

THE223 Christian Narrative 1 Creation and Fall

Unit 3c Imago Dei 2

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Hello. Welcome to Unit 3 Session C. In this session, we will continue our conversation concerning all that surrounds the fact that man has been created in the image of God. In our first lesson of this unit, we looked at how man was uniquely created. In the last session of this unit, we investigated the fact that humanity bears God's image. We were specifically interested in uncovering what it is that makes up God's image in mankind. During our discussion, we noted that humanity reflected God's image through original righteousness, rationality, moral freedom, spirituality, immortality, relational ability, and the fact that humanity has a body. Now let's turn our attention to our topic in this session today. Our main teaching point today is this: Mankind uniquely displays God's likeness. It is similar in some sense to our main teaching point from our last session. In our last session, our main teaching point was that man uniquely shares God's likeness. However, today, our interest lies in understanding how it is that mankind displays the likeness that it shares with God.

Because what the Bible makes clear for us is that we display in some way the image of God. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:49 that "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven." The Bible also presents to us the reality that humanity is to do and not do certain things because those actions will impact a person's ability to display God's likeness. So we read in 1 Corinthians 11:7 that "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man." So here we have two examples of the fact that we do in fact somehow bear God's image, and we want to better understand how we do that. Passages like the one we've just looked at force us to consider how it is that we not just share but actually display God's image in the world today. So for the rest of our time today, we'll consider historically how Christ followers throughout the ages have sought to understand how humanity uniquely displays God's image in the world. We will do this by looking at three of the main approaches to this topic. First, we will review the Reformed view. Second, we will look at the Lutheran view. And finally, we'll consider the Roman Catholic view of how humanity displays the image of God. Now, certainly there are lesser known ways that people have come to understand how humanity displays God's image, but these three represent the most relevant for those of us studying this topic in this session.

Three primary questions will drive our investigation. These three questions will help us tease out of each of these various positions the proper information which will help us both distinguish them from one another while offering an honest look at the views each holds. The first question is this: How is one to conceive of the image of God as being visible within humanity? This is at the heart of our discussion today. In each of these views, we will see that the varying traditions hold to different understandings of what constitutes the visible image of God in man. We will need to understand each if we ourselves are going to be able to make an informed decision about our own position. The second question is this: Does the image of God belong to the essence of man? What we are going to discover is that these various traditions disagree on this point. Understanding how and why each tradition disagrees will help us get a better understanding of how certain faith traditions explain the need or the inability of man to display God's image in the world today. The final question we will seek to answer is this: In what state was man originally created, and how does he exist now? Okay, so this is technically two questions rolled into one, but this question seeks to answer both the "What then?" and "What now?" question. Once we understand how the various traditions answer the first two questions, we can begin to conceive of how these traditions play out in the world today. And once we've answered these three questions, we can begin to ponder some of the practical implications of this academic exercise. So are you ready? Let's dive in.

We will start by taking a look first at the Reformed view. Now, if you're new to the whole theological Christian historical labeling of different movements and ideas, let me offer you a quick overview here of what it means to be Reformed. And later on, I'll also give you a quick overview of what it means to be Lutheran and Roman Catholic in view. Now, I'm taking these descriptions from Theopedia, a great little website which offers a lot of descriptions of different movements and theological ideas. I encourage you to check it out. Theopedia defines Reformed theology as this: "Reformed theology is generally considered synonymous with Calvinism and most often, in the United States and in the UK, is specifically associated with the theology of the historic church confessions such as the Westminster Confession of Faith or the Three Forms of Unity. A summary of Reformed theology, or what it means to be Reformed, may be seen in the following statements: To be Reformed means to affirm the great Solas of the Reformation. It means to affirm and promote a profoundly high view of the sovereignty of God. It means to affirm the doctrines of grace... to see God as the author of salvation from beginning to end. It means to be creedal... to affirm the great creeds of the historic, orthodox church. It means to be confessional... to affirm one or more of the great confessions of the historic orthodox church. It means to be covenantal... to affirm the great covenants of Scripture and see those covenants as the means by which God interacts with and accomplishes His purposes in His creation, with mankind."

Okay. So now that we have that under our belts, let's get back to the topic at hand. How does the Reformed view believe that one is to conceive of the image of God as being visible within humanity? Well, there is some debate among those within this camp. Generally speaking, the Reformed view holds that the image of God is seen in the spirituality, immortality, holiness, and dominion of a human being. The Reformed view would also argue that God's likeness can be seen in the body itself. The Reformed view would answer the question "Does the image of God belong to the essence of man?" with a resounding yes. The Reformed view believes that the image of God constitutes the essence of man. Berkhof, a Reformed theologian himself, states, "The doctrine of the image of God in man is of the greatest importance in theology, for that image is the expression of that which is most distinctive in man and in his relation to God. The fact that man is the image of God distinguishes his form from the animals and from every other creature."

Now, the Reformed view also holds that some qualities of the image of God are non-essential, that is, they can be lost and a human being can still in fact be human, while other aspects are essential and can never be lost. To this first group, the non-essentials, the Reformed view places what we learned is called original righteousness. Others, however, like dominion and spirituality, cannot be lost. They're essential to humanity. This is what leads the Reformed view to argue that human beings are inherently religious in their very nature. Depending on their relationship with God, human beings are either worshippers of God, or they are idolaters. This is because according to the view, humanity is inherently religious.

The Reformed view would then offer the following answer to the final two-part question. First, they would argue that humanity was originally created in relative perfection. Originally, humanity, that is, Adam and Eve, were created righteous, holy, and immortal. Like children, they were perfect in their parts but not yet perfect by degrees. Consider a child as it grows. It is completely human. It is completely and fully a child, yet it is going to grow and its faculties will become greater. Its reasoning and rationality will become greater, yet it is perfect in its parts but not yet in degrees. However, the Reformed view would say that, by and large, humanity exists now in a state of moral rebellion, pushing back against the sovereignty of God even though the thought of such a statement in itself is futile according to the view.

Originally, humanity was created in relative perfection. After the fall and now, humanity exists in a state of moral rebellion against God. And so we have the Reformed view.

Now we'll take a look at how the Lutheran view answers these same questions. "Lutheranism is the name used to describe the movement following Martin Luther's call to reform the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. It also refers to the authoritative doctrines and practices in the Lutheran churches and can be used as a general term for Lutheran churches worldwide. The primary doctrines of Lutheran theology stem from the three Solas of the Reformation: sola Scriptura, sola gratia, and sola fide." Now, in reply to this first question of how one is to conceive of the image of God as being visible within humanity, the Lutheran view would simply reply that the image of God is seen in the original righteousness of humanity alone.

A quick note here about each of the views that we are discussing. We're answering the first question particularly without respect to the act of salvation. Not that we are in any way trying to diminish the act of salvation. Rather, we're simply trying to understand a different point of theology at this moment. At this present moment, we're more concerned with understanding what constitutes the visible image of God during creation and how this may or may not have been impacted by the fall which followed shortly after. So the Lutheran view holds, and we must say quite differently than the Reformed view, that original righteousness alone is the source of the visible image of God within humanity.

So does the image of God belong to the essence of man? Well, according to the Lutheran view, the answer is no. The image of God does not constitute the essence of man. According to the Lutheran view, when original righteousness was lost during the fall, so was the image of God lost as well. Now, the Lutheran view does argue for something it refers to as the accidental image of God, which still in fact exists in fallen humanity. Schmidt explains the accidental image of God well. He says this: "The substance itself of the human soul exhibits certain things that are divine by accident. That is, they stand related to divinity as a model, for God is a spirit, immaterial, intelligent, acting with a free will, etc. These predicates can, in a certain manner, be affirmed of the human being of the human soul. However, only those gifts and graces granted the man in his first creation and lost by the fall are to be considered the image of God specifically."

So we can here begin to see where the Reformed view and the Lutheran view differ from one another as it relates to the visible image of God within humanity and whether or not this image of God is essential to the human soul. So the Lutheran view would hold that, much like the Reformed view, humanity was originally created as relatively perfect. The Lutheran view would argue that Adam and Eve were righteous, holy, and immortal as originally created. Perfect in parts but not yet in degrees, like a child. However, unlike the Reformed view, the Lutheran view argues that now humanity is spiritually dead, rebellion is for the living, and humanity is spiritually dead. It cannot therefore be in a state of rebellion or idolatry as suggests the Reformed view because dead things don't move.

The final view we will consider is that of the Roman Catholic position. As I've done elsewhere, let me offer a very brief overview of the Roman Catholic position from Theopedia. "The Roman Catholic Church shares many basic tenets with evangelical Protestants such as: the doctrine of the Trinity, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, and His virgin birth, atoning death and bodily resurrection. However, there are many other tenets in which the Catholic Church differs from other Christians, many of which became historically relevant during the Reformation. Most significant are: its understanding of justification, which denies the Protestant doctrine of justification through faith alone by grace alone; its

understanding of the relationship between Tradition and Scripture which denies the Protestant doctrine that Scripture takes precedence over church teaching and tradition; its mediatorial priesthood and the theology of its Mass; its beliefs surrounding Mary and the saints.”

The Roman Catholic view answers the first question in this way. It states that the image of God is to be found in the spirituality, freedom, and immortality of the human being. However, this they refer to as the *dona naturalia* or the natural image of God. The concept of *dona naturalia* or the natural image of God found in man is then contrasted against what the Roman Catholics call *the dona supernaturalia* or the supernatural image of God. This was later given by God to mankind after he was created. And part of that additional gift of *dona supernaturalia*, according to the Roman Catholic view, was original righteousness, which, after being received, was lost during the fall. So are we following? The Roman Catholic view then would say that the image of God does not belong to the essence of man and that man does not permanently hold original righteousness. In fact, the Roman Catholic view would hold that humanity in and of itself is not inherently a religious being. And this, of course, is against what the Reformed view would hold. This, of course, has an impact in the way that they answered the third and final question. Now, before we move to this slide, let me make sure that we've got this. This is a little bit different for those of us who may be less familiar with the Roman Catholic view. Humanity was given *dona naturalia*, some natural image of God. But to that was added the supernatural image of God which included original righteousness. But when sin entered the picture, original righteousness or supernatural image of God, the *dona supernaturalia*, was lost. And because they don't believe the Roman Catholic view that this supernatural image of God or original righteousness was inherent to humanity when he was first created, they do not believe that man is inherently spiritual.

All right. Let's move on to the next slide. So then the Roman Catholic view would suggest that man was created in a state of general innocence, that man, when he was created, was neither holy nor evil. However, the Roman Catholic view also argues that when man was created, he was created with concupiscence or a sort of natural inclination to pursue the lower things of the earth. Now, concupiscence is not in and of itself a sinful thing. Rather, according to the Roman Catholic view, when concupiscence is acted upon, it leads a person to sin. So the Roman Catholic view holds that man is created essentially in the same way today as the original man was created: with the natural image of God inside of him, but also with an inclination which now is slightly stronger than it was perhaps at the beginning, a slightly stronger bent towards sin. And so we have these three positions. We've reviewed each of them.

But now we must ask the question: Why is this issue so important? Why have we spent an entire session looking at this issue? Well, there are two questions that I believe are important for us to be able to answer well. First, does mankind still display the image of God in our world today? Is it only the church filled with those who have been both born again, that is, regenerated and renewed by Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit as we're told in Titus 3, that reflect the image of God? Or do those who do not yet know Christ also reflect God's image in some way? Is the image of God marred? Is it broken? Or is it lost among those who do not believe in Jesus Christ? These questions are important for us to wrestle with, and they do impact important issues of Christian practice. Is the soul of a man dead or wounded? Can a man find God on his own, or is God the only one who finds us? These and other questions impact our view of things like evangelism, eternal salvation, predestination, just to name a few.

The second and related question is this: Is the image of God inherent to being human? Can a man still be a man and not have God's image, or is the image of God inherent to what it means to be human? This question impacts our view on the dignity of life, the nature of the soul, and the ultimate purpose of humanity, just to name a few. Yes, these are important questions and this is an important topic.

So here's our big idea again. Mankind uniquely displays God's likeness. I would encourage you to consider the various positions that we've talked about and further research them, coming to your own solid conclusions about which position most accurately reflects the truth of Scripture and your own faith tradition. While you do this, understand that many godly men and women are to be found holding to each view. So we should always hold our position with a solid blend of confidence and humility.