

## Tending Ancient Paths

### The Paradigms, Posture, and Practices of Jesus

From 'The Human God' Substack  
by Dr. Kenneth Tanner  
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#### **Disarming a bad way of thinking about humans, God, and fallen existence.**

You do not have a “sin nature,” you have a human nature afflicted by sin, an infection that is at war with your good creation in the divine image.

Sin is anything that opposes the love that God forever is and humans are made in the image of that love. So, love is elemental to the human person; sin, though alien and hostile, is like cancer everywhere humans are.

Your participations in evil are not who you are; they are tragic denials of your created human goodness, a deep work in clay by the love that is God. All who share human nature have an original good beginning, a divine image that rests within humanity. This is the meaning of “God saw all that he had made—and it was very good!”

And there’s something else: Christians confess that God shares our common humanity in Jesus Christ. God is human. What it means to be human and what it means to be God is forever tied to one person. And this human is sinless.

The sinlessness of Jesus Christ is greater than the collective sin of humanity and his life story of perfect love is the measure of every human.

Sin denies and obscures our true nature. We are made in the image of love, not hate, in the image of humility, not pride, in the image of generosity not greed.

While the sin of our ancestor, Adam, has wide-reaching destructive consequences in everyone, everywhere, Christians are the ones who trust that the obedient life of the human God is far, far greater than Adam's transgression.

The effects of Christ’s exemplary humanity will override every evil in us and in creation. This is a *basic* Christian trust.

And this changes the way we look at *everyone*. Jesus is the lens through which we view every human.

That human nature is not inherently evil, but rather participates in an original created goodness that is wounded by sin, is a basic claim of the first Christians and our Judaic heritage. Please, accept no substitutes. Sin does not belong to human nature.

What I am about to write is plain but maybe that is why we miss it: God cannot become what is inherently evil. When God becomes human he takes on human nature as he finds it, subject to the conditions of the fall—*what has not been assumed has not been redeemed*—but a good creation remains in every human no matter how many layers of soot mar its incandescent reality.

God becomes what God makes and what God makes is always good.

Ancestral sin is real, we see its effects everywhere and in all. We are sinners, as we confess every week in the Liturgy. Sin is a power that afflicts us...no doubt about it...but it is important to recall that we are not our sins. They are not our identity. They do not define the human person or any human. The human God does. And that is good news.

Dr. Kenneth Tanner is an Author and Pastor of Holy Redeemer Charismatic Episcopal Church in Rochester Hills, Michigan

5907 W Wallen Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46818

Phone: 260-403-4948 [www.ihopfw.com](http://www.ihopfw.com) Email: [ben@bouwersfam.com](mailto:ben@bouwersfam.com)

And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

## A Faith that is Anti- Fragile

It can be a challenging thing to give ourselves over to truths that disarm lies we have believed about our good Triune God. Maybe because we have sat with a certain way of thinking for so long, or maybe because the ideas we are holding onto are a security blanket or even a crutch. Please do not hear what I am not saying! There are absolutely absolutes but is it possible we have made an idol out of certainty and in so doing have disregarded the mystery that is inherent to the very nature of the Godhead? Is it possible that we, in our arrogance or haughtiness, youthful zeal or naivety, have dismissed teachings of the early church Fathers, choosing instead the current trends of thought or our own denominational divides? We are living in exciting times, in crucial times, where we need to have an ‘antifragile faith’ (a term coined by our friend Ben Sternke). A faith that is not robust— meaning hunkered down and puffed up— but a faith that is anti...fragile. In the face of all the chaos we are currently seeing in the world, in the face of living in the wake of our own nation’s folly as we move fully into a post Christian culture, in the face of war, famine, and disease, in the face of a world that is ‘on fire’ - where is our footing? It is not certainty that will hold our hearts firmly in place as we face everything around us. We can see this fact in the number of people leaving the church, in the droves of young people who are denouncing God. It is love that will hold our hearts firmly, it is love that will move us to live with our whole hearts towards the dream God had for humanity from the beginning. It is a true encounter with our good Father that will call our hearts and spirits to the reality of His love. His love will be what draws. In Bible College I was taught how to make ‘evangelistic’ cold calls. We were told to go door to door asking the question, ‘If you were to die tonight are you certain you would go to heaven? Or hell?’ I recently read a quote, “When the gospel becomes an afterlife ultimatum entirely contingent on a person’s choice or decision for God, driven by the threat of eternal punishment, it is no longer ‘good news’ but a corrupted mechanism of control, manipulation, and deception. A fear-based ‘gospel’ is and always will be a false gospel.” In embracing what is true we may need to let go of ideas and strong holds in our thinking that have set themselves up against the true knowledge of our Triune God. To find ourselves teachable, pliable to the Holy Spirit’s leadership and direction, we must be willing to let go of ideology that does not align with Him. Of course, testing it against the backdrop of Scripture, the testimony of the early church Fathers, the desert Fathers, and the mystics. For example, we are not called to use fear as a tactic to persuade people to come to a relationship with our good Father. Fear is a tactic used in the strategy of our enemy. I don’t want to look like him! I want to look like Jesus! And He had an antifragile faith in His Father and did not need to use fear to persuade people to believe He was (and is) who He said he was (and is). My heart is alive, it has questions, but it is alive. I am hunting on the ancient paths for truth— truth that burgeons my faith, undergirds my heart, and causes me to stand firm when I am dismayed by the destruction I see right in front of me. When my eyes are wet with tears from grief and my bones are weary from living in the tension of not yet seeing the promises of God fulfilled. I want to stand firm with an antifragile faith. I can say like David in Psalm 27:13 I would have lost heart if I did not believe I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. I *am* seeing His goodness! Choosing to look at things I have believed that do not line up with the truth of God’s character as represented in Jesus is part of growing into an antifragile faith and part of seeing His goodness. We have been given everything we need, friends, for life and for godliness. One of those things is a passion to seek truth. Proverbs 25:2 tells us it is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and our glory to seek it out. Let that seeking be your life’s obsession, an obsession that will reap beautiful fruit. <sup>3</sup> *For though we walk in the world, we do not fight according to this world’s rules of warfare.* <sup>4</sup> *The weapons of the war we’re fighting are not of this world but are powered by God and effective at tearing down the strongholds erected against His truth.* <sup>5</sup> *We are demolishing arguments and ideas, every high-and-mighty philosophy that pits itself against the knowledge of the one true God. We are taking prisoners of every thought, every emotion, and subduing them into obedience to the Anointed One.* 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 *the Voice* We are on this journey together!

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5907 W Wallen Rd, Fort Wayne, IN 46818  
 Phone: 260-403-4948 [www.ihopfw.com](http://www.ihopfw.com) Email: [ben@bouwersfam.com](mailto:ben@bouwersfam.com)

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