

# THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

*Editor*

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## *Editorial*

THANKSGIVING is something that is frequently urged upon us in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul, for instance, says, "In every thing give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). We should recognise the blessings we receive and acknowledge them before God.

We frequently find that our Lord Jesus Christ expressed gratitude. At the feeding of the five thousand we note that "he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks". On another occasion, after sharing important teaching with the disciples, He prayed and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth . . ." (Matthew 11:25).

The Psalmist too knew what it was to be thankful; we find him saying, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation" (Psalm 68:19). Many people feel weighed down with burdens – the psalmist felt weighed down with benefits. These daily benefits include such things as life and health, home and loved ones, protection and preservation.

Thanksgiving is one of the ways by which we advance in the Christian life. In hard times and good times there is always something to thank God for – see Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Thanksgiving should be the spontaneous overflow of a grateful heart. May we never cease to be grateful for all the Lord's grace and favour towards us.

# “In the Image of God”

A Sermon by the Editor

Genesis 1:27

THE BIBLE DOCTRINE of the origin, nature and destiny of man is both fascinating and wonderful. Here we have the real truth about man; who was created in the image of God and, furthermore, is the crowning act of God's creation. The Bible record of creation reaches its climax with the making of man, the noblest and greatest of all God's handiwork. Man is God's creation; man was not self-created, he did not evolve, he came from the Maker's hand. God created him in the beginning.

Let us look, then, at this great text: “God created man in his own image.”

## 1. THE ORIGINAL IMAGE

The first great truth the Bible teaches is that man was *made* in the image of God, and this at once makes him different from all other creatures and all other beings in the universe. If we pause to reflect upon the power, the wisdom and the holiness of God, we begin to realise what a tremendous thing it is to say that man was made in the image of God, and yet this is what the Bible clearly teaches.

Now you will find that this phrase, “made in the image of God”, is not used of any other being, not even of the angels. There is a dignity and glory about man as originally made which is at once unique.

Look on into the next chapter (verse 7) and there is another wonderful statement: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” We see here in this verse at once the littleness and also the loftiness of man. He is of the dust of the ground and therein lies his littleness – yet he is inbreathed by the Spirit of God and therein lies his loftiness.

Now in what sense was man made in the image of God? It obviously cannot be in his physical nature that man is in the likeness of His Maker, because God is Spirit. If you are familiar with the *Thirty-nine Articles* (and it would do us all good to read them) you will find that the first one says: “There is One true living God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions.” That is the definition of God. He is Spirit. So man cannot be in God's image in his physical sense. It is in man's spiritual endowments and capacities, in his intelligence, in his emotional, intellectual and volitional powers that the likeness lies. So man is lifted immeasurably above every other order of creation; man is capable of fellowship with God; man has powers of thought and feeling and will, all that makes up our personal life as distinct from a merely animal existence. Man, furthermore, is

directed by a conscience that God has put within him, a power within by which he can discern what is morally right or wrong. And you find Paul saying even to the Gentiles who were outside the covenant mercies of God: "Their conscience also bearing witness" (Romans 2:15). Man, furthermore, was made with a love towards God and with desires towards Him, not only innocent but good, and so we get that great statement at the end of Genesis 1:31: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." And if we enquire as to man's destiny, what he is here for, well, here is the answer: he was made for God. You cannot improve upon the opening of the Scottish *Shorter Catechism* which says: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." The supreme activity for which man is capable is devotion, obedience and fellowship with God, and the only satisfying goal of man's life is the presence of God. We were made in the image of God.

Notice too in verse 28 the further blessings that God bestowed on man. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Man was not only above all the other works of creation in rank and dignity, but he was to rule over them. Furthermore, he was to replenish the earth and to subdue it. Man was meant to work, even in Eden. He was to master the forces of nature. He was to cultivate the soil that he might gather its fruits and harvests. You remember David's lovely 8th Psalm where he says: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (verses 4-6). That is the dignity that God has put upon man; he is endued with noble faculties and capacities. He is crowned with glory and honour. *There is the original image – "made in the image of God"*.

## 2. THE IMAGE IMPAIRED

We have to face reality, for when sin entered the human race through man's disobedience, the image of God was impaired. Sin is not part of man's original nature. It is foreign to him. Sin is an intruder into God's world, and it not only interrupted man's fellowship with God, but it distanced and alienated man from his Maker. Man wandered further and further away, reflecting less and less of the divine original. So, when you come to Genesis 5:3, it is significant that we read there: "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Notice, Adam himself was made in the image and likeness of God but Adam's son now only bears that image indirectly, he is made after his father's image and likeness because of sin. Man wandered further and further away from God, and, if you would know how far man has wandered, you have only to read the first three chapters of the Epistle to

the Romans, and there you will see the extent of man's fall. In Romans 1:22 we get that great verse: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Such was the image impaired. Take a simple illustration – sometimes we get a coin; it bears certainly the image of the Queen but, through use and maybe misuse, the image on the coin is somewhat defaced and hardly recognisable. And it is rather like that with man, the image is still there, but it is greatly impaired – nevertheless, it is still God's property, as the coin is still the legal tender and belongs to the Crown.

### 3. THE IMAGE RESTORED

Go back again to the 8th Psalm. "What is man," says David, "that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" You see, God has personal relations with His creatures; He is mindful of them; He thinks of them; He visits them and He acts on their behalf. "Thou visitest him." Recall Zacharias' great song: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people" (Luke 1:68). This is the greatest favour ever shown to the human race. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to effect a reconciliation between God and man, to restore the lost relationship or, as we have it in the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, "he shall save his people from their sins" (verse 21). Christ became incarnate with this end in view. He not only came to show us the Father – He did that – He came to exhibit the ideal Man, but He came to do more than that – to redeem man and to restore them to the divine favour.

Have you noticed in your reading of the New Testament that Paul is quite fond of this thought of Christ being the image of God? You get it in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them", and also in Colossians 1:14-15: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." That is what man should have been, but he fell. Then you get that lovely thought in Hebrews 1:3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person", or as Weymouth renders it: "He is the exact impress of God's essential nature." Christ came to redeem, to restore, and man needs to be *conformed* to the image of Christ. How is that possible? It is possible when we are quickened by the Spirit into newness of life through Christ. It is not enough for our old nature to be improved upon, to be renovated. There must be a new life, a new nature, put within us. This is precisely what happens when by faith we become savingly united to Christ. Paul says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." That is the beginning of the return to God.

But we go on from there because Paul says that the new man is created in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, and our being conformed to the image of Christ is surely God's purpose in salvation. Listen to the great words of Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many

brethren." There it is again; this is scriptural teaching from beginning to end and this is the thing that God supremely desires. This is the thing which we ourselves should seek – to be conformed to the image of God.

How is this to be done? Well, we must continually keep our eyes on Christ – *He* is the Pattern; He is the Inspiration. Listen to what it says in Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

It is by keeping our eyes on Him that we shall become increasingly like Him. Remember Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Moses, when he had been forty days in the Mount in communion and fellowship with God, came back different from when he went, because we read that "the skin of Moses' face shone" and he was unconscious of it. That shining of Moses' face (if we may put it like this) was not the shining of a snapshot – it was a time-exposure! He had been there forty days in communion with God and, in like manner, we grow like that which we look at.

"Looking unto Jesus." *There* is the goal of our hope, *to be like Him*, and at the last day we read that believers will be presented faultless before the presence of God. I am struck by that Lesson we read at the most solemn of services, the Burial Service. There in 1 Corinthians 15:49 Paul says, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; also as John puts it in his First Letter, (3:2): "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." *The image of God completely restored.* What a consolation! What a prospect! So, until that day come, let us live, "Looking unto Jesus", so that others may take knowledge of us that we have been with Him, and that they may see in us an ever-developing likeness unto Him.

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." *There* was the beginning, *then* there was Paradise lost, but, thank God, Paradise has been regained because "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", and again, we are at the very heart of the Gospel of Christ.

*May God give us grace to take heed, for His Name's sake. Amen.*

M.H.

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There can be no victory where there is no combat. The victory lieth not upon us but upon Christ, who hath taken upon Him, as to conquer for us, so to conquer in us. Let us not look so much who are our enemies, as who is our Judge and Captain; not what they threaten, but what He promiseth.

Richard Sibbes

# For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

## A NEW HOUSE

HAVE YOU EVER moved house? If your family has looked for a new place to stay, you probably scanned the newspapers to see what was available. The adverts tell you where the house is, how many rooms it has, any special features and, of course, how much it costs. Each family has different preferences and what suits one family may not suit another.

But every house has basic requirements which are always necessary. Every house needs a solid foundation and sometimes the builder has to dig down deep before he reaches firm rock.

Jesus spoke in His Sermon on the Mount about the wise man building his house on the rock. He compared that man to the person who heard God's Word and obeyed it. Jesus Christ Himself is called the Rock – the firm foundation on whom we should build our lives.

Every house needs a strong water-tight roof and thick walls to protect the family from the cold and rain and danger.

God has promised to be the protection for His people. He speaks about being like a wall of fire round His people and covering them in the shadow of His hand.

A house needs windows to allow light into the rooms. We also have electric power in our houses to give light at night.

Jesus is the light of the world. Those that follow Him, He tells us, shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life. Everyone needs Him.

Every house has a door – usually more than one – but one is absolutely essential. Jesus compares Himself to a door too. "I am the door," He said, "by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." He is the only way of access into God's kingdom. While we are in this life, God's mercy is offered to us – the door is open, but if we reject Him the door will be shut for ever.

Some houses have a path leading to the door. Jesus is like the path too. "I am the way," He tells us. "No one comes to the Father, except by me."

If we buy a new house we want it to have good foundations, strong walls and roof, good windows, a fine door and a clear path.

How important it is to make sure that we have Jesus in our lives as the good foundation, as the protection from all evil and sin, as the light of our life and as the way of access to God the Father. And what is more, this wonderful provision is absolutely free – no cost to us because Jesus has paid it all when He died for His people on the cross at Calvary.

## PUZZLE

The missing words are all parts of a house. See if you can find them all.

1. When they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the \_\_\_\_\_ where he was . . . and they let down the bed (Mark 2).
2. And there sat in a \_\_\_\_\_ a certain young man named Eutychus being fallen into a deep sleep (Acts 20).
3. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down by the \_\_\_\_\_ in a basket (Acts 9).
4. But Peter continued knocking and when they had opened the \_\_\_\_\_ and saw him they were astonished (Acts 12).
5. And thou shalt write them (God's words) upon the \_\_\_\_\_ of thine house and upon thy \_\_\_\_\_. (Deuteronomy 11).
6. And he shall show you a large upper \_\_\_\_\_ furnished, there make ready (Luke 22).
7. Then came the same Sheshbazzar and laid the \_\_\_\_\_ of the house of God which is in Jerusalem (Ezra 5).
8. But Jehoshabeath the daughter of the king took Joash . . . and put him and his nurse in a \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Chronicles 22).

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## The Work of Pilgrim Homes

*Caring for elderly Christians in the 20th century is no easy task yet Pilgrim Homes is not only doing this today, but has been doing so for almost 200 years. The Society's Chief Executive, Peter Tervet, writes here about the Society's work – past, present and future.*

### Rescued from grinding poverty

When Jane Austen was writing her novels and John Newton lay dying, a group of young people from Whitefield's Tabernacle, having been challenged by a sermon, met in a home for prayer. Their pastor had preached from Job 29:12-13: "Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."