

# Doctrine of Creation

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[0:00] All right, friends, with fear and trepidation, we're going to begin our class this morning. Good morning. Welcome. Welcome. Let me begin us with a word of prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we gather this morning and we give you praise. Lord, thank you for giving us life and breath this morning to gather together, to attend to your word and all the riches of yourself that you've revealed there and all that you've revealed about who we are as human beings.

Lord, help us this morning to understand these things rightly and apply them rightly through your spirit. God, we ask for your help and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, so here we are in class. I think this is five of our survey of the doctrine of creation. And, you know, we say this a lot when we do these Sunday school classes, but, you know, we're like, let's do four weeks. No, no, no, that's not enough.

Let's do eight weeks. And then we get towards the end of the eight weeks like we are now, and we're just like, we're just scratching the surface. It just never feels like enough time. So over the last four weeks, we've been looking mostly at Genesis 1 and 2, considering the doctrine of creation, and Luke's been walking us through these first two chapters, kind of masterfully showing us ways in which we might be understanding them and understanding them in light of how church history has understood these things and how they interface with sort of contemporary views of the origin of things.

[1:30] And last week, we talked about the origin of humanity. This week, we're going to talk about humans as created in the image of God. And, you know, there's a lot of ways we could approach a subject like this.

We could look at it just sort of through theological synthesis. We could look at how the doctrine has developed historically through time. If we had more and more weeks, that would be really, really enlightening and illuminating things to do.

But I think what I'd like to do this morning with the time that we have is just look through the biblical passages that seem to be referencing the image of God and try to weave them together into some kind of coherent whole and then spend some time doing some application and discussion at the end about the meaning of these things.

Now, next week, we're going to take up really this doctrine again. We're going to do it again in a second time, looking through some of what John will teach on, which is sort of the, can I call it the cultural mandate, John?

Is that fair? Is that fair? Okay, yeah. Look at, well, that'll all make sense in a few minutes when we get into this topic. Good. So if you're like, well, what did Irenaeus think about the image of God? We're not going to have time for that.

[2:40] Very interesting, very fascinating. But we're just going to look at the scriptures, try to synthesize them together, and then go from there. We will have a third class after John teaches next week where we kind of try to wrap some of this stuff up.

So if there's more we want to do in the image of God, then we can. So we will have some time if we find we spill over. So let's go ahead and begin. I want to begin with a quote that I think will launch us off nicely from a theologian that we've referenced before in this class by the name of Herman Bavink, who, you know, he was a thoughtful guy.

So, but I really like how he starts his chapter discussing the image of God. He says this. He says, and you'll hear resonances in this quote from what we've talked about in previous weeks.

He says, the revelation, sorry, the entire world is a revelation of God, a mirror of his virtues and perfections.

Every creature in its own way and according to its own measure is an embodiment of a divine thought.

[3:55] Does that sound familiar? We talk about kinds and creation revealing the glory of God and each thing revealing the glory of God, you know. Jonathan Edwards used to reflect on spiders and silkworms and how they were beautiful pictures of, you know, images of the divine things.

But then Bavink says this. He says, but among all creatures, only man is the image of God, the highest and richest revelation of God, and therefore head and crown of the entire creation.

Only humankind, only human beings are said to be in the image of God. And that certainly sets us apart. Let's look at that. Let's look at Genesis 1 then. So there's where we start.

Let's look at Genesis 1. So turn with me to Genesis 1. And we've read this chapter a couple times in our class, so we're just going to dive right in to verse 26.

Genesis 1, 26, 27, and we'll do 28 as well. So Genesis says, Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

[5:23] So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. And God said, Behold, I've given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.

You shall have them for food. And then he goes on. And then in verse 31, he says, And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Okay. So let's just make a couple observations about this text from Genesis 1. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

You can feel there a kind of distinction in the narrative, can't you? This is the first moment in the creation account where God sort of pauses and deliberates.

[6:32] Right? You see up till this point, God's hovering on the face of the waters. God says, Let there be light. And there was light, and there was evening, and there was morning. And then he speaks all these things into existence. Speaking them into existence.

Speaking them into existence. And then, at the end of the sixth day, at the pinnacle, when it seems like everything is done, he's already created all the beasts that are moving on the earth. Then God deliberates and says, Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

So that right away tells us that the creation of humanity is just frayed with significance and substance and importance.

Human beings are set apart from the rest of creation. Right? Now, of course, what are we according to Genesis 1 and 2? We are creatures.

Right? We are made from the dust of the ground, as Genesis 2 somewhat poetically probably says. Right? So we are not, in that sense, you know, not created.

[7:32] We certainly are. But we occupy a special place in creation as human beings. Now, there's been a lot of discussion about what God means by let us make man or make humankind in our image.

Right? Any guesses as to what us means there? Trinity. It's the Trinity. Right? That's what we say as Christians. We're like, of course, it's the Trinity. Duh. Like, we know that. Yeah, right.

And that's probably the right answer. Right? You know, some people have seen let us make man as a reference to maybe it's sort of a majestic we, you know, like when the queen always refers to herself as we, or used to.

I guess it's a king now. Does Charles refer to himself as we now? I don't know. Who knows? Who knows? Yeah. You know, maybe it's some kind of royal we, but you don't see that a lot in scripture. Maybe God's speaking to the sort of hosts of heaven, you know, the angelic creation and saying, let

us make man in our image.

But that's sort of funny because humans aren't said to be made in the image of angels nor angels said to be made in the image of God. So it's this curious thing that just hangs in the first chapter of Genesis. Let us. There's some kind of personal plurality within God hinted at here that only becomes unfolded as we follow through the rest of scripture.

[8:47] And that same kind of hinting, I think, also picks up when we think about image and likeness. What does it mean when God says, let us make man in our image and after our likeness?

Now, throughout church history, there have been many, many ways of kind of construing what it means to be made in the image of God. And I think actually a lot of them, most of them, do shine some important light on what this means.

But let's take a look. Let's take a look at the words themselves and see if that might give us some clues as to what scriptures mean.

So the first is image, right? Let us make man in our image. The idea here of an image, and if you look up other passages in the Old Testament that speak of an image, right, a lot of them aren't very positive.

What does the Bible have to say about making images? Anybody? It's a bad idea. Don't make images of things. Well, not of things.

[10:00] Don't make images of God, right? That's a really big no-no. Don't make idols, right? But what did images do? What did they function as in the ancient world? An image was something that represented something else, right?

And I would say representation kind of in the fullest sense. So if someone were to come in the classroom this morning and say, I'm here as a representative of, you know, I don't know, well, the kingdom of the United Kingdom.

I'm here as a representative of the United Kingdom, right? A representative of, well, we were picking on Charles earlier, King Charles, right? I'm here as a representative, right?

We would think, oh, he doesn't look like Charles, right? It means something, right? It means that he has a kind of almost delegated authority.

In the ancient world, when kings or rulers would conquer some new territory, especially if it was far flung from the capital, what would they do?

[11:15] Remember what Nebuchadnezzar did in the heart of Babylon? What did he build? A giant statue, probably of himself, right? He built a giant statue of himself and what did he say?

Bow down to it or you'd thrown in the furnace, right? What did that statue represent? It represented his rule, right? And you see that in the ancient world, not just in the hearts of their capitals, but in the far flung places of their empires, kings would put up images, statues, right?

And what did it represent? It said, this is somewhere I rule, right? This is an extension of my domain. Humans are made in God's image.

The one true creator and ruler, we are made in his image as representatives. So there's a deep sense of this full representation in the sense of image.

But then God says, after our likeness, likeness. And you know what the word likeness means in Hebrew?

[12:31] It means likeness. That's what it means. It means something that's similar to something else. Sometimes the Bible's not all that difficult to understand. It's just similarity. similarity. You know, you can look up other passages where Scripture uses this word likeness and it's, you know, images of stuff that looks like something else, right?

So, not only are human beings representatives, representations of God, but we bear a similarity to God.

similarity. And similarity, you get the sense here, right? Because we already said that the creation of humans on the sixth day carries this weight, it carries this importance, it carries this dignity.

So, whereas the rest of creation, right, reflects God's glory and we see something of God in every atom and every leaf and every sunset, right?

There's something about humans that carry that similarity to, in some sense, well, I'm struggling to find the right word.

[13:40] We carry that similarity to a degree that nothing else can or will. That when God says, this is how I want to show myself and represent myself in creation, I'm going to do it through humans, right?

Now, in the history of the church, sometimes there's been a lot of freight put into the difference between these two words that they talk about very different things that can be separated and maybe some are lost and some are gained and fall in redemption, maybe some means something and some means others.

However, I would put forward that these words actually aren't meant to function in super, ultra distinct ways, but they work together.

And in fact, you'll see, as we go through some other passages, hopefully if we have time this morning, you'll see that these terms start to be used interchangeably. Sometimes humans are said to be made in God's likeness, sometimes they're made in God's image, but this whole complex, this whole thing together is intended, right?

So, whereas I've tried to draw out some distinction between these two terms, keep in mind that they're really used as sort of one thing, that they're almost used interchangeably.

[15:03] And I think that helps as we think about then kind of what we mean by this or what this starts to mean. In the history, again, in the history of Christian reflection on these things, different views or different emphases have come up, right?

Now, when you think about God, humans being made in the likeness of God as being similar to God, what comes to mind for you?

Yeah, Peter. The ability to create. Mm, mm-hmm. Yeah, definitely. We're creative creatures, right? We have this aesthetic sense, right? What else? Any other similarities? Tyler. Relationships. Yes. Personhood. Personhood. Ooh, that's a good one. Did you say that, Raul? Yes. Is that you? Maybe like rationality.

[16:13] Oh, yeah, that was a biggie. Lots of people in the church thought, mm, you know what sets us apart from the animals? We can think. Look at those brute beasts, right? Reason.

Logic. What else? Existing capacity. Yes, language. Yeah, Richard.

So we shy away from this one, but I would certainly add it, and that's emotion. Emotions? Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. In preparing for this morning, I reread Wayne Grudem's chapter on the image of God, and he talks about human emotion.

He says, now look, if you own a dog, you know that dogs express emotion. They're happy when you come home. They're sad when you don't feed them.

I thought, yeah, you know, that's true. But then he makes this great point. He says, ah, but think about the complexity of human emotion, right? And he says, I could be sitting at my son's baseball game sad because they lost, proud because of how he played, so joyful that he did so as a good sport, a little anxious because we're going to be late for dinner.

[17:26] You know, think about all the ways in which humans as emotional beings reflect God who is rich in those passions, right?

Now, we can talk about impassibility another time. If that's me, if talking about emotion with respect to God is making you nervous, just put it in brackets. We'll come back to it. Yeah, Beth. Will. Yeah, we can decide things.

And to expand on this one, right, we might say that we have responsibility and we have a sense of ethics and morality, right?

Oh, my handwriting is getting bad down here. So, of course, will, you know, we can, we're inclined and we choose things, right?

We're not just instinctive creatures, right? You know, as much as I would love to posit a will on my golden retriever, she is acting out of instinct, right?

[18:30] You know, not ours though, not our golden retriever. Everyone else's dog though is. But doesn't with this come the sense that we are responsible creatures, right? We're held accountable for our actions and we do have a sense of things that are right and wrong, right?

Not just things that are or are not or that I like and don't like, but we have a sense of ought, this ought to be, this ought not to be. Yeah.

So are these just shared attributes? Between us and God, Raul? Is that what you're thinking? Yeah. Yeah, yeah, really good question. So, when we talk about our similarity to God, our likeness to God, right?

We're not saying that humans are omnipotent, right? Or omniscient. Or omnipresent.

Or eternal. Yeah, even better. Or, or, oh, here's one I really like a lot. Do you know what God's a saiyah is? Means that God has his being of himself.

[19:40] That he has, he depends on no one else for being who he is. Show me a human being who is not radically and utterly dependent and so in need of other things to just subsist.

And yet God is a very fullness of being. Needs nothing and no one to be exactly who he is, right? There are all sorts of ways in which we are not like God as creatures, right?

And yet, God, in his wisdom, in his kindness, decides to reveal himself, right? And there are ways in which we do, by analogy, by a dim reflection, of course, share or participate or shine forth with attributes of God, right?

That, as God is creative, so we as his image bearers are creative, as God is a speaking God, right? So we have this amazing capacity for language, as God is deeply personal, essentially so, so we are persons, right?

As God is deeply relational, right? As a triune God, so we, in bearing his image, are relational, et cetera, et cetera. Does that answer your question, Raul?

[20:54] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Richard? So, I would say, just like representation and similarity are not so easily disentangled from each other, and they shouldn't be, also, authority should not be disentangled from responsibility.

Yeah. Those who feel a deep responsibility for this or that, also, have that sense of authority over that responsibility, such that if something threatens to thwart their responsibility, their sense of authority begins to exercise itself.

Yeah. Yeah. So I would add responsibility slash authority. Yeah. Yeah. That's right. And isn't it interesting that as you say that, right, doesn't it immediately begin to see how these two concepts touch into each other, right?

That they're very connected. God has all those attributes, but he exercises them perfectly. Correct. Yeah, that's right. That's right.

He doesn't do jealousy perfectly. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah. We exercise these things. I mean, in the original creation, right, which we're looking at here in Genesis 1, we exercise these things in a creaturely way, in a finite way.

[22:22] In a dependent way, right? And, as God's representatives, we ought to be functioning in a creaturely dependent way, right?

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Kim. Well, the statement that we don't, we don't come into the world having those qualities, but having the potential for them Yeah.

and growing into them. Yeah. Yeah. But not necessarily growing into them all at the same level.

Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. Or someone who is relationally challenged, but have great skills in other of those. Yeah, that's right. I think this brings us to another part of our passage.

I think that's a good transition, Kim. So, we see here, right, let us make man our image after our likeness. So, we've talked about all these ways in which, you know, human beings have a similarity to God. We sort of carry these things forth in a unique and qualitatively different way than the rest of creation, right?

[23:25] But then he says, let them have dominion, right? So, here we're into this language of representation and we'll talk more about that next week, right? But then he says, so God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them, right? So, right from the start, what it means to be created in God's image is to be fundamentally, we've referenced this before, to be fundamentally relational beings, social beings, right?

That, to your point, Kim, we can't actually bear forth the image of God in isolation from one another. That we have to do this together.

And, of course, this wonderful statement in Genesis 127, which would have been quite radical in the ancient world, that men and women are created in God's image, equally, without distinction, right? That they both bear God's image. Now, the scriptures will sort of, as it unfolds, talk about different roles, different aspects that male and female play in the economy of redemption and creation and these kinds of things, right?

[24:37] But in their essence, men and women are created in God's image. Why don't they tell men that? What's that? Why don't they tell men that? What do you mean, Roel?

Since the beginning, since when Adam said to God, the woman that you... Of course, yeah. Relationships have been... Totally fractured. Totally fractured.

Since then. Yeah. Men have to buck up. They really are equal. Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah. And you see, even in this earliest passage, right? Even in this Genesis 1 passage, don't you see a kind of three-fold relationship that humans have?

That bearing God's image means something about our relationship to God and to other humans and to creation, right?

Let us make humans in our image, right? There's that fundamental relationship to God. Male and female, he created them, right? Have dominion over the created order, right?

[25:45] So we see it there. Okay. Let's keep going to look at another passage.

So, isn't it a wonderful picture of how the Bible starts? We're human beings. We bear this likeness to God. We stand as his representatives. We're meant to bear his image in the world.

We're meant to be his vice regents in creation, not just reflecting him in our, oh, I forgot one thing. I'm going to come back to it. Not just reflecting him in our being, in our attributes, right?

But also in our role, in our representation. And in the biblical story, how long does that last? We don't know. Well, we don't know. We don't know historical time, right?

But in biblical time, it's pretty quick, right? We get through one chapter, chapter two. Then in chapter three, you know, an undisclosed amount of time passes, and suddenly, the fall happens, right?

[26:54] Human beings, rather than functioning as representatives of God, decide to rest authority for themselves and rule in their own name, right?

Now, here's one of the big questions that has sort of hung, that I think hangs over the biblical text, right, is what then of our status as image bearers, right?

What then happens, right? Is it lost? Are we no longer God's image bearers? Is it completely destroyed and effaced?

I mean, God does say, you'll return to the dust, right? What becomes of it? But, there's very good indication that though the image of God is in many senses marred or cracked or disfigured in us as humans.

It is not lost. It is not lost. So, let's look at some of the following passages. So, if you turn over just a couple pages to Genesis 5, the fall happens, Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, the incident with Cain and Abel happens, the great tragedy of that, Adam and Eve have another son named Seth, and then this is chapter 5, verses 1 and 2.

[28:27] So, this is the book of generations of Adam. So, that's like a literary marker in the book of Genesis. Like, hey, here's a new chapter of the book. Here's a new section of this book. This is Genesis 5. This is the book of the generations of Adam.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. So, there you see just reference to likeness there, not to image and likeness. So, a good sign that these terms are just kind of used interchangeably. He made him in the likeness of God, male and female.

He created them and he blessed them and named them man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth.

Okay, so there's a reaffirmation as this new post-fall chapter of Genesis opens that, yes, these humans were created in my image. So, there's a reaffirmation that they were created in his image, right?

No mention of whether the fall did or didn't sort of erase the image of God in humans. And then it says, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth, right?

[29:30] Now, this passage is a little indeterminate, isn't it? Because some have read this passage and said, ha, look, Adam was made in God's image, but whose image was Seth made in?

Adam's bump, bump, bump. See, we lost it. Well, that's maybe one way of reading it, but another way of reading it as humans endowed with reason and logic, right?

We can create a simple syllogism, can't we? Now, I was an English major. I didn't study logic. So, if someone here has a good training in law and philosophy, you can correct me on this one, but the syllogism runs something like this, doesn't it?

Adam was created in God's image. Seth was created in Adam's image. Therefore, Seth is created in God's image. There's probably a flaw in there somewhere, but that's the idea, right?

That this image in which Adam is created, Seth is also in that image, that there's a sort of organic unity of bearing God's image that goes down into every generation of humans.

[30:32] Now, which reading is right? Well, I think if we go to the next passage where the image of God comes up in the book of Genesis, that becomes clear. So, this is Genesis chapter 9.

Genesis 9, verse 6. So, the fall happens, Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, humanity continues to be fruitful and multiply, but rather than bearing God's image and caring for and tending the garden and expanding God's kingdom throughout the earth, what happens?

Wickedness abounds, right? Image bearers now aren't using their endowments and their representational capacities to glorify God for the good of creation of one another.

They're using it for their own selfish desires and things are just tumbling down. So, then the flood happens. God judges the humanity but preserves humanity through Noah and the ark, right?

Noah and his family come out of the ark and then we read this in Genesis 9, and God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

[31:42] The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all fish of the sea into your hand they are delivered.

Every moving thing that lives on the earth shall be food for you and as I gave you green plants I give you everything but you shall not eat the flesh with its life that is with its blood and for your life blood I will require reckoning from every beast I will require it and from man for from his fellow man I will require reckoning for the life of man.

Okay, so God's sort of reestablishing humanity gives them that mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, right? Now he's saying, look, now you can eat animals, right? Or at least he's sort of saying go eat animals, right?

But then he says, but there's a prohibition against taking human life, right? And this is verse 6.

Whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed for God made man in his own image and you be fruitful and multiply and increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.

So what's the rationale that God gives in this prohibition against taking another human's life? Based on verse 6. God made man in his own image.

God made man in his own image. That's right. That because humans are made in God's image, no one has the right to unlawfully take their life.

[33:03] That decrees God. Exactly. That's right. That's right. So isn't that a good... Now we did a whole class on the sixth commandment and not murdering and things like that. You can go listen to that class if you're interested in how the rest of the Bible unpacks that.

But the point I want to make here is, right, that humanity's status as image bearers remains after the fall. It becomes a ground for our ethical thinking, right, and God's ethical commands to us.

Yeah, Justin. You could even make the argument that in the fall we actually unrightfully made ourselves more in God's image than the human being. Yeah, potentially.

Although, I wouldn't want to run that track too far, right? Because in rebellion, the witness of Scripture is that we actually, that there's, that actually it's a loss, right?

You'll see in the New Testament, we may get to these passages over time, where, you know, as Paul looks back and as the New Testament writers look back on the first creation, it sees us as created an original righteousness and holiness.

[34:07] There's a kind of, not just a moral rightness, but a relational rightness to God, right? That's beautiful. And it's something that on the basis of that original righteousness and holiness, we're meant to unfold it and unpack it, right?

And in rebelling against God, right, which was the ultimate, like, what was happening on the tree, right, was like, God put a tree in the middle of the garden and said, this is the way in which you can respect and honor my rights as creator, right?

I decide what's right and wrong as creator, right? So don't eat from this one tree as a sign, right, as a symbol that you honor my authority.

Then go eat from every other tree you want, right? Then humans took, under the temptation of the serpent, right? They take it. And then what's lost in that, what's lost in that is this original righteousness and holiness, like, it mars everything.

We lose so much, right? It's actually, it's actually dehumanizing in a sense, right? Not unhumanizing, but dehumanizing. And because humans are made in God's image, right, to become less human in the way we were created to be, right, is actually to become less like God, right?

[35:27] So in that act of rebellion, right, one might put it this way, God always honors God's own authority. In humans not honoring God's authority, we become less like God.

That sounded very John Piper-y, didn't it? God loves God's glory to the greatest most extent, but I think it's true. There seems to be, yeah, John.

There seems to be a sense, and I believe, that it was so, where they had imagined that in taking this behind the serpent's lie, that there would be an enhancement.

Yeah, that's right. But when they did it, it seems like you get a sense that they realized that something had cracked, that they actually were subject to a loss, right? Yeah.

That they had been had. Yeah. Yeah, that's good, John. And I wonder if there's some irony there when the writer says their eyes were opened and they did know good and evil.

[36:26] That that wasn't seen as an accomplishment, but a great loss, right? That the serpent meant you can know it in the sense of you can determine it, right? Like, you can be the determiner of right and wrong.

Why not use your status, role, and capacity to be God? And they took it and ironically, they then knew good and evil, but it wasn't what they thought. Yeah.

There's like a tension in us that it's been broken, our image of God, but then there's the *sensus divinitatis*, the sense of the divinity. Yeah, that's right.

So we want to go back to that state. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's right. Unless he does something. That's right. That's right. Yeah. Hold that thought roll because it's a great transition to my next point with the little time we have left. Yeah, Tyler, go ahead.

Just real quick, I think we see God's grace playing itself out even in Genesis 9 because he could have easily let the angel once he's done no further chances.

[37:21] Right. He's got promise God's grace is working himself out in the evening and restoring what was lost. Yeah. You know, God's been gracious since the beginning. Yeah, yeah. And isn't it wonderful too?

And you see this repeated over and over again in scripture. So, now one of the great questions that hangs over scripture at this point from Noah is like, okay, well, what's going to become of these image bearers? Right?

Right? Because you see as scripture unfolds that bearing God's image, right, it's not something that we have that we can lose. It's something that we are as humans.

Right? Do you see the difference there? It's not as if when we say that we're image bearers, it's not like I'm a book bearer and it's like, oh, I lost it. Right? It's who we are.

We can't not be created in God's image if we are humans. Right? So, the great question is what's going to become of God's image bearers whom he loves so much and for whom he exhibits much patience?

[38:21] And the history of redemption in the Old Testament is really God working to preserve, redeem, and restore his image bearers in the midst of his creation for the sake of redeeming his whole creation.

You know, isn't it interesting that when God pulls, when God calls Abraham, right, he blesses him, right? That sounds familiar. Who was blessed? Well, Adam was blessed. Noah was blessed. Abraham was blessed.

And I'm going to multiply you, Abraham, and your family. Right? When God calls Israel out of Egypt, right, brings them to Sinai, what does God call his people at that point?

He says, you're a kingdom of priests, right? You represent me, right? I think there's echoes of image language in there, right? But of course, when does all this reach its climax?

Well, you know, it reaches its climax in the pages of the New Testament. When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

[39:26] And isn't it fascinating that we, that Jesus, who's fully human and fully God, how is he described in the New Testament? Look at 2 Corinthians with me, 4, 4.

So, Paul here is talking about the ministry of the gospel and he's saying that for some, their eyes are veiled to the gospel.

And he says in verse 4, in their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

That Christ comes in his full humanity and is God's image bearer in the perfect way. We see the same thing in Colossians 1.

If you turn over to Colossians 1. Colossians 1.15 says, he is the image of the invisible God.

[40:40] The firstborn of all creation. Now, firstborn there is language that basically doesn't mean that he was like the first creation, right? Firstborn was sort of a title or a status. When you were the firstborn in a family, you had rights over all the stuff, right?

Because you were the firstborn. That's what Paul is saying there. That Christ, the crucified and risen Christ is the firstborn of all creation, right? He has rights over the whole thing.

He is the image of God, right? So Jesus comes in his redemptive role, perfectly bearing, taking up our flesh, right? And perfectly bearing that image.

Why? Why does he do that? To just show us how far off, how far we've missed the mark, right? Stupid humans, you know, look at how it's supposed to be done.

No, right? He does it for us and for our salvation. Turn over just a little bit in Colossians, if you're still there, to Colossians 3, verse 10.

[41:47] So talking about believers now, united to Christ through faith, right? Covenanted, you know, in the new covenant with Christ through faith. Paul says, well, in verse 9, don't lie to one another, seeing you've put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Christ came to rescue us, to redeem us, and to renew in us this image that had been marred through the fall, not lost, but certainly marred and misdirected, that through the work of Christ, through the Spirit's work within us, that image is being renewed over time as we follow him.

I know I'm going quickly here, and it's just because we're a little short on time. So, we see that in Christ, this image is being renewed and redeemed.

It's not left in its broken and fractured state, right? Let's look at one other passage in Romans, chapter 8. Paul says this in Romans 8, 28, he says, we know that for those who love God, all things work together for their good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

For those whom he foreknew, in the sense there is sort of like those he foreloved, he also predestined, that is, he foreordained, he set on a path to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that we might be the firstborn among many, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

[43:33] You see? Christ has come bearing that image perfectly, and now we, through God's sovereignty, are being conformed more and more into that image.

And when will this work be done? When will our imaging be made complete? Right? Well, it ought to be growing more and more in this life, right?

we ought to be experiencing more and more of God's character, righteousness, holiness, in our life, in our relationships, in our relationship to him, to others, and to creation.

We should be taking up this great call to be his image bearers. Again, we'll talk more about that next week. Right? But when does it reach its completion? When are we fully and completely and totally restored?

That's right. In the consummation of all things. So, John says this in the book of 1 John.

[44:42] 1 John, chapter 3, verse 2. It says, Beloved, we are God's children now. What a great phrase, right?

We are God's children now. And what we will be has not yet appeared. So, we have this beautiful thing now. We're becoming more and more who we are.

But yet, there's an even greater future in store. What we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, that is Christ, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

that there's going to be a perfect, in that final beholding of God in Christ, then we will be fully and finally transformed into who God had created us to be all along.

And there's this beautiful picture in Revelation. If you go to Revelation 22, this is not a passage that mentions the image specifically, but I think the theme is there.

[45:53] In Revelation 22, verse 4, talking about the new creation, right?

Let's pick up in verse 3, no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Right? Now that's kind of weird, you're like, whoa, there's like a tattoo of someone's name on our forehead, that's odd. Symbolic language, right?

The name, right? The name is a nature, right? That God's very nature, that image will be fully expressed in us, right? Name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more.

They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and here's the great part, and they will reign forever and ever.

Right? They will reign forever and ever. Wasn't that what God created humans for in the first place? That we would, in his likeness, bear out that reign as his vice regents in creation, and bring all of creation's glory up to God, right?

[47:04] Be like conductors of a great symphony of praise for God, reigning and ruling in his stead, in his name, in dependence on him. And God says, yes, that will be so.

I will not abandon my image bearers or my creation to death and decay, but I will bring them where I intend them to go. So our project now as the church is to live like that's true, to bear his image, to be renewed as we behold Christ, to become more like Christ, and bear his image more fully together in community.

Right? Now we could do a couple quick things of application. That was a bit of a biblical theology of the image there. That was most of the passage. There were others, but that was most of them.

But taking a step back, think about some applications of all this. I think the first thing to think about is that if you think about humans being made in God's image, I think that should fill us with a sense of wonder and dignity, right?

And even joy, even a sense of adventure, right? It's so easy to think, like, our lives are so humdrum, like, what are they worth? No. Every human being, every human being has just unsurpassed dignity and significance in the history of redemption.

[48:31] This is a very famous quote from C.S. Lewis, but I like it, so I'm going to read it. He says, it's a serious thing to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which if you saw it now you would be strongly tempted to worship or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

So Lewis is there talking about our ultimate destiny, right? Like, where is he taking us as image bearers? Those who are being redeemed and renewed will be unsurpassing in glory, just wonderful

to behold.

He says, all day long we are in some degree helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It's in the light of these overwhelming possibilities and it is with all. And the circumspection proper to them that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.

It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

So it's just great weight and dignity of who we are as human beings. And that has ethical ramifications, right, in how we treat each other. We see that in Scripture. It's explicitly tied to the sixth commandment, don't murder, right?

[49:48] James will tie the image of God, that's one passage we didn't look at, in how we speak of one another. He says, brothers, how out of the same mouth can come blessings and cursings? How at one time can you bless God and yet curse a human being who's made in God's image, James says?

These things cannot be so, right? How we, even how we speak about one another ought to have a kind of reverence and circumspection, given the fact that we are God's image bearers.

Let me quote another person, this is Calvin talking about how we treat one another on the basis of the image. He says, and this is really good, because I think this is very counterintuitive, he says, we're not to consider that men merit of themselves, sorry, what, we are not to consider what men merit of themselves, right?

Are you deserving of my attention, of my times? What Calvin is saying there? We're not to consider what men merit of themselves, but to look upon the image of God in all men, to which we owe all honor and love.

Therefore, whatever man you meet who needs your aid, you have no reason to refuse to help him. You say, he's contemptible and worthless, but the Lord shows him to be one to whom he has deigned to give the beauty of his image.

[51:14] Say that he does not deserve even your least effort for his sake. That's what you might say, he says. But the image of God, which recommends him to you, is worthy of your giving yourself and all your possessions.

Okay, Calvin was a wonderful writer. You know, he was fiery and spicy. His language was always seasoned with salt, right? So, should we go right out and just sell all of our wealth and give it to the next person we meet?

No, that's not what Calvin means. He's making a point though, right? We are so often, we so often want to judge people and weigh people's merits by their ethical performance, by their ethnicity, by their ability, by their gender, by their age.

We're so good at doing that, right? But Calvin's saying, no, what you need to see is that God has deigned to give his image to all humans, and that's how you should treat them.

Right? Is that how he treated Michael Cervidas? That's a long conversation, but I would say no, because Calvin was a human being, and he was a sinner.

[52:26] yeah. So, last thing I'll say is, it's very easy to think about a lot of these things we listed here, when it comes to our likeness to God, have been more things that we might say are things of the mind, right?

Or things of the soul, right? But it's very interesting that if the image of God isn't something that we have, but something that we are, does that not also mean that in our bodies to we image God, that God has created us with bodies to be his image bearers.

So, how we treat our bodies matters, right? That we are enfleshed people, right? So, let's not think about the image of God just as these sort of, you know, soul or mental realities, but all of who we are, right?

And isn't that what you see when Jesus was here, right? He came not just, you know, to reconcile us to God, although that fundamentally, but then in reconciling us to God, reconciling us to one another, and to creation.

His works of healing, even his nature miracles, right, were signs that he had come to redeem and heal creation in a body, right? So, we too, as we think about being God's image bearers, let us not forget our material creatureliness, and that that is an important part of it as well.

[54:10] Okay, we are so out of time. Let me pray, and then I'll need some help arranging some chairs, and then if you want to stick around and ask questions, we can do that. Father in heaven, thank you so much, and we just give you wonder and praise that you and your infinite kindness and wisdom have created us humans in your image.

Thank you for Jesus in whom we see the true image of God. Father, thank you that in Christ we see what it means to really be your image bearers, and above all, what we see in him is a life of love. So, Lord, help us as your image bearers to be imitators of you in love. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, friends, have a good week. Have a good week.