

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 5

The Original State and the Covenant of Works

Lesson 14

The Original Righteousness of Adam

The State of Innocence Before the Fall

“Created Good: The Positive Moral Character of Humanity as God Made It”

Key Texts: Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; Genesis 1:31; Genesis 2:15–17

“Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.”

Ecclesiastes 7:29, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Unit 5 opens with a question that precedes the doctrine of the fall and must be answered before the fall's significance can be properly understood: what was Adam like before the fall? What was the original condition of the human creature as God made it and before sin entered the world? The answer to this question matters enormously for the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of redemption, and the doctrine of the eschatological state of the redeemed. If Adam was created in a state of mere moral neutrality, a blank slate capable of moving in either direction with equal facility and no particular inclination toward God or against sin, then the fall is simply the occasion on which the neutral human creature's freedom expressed itself in the wrong direction, and redemption is the provision of the assistance that will help the creature make better choices in the future. But if Adam was created in a state of positive holiness, righteousness, and true knowledge, with the will genuinely inclined toward God, the affections rightly ordered, and the mind unclouded by sin, then the fall is a genuine catastrophe, a departure from an original excellence that was real and good, and redemption is the restoration of something genuinely lost rather than merely the correction of a neutral that went negative.

The Reformed tradition has consistently affirmed the latter account: Adam was not merely a morally neutral creature but a genuinely righteous one, created with the positive holiness and moral integrity that the Heidelberg Catechism's Q&A 6 describes as "true righteousness and holiness." This doctrine, called original righteousness (*iustitia originalis*) in the scholastic tradition, is not a speculative addition to the biblical testimony but a conclusion drawn from the biblical evidence itself: from Ecclesiastes 7:29's declaration that "God made men upright," from the restoration language of Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 that implies an original condition being restored, from the very good verdict of Genesis 1:31 applied to the human creature, and from the coherence requirements of the doctrines of the fall, original sin, and eschatological glorification. Lesson 14 develops this doctrine in its full biblical and theological richness, establishing the foundation upon which Lesson 15 (the covenant of works) and Lesson 16 (the probationary test) will build.

The lesson proceeds in six sections. We begin with the doctrine of original righteousness stated and its biblical foundations examined. We then explore the specific content of original righteousness, what the pre-fall human creature's mind, will, and affections were like. The third section examines the crucial scholastic distinction between Adam's moral freedom (*posse non peccare* / *posse peccare*: able not to sin and able to sin) and the eschatological moral freedom of the glorified redeemed (*non posse peccare*: unable to sin), establishing the hierarchy of moral states across the arc of redemptive history. The fourth section addresses the theological significance of original righteousness for the doctrines of the fall and human responsibility. The fifth section traces the progressive recovery of original righteousness in regeneration and sanctification and its eschatological perfection in glorification. We close with the doxological conclusion that the whole doctrine produces: the God who made humanity upright is the God who is restoring it to an uprightness that surpasses even the original excellence of the creation.

A brief note on terminology: the term "original righteousness" (Latin *iustitia originalis*) refers specifically to the positive moral character of Adam in the pre-fall state, as distinguished from "original sin" (*peccatum originale*), which refers to the moral corruption inherited by all of Adam's descendants as a consequence of his fall. The two terms form a pair that spans the fall: original righteousness describes what humanity was before the fall; original sin describes what humanity became after it. Together they establish the full measure of the fall's catastrophe: it was not a descent from neutrality to corruption but a descent from genuine holiness to comprehensive deformity. The greatness of the fall is measured by the height from which the creature fell; and the doctrine of original righteousness establishes that height with theological precision.

I. Original Righteousness Defined and Established

The Biblical Foundations of the Doctrine That Adam Was Created Genuinely Good

A. *Ecclesiastes 7:29 and the Upright Creation*

The most direct single biblical statement of the doctrine of original righteousness is Ecclesiastes 7:29: “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices” (NASB 1995). The verse appears at the conclusion of the Preacher’s extended reflection on the human quest for wisdom and the pervasive experience of human moral failure, and it provides his definitive theological assessment of the relationship between the Creator’s intention and the creature’s actual condition. The Preacher’s observation has the structure of a theological explanation: human beings as they are found, in their “many devices,” their ingenuity in sin, their elaborate strategies of self-deception and self-destruction, are not what God made them. God made them upright (yashar, ישר); they became corrupt by their own choosing.

The Hebrew word yashar (ישר), translated “upright,” carries a rich semantic range in the Old Testament that illuminates the content of the original righteousness it describes. Yashar is used throughout the wisdom literature and the prophets to describe the morally straight, the aligned with God’s law, the honest and the untwisted: the person whose heart and ways are yashar is the person whose life is ordered according to the divine standard without the distortions of sin. In Proverbs, yashar is consistently the quality of the righteous person as distinguished from the perverse and the crooked (Proverbs 2:13; 11:3, 6; 14:11; 21:2, 18, 29). In Psalms, yashar describes the integrity of the one who walks before God without duplicity or self-deception (Psalm 25:8; 33:4; 92:15; 107:7). When Ecclesiastes 7:29 declares that God made men yashar, it is declaring that the original constitution of the human creature was morally straight, aligned with God’s character, without the perverseness or the crookedness that the fallen condition universally exhibits. This is not moral neutrality; it is positive moral integrity.

The significance of Ecclesiastes 7:29 for the doctrine of original righteousness is magnified by its literary context. The Preacher has been conducting an extended empirical survey of human moral life and has found everywhere the evidences of human corruption and perversity. He has seen the wickedness of the oppressor, the tears of the oppressed, the futility of human wisdom, and the systematic distortions that sin introduces into every aspect of human life. And at the end of this survey he does not conclude that the human creature was always and essentially this way, that corruption is native and original to human existence. He concludes that the corruption is a departure from an original uprightness: God made men upright, but they, not God, not chance, not structural necessity, have sought out many devices. The fall is a genuine departure from a genuine original goodness, and Ecclesiastes 7:29 is the Wisdom literature’s most direct statement of that theological fact.

B. *The New Testament’s Restoration Language: Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10*

The New Testament’s most powerful evidence for the doctrine of original righteousness comes not from direct statements about Adam’s original condition but from the restoration language applied to the regenerate believer. The principle at work is the logic of renewal: you can only restore what was originally there. If the new self is “created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesians 4:24, NASB 1995) and is “being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:10, NASB 1995), then righteousness, holiness, and true knowledge were originally present in the human creature as created, because the Spirit’s work of renewal is the restoration of what was originally there and what the fall destroyed. The new creation is new in the sense of being reestablished and elevated, not new in the sense of being entirely unprecedented; and the standard toward which the new self is being renewed is the standard of the original creation.

Ephesians 4:24’s description of the new self as “created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” is particularly illuminating when its three specific elements are attended to carefully. The righteousness (dikaiosyne, δικαιοσύνη) refers to the right moral alignment of the person with God’s standard, the justice and integrity that

characterize the person who is what she was created to be in relation to God and neighbor. The holiness (hosiōtēs, ὁσιότης) refers specifically to the religious dimension of the original righteousness, the devout, reverent, Godward orientation of the person whose whole life is ordered toward the worship and service of the Creator. And the “truth” (alētheia, ἀλήθεια) qualifies both: the righteousness and holiness of the original creation were righteousness and holiness according to the truth, aligned with God’s revealed character and will, unclouded by the distortions of sin and self-deception. This is not a perfunctory description; it is a specific account of three dimensions of the original righteousness that the fall destroyed and that the Spirit’s work of renewal is restoring.

Colossians 3:10’s parallel account adds the cognitive dimension: the new self is being renewed “to a true knowledge” (eis epignōsin, εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν), the full, accurate, relationally engaged knowledge of God that distinguishes the creature who is properly related to the Creator from the creature whose darkened understanding suppresses the knowledge that is available. The original state of Adam included this true knowledge: not the infinite knowledge of the Creator, but the genuine, adequate, unclouded knowledge of the creature who knows her Creator truly and who knows herself, her neighbors, and the created order through the lens of that knowledge. Ephesians 4:18’s description of the Gentiles as “darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them” is the negative image of what the original state positively was: the original state was a state of enlightened understanding, of inclusion in the life of God, of genuine knowledge rather than corrupting ignorance. The Colossians renewal to “true knowledge” is the restoration of what Ephesians 4:18 describes as lost.

“And put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Ephesians 4:24, NASB 1995

II. The Content of Original Righteousness: Mind, Will, and Affections

What the Pre-Fall Human Creature’s Inner Life Was Actually Like

A. The Enlightened Mind and the God-Oriented Affections

The doctrine of original righteousness is not an abstraction; it has specific content that can be described across the three primary faculties of the human person, the mind (intellect), the will, and the affections (heart), and in each case the description stands in deliberate contrast to what total depravity has made of the same faculties in the fallen human creature. The Heidelberg Catechism’s formulation of the original state, “God created man good and in His image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him” (Q&A 6), provides the most concise and theologically precise Reformed account of the original state, and its three elements (rightly know, heartily love, live with in eternal blessedness) correspond directly to the three faculties of the human person.

The mind of Adam in the original state was characterized by true knowledge, not omniscience (Adam is a creature, and creaturely knowledge is always limited), but the genuine, accurate, relationally engaged knowledge of God that the creature’s constitution and the clarity of God’s self-disclosure in the pre-fall creation made available. Adam knew God as Creator with the directness and the clarity that the pre-fall relationship permitted: without the veil of sin, without the bias toward self-deception, without the darkening of the understanding that the suppression of the truth in unrighteousness produces. He knew the created order with the same clarity, because he knew it through the lens of his knowledge of the Creator, as the very good work of a very good God, designed for a good purpose and entrusted to his vice-regal stewardship. And he knew himself with the honesty that the unclouded self-knowledge of the pre-fall state permitted: as a creature made in the image of God, accountable to

the Creator, dependent on the Creator's sustaining grace, and called to the service and the worship of the One who made him.

The affections of Adam in the original state were rightly ordered toward God as their primary object and toward the created order as the medium through which the Creator's goodness was to be received and enjoyed. Augustine's concept of the properly ordered loves, the *ordo amoris*, the right ordering of the creature's loves according to the hierarchy of worth established by the Creator, describes what the original state of the affections was: God as the supreme object of love, the neighbor as the fellow image-bearer to be loved for God's sake and in God's name, the created order as the gift to be received with gratitude and governed with stewardship. The affections of the original Adam were not cold or indifferent; they were genuinely warm, genuinely loving, genuinely responsive to the goodness of the Creator and the goodness of the creation, but ordered, directed, calibrated to the proper objects in the proper proportion. The fall did not cool the affections; it disordered them, redirecting the love that was meant to flow toward God toward the self and the creature instead. Original righteousness was not affective poverty but affective integrity.

B. *The Inclined Will and the Goodness of the Original State*

The will of Adam in the original state is perhaps the most theologically critical element of the original righteousness, because it is the will's condition that most directly determines the fall's character as a genuine, voluntary, culpable act of rebellion rather than a structural necessity built into the original creation. The Reformed tradition has consistently affirmed that Adam's will in the original state was genuinely free and genuinely inclined toward God, not enslaved to God's will in a way that made disobedience impossible (that is the eschatological state, not the original one), but genuinely and freely oriented toward God in a way that made disobedience unnecessary, unnatural, and fully culpable when it occurred. Adam did not fall because the pull of sin was irresistible; he fell against the orientation of his own will, which was inclined toward God and away from sin.

Calvin's account of Adam's original will in the Institutes (I.15.8) is among his most carefully nuanced treatments: "man was endowed with a sound and upright mind ... with the capability, if he wished, of attaining eternal life; secondly, this capacity had no need of any external aid, since God had already given it to him, but merely depended on his own free choice." The key qualification, "if he wished", preserves the genuine freedom of Adam's will: the capacity for continued life with God was real and was given, but its actualization depended on a free choice that Adam was genuinely capable of making in either direction. Calvin also insists that Adam's will was genuinely oriented toward good in the original state: "He was at the same time endowed with sound understanding, and truly inclined to pursue what was good." The word "inclined" is crucial: it is not a word for mere capacity but for orientation, Adam's will did not merely have the ability to choose good; it was bent toward good, directed toward good, as the proper expression of its created nature.

The theological implication of this account of the original will is both doctrinal and pastoral. Doctrinally, it establishes that the fall was not built into the original creation as a structural necessity, that the Creator did not design a creature who would inevitably fall, so that the fall was in some sense God's fault or God's intention. Adam's sin was a genuine departure from a genuine orientation, a free act of a free will moving against its own proper inclination. This is what makes the fall a genuine tragedy: not merely a bad outcome, but a voluntary abandonment of a genuine goodness. Pastorally, it establishes the baseline against which the damage of the fall must be measured: the fall's effect on the will is not the introduction of freedom into a previously determined system but the perversion of a free will's genuine orientation from God toward sin. Total depravity describes the comprehensive perversion of an originally good orientation, not the introduction of corruption into a previously neutral or determined system. The depth of the tragedy is proportional to the height of the original excellence from which the fall departed.

III. **Posse Non Peccare: The Freedom of Adam in the Original State**

The Scholastic Distinctions That Clarify the Moral Architecture of Creation, Fall, and Glory

A. *The Four States and Their Moral Freedoms*

The scholastic theological tradition, drawing on Augustine's distinctions in the *Enchiridion* (chapters 28–30) and the *City of God* (XXII.30), developed a framework of four successive moral states of the human will that provides one of the most theologically clarifying accounts of the relationship between creation, fall, redemption, and glorification available in the history of Christian thought. The four states are: (1) the original state of innocence (*posse non peccare*, able not to sin; *posse peccare*, able to sin); (2) the fallen state (*non posse non peccare*, not able not to sin, i.e., unable not to sin); (3) the regenerate state (*posse non peccare*, able not to sin, restored by grace); and (4) the glorified state (*non posse peccare*, unable to sin). The progression from state to state tracks the history of redemption from the garden of innocence through the catastrophe of the fall through the partial restoration of regeneration to the perfect and permanent righteousness of the eschatological glory.

The original state is characterized by the pairing: *posse non peccare et posse peccare*, able not to sin and able to sin. Adam in the original state had the genuine moral freedom to refrain from sin (the inclination of his will toward God made obedience not only possible but natural) and the genuine moral freedom to sin (the probationary test of the garden established that the choice was real and the outcome was not predetermined). Neither the impossibility of sin nor the inevitability of sin characterized the original state; what characterized it was the reality of choice in the context of a will genuinely inclined toward good. The “able not to sin” was not merely a theoretical possibility but the natural expression of the will's proper orientation; the “able to sin” was not a defect but the necessary condition of a free choice that could be genuinely praised or genuinely blamed. The original state was a state of moral integrity with genuine moral freedom, neither perfect moral stability (which is the eschatological state) nor moral bondage (which is the fallen state), but the moral freedom of a genuinely righteous creature who could genuinely sin if she chose to.

The fallen state is characterized by *non posse non peccare*, not able not to sin. This does not mean that every fallen human being commits every possible sin at every moment; it means that the fallen will, in its fundamental orientation toward self and the creature rather than toward God, is not free to choose God, to submit to His law, or to exercise saving faith by its own natural resources. The enslaved will of the fallen creature does not experience this bondage as external compulsion; it experiences it as the expression of its own deepest desires, because the will is enslaved precisely to its own sinful inclinations. This is the precise content of total depravity as it applies to the will, and it stands in direct contrast to the original state's genuine inclination toward God. The fall has not merely weakened the will's capacity for good; it has reversed its fundamental orientation, from God toward self and the creature, in a reversal that no creaturely effort can undo without the regenerating intervention of the Holy Spirit.

B. *Non Posse Peccare: The Eschatological Surpassing of the Original State*

The glorified state, the eschatological condition of the fully redeemed, resurrected, and glorified saints in the new creation, is characterized by *non posse peccare*: unable to sin. This is not the same as the original state; it is higher. Adam in the original state was able not to sin (*posse non peccare*) but also able to sin (*posse peccare*). The glorified saint in the eschatological state will not merely be able not to sin but will be permanently and constitutively unable to sin: the will conformed to the image of the Son, fully sanctified by the Spirit, and confirmed in the righteousness of the glorified state will not merely refrain from sin by the exercise of moral effort; it will be constitutively beyond the reach of sin in a way that the original Adamic state was not. This is the theological basis for the claim, developed in Unit 4, that the eschatological state surpasses the original state as the resurrection body surpasses the pre-fall mortal body.

The theological grounding of the non posse peccare of the glorified state is Christological. The eschatological righteousness of the redeemed is not a restored Adamic uprightness but a conformity to the image of the Son, the risen, glorified, confirmed righteousness of the Last Adam who fulfilled the covenant of works on behalf of His people and who communicates to His people, in their glorification, the permanent and irreversible righteousness of the eschatological obedience He completed on their behalf. Romans 8:29's predestination to conformity to the image of the Son and 1 John 3:2's promise that the redeemed "will be like Him" when He appears are the eschatological expressions of this Christological grounding: the glory of the redeemed will not merely be the restoration of Adam's uprightness but the participation in the confirmed and permanent righteousness of the One who lived the perfect uprightness that Adam failed to maintain.

The practical theological significance of the non posse peccare for the doctrine of original righteousness is that it establishes the progressive character of the moral architecture across the arc of redemptive history. The original state was genuinely good but not eschatologically confirmed: it was the goodness of the first Adam, morally integral but morally probationary. The eschatological state will be eschatologically confirmed: it will be the goodness of the Last Adam, morally perfect and permanently beyond the reach of moral testing. The original righteousness was the beginning of the story; the eschatological righteousness is its end. And the end surpasses the beginning precisely because the end is the confirmed righteousness of the Son, while the beginning was merely the probationary righteousness of the first man. The fall is not the middle of the story; it is the interruption of a story that was always moving toward an eschatological goal that the fall could delay but could not ultimately prevent, because the God who planned the end is the same God who created the beginning.

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'"

Genesis 2:16–17, NASB 1995

IV. The Theological Significance of Original Righteousness

Why the Original State Matters for the Doctrines of the Fall, Responsibility, and Redemption

A. Original Righteousness and the Culpability of the Fall

The doctrine of original righteousness is not merely a theoretical reconstruction of the pre-fall state; it is a theologically necessary foundation for the doctrine of the fall's culpability. If Adam was created in a state of moral neutrality, without genuine inclination toward God, without true knowledge of the Creator's goodness, without rightly ordered affections, then the fall is merely the neutral creature's freedom expressing itself in one direction rather than another, and the divine judgment that falls on Adam and his posterity for the transgression is the judgment of a God who punishes creatures for doing what neutral creatures with freedom inevitably do. But if Adam was created in original righteousness, with genuine knowledge of God, with genuine inclination of the will toward God, with rightly ordered affections directed toward God as their proper object, then the fall is a genuine and inexcusable rebellion: the creature who knew God's goodness, who was inclined toward God's will, whose every faculty was properly ordered toward the Creator's purpose, deliberately chose against all of this. The fall is not the expression of what the creature inevitably was; it is the tragic contradiction of what the creature genuinely was.

This theological significance of original righteousness for the fall's culpability has direct bearing on the problem of evil, the question of how a good Creator can be the ultimate source of a creation that fell into sin. The doctrine of original righteousness addresses this challenge by insisting that the fall was not built into the original creation as a structural necessity or a divine intention. God made men upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29); they sought out many

devices. The devices, the elaborate strategies of sin and self-deception that the fallen human creature has pursued since the garden, were not part of the original design but the creature's own free contribution to a history that the Creator did not intend and did not cause. The responsibility for the fall belongs entirely to the free creature who fell, not to the good Creator who made the free creature good. The doctrine of original righteousness is the theological foundation for the apologetic case that the fall is the creature's catastrophe, not the Creator's design.

The Westminster Confession of Faith's account of the creation of man in chapter 4 captures this dual affirmation precisely: "God created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image, having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will." The "endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness" is the positive content of the original righteousness; the "under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will" is the freedom that made the fall genuinely culpable rather than merely inevitable. Both affirmations together establish the full theological picture: Adam was created genuinely good, genuinely free, and genuinely responsible, which is why the fall was genuinely catastrophic, genuinely his fault, and genuinely deserving of the divine judgment that followed it.

B. Original Righteousness and the Comprehensiveness of the Fall's Damage

The doctrine of original righteousness also provides the standard against which the comprehensiveness of the fall's damage can be properly measured. Total depravity is not merely the claim that the fallen creature does some bad things; it is the claim that the fallen creature's entire moral constitution, in every faculty and every dimension, is corrupted. But corrupted from what standard? The standard is the original righteousness that the fall destroyed. The mind is darkened (Ephesians 4:18) from the true knowledge of the original state. The will is enslaved (Romans 6:17) from the genuine inclination toward God of the original state. The affections are disordered (Romans 1:24–28) from the rightly ordered loves of the original state. And the conscience is dulled and distorted from the unclouded moral sensitivity of the original state. Every dimension of total depravity is the distortion of a corresponding dimension of original righteousness, and the full measure of the depravity can only be grasped by comparison with the height of the righteousness from which it fell.

This parallel structure between original righteousness and total depravity has important implications for the Christian's understanding of both her pre-conversion condition and the scope of the Spirit's sanctifying work in her present life. The pre-conversion condition is not merely the absence of something (goodness, virtue, spiritual sensitivity) but the comprehensive perversion of faculties that were originally oriented toward good. The darkened mind is not an empty mind but a mind whose light has been turned into darkness, the corruption of a cognitive faculty whose original condition was true knowledge. The enslaved will is not a passive will but an active will driving its owner toward what she was not made to pursue. And the disordered affections are not cold but on fire, burning with the loves that the fall has misdirected toward the wrong objects. The scope of the sanctifying work is correspondingly comprehensive: the renewal of the image in every faculty, toward the original standard that the fall corrupted and the eschatological standard that will surpass the original.

Genesis 1:31's very good verdict, applied comprehensively to the human creature as God originally made it, is the baseline against which the fall's damage must be measured and the Spirit's restoration work must be calibrated. Very good, not merely adequate, not merely functional, not merely neutral, but genuinely and comprehensively excellent in the estimation of the Creator who knew exactly what He had made. The standard of the original righteousness was not mediocrity; it was the genuine moral excellence of a creature made in the image of a perfectly holy God, with the knowledge, the love, and the orientation toward that God that such an origin requires. The fall degraded that excellence into frightful deformity; the Spirit is restoring that excellence toward its eschatological surpassing; and the God who declared the original creature very good will one day declare the redeemed and glorified creature more than very good, in the confirmed and permanent righteousness of the eschatological state.

V. The Recovery of Original Righteousness: Regeneration, Sanctification, and Glory

The Progressive Restoration of What the Fall Destroyed and the Eschatological Surpassing of the Original

A. *Regeneration as the Restoration of the Original Orientation*

The doctrine of original righteousness finds its practical theological expression in the doctrine of regeneration, which the New Testament presents precisely as the restoration of the original orientation that the fall destroyed. Regeneration is not the creation of an entirely new kind of human being who has no connection to the original creation; it is the re-creation of the human being in the image and after the standard of the original creation, through the creative power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:17, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (NASB 1995), describes this re-creation in the language of the new creation that mirrors and surpasses the original creation. And Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, examined in Section I, describe the specific content of the new creation in terms that are explicitly restorative: the righteousness, the holiness, and the true knowledge of the new self are the restoration of the original righteousness, holiness, and true knowledge that the original creation possessed and the fall destroyed.

The specific mechanism of regeneration as the restoration of the original orientation is the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart, the Spirit who, by creating the new birth (John 3:3–8), gives the regenerate person a new heart with a new fundamental orientation, a new set of deepest desires, a new principle of spiritual life that produces the genuine love for God, the genuine hatred of sin, and the genuine hunger for the things of God that characterize the regenerate state. Ezekiel 36:26–27 provides the Old Testament’s most direct prophecy of this regenerating work: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” The “heart of flesh”, the responsive, soft, God-oriented heart of the regenerate, is the restoration of the responsiveness to God that was the original state of Adam’s heart before the fall transformed it into a “heart of stone,” hardened and closed against the knowledge and the love of God.

The regenerate person does not immediately possess the fullness of the original righteousness, much less the non posse peccare of the glorified state. Regeneration begins the restoration; sanctification continues it; glorification completes it. The regenerate will is genuinely renewed in its fundamental orientation, it now genuinely desires God, genuinely hates sin as sin, and genuinely pursues holiness as the proper expression of the new nature, but it still contends with the remnants of the old nature, the residual corruption that the New Testament describes as the flesh (sarx) that wars against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). Paul’s account of the ongoing conflict in Romans 7:14–25 is the most searching description of this tension: the regenerate person genuinely wills what is good (the new orientation) and yet finds herself doing what she does not will (the residual corruption). The progressive sanctification that the Spirit’s work produces over the course of the Christian life is the progressive intensification of the new orientation and the progressive weakening of the residual corruption, moving steadily toward the eschatological completeness that only death and glorification will bring.

B. *The Final Recovery: Glorification as the Surpassing of the Original State*

The eschatological glorification of the redeemed is not merely the restoration of the original state of Adam but its surpassing in the confirmed and permanent righteousness of the non posse peccare. The glorified believer will be more than originally righteous; she will be eschatologically confirmed in a righteousness that cannot be lost, tested again, or reverted from, a righteousness grounded not in her own probationary integrity but in the completed obedience of the Last Adam who fulfilled the covenant of works on behalf of His people and whose fulfilled obedience is the permanent ground of the redeemed’s eschatological righteousness. The original Adam stood in a state of probationary goodness that could be lost; the glorified saint stands in a state of eschatologically

confirmed goodness that cannot be lost, because it is not the goodness of a successful probation but the goodness of the One who passed the probation on behalf of those who had failed it.

This eschatological surpassing of the original state means that the entire history of redemption, from the fall to the final state, is not a history of repair and restoration to the status quo ante but a history of progress toward an eschatological goal that exceeds the original beginning. The creation was very good; the new creation will be more than very good, with the confirmed and permanent goodness of the eschatological state. The original Adam was upright; the eschatological saint will be constitutively righteous with the non posse peccare that transcends Adam's uprightness as surely as the resurrection body transcends the mortal body. Herman Bavinck's observation in the Reformed Dogmatics is precisely to the point: "Grace restores nature and then surpasses it." The restoration is genuine; the surpassing is real; and both together constitute the full scope of the redemptive purpose that the God who made humanity upright has been executing from before the foundation of the world, through the fall, through the redemption accomplished by the Last Adam, toward the eschatological state in which the redeemed will bear the confirmed righteousness of the Son forever.

The practical and pastoral import of this eschatological account of the recovery of original righteousness is the import of a genuinely forward-looking hope. The Christian who has been formed by this doctrine will not understand her sanctification as a merely recuperative project, as the gradual recovery of something that was lost, but as a progressively escalating participation in the eschatological righteousness of the Son, toward a goal that surpasses the beginning. She is not working her way back to Eden; she is moving forward to the new Jerusalem. The very good of the original creation is the floor of the eschatological state, not its ceiling; and the Spirit who is sanctifying her is not restoring her to Adamic uprightness but conforming her to the image of the risen and glorified Son whose righteousness is the standard toward which the whole of redemption is moving. "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29, NASB 1995), not the image of the first Adam, but the image of the Last Adam in whom the entire arc of creation, fall, and redemption finds its eschatological completion.

VI. The Doxological Conclusion: God Made Men Upright

The Original Righteousness as the Beginning of a Story That Ends in Greater Glory

The doctrine of original righteousness is, at its deepest level, a doctrine about the character of the God who made men upright. It is the revelation that the Creator's intention for the human creature was not mediocrity but excellence; not neutrality but genuine goodness; not mere functionality but the positive holiness and righteousness and true knowledge that reflect the character of the One in whose image the creature was made. The creature who was made upright was made in the image of the God who is perfectly, permanently, constitutively upright, whose righteousness, holiness, and knowledge are not probationary but eternal, not derived but essential, not dependent on the outcome of a test but constitutive of the divine nature itself. The original righteousness of Adam was the creaturely reflection of the divine character, genuine, real, and good, but creaturely: finite, probationary, and dependent on the continued grace of the Creator for its maintenance.

The fall did not change the Creator's intention for the creature. The God who made men upright has not revised His estimation of what the human creature ought to be; He has set about, through the costly redemption of the Last Adam, to restore to the creature the uprightness that the creature abandoned and to elevate it beyond that uprightness to the confirmed righteousness of the eschatological state. The same Creator who said at the beginning "behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31) will say at the end something more: the eschatological "well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21), addressed not to morally neutral creatures who have adequately managed their freedom, but to genuinely righteous creatures who have been formed in the image of the Son who fulfilled what the first Adam failed to maintain, and who therefore stand in the confirmed righteousness of the One who lived for them and died for them and rose for them.

Ecclesiastes 7:29's closing observation, "God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices", is not the last word in the story it begins. The many devices of fallen human self-determination have not overturned the Creator's purpose for the creature; they have been overcome by the greater ingenuity of the divine grace that took the creature's devices seriously, seriously enough to send the Son into the middle of them, to bear their consequences in His body, and to emerge from the grave on the other side of them in a resurrection that declares the divine purpose for the creature to be not thwarted but gloriously advanced. God made men upright. They fell. He redeemed them. He will glorify them. And the glory will surpass the original uprightness as the risen Christ surpasses the first Adam, as the eschatological city surpasses the garden, as the confirmed non posse peccare surpasses the probationary posse non peccare, as the love of God revealed in the cross of Christ surpasses even the love of God revealed in the very good of the original creation. This is the arc of the story, and original righteousness is its first chapter.

"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."

Romans 8:29, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Original Righteousness (Iustitia Originalis)	The positive moral character of Adam and Eve in the pre-fall state, consisting of genuine righteousness (right moral alignment with God's standard), genuine holiness (devout, God-ward orientation of the whole person), and genuine true knowledge (accurate, relational knowledge of God unclouded by sin). The Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 6 defines it as: God created man "in true righteousness and holiness, so that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness." Original righteousness is the doctrinal baseline against which the fall's damage (total depravity) is measured and toward which the Spirit's work of renewal (sanctification) is directed.
Iustitia Originalis	Latin for "original righteousness", see definition above. The term is used in the scholastic and Reformed theological tradition to describe the positive moral constitution of Adam before the fall, distinguishing it from the forensic righteousness of justification (iustitia imputata) and the inherent righteousness of the eschatological glorification. The iustitia originalis was created integrity: genuine, real, and good, but creaturely and probationary, depending on the outcome of the covenant of works for its eschatological confirmation.
Posse Non Peccare	Latin: "able not to sin." The characterization of Adam's moral freedom in the original state: his will was genuinely inclined toward God and capable of obeying the divine command without sinning. Posse non peccare does not mean "unable to sin" (that is the eschatological state); it means that the will had the genuine capacity and the genuine orientation toward obedience. Adam was able not to sin in the sense that his will was directed toward God and that obedience was the natural expression of his created inclination. The posse non peccare is the moral freedom of the state of innocence, distinguished from both the bondage of the fallen state and the confirmed righteousness of the glorified state.
Posse Peccare	Latin: "able to sin." The counterpart to posse non peccare in the characterization of Adam's moral freedom in the original state: his will was genuinely free to choose sin if he chose to, so that the fall was a genuine exercise of moral freedom and a genuinely culpable act. Without the posse peccare, the probationary test of the covenant of works would have been a sham, a test with a predetermined outcome rather than a genuine trial of creaturely obedience. The pairing posse non peccare et posse peccare describes a moral freedom that is genuine in both directions: naturally inclined toward good, but capable of choosing evil, and therefore genuinely responsible for the choice it makes.
Non Posse Peccare	Latin: "unable to sin." The characterization of the eschatological moral freedom of the glorified redeemed: in the final state, the will conformed to the image of the Son and confirmed in the completed righteousness of the covenant of works (fulfilled by the Last Adam on behalf of His people) will be constitutively beyond the reach of sin. Non posse peccare is not the suppression of freedom but its eschatological perfection: the will that cannot sin is not less free but more fully itself, fully aligned with its created and redeemed purpose, fully expressing the holiness that is the creature's highest calling. Non posse peccare is higher than posse non peccare as the resurrection body is higher than the mortal body.

Non Posse Non Peccare	Latin: “not able not to sin,” i.e., “unable to not sin.” The characterization of the moral condition of the fallen human will: enslaved to sin in its fundamental orientation, the will of the natural (unregenerate) human being cannot, by its own creaturely resources, choose God, submit to His law, or exercise saving faith. Non posse non peccare does not describe external compulsion but the internal bondage of a will whose fundamental orientation has been reversed from God toward self and the creature. It is the moral condition described in Romans 6:17–20 and Ephesians 2:1–3, and it stands in direct contrast to the posse non peccare of the original state and the non posse peccare of the eschatological state.
Ordo Amoris	Latin: “order of loves.” Augustine’s concept for the proper ordering of the creature’s loves according to the hierarchy of worth established by the Creator: God as the supreme object of love, the neighbor as the fellow image-bearer to be loved for God’s sake, the created order as the gift to be received with gratitude. The ordo amoris describes the affective condition of original righteousness: the loves of Adam in the original state were rightly ordered, directed toward their proper objects in the proper proportion. The fall disordered the ordo amoris by redirecting the love meant for God toward the self and the creature (concupiscence), and the Spirit’s work of sanctification progressively restores the proper ordering of the loves.
Yashar (ישר)	Hebrew for “upright,” “straight,” or “aligned with the divine standard.” The word used in Ecclesiastes 7:29 for the original moral condition of the human creature as God made it: “God made men upright (yashar), but they have sought out many devices.” Yashar is used throughout the Old Testament wisdom and prophetic literature to describe the person whose life is morally straight, aligned with God’s character and law, without the perverseness or crookedness that sin introduces. Its application to the original state of humanity in Ecclesiastes 7:29 establishes that the original human condition was one of positive moral integrity rather than moral neutrality.
Grace Restores Nature and Surpasses It	Herman Bavinck’s formulation in the Reformed Dogmatics for the relationship between the created original state and the eschatological state of the redeemed. Redemption does not merely repair the damage of the fall (restore nature to its pre-fall condition) but elevates the creature to an eschatological state that surpasses even the original excellence of the pre-fall creation. The glorified state is higher than the original state as the Last Adam is higher than the first Adam, as the confirmed non posse peccare is higher than the probationary posse non peccare, and as the new Jerusalem surpasses the original garden. The formula captures the progressive, teleological character of the divine purpose in creation, redemption, and eschatological glorification.
Very Good (Tov Me’od)	The divine verdict of Genesis 1:31 applied to the entirety of the completed creation, including the human creature made in the image of God. In the context of original righteousness, tov me’od (טוב מאיד) establishes the baseline of genuine moral excellence from which the fall represented a departure. The very good of the original creation is the floor of the eschatological state: the new creation will not merely restore the very good but surpass it in the confirmed and permanent righteousness of the glorified state. Tov me’od is both the Creator’s assessment of the original human condition (genuinely good) and the measure of the fall’s damage (a departure from genuine excellence, not from mere neutrality).

Practical Application

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

We must believe that Adam was created genuinely good, not merely neutral, not merely functional, but genuinely righteous, genuinely holy, and genuinely possessed of true knowledge of his Creator. This conviction is not sentimental nostalgia for a state that existed before the church's experience; it is a theologically necessary foundation for the doctrine of the fall's genuine culpability and total depravity's genuine comprehensiveness. The fall was catastrophic precisely because what fell was genuinely good. The depravity is total precisely because the faculties it corrupted were originally oriented toward good. The school of thought that regards the fall as merely the expression of what neutral creatures inevitably do has not understood what Ecclesiastes 7:29 declares: God made men upright. They fell from something real.

We must also believe the progression of moral states, *posse non peccare*, *non posse non peccare*, and *non posse peccare*, as the theological architecture that organizes the relationship between creation, fall, and eschatological redemption. The eschatological *non posse peccare* is not merely the restoration of the Adamic *posse non peccare* but its eschatological surpassing in the confirmed righteousness of the Son. This conviction transforms the Christian's understanding of sanctification: she is not working her way back to Eden but moving forward to the new Jerusalem, being progressively conformed not to the first Adam's probationary uprightness but to the Last Adam's confirmed and eschatological righteousness. The goal of sanctification is always and only Christological conformity.

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

Let the doctrine of original righteousness produce in you a genuinely elevated sense of the tragedy of the fall. The fall is not the unfortunate but inevitable expression of what neutral creatures do with freedom; it is the voluntary abandonment of a genuine moral excellence that was a genuine gift of a genuinely good Creator. The Christian who holds original righteousness with theological seriousness will feel the fall not merely as a misfortune but as a genuine and inexcusable betrayal, a betrayal of the Creator who made the creature for fellowship and equipped it for fidelity, and whose generosity in the original creation was responded to with the ingratitude and the rebellion of the garden. This appropriate grief over the fall is not self-flagellation; it is the proper emotional response to the theological reality that the fall represents.

Desire also the progressive recovery of the original righteousness that the Spirit's work of sanctification is accomplishing. The *posse non peccare* of the original state was a genuine good; the *non posse non peccare* of the fallen state is a genuine bondage; and the sanctifying work that is progressively moving the regenerate believer from the bondage of the fallen state toward the confirmed righteousness of the eschatological state is a work that deserves the most active and the most enthusiastic cooperation of the regenerate will. Sanctification is not passive endurance of a process the Spirit controls without the believer's engagement; it is the active, Spirit-empowered pursuit of the genuine holiness that reflects the Creator's original intention for the creature and anticipates the eschatological goal toward which that intention is moving.

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

- Read Ecclesiastes 7:25–29 in its full context. What is the Preacher's larger reflection about the difficulty of finding wisdom and the pervasiveness of human folly, and how does verse 29 function as his theological conclusion about the relationship between the Creator's intention and the creature's actual condition? What does the literary placement of verse 29, as the culmination of a survey of human moral failure, suggest about the theological purpose it serves? And how does the verse's contrast between what God made (upright) and what human beings have done (many devices) bear on both the doctrine of original righteousness and the doctrine of human responsibility for sin?

- Write out the four moral states, *posse non peccare et posse peccare* (original state), *non posse non peccare* (fallen state), *posse non peccare* restored by grace (regenerate state), and *non posse peccare* (glorified state), in a table or diagram that identifies for each state: its Latin designation, its plain English description, its biblical grounding, its theological significance, and its relationship to the states on either side of it. Use this table as a reference tool for the remaining lessons of Unit 5 and for the Hamartiology and Soteriology material in later units.
- **Read Augustine’s *Enchiridion*, chapters 28–30, and *City of God* XXII.30.** These passages are Augustine’s most concise and most theologically influential account of the four moral states and their progression across the arc of redemptive history. Augustine’s treatment of the relationship between Adam’s probationary freedom (*posse non peccare et posse peccare*) and the eschatological freedom of the glorified redeemed (*non posse peccare*) is the patristic foundation upon which the entire scholastic and Reformed tradition’s treatment of original righteousness and the fall is built. For a more accessible and more contemporary treatment of the same themes, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* Vol. 2, Part IV (“The Image of God”) and Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, chapters 4–5.
- Identify one specific dimension of your own moral and spiritual life in which the contrast between the original state (*posse non peccare*) and the fallen state (*non posse non peccare*) is most vividly visible in the experience of regenerate struggle. Is it the persistent pattern of a disordered affection that was meant to be directed toward God but is consistently drawn toward lesser goods? Is it the recurring failure of a specific moral obligation that the enlightened mind recognizes and the regenerate will desires to meet but that the residual corruption of the flesh consistently subverts? Name it specifically, bring it to the Lord in honest confession, and commit to the specific disciplines of the means of grace that the Spirit uses to advance the sanctifying work in that specific area.
- Spend time this week in devotional reflection on the creation account of Genesis 1–2 with specific attention to the very good verdict of Genesis 1:31 applied to the human creature. Let the theological reality of the original righteousness shape the way you read the text: not as the description of a neutral creature in a neutral garden, but as the description of a genuinely righteous creature in a genuinely excellent creation, made for the fellowship of a genuinely good God. Allow the theological beauty of the original state, what humanity was before the fall, and what it is being restored to and surpassed in through the redemption of the Last Adam, to produce in you both a renewed grief over what the fall destroyed and a renewed gratitude for the grace that has set about restoring and surpassing it.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, did you have a clear theological account of Adam’s moral condition before the fall? Did you think of Adam as (a) morally neutral, capable of going either way with no particular inclination; (b) inclined toward good but capable of sinning; (c) positively righteous in a comprehensive sense; or (d) something else? Has the lesson changed your account, and if so, which argument or which text was most responsible for the change?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Ecclesiastes 7:23–29. What is the Preacher’s specific quest in verses 23–27, what does he find, and how does verse 29 function as his theological conclusion about the relationship between the original creation and the present human condition? What does the specific contrast between “God made men” (past creative act) and “they have sought out” (human initiative) contribute to the verse’s theological claim about the source of human corruption? And what does the plural “many devices” suggest about the creativity and the comprehensiveness of the human investment in its own corruption?
- Read Ephesians 4:17–24 as a unit. What is the specific structure of Paul’s contrast between the old self (vv. 17–22) and the new self (vv. 23–24)? What specific attributes does Paul assign to the old self, and what specific attributes does he assign to the new self? How does the creation language applied to the new self in verse 24 (“created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”) imply the existence of an original creation with the same attributes? And what does the renewal language of Colossians 3:10 (“being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him”) add to the picture of what was originally created and what the Spirit’s renewal is directed toward?
- Read Genesis 1:26–31 with specific attention to the very good verdict of verse 31 applied to the human creature. What is the cumulative theological force of the repeated “good” verdicts across the chapter, and how does the superlative “very good” of verse 31 elevate the verdict applied to the completed creation? Does the very good verdict apply to the human creature specifically, and if so, what does it imply about the original moral condition of humanity? How does the very good of Genesis 1:31 function as a theological baseline for measuring the fall’s damage?
- Read Genesis 2:15–17 in the context of Genesis 2:5–25. What is the character of God’s relationship with Adam in the pre-fall garden, what does God provide, what does He command, and what does He warn about? What does the character of this relationship suggest about Adam’s pre-fall condition: the knowledge of God’s goodness, the trust in God’s provision, and the accountability to God’s command that it presupposes? And how does the probationary command of verses 16–17 presuppose both the *posse non peccare* (Adam could obey) and the *posse peccare* (Adam could disobey) of the original state?
- Read Romans 8:28–30. What does Paul mean by “conformed to the image of His Son” in verse 29, and how does this eschatological conformity relate to the original image in which humanity was created (Genesis 1:26–27)? Is the eschatological conformity to the image of the Son the restoration of the original image or something more than its restoration? What does the progression of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification in verses 29–30 suggest about the certainty and the comprehensiveness of the divine purpose for the redeemed?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that the fall is more theologically significant, more genuinely catastrophic, more genuinely culpable, if Adam was created in original righteousness than if he was created in moral neutrality. Do you find this argument persuasive? What specifically is at stake in the question of Adam’s original moral condition for the doctrines of the fall’s culpability, total depravity’s comprehensiveness, and the problem of evil?

- The scholastic distinction between *posse non peccare* (Adam's original state) and *non posse peccare* (the eschatological state of the glorified redeemed) implies that the glorified state is morally superior to the original state. How does this implication affect your understanding of the biblical account of the original creation and its relationship to the eschatological new creation? Is it biblically accurate to say that the new creation surpasses the original creation, and if so, on what grounds?
- Calvin describes Adam's original will as "truly inclined to pursue what was good." How does this description of the will's original inclination affect the interpretation of the fall? If Adam's will was genuinely inclined toward God, what does it mean that he chose to disobey? Does the inclination toward good make the fall more or less comprehensible? More or less culpable? And what does the fall tell us about the relationship between the will's inclination and the will's freedom?
- The lesson cites Bavinck's formula: "Grace restores nature and then surpasses it." What does this formula imply about the relationship between creation and redemption? Does the surpassing of the original state by the eschatological state suggest that the original creation was in some sense incomplete or inadequate, or does it suggest something else? How does the formula affect the way you understand the purpose of the creation, the significance of the fall, and the goal of the redemption?
- The lesson argues that the doctrine of original righteousness provides the theological foundation for the apologetic case that the fall is the creature's catastrophe, not the Creator's design. How strong is this apologetic? Does the doctrine of original righteousness fully answer the charge that the Creator who made a creature capable of falling and who knew the creature would fall bears some responsibility for the fall? What additional resources, from the doctrine of divine foreknowledge, the doctrine of free will, or the doctrine of redemption, might be needed to complete the apologetic?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson argues that the doctrine of original righteousness transforms the Christian's understanding of sanctification: she is not working her way back to Eden but moving forward to the new Jerusalem, being progressively conformed to the image of the Last Adam rather than merely the first. Does this Christological account of sanctification's goal change the way you approach the disciplines of the Christian life? What specific practices of prayer, Scripture engagement, and communal worship are most directly oriented toward Christological conformity as the eschatological goal of the Spirit's work?
- The lesson identifies the fall as a genuine and inexcusable betrayal of the Creator who made the creature upright and equipped it for fidelity. Does the doctrine of original righteousness affect the way you understand your own sin, not merely as the expression of a damaged nature but as the ongoing preference of the creature for what it was not made for over what it was made for? How does holding original righteousness with theological seriousness change the quality of your confession of sin?
- The Heidelberg Catechism's Q&A 6 describes the purpose of the original state in terms that are simultaneously cognitive, affective, and vocational: to "rightly know" God, to "heartily love" Him, and to "live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him." How adequately does the congregation you serve inhabit this threefold purpose of the human creature's existence? What specific gaps are there between the purpose for which humanity was made, as described in the Catechism and as intended in the original righteousness, and the actual character of the congregation's life before God? What formation would most effectively close those gaps?
- The *non posse peccare* of the eschatological state is the permanent and confirmed inability to sin, the moral freedom of the glorified will that is fully aligned with God's character and fully beyond the reach of moral testing. Does the prospect of this eschatological state serve as a genuine motivating reality in your present Christian life, as the specific goal toward which the Spirit's sanctifying work is moving, and toward which the disciplines of the Christian life are directed? Or does it remain an abstract doctrinal affirmation? What specific practices, what specific meditations, what specific prayers would most effectively translate this eschatological prospect into a living present motivating reality?

- Unit 5 has opened with the positive doctrine of the original state (Lesson 14) before turning to the covenant of works (Lesson 15) and the probationary test (Lesson 16). Reflect on why the series addresses the original righteousness before the covenant of works rather than beginning with the covenant. What would be lost from the treatment of the covenant of works if the original righteousness were not established first? How does the original righteousness function as the necessary anthropological foundation for the covenantal, hamartiology, and soteriology material that follows in the remaining lessons of the series?

Prayer Focus

Open this fourteenth lesson of the Anthropology series, and the first lesson of Unit 5, with a slow reading of Genesis 1:26–2:25, allowing the narrative of the original creation and the original state of humanity to unfold at the pace it was designed to be received. This is not a text to be analyzed quickly for theological content; it is a text to be inhabited devotionally, as a meditation on what the creation was before sin entered the world. Attend to the fullness and the goodness of the provision: the garden with its rivers and its trees and its food, the commission with its expansive mandate and its genuine authority, the companionship with its deep covenant bond and its joyful complementarity, and the fellowship with the God who walked in the garden in the cool of the day. This is the very good that the fall destroyed. Read it not with the nostalgia of one who mourns what was lost, though that mourning is appropriate, but with the theological wonder of one who sees in the original creation the blueprint of the eschatological new creation that redemption is building toward, and who recognizes in the God who made this very good world the God who is even now at work, through the Last Adam, to restore and surpass the very good that the first Adam abandoned. Then read Genesis 3:1–24, holding the original very good in view, and let the contrast generate both the grief and the theological clarity that the doctrine of the fall and the doctrine of original righteousness together require.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the doctrine of original righteousness to deepen your appreciation of each person of the Trinity in His relationship to the original creation and its restoration. Begin with the Father, who made men upright, whose creative intention for the human creature was not mediocrity but the genuine moral excellence of original righteousness, and whose redemptive purpose for the fallen creature is not the restoration of the status quo ante but the eschatological surpassing of the original very good in the confirmed righteousness of the new creation. Move to the Son, the eternal Word through and for whom the original creation was made (Colossians 1:16), who is Himself the image of the invisible God in whose likeness the original righteousness was patterned, and who in the Incarnation took on the fallen human nature and by His obedient life fulfilled the original righteous requirement of the covenant of works on behalf of those who had failed to fulfill it. Adore the Son who not only restores the original posse non peccare but achieves the eschatological non posse peccare for all who are in Him. Conclude with the Spirit, who was present at the original creation (Genesis 1:2), who now applies the redemption accomplished by the Son to the fallen creatures of the original creation, progressively restoring in the regenerate the true knowledge and the genuine righteousness and holiness of the original state, moving steadily toward the eschatological state in which the non posse peccare of the glorified redeemed will forever reflect the confirmed righteousness of the Son.

Pray together at the opening of Unit 5 in three specific directions. First, for a renewed appreciation of the very good original creation and the genuine moral excellence of the original righteousness that the fall destroyed: that the theological vision of what humanity was before the fall would produce in the community both an appropriate grief over the catastrophe that sin represents and an appropriate gratitude for the grace that has set about restoring and surpassing that excellence in the redemption of the Last Adam. Second, for the specific application of the posse non peccare framework to the community's own sanctification: that the regenerate members of the community would hold before themselves the eschatological non posse peccare as the goal toward which the Spirit's work in their lives is directed, and would pursue the disciplines of the Christian life with the Christological energy and the eschatological urgency that this goal demands. Third, for the pastoral courage to preach and teach the doctrines of the original state, the fall, and the covenant of works with the full theological weight that the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition supply: recognizing that the greatness of the grace that the gospel announces is measured by the height of the excellence from which the fall departed, and that the church that does not understand the original uprightness will not fully understand the depth of the catastrophe that sin represents or the height of the grace that redemption provides.

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

Genesis 1:31, NASB 1995

Key Texts: *Genesis 1:26–31; 2:7, 15–17; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:17–24; Colossians 3:10; Romans 8:28–30; Ezekiel 36:26–27; 2 Corinthians 5:17*

Soli Deo Gloria
To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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