

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 3

The Image of God

Lesson 9

The Image After the Fall

Marred but Not Destroyed

“How Sin Has Damaged, but Not Erased, the Image of God in Man”

Key Texts: *Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; Ephesians 4:17–24; Colossians 3:9–10; 1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29*

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:2, NASB 1995

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Introduction

Lessons 7 and 8 established the imago Dei in its fullness as God created it: the human creature made in the image and likeness of the triune God, bearing in her structural capacities, functional calling, relational constitution, moral nature, royal dignity, and teleological trajectory the stamp of the One who formed her from the dust and breathed into her the breath of life. Now the narrative turns, as it must, and as the whole of biblical theology turns, to the event that changed everything. The fall of Adam in Genesis 3 is not merely a narrative episode in the life of the first man; it is the catastrophic rupture of the created order from which no human being has been exempt and from which no human being can recover by any resource available within the creature itself. The question this lesson addresses is not whether the fall affected the imago Dei, it did, comprehensively, but how it affected it: what it destroyed, what it damaged, what it distorted, and what it left intact.

The answer the Reformed tradition gives to this question is one of the most carefully nuanced and most theologically consequential in the whole of systematic theology: the fall damaged and distorted the imago Dei comprehensively and severely, but it did not annihilate it. This dual affirmation, severely damaged but not destroyed, is the narrow path between two errors that the history of doctrine has repeatedly fallen into. The first error is to minimize the fall's damage to the image, holding that the human creature emerges from the fall substantially intact, with the imago Dei diminished but not fundamentally altered in its orientation. This is the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian error, and it produces an inadequate account of grace, an insufficient gospel, and a pastoral practice that calls the dead to walk without first raising them. The second error is to annihilate the image in the fall entirely, holding that the fall has reduced the human creature to something no longer genuinely image-bearing and therefore no longer deserving of the dignity and the protections that image-bearing implies. This error produces a theology incapable of grounding universal human dignity and a pastoral practice that cannot account for the genuine moral awareness and genuine civic virtue that unregenerate human beings demonstrably possess.

This lesson navigates the narrow path between these two errors with the full resources of the exegetical tradition and the Reformed confessional heritage. We begin with the biblical testimony to the fall's comprehensive damage to every faculty of human nature, tracing the corruption of the mind, the will, the affections, and the conscience through the key New Testament texts. We then examine Calvin's formulation of the fall's effect on the image, the image "not totally annihilated and destroyed" but "so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity", as the most precise and most pastorally adequate account the tradition has produced. From there we revisit the narrow/broad image distinction in light of the fall, examining what specifically was lost (the narrow image) and what specifically was retained (the broad image) and why the distinction matters. We then turn to the restoration of the image in Christ, the Pauline texts on the new self, the renewed mind, and the progressive transformation that the Spirit accomplishes in the believer. We close with the eschatological perfection of the image: the glorification that completes what regeneration begins and that constitutes the final destination toward which the whole of the Spirit's sanctifying work is directed.

A note on the relationship between Lesson 9 and the series' treatment of Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) is necessary. Lesson 9 sets up that transition: the fall's effect on the imago Dei is, at the same time, the beginning of the study of sin and its consequences. The full doctrine of the fall, original sin, the imputation of Adam's guilt, the inheritance of a corrupted nature, the bondage of the will, and the universal condemnation of humanity in Adam, will be treated in Unit 5 (Lessons 17–19) when the series reaches Hamartiology proper. This lesson treats the fall's anthropological consequences specifically as they bear on the image of God, leaving the fuller hamartiology for its proper place in the series.

I. The Comprehensive Damage: What the Fall Did to Every Dimension of the Image

The Biblical Testimony to the Corruption of Mind, Will, Affections, and Conscience

A. *The Darkening of the Mind*

The fall's damage to the structural dimension of the *imago Dei*, the cognitive, moral, and spiritual capacities through which the human creature reflects the divine nature, is described by Paul in some of the most searching and most sobering language in the entire New Testament. Ephesians 4:17–18 provides the most comprehensive single account of the fallen mind's condition: "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also 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" (NASB 1995). The four phrases of this passage, futility of mind, darkened understanding, exclusion from the life of God, hardness of heart, together constitute Paul's anatomy of the fallen intellect, and each deserves careful attention.

The "futility of their mind" (*mataiotēti tou noos*, ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς) is the most fundamental level of the fall's cognitive damage: the mind of the unregenerate person is characterized by a fundamental emptiness and purposelessness with respect to God and the things of God. The word *mataiotēs* (ματαιότης) is the Septuagint's word for the "vanity" of Ecclesiastes, the futility and meaninglessness of a life lived without reference to God. The fallen mind, however intellectually impressive its achievements, is fundamentally futile in its orientation: it misses the point of its own existence, because the point of its existence is the God it is constitutionally disposed to suppress (Romans 1:18–23). The "darkened understanding" (*eskotōmenoi tē dianoia*, ἐσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ) is the epistemological consequence: the faculty of moral and spiritual discernment has been compromised, so that the unregenerate person cannot rightly perceive and evaluate the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). And the "hardness of heart" (*pōrōsin tēs kardias*, πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας) identifies the volitional dimension of the cognitive failure: the will has set itself against the knowledge of God and hardened itself in that opposition, making the darkening of the understanding not merely a misfortune but a culpable condition.

Romans 1:21–23 develops the same picture with the specific historical account of how this darkening occurred: "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (NASB 1995). The sequence is striking: the suppression of the truth in unrighteousness (v. 18) leads to the futility of speculations, which leads to the darkening of the heart, which leads to the claim of wisdom that is in fact foolishness, which leads to idolatry, the exchange of the glory of the incorruptible God for the image of corruptible creatures. The fall's damage to the structural dimension of the image is not merely the diminishment of a cognitive faculty; it is the perversion of the image-bearing creature's fundamental orientation, so that the creature who was made to reflect and represent the Creator ends up reflecting and worshipping the creature instead. This is idolatry in its deepest theological sense: not merely the worship of false gods, but the inversion of the image-bearing relationship itself.

B. *The Enslavement of the Will and the Disorder of the Affections*

If the fall's effect on the mind is darkening, a loss of clarity and right orientation, its effect on the will is more radical still: it is enslavement. Romans 6:17–20 provides Paul's most concentrated account of the fallen will's condition: "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness ... For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness" (NASB 1995). The striking phrase "free in regard to righteousness" captures the paradox of the enslaved will: the unregenerate person is not free in the libertarian sense (free to choose either good or evil with equal facility); she is free in the terrible sense that she is free from the claims of righteousness, so thoroughly oriented toward sin that

righteousness has no hold on her. This is what Luther meant by the bondage of the will: not that the unregenerate person cannot choose among earthly goods and evils, but that she cannot, by the resources of her own unregenerate nature, choose God, submit to His law, or exercise saving faith.

The fall's disorder of the affections, the loves and desires that orient the whole person toward her object of worship, is treated by Paul in Romans 1:24–28 with the language of dishonorable passions and a depraved mind: “Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity ... For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions ... And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind” (NASB 1995). The threefold repetition of “God gave them over”, in the context of sexual immorality, degrading passions, and depravity of mind, describes the judicial dimension of the fall's damage to the affections: not merely that sin corrupts the affections, but that God, in His just judgment on the suppression of truth, gives the creature over to the disordered affections that the suppression has generated. The disordering of the affections is simultaneously a consequence of human sin and a judicial act of divine judgment on human sin, and the double character of its origin makes it all the more devastating and all the more resistant to purely human remedies.

The comprehensive character of the fall's damage, affecting the mind, the will, the affections, and the conscience, is what the Reformed tradition means by total depravity. Total depravity is not the claim that every fallen human being is as evil as possible; it is the claim that no faculty of the fallen human creature escapes the fall's corrupting influence, so that the mind is darkened, the will is enslaved, the affections are disordered, and the conscience is dulled and distorted in its operation. The image of God in every dimension, structural, functional, relational, moral, royal, and teleological, bears the mark of this comprehensive corruption. The structural image is damaged in its cognitive clarity and its spiritual sensitivity. The functional image is perverted in its exercise of dominion: the vice-regent who was designed to govern the creation in accordance with the Creator's will now exercises governance in service of the fallen self's desires. The relational image is ruptured in its vertical orientation toward God (the fall immediately produces the hiding of Genesis 3:8) and in its horizontal orientation toward other image-bearers (the blame-shifting of Genesis 3:12 is the fall's first expression in horizontal relationship). The moral image is corrupted in its operation, producing a conscience that registers moral awareness while systematically distorting its application. The royal image is abused in its exercise of authority. And the teleological image is misdirected in its orientation toward the eschatological good.

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”

John 3:19, NASB 1995

II. Calvin's Formulation: Frightful Deformity

The Most Pastorally and Theologically Adequate Account of the Fall's Effect on the Image

A. Not Annihilated, but Frightfully Deformed

John Calvin's account of the fall's effect on the imago Dei in the Institutes of the Christian Religion (I.15.4) is the formulation against which every subsequent Reformed treatment of the question must be measured, and it achieves its characteristic precision by holding simultaneously what the history of doctrine has repeatedly separated: the genuine retention of the image and the genuine severity of its corruption. “Since reason, by which man discerns between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be completely wiped out; but it was partly weakened and partly corrupted, so that its misshapen ruins appear.” And later in the same passage, Calvin delivers the formulation that has defined the Reformed account ever since: the image is “not totally annihilated and destroyed” but “so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity.”

The genius of Calvin’s formulation is the combination of “not totally annihilated” and “frightful deformity.” The first phrase guards against the error of those who would treat the fall as the annihilation of the image, thereby losing the grounds for universal human dignity and the genuine cognitive and civic achievements of unregenerate human beings. The second phrase guards against the error of those who would treat the fall as a minor corruption that leaves the image substantially functional, thereby losing the radicality of grace and the necessity of regeneration. “Frightful deformity” is a pastoral and theological masterpiece: it affirms the genuine retention of the image’s substance (there is something remaining, the ruins of the image are visible) while insisting on the comprehensive severity of its corruption (what remains is frightening in its disfigurement, not merely inconvenient in its imperfection). This is not an image slightly damaged; it is an image so comprehensively corrupted that the resulting condition is genuinely disturbing, frightful, to any honest assessment.

The pastoral implications of Calvin’s formulation are immediate and profound. The pastor who has internalized the “frightful deformity” formulation will preach the gospel with an urgency and a clarity that the more optimistic anthropologies cannot produce. The unregenerate person in the pew is not a person who needs a nudge in the right direction, a supplement to her natural goodness, or the removal of environmental obstacles to her self-actualization. She is a person in a condition of frightful deformity, in whom the image that makes her fully and gloriously human has been so comprehensively damaged that only the creative, regenerating power of the same God who originally created the image can restore it. The gospel that this anthropology requires is not the gospel of self-improvement or moral education; it is the gospel of the new creation, the gospel of the God who creates out of nothing, who brings life from the dead, who calls things that are not as though they were. And the grace that this gospel announces is not the grace of divine assistance to a partially functional will; it is the grace of divine resurrection to a will that is, in its unregenerate state, dead toward God.

B. *The Image Retained and the Image Corrupted: Holding the Tension*

The tension in Calvin’s formulation, retained but frightfully deformed, requires theological precision to maintain, and the history of Reformed anthropology demonstrates how easily the tension collapses in one direction or the other under pastoral and polemical pressure. The direction of collapse into the Pelagian/Semi-Pelagian error, emphasizing the retention while minimizing the deformity, is the more common in the contemporary evangelical church, and it is the error this lesson most urgently addresses. When the church speaks of the unregenerate’s “search for God,” of the human being’s “inherent dignity” in ways that understate the radicality of total depravity, or of the “good in everyone” as a meaningful category in soteriological contexts, it is collapsing toward the Pelagian direction and losing the urgency and the totality of the grace that the gospel announces.

The direction of collapse into the annihilationist error, emphasizing the deformity so severely that the retention is effectively denied, is less common in the contemporary evangelical church but equally dangerous. The theological tradition that treats every unregenerate human achievement as without genuine value, that reads Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 as mere formalities without substantive content, and that denies any genuine moral awareness or civic virtue to the unregenerate is collapsing toward the annihilationist direction and losing the grounds for cultural engagement, natural law argument, and the kind of generous theological evaluation of common human goods that Calvin’s treatment of common grace models. The Reformed tradition at its best has maintained the tension not by splitting the difference between the two errors but by holding both affirmations with their full weight simultaneously: the image is genuinely retained (Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 are full-weight theological affirmations) and the image is genuinely and comprehensively deformed (Ephesians 4:17–18 and Romans 1:21–23 are full-weight theological descriptions of the fallen creature’s actual condition).

The exegetical basis for maintaining the tension is the juxtaposition, within the canon of Scripture itself, of texts that affirm the post-fall persistence of the image (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; 1 Corinthians 11:7) with texts that describe the comprehensive corruption of the fallen nature (Ephesians 4:17–18; Romans 1:18–23; 3:9–18; 6:17–20). These are not competing traditions that the interpreter must choose between; they are complementary dimensions of a single, complex, exegetically determined account of what the fall has done and has not done to

the image-bearing creature. The broad image (personhood, rationality, moral agency) is genuinely retained and is the ground of the protections that Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 require. The narrow image (original righteousness, holiness, and true knowledge) is genuinely lost and is the reason that the protections of Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 must be grounded in ontological status rather than in the quality of the creature's present moral and spiritual condition. It is the work of the careful exegete and the faithful theologian to hold both sets of texts in their full canonical weight and to construct an account of the imago Dei after the fall that honors all of them.

III. Narrow and Broad Revisited: What Was Lost and What Was Retained

The Precise Theological Account of the Fall's Damage in Reformed Perspective

A. What Was Lost: The Narrow Image in Ruins

The narrow image, the original righteousness, holiness, and true knowledge in which Adam was created, was not merely damaged in the fall; it was genuinely lost. The Heidelberg Catechism's formulation of the pre-fall state (Q&A 6: "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") is the account of what the fall destroyed. The rightly oriented knowledge of God that characterized Adam in the garden, the true knowledge that is not merely cognitive information about God but the relational, obedient, worshipful orientation of the whole person toward God as the proper object of the creature's love and service, this is what Ephesians 4:18 describes as "exclusion from the life of God," and what Romans 1:21 describes as the failure to "honor Him as God or give thanks." The heartfelt love for God that characterized Adam in the garden is what Romans 1:24–28 describes as the dishonorable passions and the depraved mind to which the suppressor of truth has been given over. And the holy living before God that characterized Adam in the garden is what Romans 6:17–20 describes as slavery to sin.

The New Testament's restoration language provides the strongest exegetical evidence for what was lost in the fall. Colossians 3:10 speaks of the new self "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him": the renewal to true knowledge presupposes that the true knowledge of the original creation was lost and that regeneration and sanctification are its restoration. Ephesians 4:24 speaks of the new self "created in righteousness and holiness of the truth": the creation language applied to regeneration (the same verb *ktizō* [κτίζω] used for the original creation) presupposes that righteousness and holiness were originally created into the human creature and are being re-created by the Spirit in the new birth. And 2 Corinthians 3:18's progressive transformation "into the same image from glory to glory" presupposes both that the image has been corrupted (it is being restored) and that it will be perfectly restored (the transformation is moving toward a *telos*). The restoration language of the New Testament is the negative impression of the fall's damage: what the Spirit restores is what the fall destroyed, and what the fall destroyed is what the narrow image consisted in.

The Westminster Confession of Faith's account of the fall's damage in chapter 6 is the most comprehensive confessional statement of what was lost: "By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body." Three things are specified as lost: original righteousness (the positive moral orientation of the will toward God), communion with God (the relational fellowship that Genesis 2's portrait of the garden describes), and the spiritual life of the soul (the death in sin that Paul describes in Ephesians 2:1–3). These three losses correspond precisely to the three elements of the Heidelberg Catechism's account of the narrow image: true knowledge (communion with God destroyed), heartfelt love (original righteousness destroyed), and holy living (spiritual death). What was lost in the fall is not a peripheral quality added to human nature from outside; it is the core positive moral and spiritual orientation that constituted the image in its most excellent creaturely expression.

B. What Was Retained: The Broad Image in Ruins

Calvin's careful qualification, "not totally annihilated and destroyed", points to what survives the fall's destruction: the broad image, the structural properties of human personhood that remain as the permanent characteristics of the human creature even in the fallen state. The broad image is the image that Genesis 9:6 presupposes when it grounds the prohibition of murder in the fact that God made man in His image: the prohibition is addressed to all human beings after the fall and after the flood, establishing that every human being, regardless of covenant status, regardless of personal moral condition, retains the image-bearing status that makes murder the most serious possible crime against both the victim and the Creator. And it is the image that James 3:9 presupposes when it grounds the prohibition of cursing in the fact that human beings "have been made in the likeness of God."

What specifically constitutes the retained broad image? The Reformed tradition, drawing on the consistent biblical testimony, identifies several core properties. First, personhood: the fallen human being remains a genuine person, a self-conscious, self-reflective subject who exists in genuine relationship, who makes genuine choices, and who can be genuinely addressed, commanded, and held accountable. This personhood is not a diminished or merely formal property; it is the same genuine personal existence that the pre-fall Adam possessed, now oriented differently but not ontologically diminished. Second, rationality: the fallen human being retains the capacity for genuine rational thought, for the construction of valid arguments, for the acquisition of genuine knowledge of the natural world, and for the appreciation of truth, beauty, and goodness, even if all of these are affected by the noetic effects of sin in their application to the knowledge of God. Third, moral agency: the fallen human being retains the genuine capacity for moral choice and the genuine moral awareness that comes with it. Romans 2:14–16's account of the conscience bearing witness to the work of the law written in the heart establishes that even the unregenerate retain a genuine moral sense, distorted, yes, but genuine enough to produce the moral experience of accusation and defense that Paul describes.

The theological function of the retained broad image, the reason why the distinction between narrow and broad matters for the life of the church, is twofold. First, it provides the grounds for universal human dignity in the fallen world: every human being, regardless of personal moral condition, retains the image-bearing status that demands the respect, the protection, and the honor that Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 require. The claim that the fall has annihilated the image would undermine these protections at precisely the point where they are most needed, for the most fallen, the most corrupted, the most distant from God. Second, it provides the grounds for the church's engagement with the unregenerate culture through common grace: because fallen human beings retain genuine rationality, genuine moral awareness, and genuine aesthetic sensitivity, it is possible to conduct meaningful dialogue, to make genuine natural law arguments, and to appreciate genuine human cultural achievements as expressions of the image-bearing dignity that the Creator has placed in every human being, even those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The broad image is not a flattering account of human potential; it is a theologically necessary account of what sin can and cannot do to a creature that bears the stamp of its Maker.

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."

Romans 7:18, NASB 1995

IV. The Restoration of the Image in Christ: The New Self

What Regeneration Begins and Sanctification Continues in the Renewal of the Image

A. Put On the New Self: Regeneration and the Renewed Image

The restoration of the imago Dei in the fallen creature is the work of the triune God in redemption, accomplished by the obedience and the sacrifice of the Last Adam, applied to the creature by the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and progressively brought to completion through the means of grace until it reaches its

eschatological perfection in the glorification of the redeemed. The New Testament's account of this restoration is concentrated in two Pauline texts that stand as bookends to the doctrine of the renewed image: Ephesians 4:22–24 and Colossians 3:9–10. Both texts employ the same structure, put off the old self, put on the new self, and both describe the new self in terms that directly echo the creation of the original image: “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); “and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Colossians 3:10, NASB 1995).

The creation language of Ephesians 4:24, “created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”, is the most theologically decisive phrase in the entire New Testament for the doctrine of the restored image. The verb *ktizō* (κτίζω), used here for the creation of the new self, is the standard New Testament word for the divine act of creation. Paul is not describing a moral improvement or a progressive self-reformation; he is describing a creative act by which God produces in the believer a genuinely new self, a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17: “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature”), in which the righteousness and holiness of the original creation is restored. The specific content of the new creation, “righteousness and holiness of the truth”, corresponds precisely to what the Heidelberg Catechism identifies as the content of the narrow image that was lost in the fall: the original righteousness (now restored in the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness and the progressive sanctification of the new self) and the original holiness (now restored in the new birth and the Spirit's renewing work). The new creation is not something other than the restoration of the original creation; it is the restoration of the original creation, accomplished through the Last Adam who lived the righteousness and holiness that the first Adam failed to sustain.

Colossians 3:10's account adds the crucial present tense participle that establishes the ongoing character of the image's renewal: the new self “is being renewed” (*anakainoumenon*, ἀνακαινούμενον), a continuous, active, present-tense process rather than a completed event. The image is not fully restored in the moment of regeneration; it is decisively renewed (the direction is permanently changed, the Spirit has taken up residence, the new creation has genuinely begun) and is being progressively renewed throughout the believer's life in the Spirit. The phrase “to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” establishes the Christological standard of the renewal: the image being restored is the image of the Creator, which, in the light of Colossians 1:15's identification of Christ as the image of the invisible God, means the image of Christ. The renewal of the image in the believer is the progressive formation of Christ's character, priorities, loves, and obedience in the believer's mind, will, and affections.

B. Transformation by Beholding: The Mechanism of the Image's Renewal

The most striking account of the mechanism by which the image is progressively renewed in the believer is Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “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 mechanism is beholding: the progressive transformation of the believer into the image of the Lord is accomplished through the sustained, faith-filled, Spirit-enabled contemplation of the glory of the Lord. This is not merely a devotional suggestion; it is a theological account of how the image-bearing creature is renewed, not by moral effort, not by the accumulation of spiritual information, but by the transformative encounter with the glory of the One whose image the creature bears and is being conformed to bear.

The contrast between the veiled face of Moses (2 Corinthians 3:13–15) and the unveiled face of the believer (v. 18) is the hermeneutical key to the mechanism. Moses, after his encounters with the glory of God on Sinai, wore a veil to conceal the fading glory from the Israelites: the old covenant's revelation of the divine glory was glorious but temporary, veiled because the fullness of the glory had not yet been revealed. The believer in the new covenant era, by contrast, beholds the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, without the veil of the old covenant's provisional forms, without the veil of unbelief that still covers the heart of the unrepentant (v. 15), and with the freedom (ἐλευθερία, v. 17) that the Spirit produces. The unveiled beholding of the Lord's glory is the primary

means by which the image is renewed: as the creature fixes the gaze of faith on the Lord whose image she bears and is being conformed to bear, the Spirit uses that beholding to transform the creature into an increasingly accurate reflection of the One she beholds. The image is restored not by looking inward at the ruins of the fallen self but by looking outward and upward at the One in whose image the fallen self was made and is being remade.

The renewal of the image through beholding is not a passive process that requires nothing of the believer; it is an active process that requires the sustained use of the means of grace through which the Lord makes Himself available to be beheld. The Word of God, rightly preached and received, is the mirror in which the glory of the Lord is displayed and through which the Spirit accomplishes the image's renewal. Prayer, particularly the kind of worshipful contemplation that fixes the mind on the character and the works of God, is the sustained beholding that 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes. The Lord's Supper, in which the believer receives the body and blood of the One who gave Himself for the restoration of the image, is a form of the beholding that transforms. And suffering, the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ that Paul describes in Philippians 3:10, is the beholding that occurs not with the eyes of intellectual contemplation but with the experience of creaturely limitation and dependence, through which the creature is conformed to the likeness of the One who suffered and was raised. All of these are means by which the Spirit uses the believer's sustained engagement with the Lord to accomplish the image's progressive renewal.

V. The Eschatological Perfection: We Will Be Like Him

Glorification as the Complete Restoration of the Imago Dei

A. 1 John 3:2 and the Promise of Final Likeness

The eschatological consummation of the image's restoration is announced with breathtaking simplicity in 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (NASB 1995). This verse is the New Testament's most concentrated statement of what the glorification of the redeemed will accomplish with respect to the imago Dei: the full conformity of the creature to the likeness of the One in whose image the creature was made and toward whose likeness the Spirit has been progressively conforming the creature through the process of sanctification. The eschatological "we will be like Him" is the destination toward which the entire arc of the image's history, from creation through fall through restoration through sanctification, has been moving.

Three features of the 1 John 3:2 promise deserve particular attention. First, the epistemic humility of the middle clause: "it has not appeared as yet what we will be." This is not mere rhetorical modesty; it is a genuine theological acknowledgment that the glorified state of the redeemed exceeds the capacity of present experience and present language to describe. What the image will be in its eschatological fullness, in its conformity to the risen, glorified, ascended humanity of the Son of God, is genuinely beyond what the present experience of the restored image, even in its most advanced expression in the sanctified believer, can anticipate. The creature who is being renewed from glory to glory has not yet arrived at the glory to which she is being renewed. Second, the certainty of the promise: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him." The Greek verb *oidamen* (οἶδμεν) denotes settled, assured knowledge rather than mere expectation. The eschatological likeness is not a hope to be wished for but a certainty to be held. Third, the mechanism of the final transformation: "because we will see Him just as He is." The vision of God, the beatific vision, is the eschatological fulfillment and the eschatological intensification of the beholding-and-being-transformed dynamic that 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes in the present age. The creature who beholds the Lord in the Word and in prayer is being progressively transformed into His image; the creature who will behold the Lord face to face at the parousia will be fully and finally transformed into His likeness. The mechanism is the same; the degree is infinitely greater.

The relationship between 1 John 3:2's promise of final likeness and Romans 8:29's predestination to conformity to the image of the Son illuminates the sovereign, certain, and comprehensive character of the image's

eschatological restoration. Paul's formulation in Romans 8:29–30, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son ... and these whom He glorified", treats glorification as already accomplished ("glorified" is in the past tense in the Greek, *edoxasen*, indicating the certainty of the eschatological event from the perspective of the divine purpose) and places it at the end of the unbroken chain of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, and justification. The glorification that completes the image's restoration is as certain as the predestination that ordained it, because the One who ordained it is the One who sovereignly accomplishes it from first to last. The creature's image will not be partially restored and partially corrupted in the final state; it will be fully, completely, and permanently conformed to the image of the Son, in a conformity that sin can never again disrupt and that death can never again interrupt.

B. *The Glory That Exceeds the Garden*

A crucial theological point, one that distinguishes the Reformed eschatological account from mere restorationism, is that the eschatological perfection of the image is not merely the restoration of the Adamic state. The glorified saint does not return to the garden; she arrives at a destiny that the first Adam never reached and that was foreclosed to him by the fall. This is because the image in its eschatological fullness is not the image of Adam but the image of the Last Adam, the risen, glorified, ascended Son of God in His perfected humanity. Adam in the garden bore the image in its original creaturely integrity; the glorified saint will bear the image in its eschatological fullness, which is a greater glory than Adam's original glory as surely as the resurrection body is a greater body than the pre-fall mortal body.

The Pauline contrast in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49 between the first Adam ("a living soul," "the first man ... of the earth, earthy") and the Last Adam ("a life-giving spirit," "the second man ... from heaven") establishes that the eschatological state of the redeemed exceeds the original Adamic state as the heavenly exceeds the earthy. We have borne the image of the earthy, the image as it existed in the first Adam, in its original creaturely integrity before the fall, and we will bear the image of the heavenly, the image as it exists in the Last Adam, in its glorified and eschatological perfection. The gap between the earthy image and the heavenly image is not the gap between an inferior and a superior version of the same thing; it is the gap between a created integrity that was subject to the test of probation and an eschatological glory that is permanently beyond the reach of sin and death. The glorified saint inhabits a righteousness and a holiness not merely equivalent to Adam's original righteousness and holiness but permanently secured, definitively confirmed, and eschatologically elevated beyond the possibility of any further fall.

This is why the glorification of the redeemed is not merely the undoing of the fall but the fulfillment of the creation's purpose. The creation's purpose was always the glorification of the creature in the presence of the Creator, the full and final realization of the image in the communion and the fellowship that only the beatific vision provides. The fall interrupted and perverted the path toward that purpose; the redemption accomplished by the Last Adam restores the path; and the glorification at the consummation arrives at the destination. The image that was marred in the fall, being restored in sanctification, will be perfected in glorification, not as a return to the beginning but as the arrival at the end for which the beginning was always designed: the creature, bearing the image of the Son in its eschatological fullness, standing before the Creator in the unmediated, uninterrupted, everlasting fellowship that the triune God has purposed from before the foundation of the world.

VI. Pastoral and Doxological Conclusion: The Image in Ruins, the Image in Glory

What This Doctrine Demands of the Pastor and Produces in the Worshipper

The doctrine of the *imago Dei* after the fall is not a comfortable doctrine, but it is a necessary one, and in its necessity it carries a pastoral urgency that more comfortable anthropologies cannot provide. The pastor who has been formed by the formulation "frightful deformity" will preach the gospel with the urgency of someone who

understands that the people in the pews are not slightly confused moral agents who need gentle redirection but image-bearers in a condition of comprehensive corruption from which only the sovereign, effectual, regenerating grace of God can rescue them. This is not the counsel of despair; it is the counsel that produces the appropriate urgency and the appropriate gratitude, the urgency of those who know that nothing less than divine omnipotence can effect the restoration of the image, and the gratitude of those who know that divine omnipotence has been graciously deployed on their behalf in the death and resurrection of the Last Adam.

The same doctrine that produces pastoral urgency produces pastoral compassion. The unregenerate person who sits across the counseling table, whose life is marked by the comprehensive disorder of the fallen image, the darkened mind, the enslaved will, the disordered affections, the dulled conscience, is not someone to be despised for her condition but someone to be deeply pitied and deeply served. She bears the image of God even in her ruin, the broad image that Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9 affirm, and her ruined condition is not the expression of a nature that was never capable of better but the expression of a nature that was made for glory and has been comprehensively corrupted by sin. The appropriate response to the fallen image-bearer is not contempt but the compassion of the One who looked on the crowds and saw them as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36), and who came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for the many (Matthew 20:28).

The doxological conclusion of this lesson, as of the entire Unit 3, is the same as the conclusion of every lesson in this series: the doctrine of the imago Dei, traced from its creation through its corruption to its restoration and eschatological perfection, is not ultimately a doctrine about human beings. It is a doctrine about God: about the God whose image the creature bears, whose grace the creature requires, whose Son took on the ruined image and restored it by His obedience and sacrifice, and whose Spirit is even now engaged in the slow and certain work of conforming the creature to the likeness of the Son. “We will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is” (1 John 3:2, NASB 1995). This is the destination of the imago Dei. This is the destination of the creature. And it is a destination that can only be reached by those who have passed through the humbling recognition of what the fall has made of the image, and through the grateful reception of the grace that the One who is Himself the image has provided for its restoration. “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!”

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

1 John 3:2, NASB 1995

Theological Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Total Depravity	The Reformed doctrine that the fall of Adam has affected every faculty and dimension of human nature, mind, will, affections, conscience, and body, so that no fallen human being is able, apart from the prior, regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, to exercise saving faith, to will what is genuinely pleasing to God, or to merit any aspect of salvation. Total depravity does not mean that every fallen human being is as evil as possible; it means that sin's corruption extends to every part of the person, leaving no faculty untouched and no capacity fully functional in its proper orientation toward God. Grounded in Ephesians 4:17–18, Romans 1:18–23, Romans 3:9–18, and Genesis 6:5.
Noetic Effects of Sin	The specific effects of the fall on the human mind and intellect. The fall has darkened the understanding (Ephesians 4:18), produced futility of thought (Romans 1:21), and generated a systematic bias against the knowledge of God (Romans 1:18–23). The noetic effects do not destroy the capacity for rational thought or the acquisition of knowledge about the natural world; they corrupt the mind's fundamental orientation, producing a disposition to suppress the knowledge of God that is available in creation and conscience, and rendering the unregenerate mind unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The noetic effects are the epistemological dimension of the fall's damage to the structural dimension of the imago Dei.
Bondage of the Will	Luther's term (from <i>De Servo Arbitrio</i> , 1525) for the condition of the unregenerate will as enslaved to sin and incapable of genuine freedom with respect to God and salvation. The will remains free in the realm of earthly choices but is not free, by its own natural power, to turn toward God, to exercise saving faith, or to do what is spiritually good. Paul's description in Romans 6:17–20 of the pre-regenerate condition as slavery to sin and freedom from righteousness is the biblical basis. The bondage of the will is the volitional dimension of the fall's damage to the imago Dei, specifically to the narrow image (original righteousness and holiness of the will).
Frightful Deformity	Calvin's formulation in Institutes I.15.4 for the condition of the imago Dei after the fall: the image is "not totally annihilated and destroyed" but "so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity." This formulation holds simultaneously the genuine retention of the image (it is not annihilated) and the genuine severity of its corruption (what remains is frightful in its disfigurement). It guards against both the Pelagian error (minimizing the corruption) and the annihilationist error (denying the retention), and provides the most theologically precise and pastorally adequate account of the fallen image-bearer's actual condition available in the Reformed tradition.
New Self (Kainos Anthropos)	Paul's term in Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 for the regenerate person as a new creation in Christ. The new self is "created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Ephesians 4:24) and is "being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Colossians 3:10). The creation language applied to the new self (ktizō, κτίζω) establishes that regeneration is not a moral improvement of the old self but a genuine new creation, the restoration of the narrow image (original righteousness and true knowledge) that was lost in

	the fall, accomplished by the creative power of the Holy Spirit through union with Christ.
Beatific Vision	The theological term for the direct, unmediated, face-to-face vision of God that the redeemed will enjoy in the eschatological state, the consummation of the image's restoration and the fulfillment of the creature's capacity for fellowship with God. 1 John 3:2 establishes the beatific vision as both the mechanism of the image's final transformation ("because we will see Him just as He is") and the state produced by that transformation ("we will be like Him"). The present-age dynamic of beholding and being transformed (2 Corinthians 3:18) is the anticipation and the beginning of the eschatological beatific vision; the beatific vision is the completion and the perfection of what beholding in the Word and in prayer begins in the present age.
Common Grace	The general, non-saving favor of God extended to all human beings regardless of their spiritual condition, by which He restrains sin, sustains civil order, and enables unregenerate human beings to achieve genuine intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and civic goods. Common grace is grounded in the broad image of God retained after the fall and is the theological explanation for the genuine achievements of unregenerate human culture that Calvin treats extensively in Institutes II.2.12–17. Common grace does not produce saving faith or spiritual righteousness; it produces the genuine but non-saving goods of natural reason, civic virtue, and cultural achievement that the broad image makes possible even in the fallen state.
Glorification	The final and complete transformation of the redeemed creature at the parousia, in which the corruption of sin is entirely and permanently removed and the creature is fully conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29–30; 1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:21). Glorification is the completion of what justification declares and sanctification progressively accomplishes: the full restoration and eschatological elevation of the imago Dei in the redeemed creature. The glorified state is not the restoration of the Adamic condition but the achievement, through the Last Adam's obedience, of the eschatological state that the first Adam never reached, a righteousness and holiness permanently beyond the reach of sin and death.
Sanctification	The ongoing, Spirit-empowered process by which the regenerate believer is progressively conformed to the image of Christ through the mortification of sin and the vivification of the new self. Sanctification is the restoration of the narrow image in progressive degrees: the mind is being renewed (Romans 12:2), the will is being freed from sin's dominion (Romans 6:14), the affections are being reordered toward God and neighbor (Galatians 5:22–23), and the whole person is being transformed into the image of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18). Sanctification is not completed in the present age; it is completed only at glorification, when the image's restoration reaches its eschatological fullness in the beatific vision.
2 Corinthians 3:18 Transformation	Paul's account of the mechanism of the image's progressive restoration in the present age: "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." The mechanism is beholding, the sustained, faith-filled, Spirit-enabled contemplation of the glory of the Lord in the Word, in prayer, and in the sacraments, through which the Spirit uses the creature's engagement with the Lord to progressively transform the creature into an increasingly accurate

	reflection of the One she beholds. This beholding-and-transformation dynamic is the present-age anticipation of the beatific vision at which 1 John 3:2 points.
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Practical Application

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

We must believe Calvin's formulation with the full weight of both its parts: the image is genuinely and seriously damaged in the fall ("frightful deformity") and it is genuinely and substantially retained ("not totally annihilated and destroyed"). The Christian who holds only the first part, who emphasizes the comprehensive damage so severely that the retention is effectively denied, will lose the grounds for universal human dignity and the framework for cultural engagement. The Christian who holds only the second part, who emphasizes the retention so generously that the severity of the damage is understated, will produce an inadequate gospel that neither requires nor announces the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. The narrow path between these two errors is the path that the exegetical tradition marked out in the texts of Genesis 9:6, James 3:9, Ephesians 4:17–18, and Romans 1:18–23, and that Calvin navigated with the precision of "frightful deformity." Walk the narrow path with both parts held simultaneously.

We must also believe the eschatological promise of 1 John 3:2 with the specific content that the verse gives it: not the vague hope of a generically better future, but the precise promise of a specific conformity to a specific Person, the risen, glorified Son of God. The glorification that completes the image's restoration is conformity to Christ's image, and the mechanism of the final transformation is the beatific vision: we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is. This specific, Christological, visionary eschatological hope is the ground of the Christian's present sanctification ("everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself," 1 John 3:3) and the ultimate destination of the Spirit's present work of renewal.

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

Let the doctrine of the fall's comprehensive damage to the image produce in you, first, a renewed sense of the seriousness of your own sin. The fallen image-bearer who honestly contemplates what the fall has done to the image she bears, the darkened understanding, the enslaved will, the disordered affections, the dulled conscience, will find in that contemplation not the occasion for self-loathing but the occasion for a genuine reckoning with the condition from which grace alone can rescue her. The doctrine of total depravity is not a doctrine of despair; it is a doctrine of realism about the human condition that makes the gospel genuinely good news. The person who knows the depth of the deformity will know the magnitude of the grace.

Desire, above all, the progressive renewal that the Spirit is at work accomplishing in you through the means of grace. The 2 Corinthians 3:18 dynamic, beholding and being transformed, is not a passive process; it requires the active, daily, sustained engagement with the Word, with prayer, and with the community of the church that the means of grace constitute. But the transformation itself is not your work; it is the Spirit's. The appropriate posture of the image-bearer who is being renewed is the posture of receptive beholding, of the creature who looks steadily at the Lord whose image she is being conformed to bear and trusts the Spirit to do in her what the beholding makes possible. This is not spiritual passivity; it is the active, believing reception of the grace that only the Spirit can give and that the beholding of the Lord's glory in the Word and in prayer makes available.

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

- Read Romans 7:14–25 slowly and honestly, Paul's most personal and most searching account of the ongoing conflict between the old self and the new self in the experience of the regenerate believer. Note the specific forms of the fallen image's residual corruption that Paul identifies in this passage: the captivity of the flesh, the law of sin in the members, the failure to do the good that is willed and the doing of the evil that is not willed. Ask yourself: where do I recognize these patterns in my own experience of the Christian life? And then note the doxological conclusion to which the honest recognition of these patterns leads in verse 25: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" The honest acknowledgment of the fallen image's

residual corruption in the believer is not the conclusion of the argument; it is the premise from which the gratitude that the gospel requires flows.

- Practice the discipline of honest self-examination in light of the four dimensions of the fall's damage to the image. The mind: where is your understanding still darkened, where do you suppress the truth that the Word speaks about God, about yourself, or about your neighbor in the interest of maintaining a more comfortable self-understanding? The will: where are you still enslaved to patterns of behavior and response that you know to be wrong and that you have been unable to break by the exercise of resolution and moral effort? The affections: where are your loves disordered, where do you love created things more than the Creator, or love your own comfort more than your neighbor's wellbeing? The conscience: where has your conscience been dulled by the habituation of sin, so that you no longer feel the full weight of what the Word has said is genuinely wrong? Bring each of these to the Lord in honest confession, and receive the renewal that His grace provides.
- **Read Calvin's Institutes II.1–2 (on the knowledge of humanity after the fall) and II.3 (on the corruption of human nature).** These chapters are the locus classicus of Calvin's account of the fall's damage to the image, and they model the kind of pastoral, exegetical, and theological precision that this lesson seeks to develop. Pay particular attention to Calvin's treatment of the unregenerate's genuine intellectual and civic achievements (II.2.12–17) alongside his uncompromising account of the will's bondage (II.3.1–5). The combination of generosity toward common grace and rigor about total depravity is the Calvin that the contemporary church most needs to recover.
- Identify one specific pattern in the life of the congregation you serve in which the "frightful deformity" of the fallen image is most evident: a pattern of spiritual dullness, moral failure, relational dysfunction, or theological confusion that reflects the comprehensive damage of the fall to the image's various dimensions. Then identify the specific resources, preaching, pastoral care, discipleship, community accountability, or the specific means of grace that 2 Corinthians 3:18 identifies, that are most directly applicable to the renewal of the image in that specific pattern. Commit to one concrete initiative that brings the renewal resources of the gospel to bear on the specific corruption you have identified.
- Spend time this week meditating on the eschatological promise of 1 John 3:2 with the specific Christological content that it carries. Write out in your journal what you understand "we will be like Him" to mean specifically, not in terms of what you will be free from (sin, suffering, death) but in terms of what you will be conformed to: the specific virtues, the specific loves, the specific orientation of mind and will and affection that characterize the image of the Son. Then ask yourself: in which of these specific Christological qualities is the Spirit most obviously working in your life right now? And in which is the residual deformity of the fallen image most resistant to His renewing work? Let the answers shape your specific petitions in the days ahead.

Study and Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- Before working through this lesson, where would you have placed yourself on the spectrum between the two errors the lesson identifies, the error of minimizing the fall's damage to the image (Pelagian direction) and the error of annihilating the image entirely in the fall? Has the lesson moved your position? If so, which argument or which exegetical observation was most responsible for the movement? If not, where do you find the lesson's account of the fallen image most in tension with your prior understanding?

Observation Questions (What Do the Texts Say?)

- Read Ephesians 4:17–24 as a continuous unit. What is the movement of Paul's argument from the description of the Gentile walk (vv. 17–19) to the account of what the Ephesians "learned in Christ" (vv. 20–21) to the instruction about the old self and the new self (vv. 22–24)? What specific attributes does Paul assign to the old self (vv. 22–23) and to the new self (v. 24)? How does the language of "created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (v. 24) echo the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2?
- Read Romans 1:18–23 carefully. What is the sequence of steps in the fall's intellectual and moral degradation that Paul describes? What does the phrase "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness" (v. 18) suggest about the volitional character of the fall's noetic effects? What does the phrase "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (v. 21) suggest about the relationship between the rejection of God and the deterioration of the mind? And what does the description of idolatry in vv. 22–23, the exchange of the glory of the incorruptible God for the image of corruptible creatures, suggest about the fall's specific damage to the *imago Dei*?
- Read Colossians 3:9–11. What does Paul say has "been laid aside" with the old self, and what does he say is "being renewed" in the new self? What is the specific content of the renewal ("true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him")? And what does the phrase "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (v. 11) add to the picture of the restored image? How does the unity of the renewed humanity in Christ relate to the unity of the created humanity under Adam?
- Read 2 Corinthians 3:12–18. What is the contrast between the veil that prevented the Israelites from seeing the glory on Moses' face and the unveiled face with which the believer beholds the Lord's glory? What specific result does Paul say this unveiling beholding produces (v. 18)? What is the role of the Spirit in the transformation (v. 18)? And how does the phrase "from glory to glory" describe the character of the transformation, is it sudden or gradual, partial or complete in the present age?
- Read 1 John 3:1–3. What motivates the exclamation of verse 1 ("See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us")? What does the present status of the believer as "children of God" (v. 1) imply about the present state of the restored image? What is the specific content of the eschatological promise in verse 2, and what is the mechanism of the final transformation? And what is the specific ethical implication that John draws in verse 3 from the eschatological hope: "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself"?

Interpretation Questions (What Does It Mean?)

- The lesson argues that Calvin's formulation, "not totally annihilated and destroyed" but "so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity", is the most theologically precise and pastorally adequate account of the fallen image. Do you agree with this assessment? Is there another formulation from the history of doctrine that you find more adequate? What specific pastoral or theological inadequacy, if any, do you find in Calvin's formulation?
- The lesson argues that the fall's damage to the image affects all six dimensions identified in Lesson 8: structural, functional, relational, moral, royal, and teleological. Trace the fall's specific damage to each

dimension. For each dimension, identify the specific way in which the fall has corrupted it and the specific way in which the broad image's retention manifests even in the fallen state. Which dimension do you think is most severely damaged by the fall? Which is most clearly retained?

- The lesson argues that the restoration of the image in regeneration is a genuine new creation, not a moral improvement of the old self but a creative act by which God produces in the believer a new self. Does this account of regeneration as new creation help explain the Christian's experience of genuinely changed desires and genuinely new capacities after conversion, alongside the persistent presence of indwelling sin? What does the "new creation" language imply about the continuity and the discontinuity between the old self and the new self?
- The lesson argues that the eschatological perfection of the image in glorification is not merely the restoration of the Adamic state but the achievement, through the Last Adam, of an eschatological glory that exceeds what Adam possessed in the garden. What is the basis for this claim? Is the glorified state genuinely better than the Adamic state, or is it simply the Adamic state made permanent? What specific biblical texts support the claim that the eschatological state exceeds the original Adamic state?
- The doctrine of common grace holds that fallen human beings retain genuine intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities that enable genuine achievements in science, art, philosophy, and civic life. How does this doctrine relate to the Reformed doctrine of total depravity? Is there a tension between the claim that the fallen human creature is totally depraved and the claim that she retains genuine intellectual and moral capacities? How does the narrow/broad image distinction help resolve this tension?

Application Questions (What Does It Demand of Us?)

- The lesson argues that the pastor who has been formed by Calvin's "frightful deformity" formulation will preach the gospel with the urgency of someone who understands that her congregation consists of image-bearers in a condition of comprehensive corruption. Evaluate your own preaching or teaching in light of this standard. Does it convey the urgency and the radicality of grace that the "frightful deformity" anthropology requires? Or does it tend to understate the seriousness of the fall's damage in ways that make the gospel seem less necessary and less powerful than it is?
- The 2 Corinthians 3:18 dynamic, transformation into the image of the Lord through the beholding of His glory, identifies the primary mechanism of the image's progressive restoration. Evaluate the practices of corporate worship in the congregation you serve in light of this mechanism. Do the sermon, the prayers, the songs, the sacraments, and the fellowship of the community genuinely facilitate the sustained, faith-filled, Spirit-enabled beholding of the Lord's glory that 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes? Or are they structured primarily around other goals? What specific adjustments would bring the congregation's worship more fully into alignment with the beholding dynamic of 2 Corinthians 3:18?
- The lesson argues that the same doctrine that produces pastoral urgency (about the fall's damage) produces pastoral compassion (toward those whose lives display that damage). How do you hold these two together in your own pastoral practice? Is there a tendency in your ministry to be long on urgency and short on compassion, or long on compassion and short on urgency? What specific adjustments in the way you engage the people in your pastoral care would bring these two into better balance?
- 1 John 3:3 draws a specific ethical implication from the eschatological hope of 1 John 3:2: "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." The eschatological promise produces present-day ethical urgency. In what specific areas of your own life is the eschatological hope of conformity to Christ's image most motivating for present-day purification? And in what specific areas is the connection between the eschatological promise and the present-day ethical demand most difficult to maintain?
- The lesson closes with the observation that the doctrine of the imago Dei after the fall, traced from its corruption to its restoration to its eschatological perfection, is ultimately a doctrine about God rather than about human beings. In your own experience of studying this doctrine across Lessons 7 through 9, has the

study produced in you primarily a richer self-understanding (understanding yourself better as a fallen and partially restored image-bearer) or primarily a richer Godward orientation (understanding better the God whose image you bear, whose grace you require, and whose likeness you are being conformed to)? What would it look like to ensure that the study of the imago Dei always terminates in doxology rather than anthropology?

Prayer Focus

Open this ninth lesson of the Anthropology series with a reading of Psalm 51, the great Davidic psalm of penitential confession that was introduced in Lesson 2 as the Old Testament's most searching personal testimony to the doctrine of original sin. Read it again now, in the light of the doctrinal content of this lesson, with specific attention to what it reveals about the fall's damage to each dimension of the image. The darkened understanding: "Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom" (v. 6), the confession that the truth God desires is precisely what the fallen heart is most resistant to receiving. The disordered affections: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (v. 10), the recognition that the heart's cleansing is not a project within the fallen creature's own power but a creative act that only God can perform. The enslaved will: "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit" (v. 12), the petition not merely for renewed will but for the sustaining grace that makes the willing possible. And the hope of restoration: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise" (v. 17), the confidence that the God who sees the frightful deformity of the fallen image is the God who receives the creature who brings that deformity to Him in honest, broken, contrite acknowledgment of what sin has made of what He created.

Spend time in Trinitarian adoration, allowing the arc of this lesson, from the fall's comprehensive damage through the Spirit's progressive renewal to the eschatological perfection of the image in the beatific vision, to structure the movement of your worship. Begin with the Father, who did not abandon the image He had made when the fall reduced it to frightful deformity, but determined from before the foundation of the world to restore it through a redemption more glorious than the original creation, who sees in the ruins of the fallen image not the end of His purpose but the occasion for the display of His grace. Move to the Son, the Last Adam, who took on the very image in its fallen creaturely form, not the deformity of sin (He knew no sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21) but the frailty, the vulnerability, and the mortality of the creature whose image had been comprehensively compromised by the fall, and who by His obedience and sacrifice accomplished the restoration of the narrow image that the first Adam's disobedience had destroyed. Conclude with the Spirit, who is even now at work in the hearts and minds of believers, producing the new creation, renewing the image, conforming the creature to the Son's likeness, and groaning alongside the creature in the not-yet of the present age as both await the redemption that will complete what regeneration has begun.

Pray together for the congregation and for the ongoing development of Unit 3 in three specific directions. First, for honest self-knowledge in the light of the fall: that every member of the community would have the courage and the grace to see the frightful deformity of the fallen image in their own life, not as a reason for despair but as a reason for dependence on the grace that the gospel announces. The culture consistently encourages the affirmation of the self's worth and the suppression of the self's deformity; the gospel requires the honest acknowledgment of both what the creature is (an image-bearer of the living God, with all the dignity that implies) and what sin has done to the creature (a frightful deformity that only divine grace can restore). Second, for the discipline of beholding: that the members of the community would develop the specific practices of sustained engagement with the Word, with prayer, and with the fellowship of the church that 2 Corinthians 3:18's beholding-and-transformation dynamic requires, not as an achievement of spiritual self-discipline but as the grateful reception of the means by which the Spirit accomplishes the image's progressive renewal. Third, for the eschatological hope of 1 John 3:2: that the knowledge of the promised final conformity to the image of the Son would function in the congregation's life not merely as a distant theological truth but as a living, motivating, purifying reality, the specific hope that drives the specific purification that the not-yet calls for in the present moment.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”

Psalm 51:10–11, NASB 1995

Key Texts: Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; Ephesians 4:17–24; Colossians 3:9–11; Romans 1:18–23; 6:17–20; 7:14–25; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17; 1 John 3:1–3; Romans 8:29–30

Soli Deo Gloria

To God Alone Be the Glory

FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

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