Disciples Church

A Firm Foundation – Lesson 3

Week of April 18th, 2018

**TEACHING NOTES**

Good evening, I can’t tell you how excited I am to be in this series and I look forward to all the ways it will bless you and the world around us as we take these lessons and really look to putting them into action in practical ways.

We have had to and will continue to lay the foundations for this series so even if it seems like we aren’t heavily focused directly on apologetics don’t miss the reason or weight behind how we are doing this. I don’t want to teach you how to simply regurgitate things we’ve taught, I actually prefer that you understand the why behind all of it so when you find yourself in a situation that we haven’t covered you’ll still be prepared to give a defense to ANYONE who asks about the hope that is in you!

1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

Remember how the passage in Peter starts, honor Christ Jesus in your heart then be prepared. Also remember how it ends, do this with gentleness and respect. When you begin to see how deep this truth is and realize that we are not just pointing out inconsistencies but utterly wrecking people’s entire foundation for how they live, you’ll see the great need to be loving, gentle, and respectful. Lord willing, these steps will allow you to present the gospel to a soul that God may grant repentance and faith! This is always our ultimate aim!

With that, let’s pray and then dig in!

**LESSON 3: Character of MAN**

It’s vitally important to understand the character of man when it comes to apologetics. The reason we need to know this is that when we give a defense of our faith we are appealing to or declaring to others with the understanding that they will use whatever “Reasoning=character” they have to receive or interpret our defense. Understanding how people think and what their minds are capable of, because of their character, will give us a greater ability to share our faith and defend it. A right understanding of this will also help us be able to discern the way in which we think and how our character affects us when it comes to the knowledge of God and His truths.

***Intro:*** How many of you of have been in a foreign place and assumed someone spoke a different language.

So there you are trying hard to communicate with someone but because of your assumptions (lack of knowledge) you end up looking silly when they explain that the actually speak your language?

VIDEO CLIP (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xb4DUD9OZM)

Understanding the character of man and how we think is very important. Seeing the biblical flow and reason behind our character is the aim for our time tonight. I want to cover the three main areas of the character of man as another foundational piece to understanding presuppositional apologetics.

These are 1st the character of man before the fall (pre-fall), 2nd the character of man in sin (post fall), and 3rd the character of man post salvation (post redemption). REPEAT

1. **The character of man before sin**

Genesis 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.

Let me begin with the definition of character.

Character: the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.

1. **Man in the image of God:**

Man was the only created thing made in the image of God. This truth has a lot of implications but for our time we will need to focus on just a glimpse of these. Outwardly man is able to represent God in physical characteristics and ability. Inwardly man is able to think and reason beyond any other living creature, and man has a unique soul that will never perish because they have been made in God’s image. God also placed man in a role of headship meaning he gave us the responsibility to rule over the world He created. Now before sin man was made in God’s image perfectly:

Eccles. 7:29 God made man upright

In the garden Adam and Eve prior to sin were perfect and lived in perfect harmony with God.

They walked before Him without shame. In Colossians Paul makes a comment about men being restored but he makes a reference to what we are being restored to. In this we see what Adam and Eve had in the garden prior to the fall. They had a true knowledge after the image of the creator. He also says in Ephesians that those being redeemed and sanctified are returning to the righteousness and holiness of truth.

From these we see two important qualities of man before the fall. First they had true knowledge-Adam and eve had not set aside the creator creature distinction, so for all truth that they received, they depended completely upon God to give it to them, and they agreed or conformed all of their thoughts to the standards of God. This is why Adam was able to keep the garden and name all the animals, he was uniquely aware of his need for God to reveal truth and submitted all his own thoughts to God’s. Before the fall man never argued with God as if they were the creator, man knew the only way to know truth was to receive it from God. The second major point is that man had “righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Adam knew because he was created and not God that he needed to learn from God what was proper and what was not. This is why Adam and Eve lived in peace with God, they believed Him and acted out of that true belief. In every way possible, man before sin knew truth and lived according to that truth fully dependent upon the God of truth.

1. **Sinless and finite:**

Although man was the perfect image of God prior to the fall, man was still a finite creature. God is omnipresent (everywhere at all times), man is limited to wherever his body is. God is omnipotent (all powerful), man is incomparably weak and limited before God.

This helps us understand this critical point, in the same way God is omniscient (all knowing) and therefore the source of truth, man is limited in his knowledge and therefore incapable of knowing truth with certainty outside of the all-knowing Creator revealing truths to him.

Heb. 4:13b there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open laid and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (God).

Isaiah 55:9 As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My (God’s) ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

So what we need to see clearly is that even though man knew that truth and morality came from God and they believed it and were in peace with God, they were still limited in regards to their depth of knowledge, they were still not God. There is and always was a Creator – creature distinction. This truth shows us that man can only know truth for certain through what God has revealed to him. Otherwise man is incapable of knowing truth for certain because the very things man does not know can prove what he thinks he knows to be false.

ILL: There was a man from California who was on a business trip in Florida. He was driving on a Saturday in a school zone when he got pulled over. The officer stepped up to his window said, “license and registration please,” then he did the normal “Do you know why I pulled you over” question. The man replied I have no idea officer, to which the officer replied you were speeding. The man began to argue with the officer so the officer asked him what he thought the speed limit was. The man said it was 40 mph, the officer said you’re in a school zone its 25 mph. The man replied “but it’s a Saturday, there is no school” the officer while looking at his driver’s license replied “maybe that’s the law in California, but here in Florida when you’re in a school zone the speed limit is 25 no matter what day of the week it is.” The officer then said “Ignorance of the law is no excuse Mr. Scott” and he proceeded to give my step dad a ticket. You see my stepdad knew what the law was here in California and assumed it was the same in Florida. The problem is even though my stepdad thought he had truth, and he was obeying what he thought the speed limit was, what he didn’t know revealed to him that the truth he thought he had was false and it cost him.

If you do not have exhaustive knowledge about all things then you cannot be **certain** that you know anything **for certain**, unless someone who does have exhaustive knowledge reveals truth to you. God is the only source of truth however, God does not reveal all things to us;

Duet. 29:29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

Man’s knowledge even in the garden prior to the fall was finite and still is. We can only know what the infinite God reveals to us and there are things He doesn’t reveal. What we must see is that man is dependent on God to know truth, even prior to the fall. This dependence was not an effect of the fall. All that Adam knew he knew truly because he went to the only source for all his truth and that was God. Even though Adam was perfect there were things he did not know, Adam was never omniscient. Because Adam was finite he was limited by what was revealed to him. You see God’s complete knowledge validates our incomplete knowledge so long as we depend on Him.

Here’s an example for us today. At the incarnation, Jesus took on a human nature yet remained eternally, fully divine at the same time. Jesus Christ is one Person, fully God and fully man. Now to an extent we can understand some of this, but to another extent there is mystery. If we carry out this truth we will run out of the ability to explain it, however it will not make it **less true**. For example how can the incarnate Christ Jesus grow in wisdom? Or, how did Jesus die on a cross? You see I can answer these to an extent but after a certain point I can’t fully unpack it because I am finite, mankind is finite. But us being finite, doesn’t mean truth beyond or understanding is not true. God has said what is true and so we believe it.

God has to reveal things to us so that we can have truth, but there’s still mystery that we won’t be given. So long as we depend on God for knowledge, the greatest mysteries will not keep us from truth!

1. **Logic, God and Man:**

Logic in relation to God and man is an issue that will come up all throughout our apologetics.

Logic - reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity.

Thinking and reasoning are the use of logic. Adam in the garden before the fall was a thinking and reasoning creature. The level of ability given to man in thinking and reasoning are two ways God made him distinct from all the rest of creation. Now Adam’s ability to reason and think was limited and totally dependent upon God. He patterned his thinking according to God’s instruction. Adam never thought he could use his reasoning to be independent from God. Because he did this his reason and thought was always limited to what God revealed. God was always looked to as the foundation and revealer of truth because Adam was made in God’s image and was without sin.

Now because reasoning and logic existed before the fall, we can know a few things about it. First reason is not bad, many people have thought science and reason is evil because it is often used by unbelievers to claim problems about God. We must see that reasoning and logic are not bad in and of themselves, a lost and sinful world that uses them apart from God leads to falsehood and evil, but reason or logic itself is not bad. Don’t be afraid of it. Reason is not opposed to faith or truth.

Second, logic is not above God, logic is a reflection of God. Even though God stoops down and reveals Himself in terms that creatures can understand (creaturely reason), logic is not above God or equal to God. Human logic is a part of creation and it was given to us to reflect God (made in His image) but logic is not God. **(This is important because most unbelievers rely on logic as if it’s an ultimate standard)**

Because logic is a part of creation it has limitations. Human logic is a changing and developing system. Human logic cannot be used to judge truth and falsehood because it is limited. Human logic can’t explain completely the trinity because logic is not God.

The real problem is that man wants to reject logic for blind faith or they want to give logic some independence from God. Neither of these views were present in creation while man was without sin. So we must see that by creation and before sin, man used logic and it reflected God so long as it was used in submission and dependence upon God and it was good.

Now this gets tricky because here is where we turn the page. When Woman was tempted in the garden she decided that she could use her own logic or reasoning to declare if something was true or false.

Remember God had said, “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” The serpent came up to the woman and said “Did God really say…?” So let’s turn the page to the character of man in sin.

**2: The character of Man in Sin**

1 Corinthians 2:14The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

When this passage refers to the natural person, it is referring to people after the fall in their natural state, mainly enslaved to sin. If we truly want to know ourselves we must know what sin has done to the character of man.

John Calvin wrote in his institutes “The knowledge of ourselves lies first in considering what we were given at creation…., secondly, to call to mind our miserable condition after Adam’s fall.” Because of sin the entire character of man is affected and therefore different than it was when man was made upright in the garden. In fact this has affected man so much that man actually denies his total dependence on God. I’m going to start by revisiting the fall to see what happened at the fall and follow with the consequences thereafter.

1. **The Fall of Man:**

God made man and woman in the garden and made them in His image. Since they knew they were **created** they dedicated their life to God their creator, they depended on Him. Unfortunately this did not last for long. God placed a tree in the middle of the garden and tested Adam and Eve to see if they would remain in this state of honoring the Creator – creature distinction. God gave them this command.

Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

There was a lot more at stake than just abstaining from eating a certain fruit. Adam was denied the fruit from this tree to prove his obedience to God and willingly submit all things to Him. God (the only source of truth) revealed His will about the tree. Adam and Eve had a choice to recognize and obey the authority of God or deny Him and their dependence upon Him. We see in Genesis 3 the choice they make. In this passage the devil (serpent) approached Eve and tempts her to forsake what God commanded. This placed the most important decision of Eve’s life in front of her:

Genesis 3:1-5 1Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

2And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 4But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The serpent’s words contradicted what God had said. Eve was faced with a decision, who was more trustworthy? God had said you will die, the serpent said surely you won’t die. Who should she believe? The woman had to believe one or the other.

Now it ***wasn’t just*** a matter of believing between God and serpent, die and won’t die. The crafty serpent added to the temptation. He suggested to Eve that if she ate the fruit the Creator-creature distinction would be removed. “You will be like God.” When he did this he insinuated that man could have the ability to be like God.

Now as crazy as it seems Eve was deceived and the temptation to be like God proved to be too attractive, so she took the fruit. Now this was huge. Eve, on her own accord, decided that she could discern between right and wrong and that she wanted to keep this ability, she wanted to be God.

She decided she no longer depended on God for truth or morals but that she could make those decisions herself.

Genesis 3:6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Eve didn’t immediately grab the fruit and eat. She didn’t just immediately believe the serpent instead she did something new, unique to the creature at this point.

She looked at the options herself and chose to place herself on the throne disregarding her total dependence upon the Creator and deciding she, on her own will and ability, can decide what’s best. She looked at the tree herself and said it looks good, the fruit looks good, surely it won’t kill me, rather it will make me like God, and I want it so I’m going to take it. Eve said to herself why listen to everyone else I have the ability to decide for myself and this is what I want. When Eve did this she rejected the distinction that she was creature and God was creator. She said I no longer need to depend on the creator for truth and morals I can decide this on my own. She took a lie presented to her by a serpent and put it on the scale against God’s revelation setting herself up as the ultimate judge.

It’s so critical that you guys see this because this is what we do! Eve decided that she was the ultimate standard and could discern what was good or bad, right or wrong. Eve then gave the fruit to Adam who was with her and he ate it and the human race fell under sin.

This is the essence of sin, that man in his rebellion denies his dependence upon God in everything. Man assumes his ability to be independent of God. Essentially every time we sin this is the root, we decide to take God’s throne and declare what we want to do (when it is in contrast to God’s declarations) as supreme and so we do it.

At this point I want to remind you that even though man decided that they could work outside the creator creature distinction, the distinction still remained and man still did not become the creator or independent of the creator. See the serpents lie ran deep, they did not become like God rather they died spiritually and were separated from God. So even though Adam and Eve thought they could act outside of God and had the ability to discern things for themselves, the truth was they were and we are still dependent today on God for truth and morality.

By a show of hands, how many of you said when you were a child that you were going to run away and that you didn’t need your parents? See a child can deceive itself and say they don’t need their parents but when reality hits they all go back home because they have no way to provide for themselves. They are (whether they admit it or not) still dependent upon their parents even though they’ve convinced themselves otherwise. Adam and Eve thought they could be independent of God but they still needed Him for everything. God even had to clothe them properly before kicking them out of the garden.

ILL: I picture it a lot like the kids running away from home, they don’t even know what they will need yet in their minds they are certain that they can be independent. Picture in your mind a loving mom putting the kids jacket on as they are about to “Run away” into a snow covered outdoor place without it. This is the picture I get.

Just think about this, Adam and Eve were even dependent upon God to have the ability to reject Him. God demanded man to trust Him for all truth and man rejected that. Thinking themselves wise they became fools, and found God to be true after all. When they ate the fruit they died. Just like God told them.

1. **The Effects of the Fall:**

The fall in the garden placed all man born from man and woman under the bondage of sin. This event did not just effect Adam and Eve it effected all mankind.

Romans 5:12 just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Because of Adam all men are born in sin and corrupted. Just like Adam and Eve rejected their dependence on God so all men who are born after them do this very same thing. Paul describes this

Romans 1:18-32 18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

What we see in this section of Romans 1 is that mankind in sin suppress the **truth** they know. God has revealed Himself in creation and man in sin rejects this revelation because they want to worship the creature rather than the creator. Today that is not carved images, its men themselves, today we are self-worshipers which still makes us worshipers of creature not creator, this runs so deep that many even in the church struggle here. What I mean is this runs so deep that even many people who profess faith and attend church still think God is about them and they still worship themselves rather than Him above all things.

Now because men worship created things rather than God, God has handed them over to a debased mind. Their hearts are darkened and though they claim to be wise they are fools because they have rejected or suppressed the truth of God which is the only source of true knowledge. This is why God finds man guilty. The unbeliever is not guilty for something they didn’t know, rather they are guilty for suppressing the truth that they do know. Man in their fallen state, in sin, refuse to acknowledge God’s revelation in all of creation.

Man in sin also refuses to submit himself to God’s special revelation. Jesus tells this parable about Israel (the nation-not the true elect) and their effort to assert their independence even in the midst of special revelation. We find this in:

Matt. 23:33“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. 35And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. 37Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ 39And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” 41They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

You see Jesus is referring to the prophets that were sent to the old covenant Israel and Jesus is also referring to the special revelation of Himself.

Even though this was done Jesus said they rejected these revelations and will in due time receive their penalty. Now we don’t have ongoing special revelations today because the cannon of scripture is closed and it is itself sufficient special revelation. According to scripture the man who is dead in sin cannot accept this special revelation of the Word of God either.

Romans 8:7 The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; for it does not submit to God indeed it cannot.

Man in sin is incapable of understanding God’s special revelation in scripture.

1 Cor. 2:14 He cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

You see instead of acknowledging God as the only source of truth, man like Adam and Eve in the garden, has decided that all things must be measured by their own knowledge. Man has decided that he himself is the ultimate standard. The failure of man to acknowledge God in creation and the incapability of man to discern the scriptures has left fallen man in a bad spot.

Jer. 8:9 Behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what kind of wisdom do they have?

This of course is a rhetorical question. When we reject God we cannot have wisdom and knowledge. God alone teaches man knowledge. If we reject His word we reject all truth and in principle know nothing but falsehoods.

Prov. 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

Proverbs is full of this. The man who trusts his own heart is a fool (Prov. 28:26). He also has no delight in true understanding (Prov. 18:2) He hates knowledge (Prov. 1:29) and words of knowledge cannot be found on his lips (Prov. 10:18, 14:7, 19:11). According to Eph. 4:17-18 because men reject God they “walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God. This is why God says in 1 Cor. 3:20 the Lord knows the reasoning’s of the wise, that they are useless.

You see as long as man remains in sin suppressing the truth they will be unable to arrive at true knowledge of themselves, the world, and God.

This will remain impossible because until you acknowledge the only true source of knowledge which is God you cannot be certain about any knowledge you claim to have.

1. **Inconsistencies and Surface Truth:**

Since the scriptures are clear that in sin we cannot have true knowledge then how can non-Christians still express ideas that are correct? Believers and unbelievers alike would still say two plus two equals four. In fact scripture says when speaking of unbelievers that fallen man have truth (Acts 17:28). So what do we do this?

When we look at fallen man we see two aspects of his knowledge.

1st Though unbelievers reject God’s revelation of Himself they cannot be completely consistent in this, because they were made in His image and they retain many of man’s original abilities. Fallen man still thinks and reasons. He is able to do this because he is made in God’s image.

Romans 2:14,15 … when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires … They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts …

You see because man in sin has rejected God then they cannot truly know anything for they have given up the source of truth.

However because man is made in God’s image they still have the ability to reason and think and therefore they do arrive at conclusions that are true. They simply cannot be certain they are true, and their truth is incomplete, because they have rejected God who is truth. Fallen man often thinks and says things that are true, they simply have no foundation from which to do it.

So the real problem is we have to mine down what man is saying. For example most unbelievers would say murder is bad. The problem is they can’t rightly define bad or good without God.

So they can be right, murder is bad but they cannot account for **why** murder is bad, they cannot be fully right because they refuse to acknowledge that murder is bad because God has said it is.

Another way this happens is that the unbeliever may ***seem*** right but because they have beliefs founded in something other than the one true God they end up using similar terms or phrases but their meaning is corrupted. For example Mormons will say Jesus is the Son of God. Is Jesus the son of God? Of course, so are they are right? Well to an extent at least in regards to our definition of Jesus, God, and of Son. However the Jesus **they** speak of in ***their*** minds is a spirit son of a god who is one in a billion gods and their god literally was physically intimate with Mary to produce this son of god in the flesh. So though they make a statement that’s true to us, however because they have not acknowledged God, their definitions and beliefs are incorrect, therefore what they say may seem right but it cannot be truly correct (their minds have become corrupted). Their presuppositions give the same statement a different meaning, so because they have twisted the meaning to fit their presuppositions and their presuppositions deny the one true God they cannot be truly correct.

You see sometimes we have to dig deep to the untruth in fallen man’s claims but ultimately because they are in sin they have an underlying belief that they are independent and capable of knowing truth apart from God and God’s revealed will. The scriptures call this foolishness!

So they have no rational or valid reasons for the truth they come to, the truth they come to according to their worldview is simply arbitrary (it’s just because). The mere commitment to human independence falsifies all the non-Christians statements. The majority of faulty thinking in the unbeliever can be exposed by paying attention to their reasoning. Their reasoning will typically be arbitrary or inconsistent. If it’s arbitrary then it cannot be rational, it has no real meaning behind it. If it’s inconsistent it cannot be rational.

Recognition of the hopelessness and futility of the non-Christian thinking provides direction for and gives confidence to the believer defending his faith. So what happens to the man who has been born again? What character changes do we see in this person?

1. **The character of Man Redeemed by Christ**

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Do you guys realize that if it wasn’t for God’s lavished grace upon His beloved, everyone would be lost, dead in sin and under His holy righteous wrath? God in His great mercy sent Jesus to die for His beloved and pay the debt of sin. All who trust in Jesus are delivered from the wrath of God and enter into His blessing!

**The Reversal of the Fall:**

What was Eve’s basic failure in the garden? She stopped trusting God as the sole and final source of truth and decided she could judge between truth and deceit on her own, making herself the ultimate standard (wanting to be like God). At salvation there is a reverse of the things that happened as a result of the fall. At the fall Eve assumed her independence from God by refusing to submit to His word. Eve rejected the creator creature distinction by thinking she had the ability to know truth through her own insight apart from God. The exact opposite is what happens at true salvation.

1 Cor. 1:21For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Using human wisdom as the standard for truth like Eve did in the garden leads away from God into falsehood. The opposite is true about the cross. The cross causes us to turn from our independence and self-ability to total dependence upon God and His finished work through Christ on the cross. Where we thought in the garden we could be independent and know truth, at salvation God causes us to see the truth that we are utterly dependent upon Him for truth and salvation. We are dependent upon His word which informs us of this truth.

Romans 10:17So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

While the faith that God gives us by grace is in truth and secure, the reversal of the fall doesn’t stop at conversion. We imperfectly but increasingly lean not on our own understanding, but trust and depend on God practically. It is part of the sanctification that covers the entire life of the believer. When we are glorified, our imperfection in this is no more; God will remove any imperfection at that time. But for now, we still struggle at times with doubt, confusion, temptation, etc. Our faith in Christ is real and will not be lost. But our growth in living out that faith is a process.

We know that the one who trusts in the gospel is in agreement with Paul

Romans 3:4…Let God be true though every one were a liar…

The heart of fallen man in sin is to forsake true knowledge and falsely assert his independence from God. The heart of the believer, the one who is truly saved, holds that God’s word can always be trusted for God is true!

Isaiah 45:19 I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.

God’s word is trustworthy and the believer in Christ confesses his total reliance on it. Despite arguments from clever men, despite sin and its temptations, despite the work of Satan, the believer affirms

1 Sam. 2:2“There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

1. **Restoration by Regeneration:**

When we think of the salvation in Christ we often think primarily of the eternal effect that trusting in Him brings. Heaven and union with God etc… This is truly a great thing so we should think of this however for our time we will focus more on the character change that takes place in the heart of the regenerated man. I want us to see how it affects the areas of knowledge and morality. We see Jesus tell Nicodemus the requirement for entering the kingdom of God in John chapter 3.

John 3:5-7 5Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

The man in his sin is spiritually dead. This is (in one aspect) the death God warned Adam and Eve about prior to their fall. Fallen man must be born again. Obviously if you are moved from spiritual death to spiritual life you will have a character change. The reversal is as extreme as death to life. The man who has been regenerated now (through his dependence upon God) has the ability for true wisdom and knowledge because they rightly fear (respect acknowledge) God the only source of true wisdom and knowledge. If a man was born of Adam (all mankind except Jesus) they are born into sin with spiritual deadness and must be born again to have any true knowledge because all true knowledge must rightly honor God as God.

2 Cor. 5:17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

You see when we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone, we are given a new life. Therefore, the entirety of our lives has been affected. We are entirely like a new creation. Every aspect is affected by this regeneration. When man was created he was not affected by sin, at the fall all mankind is spiritually dead because of sin. The day you eat of it you shall surely die. When Christ redeems man it is the restoration (or beginning of the restoration) back to our original state.

Eph. 4:20-24 20But that is not the way you learned Christ! — 21assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Believers are being restored according to the original character of the image if God. We are restored in righteous, holiness, and true knowledge-all these things we lost at the fall. What we need to see is that regeneration also corrects (not entirely right away) the man in his thinking process.

2 Cor. 10:5 5We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Christians are to a degree restored to the original state of man in the garden in every aspect of their character. Sanctification **is** a process, but it affects the whole man, not just some part, and it does this until Christ returns.

As a side note, we won’t simply be restored to Adam and Eve’s status, at Final Glorification we will actually be in a better condition than they were. One where we won’t be able to fall into the sin that they did. God will eternally keep us secure in the perfect state. Baptist Confession of 1689: “…man is made perfectly **and immutably** free to good alone **in the state of glory only**.”

But in the here and now, as the restored image of God the redeemed man seeks to do justice to God’s revelation in all of creation and in scripture. The renewed man realizes that it is insufficient to know that rain is the condensation of evaporated water. He asks what rain is and how it reveals the character and will of God. If sin had never entered this world, this would not be a problem. Man would simply observe the world and know God through it.

As a restored creature the Christian seeks to maintain the Creator creature distinction in his knowledge and morality. He therefore gives proper place to the revelation of God.

1. **The Believer and Remaining Sin:**

The life of the restored man is not without fault. He will grow in Christ likeness until Christ returns but never fully reach it. The Christian is involved in a constant raging battle between righteousness and sin.

Gal. 5:17 17For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

The Holy Spirit dwelling within the true believer is at war with the remaining sinful flesh. This causes two things to be at work in the believer. One works toward obedience and the other toward disobedience. Even though the believer looks to God’s revelation for truth and morality as a dependent creature he does not always carry this out well. In fact when we (true believers) are in sin we are acting like our “old self” and are essentially telling God we can do what we want independently from Him. Just as the non-Christian cannot escape his qualities being made in the image of God, the believer cannot, prior to Final Glorification, fully escape the effects of sin in his life. Even though we are saved and the effects of the fall are being reversed we do not maintain a 100% consistent dependence upon God and therefore we maintain some falsehoods in our thoughts and actions. Scripture constantly warns us to fight against this!

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

ILL: Here is a great example of how real this struggle is. Our minds are so constantly bombarded with a worldview from a culture that has denied God that it is nearly impossible to shake of these poor views in light of God’s commands. More often than not when it comes to the believer who sins I can almost always point you to an adoption of our cultures world view. That’s what Paul was concerned about for the Romans. Don’t be conformed to this world. So here is an example what has God said about murder? So is it okay for a country to allow abortion? Now the tendency is to answer this question with “It’s more complicated than that”. But listen it isn’t more complicated, God has said murder is wrong period “Thou shalt not murder.” So will you trust what God has said Christian as a dependent creature or will you fight this in your mind and make a decision independent of God therefore giving up knowledge and walking in sin?

Romans 6:11-12 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Obedience and right minded thinking doesn’t automatically happen when you become a Christian. This is something we have to fight for and reorient our minds too. There’s a real battle going on in our flesh and minds that cause us to want to be independent and act as if we are God. This happens even after salvation. This is essentially sin. When we say no God I’m doing it this way, we are assuming His throne and acting independent of God. So this battle is a long and difficult one but it is one we must fight continually in so that we rightly know God and His will.

Understanding the character of man after redemption is vital to our apologetics. Christ’s finished work has given us a character that is again able to have true knowledge and submit our thoughts to God’s word trusting Him as our ultimate source of truth. Understanding how this happened is vital as well but we will see that in greater detail in a future lesson.

Next week’s lesson will cover the difference between the non-Christian worldview and the Christian worldview. This foundational work here will help us better understand those differences. I’m looking forward to that time and want to remind you that these lessons really are building upon each other so don’t miss next week it will help you have a more robust understanding of this week!

Let’s pray