamartiology's account of sin, Soteriology's account of salvation, Pneumatology's account of the Spirit's work, Ecclesiology's account of the church, and Eschatology's account of the last things, presupposes the anthropological account that this series has provided. Without the Anthropology series' account of the human creature's original dignity, the Hamartiology series' account of sin's devastation has no adequate standard against which to be measured; without the account of sin's devastation, the Soteriology series' account of salvation has no adequate problem for which to provide the solution; without the account of salvation's provision, the Pneumatology series' account of the Spirit's applying work has no adequate context in which to be understood; and without the account of the Spirit's present renewal, the Eschatology series' account of the glorification has no adequate process from which to be the completion.

The specific transition from Anthropology to Hamartiology that this lesson anticipates is the transition from the account of the human creature as God made it, in its pre-fall dignity, its original righteousness, its covenantal accountability, its image-bearing richness, to the account of what happened to that creature when the covenant of works' condition was violated. The Hamartiology series will examine the act of the fall in its specific character as the transgression of the covenant of works' prohibition, the doctrine of total depravity in its comprehensive reach across every dimension of the fallen creature's existence, the specific nature of original sin in its imputed and inherited dimensions, and the specific forms of the actual sin that the fallen creature's corrupted nature produces. Every one of these hamartiological topics presupposes the anthropological account that this series has provided: the fall's specific character as covenant transgression presupposes the covenant of works' establishment (Lesson 15); the total depravity's comprehensive reach presupposes the pre-fall image's comprehensive goodness (Unit 3); the original sin's imputed dimension presupposes the federal headship (Lesson 24); and the actual sin's forms presuppose the original righteousness from which they depart (Lesson 14).

The specific transition from Hamartiology to Soteriology that the hamartiological account will anticipate is similarly grounded in the anthropological account that this series has established. The Soteriology series' account of the election, the effectual calling, the regeneration, the justification, the adoption, the sanctification, and the glorification of the redeemed all presuppose the anthropological account of what the redeemed creature is: an image-bearing creature whose image has been damaged by the fall and is being progressively renewed toward its eschatological perfection by the Spirit's transforming work; a covenantal creature whose representative in the first Adam transgressed the covenant of works and whose representative in the Last Adam fulfilled it; a whole-person creature whose body as well as soul is the object of the redemption that the resurrection of the body promises; and a communal creature whose individual redemption is the redemption of a member of the one human family that Adam represents and that the Last Adam has redeemed. The Soteriology series is the account of how the God who made this specific creature in this specific condition addresses its specific need with the specific provision of the gospel's grace, and every dimension of the specificity depends on the anthropological account that this series has established.

Lesson 26, the doxological conclusion of the entire Anthropology series, will gather the full arc of the human story and offer it as a doxological meditation: from the dust of the creation through the glory of the pre-fall state through the ruin of the fall through the grace of the redemption to the glory of the eschatological destination, the human story is the story of the God whose purposes for the creature He made in His own image are not thwarted by the creature's transgression but are accomplished through it, in ways that will display the wisdom, the power, the mercy, and the grace of the God who is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, with a comprehensiveness and a glory that no other story in the history of the universe could have provided. That is the

doxological conclusion toward which the Anthropology series' twenty-five lessons of careful theological labor have been building, and it is the conclusion with which the series will end: not with a doctrinal summary but with the worship of the God who made the human creature and who, in all the ways that these twenty-five lessons have described, has not abandoned it.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Hamartiology	The branch of systematic theology that addresses the doctrine of sin: its origin in the fall of Adam, its nature as the violation of the law and covenant of God, its extent in the total depravity of the human creature, its transmission through the federal headship of Adam and the inheritance of the corrupted nature, and its consequences in the guilt, the bondage, and the estrangement from God that the fallen human creature experiences. Hamartiology is the systematic theology series that follows Anthropology, and the Anthropology series' account of the human creature's original dignity provides the necessary standard against which the hamartiological account of sin's devastation is measured.
Total Depravity	The Reformed doctrine that the fall's damage has extended to every dimension of the fallen human creature's existence, leaving no faculty untouched, no capacity unaffected, and no dimension of the image-bearing creature's life immune from the corruption that the first transgression introduced. Total depravity does not mean that every human being is as sinful as possible, or that the fallen human creature is incapable of any relative goodness; it means that the fall's corruption has reached every dimension of the human constitution, mind, will, affections, body, so that no faculty remains unaffected and no fallen creature can contribute to her own salvation from within the condition of her fallen nature.
Spiritual Death	The condition of the fallen human creature described in Ephesians 2:1 as being "dead in trespasses and sins." Spiritual death is not the cessation of biological or psychological functioning; it is the estrangement from the God who is the source of the creature's truest life, the broken communion with the Creator for whom the creature was made and from whom, separated by the fall's transgression, the creature cannot truly live. Spiritual death is the most fundamental consequence of the fall's devastation: not the loss of any particular capacity but the loss of the relationship with God that is the ground of every capacity's proper function. The 'But God' of Ephesians 2:4 announces the resurrection from spiritual death that the gospel provides.
The World, the Flesh, and the Devil	The traditional three-fold account of the fallen human creature's enemies, drawn from Ephesians 2:1–3. The world is the corporate, social, cultural, and historical environment of the fallen human community, the "course of this world" (v. 2) that forms the individual's values, desires, and directions in opposition to the Creator's character and purposes. The devil is the personal, spiritual enemy, "the prince of the power of the air" (v. 2), whose malevolent agency works in the children of disobedience. The flesh is the internal enemy, the corrupted nature that the fall has produced in every member of Adam's race, which drives the creature toward sin as its natural orientation. The three enemies together constitute the comprehensive bondage in which the fallen creature lives, from which only the sovereign act of the gracious God can liberate.
Prologue of Anthropology	The theological function of the Anthropology series in relation to the subsequent series of the systematic theology curriculum. Anthropology provides the prologue to Hamartiology (establishing the pre-fall dignity that the fall devastates), to Soteriology (establishing the image-bearing creature whose redemption is the gospel's provision), to Pneumatology (establishing the whole-person creature in

	whom the Spirit works the renewal of the image), to Ecclesiology (establishing the communal creature whose redemption is always the redemption of a member of the one human family), and to Eschatology (establishing the glorification's destination as the eschatological perfection of the image that the present life's renewal is moving toward). Without the anthropological prologue, none of the subsequent series has the adequate context within which its specific doctrinal content is intelligible.
The Servum Arbitrium	Latin for "the enslaved will," Luther's term for the fallen human creature's will in its post-fall bondage to sin. The servum arbitrium is not the abolition of the will's freedom in the sense of the elimination of voluntary choice; the fallen creature still chooses voluntarily. It is the bondage of the will's inclination to sin as its natural orientation, so that apart from the grace of regeneration the fallen human creature consistently chooses what is evil because her will is inclined by the fall's corruption toward evil as its natural direction. The servum arbitrium is the specific form in which the fall's comprehensive damage to the will expresses itself, and it is the specific diagnosis that the gospel's proclamation of regeneration addresses as the sovereign act of the Spirit who gives the new birth that the dead cannot give themselves.
Image Renewal (2 Corinthians 3:18)	The progressive transformation of the believer's image toward the eschatological perfection of conformity to the image of Christ, described in 2 Corinthians 3:18 as the Spirit's work through the believer's beholding of the Lord's glory: "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." The image renewal is the present, progressive, still-incomplete expression of the same renewal that will be brought to its eschatological completion in the glorification of Romans 8:29–30. The Anthropology series' account of the image's original richness and the fall's damage provides the standard against which the renewal's progress is measured and the eschatological perfection's glory is anticipated.
Eschatological Surpassing of Eden	The theological claim that the eschatological state of the redeemed exceeds the pre-fall Edenic state of the first Adam, not merely restoring what was lost but providing what the protological state was always pointing toward: the glorified, resurrection existence in conformity to the image of the incarnate Son whose human nature is the perfected expression of the image of God in the conditions of the eschatological state. Grounded in Romans 5:15–17's "much more" of grace over trespass and in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49's contrast between the natural (Adamic) body and the spiritual (resurrection) body. The eschatological surpassing means that the fall, though the greatest catastrophe in the history of the created order, has been used by the sovereign wisdom of God to become the occasion for a display of grace and glory that exceeds what the pre-fall creation could have displayed.
But God (Ephesians 2:4)	The theological pivot of Ephesians 2:1–7 and the grammatical expression of the gospel's specific answer to the anthropological problem of the fallen creature's death: "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ." The 'But God' of verse 4 is the most theologically compressed possible statement of the doctrine of sovereign grace: the initiative that the dead cannot take belongs entirely to God, and the act that raises the dead from spiritual death is entirely His act. The 'But God' of the gospel's announcement stands

	against the ‘dead in trespasses and sins’ of the fallen creature’s condition as the only adequate response to the condition that Anthropology has defined.
The Forward Movement of Systematic Theology	The theological narrative arc of the systematic theology curriculum: from Creation (the doctrine of the Creator and the creation), through Anthropology (the doctrine of the creature), through Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), through Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), through Pneumatology (the doctrine of the Spirit’s work), through Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church), to Eschatology (the doctrine of the last things). Each series presupposes and builds on the series that precede it, so that the full curriculum constitutes a single theological narrative moving from the creation’s goodness through the fall’s devastation through the redemption’s provision to the glorification’s consummation, a narrative whose coherence depends on the anthropological account of the human creature that this series has provided.

Practical Application

A. *For the Mind: What Must We Believe?*

We must believe the account of the fall's devastation with the theological comprehensiveness that the Anthropology series' account of the pre-fall dignity requires. The fall is not a modest setback from which the human creature can recover by her own efforts; it is the catastrophic plunge from the height that twenty-four lessons have described, a plunge from which no faculty of the fallen creature is adequate to raise her. The doctrine of total depravity is not a theological pessimism that despairs of the human creature's worth; it is the theologically precise diagnosis of the condition from which only the sovereign act of the gracious God can deliver. The person who has held the Anthropology series' account of the human creature's original dignity with genuine theological seriousness will hold the Hamartiology series' account of sin's devastation with equal seriousness, and will not be tempted to minimize either the height of the fall or the magnitude of the grace that was required to address it.

We must also believe the hope of restoration with the eschatological specificity that the Pauline account provides. The hope is not the vague spiritual optimism that expects things to get better; it is the specific, Christological, bodily, communal hope of the eschatological glorification that Romans 8:29–30 describes as the end of the chain of grace that begins in the eternal foreknowledge and ends in the glory that is already secured in the Last Adam's resurrection. The person who believes this hope will not despair of the present existence's mortal limitations but will hold them within the eschatological horizon of the "much more" of grace that the Pauline account consistently points toward.

B. *For the Heart: What Must We Feel and Desire?*

Let the full weight of the fall's devastation, held against the full height of the human creature's original dignity that the Anthropology series has described, produce in you the specific quality of grief that is the appropriate response to what the fall has done. The grief is not the grief of despair; it is the grief of those who know what was lost and therefore know the full magnitude of what grace has recovered and surpassed. The theologian who is not moved by the account of what the fall has done to the image-bearing creature that God declared very good has not fully received what the Anthropology series has been trying to communicate; and the theologian who is not moved by the account of what grace has done in response to the fall's devastation has not fully received what the gospel is trying to communicate.

Desire the "But God" of Ephesians 2:4 with the urgency that the condition of spiritual death produces and the joy that the sovereign gracious initiative of the One who makes the dead alive generates. The "But God" is the most pastorally powerful two words in the entire Pauline canon, and the person who has understood both the condition it addresses ("dead in trespasses and sins") and the action it announces ("make us alive together with Christ") will bring to the proclamation of the gospel the specific quality of urgency, compassion, and doxological wonder that those two words generate. Let the grief of the fall's devastation and the joy of the gospel's provision together constitute the pastoral and the doxological posture with which you enter every dimension of the ministry that the systematic theology curriculum is equipping you to exercise.

C. *For the Hands: What Must We Do?*

- Before the Anthropology series concludes with Lesson 26, take time to review the series' twenty-five lessons as a unified theological narrative. What is the single most important theological conviction that the series has established or deepened in your theological understanding? What is the single most significant pastoral implication that the series has generated for your specific ministry context? And what specific doctrinal topic in the next series (Hamartiology) are you most prepared to engage with as a result of the Anthropology series' account of the human creature's pre-fall dignity and the federal headship's role in the fall's condemnation?

- Read Ephesians 2:1–7 meditatively and in full. Attend to each of the three enemies identified in verses 1–3 (the world, the flesh, the devil) and identify a specific contemporary expression of each enemy’s hold on the fallen human creature in the specific cultural context you inhabit. Then attend to the “But God” of verse 4 and the specific dimensions of the divine response (rich mercy, great love, making alive, raising up, seating in the heavenly places) as the specific answer to each of the three enemies’ hold. How does the passage’s specific account of the divine response to the three enemies most directly address the specific forms of spiritual death that you observe most frequently in the congregation you serve?
- **Read J. I. Packer’s introduction to John Owen’s *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (1959), reprinted as “Introduction: On Owning the Gospel”.** Packer’s introduction is one of the most accessible and the most doxologically powerful accounts of what is at stake in the doctrines of total depravity, the dead-in-trespases-and-sins condition of the fallen creature, and the sovereign grace of the gospel’s ‘But God.’ It provides, in pastoral and accessible prose, the specific link between the anthropological account of the fallen creature’s inability and the soteriological account of the grace that addresses it, the link that Lesson 25 has been tracing theologically. Reading Packer’s introduction at this juncture in the curriculum is the most effective single preparation available for the entry into the Hamartiology series.
- Prepare a five-minute summary of the Anthropology series’ theological arc, suitable for delivery to a congregation member who is beginning the study of the next series (Hamartiology). The summary should communicate: (1) the height of the human creature’s original dignity (image of God, original righteousness, pre-fall communion with God); (2) the breadth of the fall’s devastation across every dimension of the creature’s existence; (3) the depth of the misery that the fall has produced (dead in trespases and sins, not merely wounded); and (4) the hope of the restoration that the gospel provides through the Last Adam’s representative obedience and the Spirit’s progressive renewal of the image toward its eschatological perfection. After preparing the summary, reflect: what single theological conviction do you most want the congregation member to carry from the Anthropology series into the Hamartiology series?
- Spend time this week meditating on the full movement of Romans 5:12–21, from the “one man” through whom sin entered to the grace that “reigns through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Let the meditation attend to the specific movement of the passage from the devastation to the hope: the sin that reigned in death to the grace that reigns in life; the many made sinners to the many made righteous; the transgression that increased to the grace that abounded all the more. What specific emotion, grief, awe, gratitude, wonder, urgency, does the movement from devastation to hope most powerfully produce in you? And how does that specific emotion most directly shape the pastoral posture with which you approach the proclamation of the gospel and the care of those whose lives are still marked by the devastation whose full extent the Anthropology series has established?

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- As you stand at the threshold of the Hamartiology series and look back across the twenty-five lessons of the Anthropology series, what single aspect of the human creature's original dignity, its image-bearing character, its original righteousness, its pre-fall communion with God, its vocational commission, its covenantal accountability, strikes you as most significantly undervalued or underappreciated in the theological culture of the congregation you serve? And how does the undervaluing of that dimension of the human creature's original dignity most directly affect the congregation's understanding of the fall's devastation and the gospel's adequacy as the answer to it?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Ephesians 2:1–7 in full. What specific features of the passage establish the radically comprehensive character of the fallen human creature's condition? How does the "dead" (v. 1) differ from "wounded" or "ill" as a description of the fallen creature's condition before God? What does the "by nature children of wrath" (v. 3) establish about the ground of the condemnation (is it the specific acts of sin, the inherited nature, or the imputed guilt)? And what is the specific relationship between the "dead in trespasses and sins" of verse 1 and the "made us alive together with Christ" of verse 5, what does the parallelism of death and resurrection establish about the character of the divine initiative that the gospel announces?
- Read Romans 5:12–21 and 8:18–25 in sequence. What is the specific account that Romans 5 provides of the scope of the fall's devastation (all who descend from Adam are affected), and what is the specific account that Romans 8 provides of the creation's participation in the groaning that the fall's subjection to futility has produced? How do the two passages together establish the comprehensive scope of the fall's damage, encompassing both the human creature and the non-human creation, and how does the comprehensive scope of the damage establish the comprehensive scope of the restoration that the eschatological liberation promises?
- Read 2 Corinthians 3:17–4:6. In what specific ways does Paul connect the Spirit's work in verse 3:18 ("being transformed into the same image from glory to glory") to the "god of this world's" blinding of the minds of the unbelieving in 4:4? What does the connection between the Spirit's transforming work in the believer and the god of this world's blinding work in the unbeliever suggest about the comprehensive spiritual battle that is being fought over the renewal of the image that was damaged by the fall? How does Paul's account of the God who said "Light shall shine out of darkness" (4:6) as the source of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God relate to the Spirit's work of transforming the believer into the image of the Lord whose glory is that light?
- Read Romans 8:29–30. What is the specific chain of grace that Paul traces from foreknowledge through predestination through calling through justification to glorification? What does the aorist tense of "glorified" (edoxasen, past tense) in verse 30 establish about the certainty of the glorification for all whom God has predestined, called, and justified? And how does the specific goal of the predestination, "conformed to the image of His Son" (v. 29), connect the eschatological destination of the chain of grace to the Anthropology series' account of the image of God and the image's progressive renewal toward the eschatological perfection?
- Read Genesis 3:1–13. What specific features of the serpent's temptation most clearly engage the faculties of the human creature that the Anthropology series has described: the mind (the intellectual dimension of the image), the will (the volitional dimension of the original righteousness), the affections (the relational dimension of the image's orientation toward God and the neighbor), and the body (the physical dimension of the forbidden eating)? How does the comprehensive reach of the temptation across every dimension of the human creature's constitution anticipate the comprehensive reach of the fall's damage across every dimension of the human creature's existence?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that the fall was not a stumble from neutrality but a plunge from glory, and that the magnitude of the fall's devastation is precisely proportional to the height of the pre-fall dignity. Is this proportionality argument theologically valid? Does the height of the pre-fall state actually determine the magnitude of the fall's devastation in the Pauline account, or is the devastation determined by other theological factors (the violation of the law, the breaking of the covenant, the estrangement from God)? And how does the Anthropology series' account of the pre-fall dignity most specifically illuminate the Pauline accounts of sin's devastation in Romans 1, Ephesians 2, and Colossians 3?
- The lesson identifies spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1's "dead in trespasses and sins") as the most fundamental consequence of the fall's devastation: not the loss of any particular capacity but the loss of the relationship with God that is the ground of every capacity's proper function. Is this identification of spiritual death as the most fundamental consequence exegetically and theologically warranted? Are there other ways of characterizing the most fundamental consequence of the fall (the legal condemnation of the imputed guilt, the corruption of the nature, the estrangement from the created order) that compete with or complement the spiritual death account? And how does the identification of spiritual death as the fundamental consequence shape the character of the gospel's provision as the specific remedy?
- The lesson argues that the Anthropology series drives the student to the cross, not as a conclusion drawn from a series of arguments but as the only answer that is adequate to the question the series raises. Is this a legitimate theological move? Does the anthropological account of the human creature's condition actually generate the need for the gospel, or does the need for the gospel depend on theological data that the Anthropology series has not yet provided (specifically, the hamartiological account of sin as the violation of God's law)? How does the transition from Anthropology to Hamartiology to Soteriology function as a coherent theological argument rather than a series of disconnected doctrinal accounts?
- Romans 5:20's declaration that "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" raises the question that Paul anticipates in Romans 6:1: "Shall we continue in sin so that grace may increase?" How does Paul's answer to this question (Romans 6:1–5: "May it never be!") establish that the "abounding grace" of 5:20 is not a license for sin but the specific theological claim that the magnitude of the grace exceeds the magnitude of the sin without implying that the increase of sin is therefore good? And how does the abounding grace of 5:20–21, rightly understood, produce the specific combination of humility (before the sin's magnitude) and doxological wonder (before the grace's surpassing magnitude) that the gospel is designed to generate?
- The lesson's account of the eschatological surpassing of Eden, the claim that the eschatological state of the redeemed exceeds the pre-fall Edenic state of the first Adam, is a significant theological claim. What specific biblical evidence most clearly supports this claim? What does it mean, specifically, that the eschatological state exceeds the Edenic state? In what specific dimensions (the glorified body, the confirmed righteousness, the unbreakable communion, the perfected image) is the eschatological state superior to the Edenic? And what is the theological significance of the claim that the sovereign wisdom of God has used the fall's devastation as the occasion for a display of grace and glory that exceeds what the pre-fall creation could have displayed?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson identifies the "But God" of Ephesians 2:4 as the most theologically compressed possible statement of the doctrine of sovereign grace and the most pastorally powerful two words in the entire Pauline canon. How effectively is the "But God" of Ephesians 2:4, the specific announcement of the sovereign gracious initiative of the One who makes the dead alive, communicated in the preaching of the congregation you serve? Does the preaching communicate both the full weight of the condition it addresses ("dead in trespasses and sins") and the full adequacy of the sovereign initiative it announces ("made us alive together with Christ")? What specific adjustments in the content, the emphasis, or the pastoral application

of the preaching would most effectively develop the “But God” announcement as a living, urgent, doxologically powerful reality in the congregation’s theological formation?

- The lesson argues that the doctrine of total depravity is not a theological pessimism that despairs of the human creature’s worth but the theologically precise diagnosis of the condition from which only the sovereign act of the gracious God can deliver. In the congregation you serve, which error is more common: the underestimation of the fall’s devastation (treating the fallen human creature as wounded but recoverable by her own efforts) or the despair that forgets the worth that the *imago Dei* establishes and that the “But God” addresses? What specific preaching, teaching, or pastoral formation would most effectively correct the specific error most prevalent in your context?
- The transition from the Anthropology series to the Hamartiology series is the transition from the account of the human creature’s original dignity to the account of what the fall has done to that dignity. How will you structure the teaching of the Hamartiology series in the light of the Anthropology series’ account that has now been completed? What specific dimensions of the hamartiological account (the nature of sin, the extent of total depravity, the specific forms of original and actual sin) will be most directly illuminated by the anthropological account of the pre-fall dignity, and how will you explicitly draw the connections in the teaching of the Hamartiology series?
- The lesson’s account of the progressive renewal of the image in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”, establishes that the present life’s spiritual formation is the same process in its still-incomplete expression that will be brought to its eschatological completion in the glorification. How explicitly does the congregation’s formation culture understand the connection between the present spiritual formation and the eschatological glorification? Is the spiritual formation understood primarily as moral improvement, primarily as skill development, primarily as knowledge acquisition, or primarily as the Spirit’s progressive renewal of the image toward its eschatological perfection? What specific reframing of the formation language and the formation practices would most effectively communicate the eschatological dimension of the present renewal?
- The Anthropology series is now complete except for the doxological conclusion of Lesson 26. Before attending Lesson 26’s gathering of the full arc of the human story for the doxological meditation, spend time in extended personal reflection on the series as a whole. Which of the twenty-five lessons has most significantly changed your theological understanding? Which has most significantly changed your pastoral practice? Which has most significantly changed your personal posture before God? And what single sentence would you use to summarize the theological gift that the Anthropology series as a whole has offered to your understanding of what it means to be a human being made in the image of God, living in the conditions of the fallen world, and called by the sovereign grace of the last Adam to the eschatological glory that awaits?

Prayer Focus

Open this twenty-fifth lesson of the Anthropology series, the penultimate lesson that gathers the full weight of the series' theological content and holds it before the abyss of the fall's devastation, with a reading of Psalm 51, David's great penitential Psalm. Read it as the most personal and the most pastorally immediate single expression in the entire biblical canon of what the fall's devastation looks like in the specific experience of the specific sinner who has come to understand both the height from which the fall came and the depth to which it has brought him. Attend to the specific movement of the Psalm: the cry for mercy grounded in the steadfast love and the abundant compassion of the One who is being petitioned (v. 1); the honest acknowledgment of the transgression and the sin against God alone (vv. 3–4); the recognition of the inherited corruption in which the petitioner was conceived and born (v. 5); the cry for the cleansing that the petitioner cannot accomplish in himself (vv. 7–9); the petition for the renewed spirit and the restored joy (vv. 10–12); and the promise of the proclamation that the restored sinner will make to transgressors who need to hear what the mercy of God has accomplished (vv. 13–15). The Psalm moves from the specific consciousness of the fall's devastation in the specific sinner's experience to the specific confidence in the mercy of the God who restores; and the movement of the Psalm is the movement that the Anthropology series has been tracing in its theological account of the human creature's creation, fall, and the hope of restoration that the gospel provides.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the full weight of Lesson 25's account of the fall's devastation to deepen your worship of the Triune God whose grace is "much more" than the devastation it addresses. Begin with the Father, who made the human creature in His own image and declared the result very good, who watched the creature He made for communion with Himself hide from His presence among the trees of the garden, who subjected the creation to futility in hope of the liberation that His eternal purposes had already determined, and who, being rich in mercy and acting out of the great love with which He loved the fallen creature, sent His Son as the Last Adam to accomplish what the first Adam's transgression had forfeited. Adore the Father who did not abandon the creature He made in His image when the creature plunged from the height of the original dignity into the ruin of the fall, but who declared in the very moment of the fall's announcement the first proclamation of the gospel: the seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Move to the Son, who bore the sin that the fallen creature could not bear herself, who was made to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, who descended into the deepest consequences of the fall (death, burial, the God-forsakenness of the cross) in order to ascend from those consequences in the resurrection that is the first fruits of the new creation's eschatological harvest. Adore the Last Adam who is what humanity was meant to be, who has done what humanity could not do, and who is making those who are in Him what by grace they are becoming: conformed to His image from glory to glory. Conclude with the Spirit, who is at work in the hearts and minds of the fallen image-bearing creatures, renewing the image that the fall has damaged, progressively transforming the believer into the same image from glory to glory, and interceding for the groaning creature and the groaning creation with groanings too deep for words, in the confidence that the One who subjects the creation to futility in hope of the liberation is the same One who will bring the liberation to its eschatological completion when all things are made new.

Pray together at the threshold of the Anthropology series' doxological conclusion and the Hamartiology series' beginning in three specific directions. First, for the theological formation that the transition from Anthropology to Hamartiology requires: that the congregation would enter the doctrine of sin with the full weight of the human creature's original dignity, established by the twenty-five lessons of this series, as the standard against which the fall's devastation is measured. The student who knows the height from which the fall came will not be able to minimize the sin's devastation; and the student who cannot minimize the devastation will not be able to minimize the grace that was required to address it. Second, for the pastoral urgency that the "dead in trespasses and sins" condition of the fallen human creature demands: that the congregation would hold the depth of the human misery with the same theological seriousness with which it holds the height of the human dignity, and that the holding of both together would produce the specific quality of pastoral urgency that drives the proclamation of the gospel

to those who are still dead in their transgressions and the pastoral care of those who are being made alive together with Christ. Third, in anticipation of Lesson 26's doxological conclusion: pray for the readiness to receive the full arc of the human story, from dust to glory, from the creation's very good through the fall's ruin through the redemption's provision to the glorification's consummation, as the story of the God who is the Alpha and the Omega, and to respond to the story with the specific quality of worship that the story's Author deserves: the worship of those who have been made, and broken, and redeemed, and who will be glorified, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ... and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

Romans 8:29–30, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 3:1–24; Psalm 51; Ephesians 2:1–10; 4:17–24; Romans 1:18–25; 5:12–21; 8:18–25, 29–30; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17–21*

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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