

# The Portico Notes

July 20, 2023

## Session 3

**Portico Goals:** (1) To gain clarity about what we believe about aspects of redemption; (2) To corporately explore what the Bible teaches and emphasizes about aspects of redemption; (3) To deepen our sense of what the Spirit would say to the churches about redemption in this strategic time.

***Working Hypothesis: Human fallenness consists of a deficiency; something connected to human nature departed from it when our first parents sinned.***

**Q:** On the occasion of Adam and Eve’s sin, when something departed from human nature, *did the image of God remain?* If so, what aspects of the divine image are discernible in people to this day, and why does it matter?

**Kaj:** The divine image remains, but is obscured. Evil spirits pursue humans precisely because unlike other creatures humans bear God’s image. Junior High kids, some are hungry for God and so obedient, and others are like feral cats; they’re still cats, but they’re feral. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit pursues them because they’re made in God’s image. Jesus pursued the demoniac because He knew there was a person “in there.”

**Beth:** Yes, the image of God remains. The image, like a photo, may be marred, fuzzy or a little pixelated.

**Eric:** Psalm 8.4-6 points to the image remaining. The human mandate to rule over creation has not been rescinded. Radical evil (as manifested in Hitler) still wants to create human carnage, implying a demonic drive to wipe out the image of God still visible in mankind.

**Kaj:** 1Corinthians 15.27, reiterates Psalm 8.6, “you put all things in subjection under His feet,” but in this chapter, Paul speaks of the resurrection, when God brings something

valued back to life. Resurrection in particular and redemption in general implies something still of value in fallen man.

Rod: Excellent, you're already touching on the practical implications of this question, whether the divine image still remains in fallen man. There are Scriptures that indicate that the divine image remains in man, not only after the fall, but also after the flood (Genesis 9.6). Jesus also made a point of the divine image remaining in people with His saying, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto God [what has His image stamped upon it]." We can confidently affirm that the divine image in man remains after the fall. What does that mean? What aspects of that image are discernible in people today?

Beth: Aspects of the divine image include love, conscience.

Eric: Morality.

Kaj: Volition.

Rod: Relational capacity. Personal relationships.

Mark: Capacity, even in unbelievers, to recognize the existence and power of God (Romans 1).

Eric: Instinctive keeping of the [moral] law (Romans 2.14). A practical implication of all this is that people are not worthless [but have value].

Rod: Even fallen people are born with such an innate recognition of God's existence, and such an impulse to worship and do "what's right," that they must suppress this knowledge and these impulses in order to pursue their ungodliness.

Eric: The Bible speaks of "worthless fellows."

Kaj: Every culture has its "worthless characters" who will do anything for a dollar or for the flesh. Jezebel and Caiaphas were able to identify such people. This is a matter of willful rejection of the divine image.

Rod: Generally speaking, when we are addressing unbelievers, it is appropriate for us to recognize the immense value of sinners as created in the image of God. We can express God's value for humanity, and call sinners to stop violating the image of God stamped upon their being. Theologians who believe that we have a "sinful nature" have struggled with telling sinners that God will hold them accountable for their sins; why should God hold them accountable when they are just acting in accordance with their nature? But if man retains a good nature with the image of God stamped upon it — in other words, if the locus of man's corruption lies in some other aspect of his being — then we can reasonably affirm man's accountability for *violating his God-given nature*.

Eric: We lack spiritual life, something that Jesus didn't lack. Jesus didn't lack that connection with the Father [or the Spirit] humanity lost in the fall. The Father was always the One at the wheel of Jesus' nature.

[Rod: I track with that. I'm proposing that the fall left human nature without a "governing module" on our earthly impulses. Or in another analogy, no one remains at the steering wheel of man's nature, and as we've already observed, the spiritual realm abhors a vacuum.]

Mark: We take hold of the wheel.

Rod: Right! What else drives human nature after the fall?

Mark: "Flesh."

Eric: Sin (John 8.34)

Gene: The devil. [Cf. John 8.44]

Rod: What is the Flesh that Paul speaks of?

Kaj: Galatians 5, "the desires of the flesh": the long list of fleshly drives and hungers.

Rod: Immorality, what is the underlying drive?

Beth: Desire for love, connection, acceptance.

Rod: Consider, God gave us the sex drive. God gave us the desires and drives that would allow us to **thrive** in this earthly environment. But without the Spirit regulating these drives, they can only take on a selfish and worldly orientation.

Mark: I use a puppy dog analogy. God created a house and a big yard and gave us everything we need to thrive in that environment, and all we have to do is love our Master.

Eric: God didn't just give us what we needed to survive; God gave us all things richly to enjoy.

[Rod: Yes, I used the word *thrive*, and thriving for us must include enjoyment.]

Rod: Back to the very practical matter: The flesh, in Paul's understanding, consists of the good drives and impulses and instincts that God built into human nature, but now allowed to run wild, so to speak, because they are not under the control of the Spirit. All our good drives and impulses, like the drive for intimacy, without the governing of the Spirit, reduce to something we can sum up in one word, **Selfishness**.

Mark: The flesh is controlled by us and other influences. Putting the flesh to death is [part of] the process of being conformed to the image of Christ and His character.

Rod: That's good biblical language, severe but appropriate; I would say that what needs to be put to death is that uncontrolled pursuit of fleshly gratification, so "putting the flesh

to death” is a key part of the process of being conformed to the character of Christ. Okay, based on what we’ve said so far, it seems that when we are calling sinners to repent and turn over the control of their lives to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we’re not asking them to deny their hunger for love, we’re not asking them to deny their hunger for relational intimacy. But we can point to those things and say, “Look, you know that God is real, you know that you’re created in God’s image because you have a conscience. And you know you were created for intimacy because you’re looking for it all the time, only in the wrong places. But as Christian evangelists, we’re not calling you to die to the need for intimacy, we’re calling you to find true intimacy that is only possible when the Holy Spirit of God takes control of the wheel of your [natural] impulses.

Kaj: Yes, the key word I keep coming back to is *honoring*. You cannot have satisfaction if it’s not honoring. There’s a measure of satisfaction in idolatry, immorality, etc., but a lack of honoring [undermines the intimacy and satisfaction we seek]. So sorcery and idolatry will never work because there is no honoring of the Creator. But people are finding some answers in sorcery, but it’s not honoring and ultimately doesn’t satisfy. Idolatry, pornography, sexual immorality, it’s all a cheap imitation of what will really satisfy.

Rod: That’s wonderful insight, Kaj. It’s prompting me to in these last few minutes jump over to another question. The natural religion of man is the pursuit of personal standing with God through personal effort and merit. Why can man NOT save himself in this manner.

Mark: That’s trying to get in by another method than the door.

Kaj: The source [of this religious instinct] is flesh.

Eric: In C. S. Lewis’ *Miracles*, [there’s a metaphorical illustration that] we can’t take the pressure; we can’t dive that deep.

Rod: Good insights, and we’ll talk more about this down the line, but let me just note two things as we wrap up for today: (1) Natural religion does nothing to restore and redeem human character. (2) Natural religion is self-centered, rather than seeking relationship with our Creator. In short, trying to avoid hell by stacking up personal merit misses the whole point of biblical redemption, which is the restoration of man to his original design and to fellowship with his Creator.

## Online Texting Notes:

### Eric Greninger to Everyone

#### Everyone

Ecc 7:29 "This only I have found: God created mankind upright, but they have gone in search of many schemes."

8:29 AM

### Eric Greninger to Everyone

26 and He made from one [man] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined [their] appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ... 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' 29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. (Act 17:26, 28-29 NASB95)

8:55 AM

### Eric Greninger to Everyone

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; 6 just as He says also in another [passage,] "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." 7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, 10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 5:5-10 NASB95)