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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Man in the Image of God”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the word of God to our lives and we pray, that as we consider again some of the theology of the word that we may be instructed and that our instruction may lead to our equipment for every good work as the Apostle has exhorted young Timothy hundreds of years ago. May the word of God, which is inspired and profitable, be profitable for us. And we commit this class to Thee, and we pray that it may be a time in which the name of our Savior is honored and glorified.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[Message] Tonight, our subject is “Man in the Image of God.” And, first of all, a few words by way of introduction and review. We are dealing with the subject of anthropology, or the doctrine of man. The Greek word for Man is *anthropos* and the word *logos*, means reason, speech, reasoning, and so, what we are doing is speaking about man. Anthropology, a division of systematic theology.

I've been insisting that this subject is one of the most appropriate subjects for our day, because one of our great problems is the understanding of ourselves. Now, I'm not speaking of Christians when I say that, but men in general. I wrote a college president a

few weeks ago, who asked me for some subjects in a series that I was going to give at the college, and I gave him a series of topics in anthropology. And he wrote back to me. I asked him, “Were they satisfactory?” (That is, the topics. He doesn’t know what the lectures contain.) And he said, “This is to confirm those subjects as excellent. They are extremely appropriate to the problems of today.”

Anthropology. Our young people are saying, all over the land, who am I, and we’re seeking through the Scriptures to answer just such a question.

I’ve been trying to make these points: that one of the reasons that man is uncertain of himself is because he has lost his sense of sin. And because he has lost his sense of sin, he has lost the key to the knowledge of himself. He cannot really understand himself until he understands that he is a sinner.

And then we talked briefly about evolutions’ denial of man’s creation, man’s fall, and the offer of redemption. And I’ve tried to point out that evolution is a gigantic faith structure. It is not a structure which is devised out of sensible, sound reason as Evolutionists would like us to think, but it is an airy dream, just as much dependent upon faith as any doctrine in the word of God.

Then, we turned to man and we saw him to be a composite of body, soul, and spirit. And, I particularly referred you to the text, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23, where Paul expresses himself in this tripartite fashion. We may not understand specifically and precisely what we mean when we say “tripartite” but we do know that man is composed of body, soul, and spirit. For Paul writes, “Now, may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely and my your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Further, we saw that the evidence points to the fact that the transmission of the spirit and the soul is from parents to children. Now, well call that the doctrine of traducianism, for that is the theological name. That is, that when men are born, their spirit is not given by God as an immediate creation at the moment of their conception or

at the moment of their birth; but rather, the soul and spirit is transmitted from parents to child. And that this best explains the transmission of sinful inclination among men. It is much easier for us to understand how, by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men because all sinned. It is much easier to understand the transmission of sinful inclinations, which the Bible sets forth for us, by the doctrine of traducianism.

We have been saying then that the race is a unity, and that the race is the descendent of Adam in the Garden of Eden. If there are men on earth who are not descended from Adam, then their federal connection with him is broken. And we cannot understand why they die; because, as far as the Bible is concerned, death is traceable to the sin of Adam. But, further, if there are men on earth who are not descended from Adam, then their inheritance in the Gospel promises is also in question.

Now, in this lecture we want to seek to answer further important questions: What was the original state of man? He is said to be created in the image of God. What is the image of God? What is meant by that expression?

Now, we’re going to talk later -- not tonight -- about the effect that sin has upon that image, but tonight we want to specialize in, ‘what was the original state of man?’ This is important. We ought to be able to answer this question, because our answers, the state of man and the effect of sin upon the image of God, affect our doctrine of sin. It affects our doctrine of the atonement. It affects our doctrine of sanctification. In fact, it affects, I hope you will ultimately see, the whole gamut of the areas of theology. So it is important.

Now, I want to apologize again tonight, we are going to deal with a few technical things, but, after tonight, I think you’ve been very, very patient, so far -- After tonight, we will deal more particularly with the exposition of sections of the word. But we have to deal with these things because these questions do arise. So, in our outline, Roman 1, the original state of man.

And for a Scripture reading, instead of reading the Genesis 1 passage, which we have read several times, I’m going to ask you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4, verse 24. We’ll read that one verse. And then we are going to read Colossians chapter 3 in verse 10. Ephesians 4, verse 24. Now, this is in the section of Ephesians in which the Apostle Paul is giving exhortations based upon the calling, which he has outlined in chapters 1 through 3. He’s telling his Ephesians readers to walk worthy of the calling by which they have been called. And then he exhorts them in particular aspects of their calling. And so in verse 24, he says in the 4th chapter,

“And put on the new self, (or, the new man) which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness (which springs from) of the truth.”

Now, I have defined that “of” a little more specifically. It is, I think, a genitive of source. So the truth, which is the product of the spirit, is the source of the righteousness and holiness. And Paul is asking the Christian believers to put on the new man, which has been created. This is the new man created in the believer. Created in righteousness and holiness. And he calls this in the likeness of God. Now, you’ll notice in the likeness of God.

And what is the likeness of God suggested here? Well, it is suggested that that likeness of God must include righteousness and holiness that springs from the truth. That may help us to answer the question, in part, at least, what is the image of God? Well, it must have to do with righteousness and holiness.

Now, chapter 3, verse 10, of Colossians, and one further item is suggested by this text. He tells the Colossian believers that they are not to lie to one another. And he gives the reason why they should not in verse 9 of chapter 3,

“Since you laid aside the old self (or the old man) with its evil practices, and have put on the new self (or new man) who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”

And so here Paul says that God who created the new man within the Christian upon our faith in Jesus Christ, well, he wants us to be sure to put on that new self which has been created and which is being renewed, according to -- or unto a true knowledge according to the image of God. So the image of God includes true knowledge.

Now, I think we could see from just these two texts that to answer the question, “What is the image of God?” correctly, our answer must include in its parts something of the righteousness, the holiness, and the true knowledge of God, which springs from the truth.

All right. The original state of man. Man was created then in the image of God.

We are inclined to think that the first man was a kind of brute man who lurked in caves, who skulked about afraid of his existence. He, accidentally, learned about fire. He then developed rude weapons and tools. He was barely up to the brute stage in the early stages of his existence. And he was easy prey for wild beasts. He eked out his existence by dint of rude experiments in planting and by the chase.

We have learned a great deal about some of the earliest men. The “Lascaux” caves, for example, have given us a higher appreciation of primitive man than this. On cave wall and ceiling, preserved through many centuries, are paintings of animals, skillful advantage of configuration of the rock has been taken, the creatures seem alive. Those figures -- those paintings are the works of ancient geniuses, really.

And, further, we need to remember this, too. The whole modern estimate of primitive man is based upon a kind of idolatry of artifacts, which is one of the great corporate sins of our own civilization. C. S. Lewis has said we forget that our prehistoric ancestors, B.C., would help us if we would just watch B.C., but listen to what that comic

strip says. But we forget that our prehistoric ancestors made all the most useful discoveries with the exception of chloroform, to which I referred a lesson or two ago. We owe language to them. We owe the family to them, speaking naturally. We owe clothing to them. We owe the use of fire to them. We owe the domestication of animals to them. We owe the wheel to them. We owe the ship to them. We owe poetry to them. One of the earliest things we read in the Bible is the poetry -- in the 4th chapter of the Book of Genesis. We owe agriculture to them. And, I’m not too happy about this, but we owe rock music to them, too. [Laughter] Now, I’m sure that’s the kind of music that Cain must have been responsible for and Tubal-Cain, his ancestors.

So the idea that primitive man was a kind of brute who had no sort of civilization at all, that he was ignorant, and that we are far more intelligent is totally irresponsible and wrong. The chances are that the only way that we surpass him is in some of the technical, scientific advances that have been made on the basis of his original discoveries. As far as our morals, as far as our mental equipment, as far as other things like this, we are, as far as I can tell, not surpassing them at all.

So let’s not think then about Adam as a kind of rude caveman who, as I say, skulked around in caves, afraid of the animals. What we can say about Adam, I think, we can say just briefly, first of all: Adam was created in maturity and perfection, capital A in our outline.

Now, I don’t think by saying this that Adam was necessarily in the highest state of excellence. But he was not created in infancy. He was no imbecile who gradually managed to learn articulation and speech. He was created, so far as we know, an adult. Created by God, and over him God said, “He is very good.” He was perfectly adapted to the end for which he was created. And so, I believe, he was created in maturity and, I believe, he was created in perfection.

I am not suggesting that there were not means by which Adam might grow, of course. Well, that is probably true. In fact, I’m sure it is true. But I think it is fair to say

he was created in maturity and perfection. He was created an adult with many capacities, and also he was created perfectly adapted to the end for which he was made in both his body and his soul. It would have been a strange thing if he was created an adult, perfectly formed in his body, and yet his mind and his soul, the soul of an infant. That would have been a strange creature. So there is no evidence in the Bible that he was created in any way other than as an intelligent, perfect human being.

Now, he was created in holiness, not in innocency. We read in our Bibles often that the age of innocence is the description that we ought to give to the experience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. With that, I disagree. Adam was not created in innocency. As a matter of fact, no one is ever created in innocency. His regeneration, we have read in these texts, is the restoration to his original state.

We have just read in Paul two passages which say that the work that is going on within us now, is a work of restoration to the image of God. And, we are told in that image of God, it is in righteousness and holiness and in the knowledge of the truth.

And so it is not right for us to say that man was created innocent. That is a Pelagian doctrine. I know, you have fallen for it. I did too, for a long time, till I thought about it. But I do believe that there was with man, a – if I may use the word – con-created holiness. That is, Adam was created with holiness. He did not attain to holiness. He was created with holiness.

I want to tell you why I think that is true. Adam was created holy for; in the first place, his maturity demanded it. He was not created an infant. And a perfect man without the knowledge or love of God would be a contradiction. So if Adam were created mature, perfectly adapted for his life, and he did not have the knowledge of God, he did not have love for God, well, that would be a contradiction.

Second, the idea of the will demands that Adam be created perfect, not in innocency, in holiness, not in innocency. An un-inclined will -- And I’ll grant that men have wills. I do. Some people have too much will, and so we usually speak of them as a

very strong-willed person. Everybody has the faculty of will. But an un-inclined will is an anomaly. A will must be inclined one way or the other. You cannot have an un-inclined will. You cannot have a kind of neutral will. It wouldn’t be a will if it were neutral.

If it is undetermined either toward good or evil, our wills, then it is not a voluntary faculty. It’s not a will faculty. So the very fact that we have a will means that we are inclined one way or the other. So Adam was not created with an un-inclined will. As a matter of fact, an un-inclined will would represent an un-inclined character. And so there could be no decision, because there would be nothing behind his will.

Third, if holiness is not created by God in Adam, then the creature would be improving the creator’s work. In other words, Adam is created in innocency but he gains his holiness by virtue of his own activity. Well, that’s contradictory to all that we learn in the Bible. For, from beginning to end, we learn that holiness comes from God. It doesn’t come from men. And so Adam was created in holiness not in innocency. He knew God. He knew him in the fullness of personal contact with him. He knew him in un-dimmed seed.

Now, I do not think, as I have told you many a time, I do not think that Adam saw the Father, in fellowship directly with the Father. But, he had fellowship with Jesus Christ who came down into the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. And the Creator and his creature had fellowship, one with another. So, Adam had fellowship with God -- God the Son. That’s why we read in the Book of Revelation in which we have a restoration of that which is lost in the Garden of Eden. We read that, “They shall see his face.” That is a restoration to that which was taking place in the Garden of Eden. Now, there may be maturity and further growth. But, Adam saw God. He fellowshiped with God -- he knew God. He knew him in righteousness. He knew him in holiness. He knew him in the knowledge that God gave him. So Adam, then, was created in maturity and perfection.

B, the text of Scripture says that Adam’s original state was in the image of God. Generally, we can all agree I think that phrase must mean that Adam was like God in some way. In the image of God surely means Adam was like God. Now, it does not refer to Adam’s essence. It does not mean that Adam, in his essence, was like God, because God’s essence is -- What did we learn in our studies in the attributes? What is the essence of God? It is incommunicable. He is the only self-existent being in the universe. He cannot communicate his eternal, divine essence.

You’re never going to be God. Don’t think for one moment you are ever going to be God. We’ll talk later, ultimately, about what Peter means when he says we have become partakers of divine nature. But one thing that does not mean -- and all theologians agree -- is that we will possess the self-existent essence of God. That is incommunicable.

Well, this does not mean that we are like God in body, for God does not have a body. Remember, he is immense. What does the word immense mean in theology? That’s not a description of some theatrical production. What does immense mean in the Bible? Well, it means that God fills the universe. Fills it. And so, in the case of the body, God does not have a body such as man. He, by his own divine nature, is immense.

This does not mean that Adam was created in holiness only. For, as we shall see, the Fall came and Adam lost his holiness. But Paul still says that we are in the image of God after our holiness is gone. So our -- the image of God is not to be identified with holiness. It must be something more than that; for we are still in the image of God.

That’s one of the reasons why we should not murder, Moses says, because men are in the image of God. That’s why capital punishment was instituted, because when one kills another man, he is murdering someone made in the image of God. Genesis, chapter 9, verse 6, states that, as you know.

So the express in the image of God must have to do not only with man’s moral makeup, but it must have to do with his mental makeup, the structure of his being, as well. So let’s move, secondly, to the meaning, then, of the image of God.

Three things we need to remember. I’ll read the changes on this point before we look at capital A. Likeness does not remove the difference between God and men. Now, when we say that man is made in the likeness of God we are not trying to suggest that there is not some difference. We must always keep that in mind.

On the other hand, if we say man is made in the image of God, then we know that when some theologian tells us that God is the wholly other person and he is so different from us, and so beyond us that we can have no real contact with him, then we know that that is wrong, too. He is not the wholly other, for he has revealed himself in the fact that he has created us in his image. So there is a relationship.

I think, also, we should remember when we say that man is the image of God, that that expression is designed to distinguish man from the animals. They are not created in the image of God. But we are created in the image of God. All right.

The meaning of the image. Now, I’m not going to say anything tonight about the views of the Romanist -- I, once before, referred to them. And I’m not going to say anything about the views of the Lutherans, with this exception. Martin Luther felt that the image of God in man was the image of God in the whole man, body and soul. In other words, he felt that Adam was perfect inwardly in his intellect and in his will. And he was also outwardly perfect in his body. Martin Luther felt that when man sinned he lost the image of God entirely; that is, that man today is no longer in the image of God. He felt that man was utterly leprous and unclean. But, he felt that the image might be restored by redemption.

The interesting thing is that he felt that man was in the image of God in his bodily form as well as in his whole man, his soul. In other words, he held -- he believed that Adam’s eyes were sharper and clearer than those of the lynx and the eagle. He felt that

man was stronger than the lion and the bear. He said he handled them like trained dogs. Now, I don’t know whether that’s true or not. If we were given an instant replay of the Garden of Eden, I wouldn’t be shocked to find something like that, I must confess.

But I think that Luther’s view, that the image of God in man is now totally lost is really not true to Scripture, although the point is not a significant point. Nevertheless, I’m going to ask you to turn to one passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, in order that you may see that that aspect of Luther’s generally sound views is not really sound.

This is the chapter which men often refer to which women skip, but which we all puzzle over deep down within. Paul writes,

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, (Isn’t that a wonderful little clause?) and God is the head of Christ. Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and the glory of God; (Now, notice – since he is the image and glory of God) but the woman is the glory of man.”

Now, I think you can see from that, that according to Paul, man is still the image and the glory of God.

Let’s come to the view of the Reformed theologians which is generally the view that I believe is scriptural. Evangelicals find the image of God, generally speaking, in

man’s personality. They think of his intelligence, his moral responsibility. They think of this as also inclusive of the knowledge of God. They believe that the Fall is not totally destructive of the image of God but that, as a result of the Fall, the image of God in man is spoiled. Man is a spoiled species. He has not lost his likeness to God totally. But sin has made a difference.

Now, trying to define the image of God in man is a very difficult thing. I’m going to suggest that there are three aspects to it. First, (I believe I have those on the board.) First, man’s rational nature. Man’s reason is a unique endowment. It is, obviously, unique because the animals don’t have reason. You might say, “I know lots of men who don’t have any reason, either.” Well, that’s a relative thing. Almost all men have reason unless they are sick in one form or another; totally irrational -- they are insane. But men possess reason.

That unique endowment enables them to know God. In Adam’s case, he was able after he knew God to name the animals, and name them beautifully. He was able to govern. He was able to keep the Garden of Eden. He was able, so far as we can tell now, to do many things. He had a unique endowment. As far as I know, he never made any mistakes in arithmetic. He never said 9 times 9 is 80. He knew 9 times 9 is 81. Since the fall, there are lots of people who make mistakes in arithmetic because our reason has also been affected by the fall. And when we talk about man’s will, we shall discover that man’s will was affected by the fall, also. But, in Adam’s case, no.

Isn’t it striking, too, that Jesus Christ is called, The *Logos*, the Word. And *logos* frequently meant reason. The Reason of God. In a sense, Jesus Christ is the expression of the rational factor in God himself.

Lots of people don’t like reason. D. H. Lawrence talked that one of the greatest calamities that ever affected the human race was the use of mind and reason. He thought that men ought to just express themselves. And whether it was a reasonably good thing to do or not was beside the point. Just express yourself. That philosophy is not absent

from us today. There are many who feel that it is the thing we ought to do, to do our thing, regardless of whether it’s rational or not. As far as I can tell, that’s contrary to man’s own nature. That’s why, when we express ourselves, when we do our thing we are really rebelling against God, as a rule, unless it’s something like Mark Spitz. He’s doing his thing and doing it very well. But, in his case, it’s a rather rational thing as his opponents can testify.

Now, secondly, man also has a moral nature. Righteousness and holiness we saw referred to in Ephesians and Colossians. Righteousness and holiness from the truth. Now, that’s original righteousness, in other words, Adam was created in original righteousness. Now, that has been lost by sin. But that was his original state. And this righteousness, this holiness, this knowledge, why, it comes from the spirit of truth. And when Adam was created, God as I said called what he saw, “very, very good.” So he is endowed with a rational nature. He is endowed with a moral nature.

And, third, Adam was also given, as a consequence -- I’m inclined to think this was really not, strictly speaking, part of his image, but the result of it, he was given authority. Now, that is of course, a reflection of God. Because, remember, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man. And the man is the head of the woman and God is the head of Christ.

And so we have God and Christ and man and the woman. And man is in the image of God. It is evident that included in that idea is the idea of authority. And so just as God has authority over the Messiah, in his Messianic work, just as the Messianic King has authority over man, so the man has authority over the woman. That’s why Paul says, he did not want a woman to usurp authority over the man. So that is, it seems to me, the expression of the image of God, but an integral part of it. That’s why when we read in the Book of Genesis, in Genesis chapter 1 in verse 26, remember:

“Then God said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule -- ” (So here, in the likeness of God and let them rule. Verse 28,) “God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it;”

Having said in the preceding verse, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” So, man’s regal office flows out of his rational nature and his moral nature.

Now, I’m not going to say anything about the views of contemporary theologians; except just to name these views because it really will not help us too much. Some of them are rather interesting. For example, Karl Barth, perhaps our greatest 20th century theologian after a lengthy discussion of the image of God in man concluded that, “The image of God in man had to do with the relationship of male to female.” And, as you can see he based that on Genesis, chapter 1, verse 26 through 28.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

And so the image of God consisted in the male-female relationship. Very few theologians have followed Professor Barth in this because it does not agree with those texts in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 to which we referred. The work of God in redemption is not a restoration of this relationship. It exists -- still exists. That is probably not a correct interpretation. Others have had other views. Some have spoken of the image of God as being only reason, and that we should think of it only in that way.

Let’s go on to the last section of our study. The Problem of the Pelagians. Because this is involved with my assertion that Adam was created holy and not innocent. Now, I have to go over this all the time because it’s so important. And there are some of

you who are not here or who have not been here, and you probably are not familiar with what I have been saying over and over again about Pelagius.

If you want to know the story of any heretic and the influence that he has had on the Christian church, don’t study some modern heretic like Bishop Pike. Go back a little farther in history. Go back to Pelagius. Go back to Sosinus. Go back to some of the great heretics; whose heresy is just repeated over and over again in modern heresies.

Most of the heresies that we see today are heresies that existed hundreds of years ago. Christian Science is nothing more than a modern form of ancient Gnosticism, for example. You wouldn’t be disturbed by that if you knew about Gnosticism, because most of the lineaments of that false doctrine are found right there in Gnosticism many, many hundreds of years ago.

Pelagius was a British monk, that is, he was a churchman. He was a very popular preacher. He came to Rome, preached in Rome during the early part of the 5th century. Now, there was a great Christian theologian living at that time. His name was Augustine. He was the Bishop of Hippo. And Augustine, probably next to Calvin, has influenced Western thought tremendously.

Augustine carried on quite a controversy with Pelagius in the Christian church because Pelagius was a legalist. Pelagius preached that men were not fallen, really. Men did not need to be redeemed, really. Men possessed within themselves the power to choose God and thus, they could come to God on their own power. What he preached, really, was a form of rationalized moralism. Pelagius was a son of legalism. The idea that men can approach God on the basis of what they do.

Now, we know, of course, that almost all -- in fact, I think all false doctrine flows out of this idea that man can approach God on the basis of his good works. Now, Pelagius, in view of the fact that he lived in the 4th and 5th centuries, he conformed his heresy to the age. He set it within the culture of his day. But it was the same old legalism that man has exhibited from time immemorial. Well, Augustine, out of the

controversies, was clearly declared the victor in the providence of God, I believe, by the Christian church and Pelagius’ doctrine was characterized as heresy.

But you see, men like the doctrine that we can, somehow or other, be pleasing to God in ourselves. And furthermore, we are often deceived and fail to sense some of the real issues at stake in some of the common things that we say. So it wasn’t but just in the 6th century -- Augustine died in the 5th century -- that Semi-Pelagianism arose.

Now, Semi-Pelagianism acknowledged that man was generally lost. That man could be, generally, redeemed. But Semi-Pelagianism taught that while grace was essential to salvation -- we must have grace to be saved -- they -- The Semi-Pelagianists felt that grace was added when the first step was taken by the will of man.

In other words, when the Gospel comes to us, we have within our own wills the power to respond. And when we respond positively to the message then God gives us grace so that we come to Christ. Now, we are not totally brought to Christ as you can see. We are brought to Christ by the grace of God plus the autonomous action of our own will. And so, the Pelagians -- the Semi-Pelagians talked about positive volition. They would talk about those who were Christians were those who possessed positive volition. And when the Gospel came to them, possessed of positive volition, when they responded God gave them grace so that they were brought to Christ.

Now, there are many people who preach this form of doctrine in the 20th century as I have said to you over and over again trying to warn you of the principle in back of this; for it is the age-old principle of legalism. Called grace or not, it is the principle of legalism. But there are many people who don’t realize what this really means. It means, in effect, that there is something in man that is acceptable to God. The action -- the autonomous action -- of his will --

Now, the Bible speaks plainly against this. The Bible says, we are born, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but we are born of God. Now notice, it says we

are born of God. Well, a Semi-Pelagian would say, oh, yes, we’re born of God. But it says, “not of the will of man.”

Now, Paul says, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

James says, “It is of HIS own will that he begat us by the word of truth.”

So, you see, the Bible says that we are not born by the action of the human will, speaking autonomously. Now, our wills must respond -- but it is God who initiates the work in our inmost being and out of what he does in the heart, our will does respond. But his grace is responsible for the action of our will. It is not our must act and then God gives us grace to save us. It is by his grace that our will responds so that salvation is truly of the Lord.

You get it? You don’t get it?

You see, some of you are saying, “I do get it.” Well, praise the Lord! [laughter] A few of you are beginning to understand what salvation by grace really is. Now, I’ll keep repeating it whenever it comes up.

Again, the Pelagians raised two objections, two questions touching Adam’s original righteousness. The first is the problem of ability and obligation. Now, what they claimed was that Adam received only a negative innocence. They said, positive righteousness must be the result of the acts of the human will. Now, if that were true, from the standpoint of Bible doctrine, if positive righteousness is the result of the acts of the will, then that principle would preclude the possibility of original sin and indwelling sin. Because, we could not have any sin apart from the action of the human will. But we know, the Bible teaches, that we inherit sin. And we inherit the sin before there is any activity of the human will. So we know from the teaching of Scripture that that is wrong.

But you see, the other makes good sense because, you see, Arminianism and Pelagianism are religions of common sense. All of these things are the kinds of things that men would say out of their own natural nature. That’s why, when I say these things,

some of you who are just being introduced to them, you say, “Ah, that can’t be right. That doesn’t sound right. That sounds wrong. That sounds unjust.”

Now, this is the very same thing that Paul had to contend with in Romans. Paul preaches his doctrine of salvation by grace, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” How can God judge men with this kind of doctrine? All of these objections that the natural man raises -- Arminianism, Pelagianism, they are religions of common sense. So they said that positive righteousness must be the result of the acts of the will.

And then they went on further, to the ultimate assumption, that ability limits obligation. A man cannot have obligation beyond his ability to do. A man can only be praised or blamed for his own acts within his own ability. That sounds very good, now, doesn’t it? Sounds like good common sense? Well, that’s what it is. It’s good common sense, but it’s not spiritual teaching.

Let me illustrate why -- or say why. First, the Bible disagrees with it. The Bible says, for example, concerning Christians, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

For it is the acts of your will by which you make yourselves holy. You know that the text doesn’t say that. The text says, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” So the things that we will and the things that we do, in our work of sanctification, are things which God has willed and done in us. Pelagian doctrine is untrue doctrine. It’s not biblical doctrine. Sounds good, but --

Secondly, this idea that ability limits obligation and that we can only be responsible for the things that are the acts of our will is not true to our own consciousness. We hold ourselves responsible for emotion, impulsive acts which precede all deliberation. If I were to suddenly, out of anger, pull out of my pocket a .45 and shoot Bob Nixon through the heart and then were to say to you, “That was not an act of my will. It was just something that came over me. I suddenly felt this antipathy toward

him. I just blew up and shot him.” Well, that’s what my lawyer would probably try to say at the trial. He would probably try to say, “He was temporarily insane.” He would mean by that that what I did was not premeditated, not a thing of my will at all. We recognize that. But we know that we are responsible. Our inmost consciousness tells us that we are responsible. We may not be as responsible as under other circumstances; the law recognizes distinctions like this. But we recognize that we are responsible for our emotion, spontaneous acts.

Common sense disagrees with this idea, too, that is good common sense. It’s true that an action, against a man’s will, can be to him neither praise nor blame. If I do something good against my will, I cannot be praised for it. If I do something that is bad, against my will, I cannot be blamed for it. But it’s a different thing to say that there can be no blame when a man’s will does not act positively.

If not, there could be no sins of omission. Sins of omission are caused by failure to choose. But we recognize they are still sins of omission. If I do not do certain things, I am, in the sight of God, responsible, even though I have not necessarily willed not to do them.

Let me read you a statement from Robert Dabney, our Southern Presbyterian theologian friend. Now, if you have read Hayre, you won’t like this quotation. And I don’t understand Dr. Dabney really about this because he seems to have a prejudice against red-haired people. [Laughter] And since one of my sisters is red-haired, and one of my children has red hair, some of my cousins have red hair, and my father really had red hair. I don’t know what to make of this but there are just some people that are prejudiced, I guess.

He says, “Men strangely forget that their free agency may as spontaneously prefer and thus make them responsible for a state which was original --”(He means something that they were born with.) “As though this preference of theirs had originated it.”

“Here is a man who was born with carroty hair” I looked that up in the dictionary. It is a word in the dictionary. Carroty hair. Never thought of a red haired person being called a person with carroty hair. But it said carrot-red-colored hair. “He is absurdly proud of its supposed beauty and prefers it to any other. Everyone decides that thereby he exhibits precisely the same bad taste as though having been gifted by nature with the finest brown hair; he had produced this unsightly color with a hair dye. So he, who naturally having a perverse disposition, delights in, prefers and fosters it, is as truly spontaneous and responsible therein as though he had himself acquired it in the impossible way that Pelagians imagine.”

In other words, it is true that we recognize that we may be responsible for things that are ours originally, because we delight in them. We prefer them. And so, though I am born in sin, I am still responsible for it because I delight in it. I like it. I persist in it. I don’t want to change.

Now, if I were saying, “I want to change, but I could not.” That’s another matter. But men who were born in sin love it. Like it. They prefer it. And though they cannot change their status, apart from the work of God, they are still responsible. For they love it. And they like it. And they want to persist in it. And they don’t want to be changed.

Now, also, original depravity in infants and infant salvation disagree with this idea. No sin of choice exists in infants; yet they die. They are infants. They could not really be redeemed. For, according to this doctrine, they should decide for redemption. But they are infants, they cannot decide. So, salvation should be beyond them, according to the Pelagian doctrine. As a matter of fact, their principles demand the damnation of all who die in infancy. So this idea of ability and obligation -- well, the Pelagian idea is wrong. Man was created in righteousness. And that was God’s original creation. Not in innocency.

Now, one other problem before our time is up. The problem of mortality. Pelagians teach that man was created mortal. And that the creature’s death is as natural

and unavoidable as the fall of leaves from the tree. They do not teach that Adam would have lived forever. They affirm that Adam’s body was perishable. Because, Adam had to sleep, that evidenced that it was not perfect. Adam had to eat food; that evidenced that his was just a mortal body. Adam grew older and older, and so, as a result of that, we must believe that men would have died apart from sin. Further, God told men to be fruitful and multiply. The idea of propagation proves that succession was intended, so they say. And that man was to die.

And finally, 1 Corinthians 15:14 through 15, shows according to Pelagian reasoning that Adam was not created for immortality, but destined to decay. Because, it is said, he had a body of the earth. And the resurrection, he is to have, and we are to have a body of the spirit. Remember, we have a natural body and a spiritual body.

Well, let me just close by saying this: Would Adam have died had he not sinned? No, as far as the Bible is concerned, there is no evidence, whatsoever, of a solid character, that Adam would have died if he had not sinned. In fact, all of the statements of Scripture imply that he would have lived on, had he not sinned.

“In the day though eatest thereof, though shall surely die.”

And then, Paul says in Romans 5:12,

“For this cause, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” --
Death by sin.”

Death, then, is not simply a chemical dissolution that happens to everyone because we are all born mortal. Death is a penal misery inflicted upon men because of their sin.

Well, now, one last question. Was Adam’s body, as originally formed, adapted to an immortal state of existence? Was Adam’s body, as originally formed, adapted to an immortal state of existence? Some of the fathers said, if Adam passed his probation in earthly paradise, he would be translated to the anti-type, the heavenly paradise.

Luther said, “If Adam had eaten of the Tree of Life, his body would have been preserved and perpetually used.” Others have said, in obedience, Adam’s body would have been changed as those are raptured at the resurrection. That if he had obeyed, he would have experienced the great snatch. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

I’m inclined to think, and I don’t say this with any dogmatism at all because I don’t think the Bible, as far as I can tell, has anything definite to say about it. I’m inclined to think that Adam’s body was adapted to immortality as created.

The only thing I can see that may bear on this, and I’m not sure exactly how it does bear on it, but it seems to say something rather mysterious. We read in chapter 2, verse 25,

“And Adam and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Apparently, there was something about their bodies, in that state, that marked them off as different than anything we know now. Perhaps they were clothed in some form of glory, the glory of righteousness and holiness, and true knowledge of God. And then we read, for when Adam and Eve sinned, verse 7 of chapter 3,

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;”

Well, this does not seem to be that they knew what had been true all along but they saw that the glory had departed. So I’m inclined to think that that may be the

intention of the Biblical record. But it is sure that the Bible doesn’t really tell us a great deal about that. And so we should not, perhaps, make too much of it either.

For next time, we will look at the probation of Adam in the Garden of Eden as we continue our study of anthropology and, sub-heading, Pelagianism. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the free grace by which we are saved. We thank Thee that Thou hast, in wonderful grace, moved within our inmost being, bringing us, by Thy grace, to the decision that has meant life. And now we know that salvation is of the Lord. Make us, Lord, grateful and thankful for this marvelous grace and enable us to serve Thee out of our gratitude. For Jesus’ name. Amen.