“God’s Image In Man”

July 26, 2015

How you see yourself is important. Not long ago, Gil Zamora, an FBI forensic sketch artist who works with the San Hosea, CA Police Department, was given an interesting task. Mind you, he’s conducted over 3,000 sketch interviews; usually those who have witnessed crimes. He was asked by the makers of Dove Beauty Soap to listen to the way women described their faces; then while they answered his questions, he was asked to draw a picture of them based upon what they themselves thought they looked like.

“My chin protrudes out, especially when I smile. As I’ve grown older, I have more freckles than when I was a child. My forehead is quite big. My Mom told me I had a big jaw. My most prominent feature is my fat, rounded face. My hair is quite long.”

Next, he had someone else describe them; a friend, a husband, etc. He then drew a picture of that same person from the viewpoint of the one who was describing them. “She has a very nice, thin chin. She has a normal-sized jaw. Her forehead is medium. Her face and eyes and smile are quite pleasant.”

Then, he set the two pictures up on a screen and had the woman come back in to see her two portraits. The result. The way others saw them was surprisingly accurate. The way they saw themselves was surprisingly inaccurate.

Now, I grant you, this only represents our outward appearance. And, you do change as the years go by. But it does say something about how we see ourselves.

A while back I renewed an acquaintance with a friend from when I was in my twenties. He saw me sitting in the soccer stands in a park over in Clinton. I was watching my son Dan play soccer. I had walked down to the fence. He walks us to me and says “Are you Dan Peters?”

“Yes, I am. Who are you?” “I’m Larry.” I said, “I would have never know you.” He says to me. “You haven’t changed a bit.” Not true for the most part; but I was easily recognized by him.

Now, don’t you think it’s valuable to see yourself as you really are; notwithstanding your outward appearance?

As you know, God sees you in truth. He sees you exactly the way you are. He knows you very well. And that should give your tremendous comfort.

Now, you live in light of how you see yourself. Yet, that might be much different from what God sees. In other words, our opinions of ourselves are likely inaccurate.

For example, you might see yourself as trustworthy and trusting. So, you act accordingly. If you see yourself as, let’s say, poor or unhappy or selfish or critical, won’t you act accordingly? If your thoughts are mostly self-condemning, you will act in accordance to those thoughts. On the other hand, if you see yourself as a uniquely designed creation of God, gifted and blessed with unique abilities and talents, gifted also with your appearance, won’t you act accordingly? And not only that, but can’t you trust Someone Who always has your best interests at heart?

Psalm 139:17 says this *“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!”*

I John 3:1 *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:…”*

Galatians 4:6 *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*

You all know what these are they are rose-colored glasses. If you put them on, everything will have a rose tint to it. Well, they remind me that I need to see things as they are; not as they appear through any-tinted glasses.

Today’s sermon topic goes right to the heart of how you see yourself. I’ve titled it “God’s Image in Man.”

You have been made in the image of God. I’d like to show you this in the Bible. But, what does it means to say “I’ve been made in God’s image”? Does it mean you look like Him? Does it mean you act like Him? Does it mean you have a character like He has? Does it mean you think as He thinks?

For hundreds of generations, students of the Bible, Pastors and Theologians and Bible Commentators and Bible teachers all over the world have thought on this question “What is the image of God?” Now, with the millions of pages that have been written on this subject, it’s still a good question.

My goal today is to stir up in you an awareness that you’ve been created in *His* image. And as you see what this means, consider how differently you are going to act this week in light of it. Shall we pray?

Let me say this at the outset. I don’t want to give you the impression that I know better than all those well-known theologians and teachers who have spoken on this subject. Yet I hope to answer the question and say something meaningful and encouraging and edifying to your spirit.

What does the Bible say about the image of God? And does it even matter if you’ve been made in His image?

Please open your Bible with me to the first book, Genesis chapter one.

Well, to begin with, please remember that your life needs a solid foundation. And God has provided you a Book that He designed to help you to understand that foundation. We know it as the Book of Genesis. The word “Genesis” means “Beginning.” In Hebrew it’s called “Bereshith,” meaning “In the beginning.” The Hebrews books are called by the first few words of each book.

Moses, in this first Book of the Bible, tells you where you and I came from. He tells you, by direct revelation, what happened in the beginning. He tells you Who made you. He even tells you *how* God formed you from the dust of the ground. And in Genesis He tells you where and how sin began and that He is a gracious Who provided an answer to man’s sin.

Whatever you think about as to what God’s image in man is, think first about what the Bible says.

First, then “What is the image of God?”

And here’s my answer. If you want to know what the image of God in man is, simply look at the first man Adam. The simplest thing we can do is to look at the first two chapters of Genesis and see what Adam was like. What do you see? What was Adam when the hand of God formed in on the sixth day of creation?

Fortunately for us, the Bible tells us. Please follow with me in Genesis chapter one. Here’s the way I’d like to approach this passage today. Simply look at Adam as though he had just been formed from the clay by the hands of the LORD. What’s he like? What kind of being did the LORD make when He formed him from the dust of the ground?

Here is the man who was made in God’s image. Let’s start with Genesis 1:26. (26) *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

*(27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (28) 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.”*

Do you see how important and necessary it is to simply read the words of Scripture? Moses reports for us on a conversation that took place in Heaven between the members of the trinity. God says “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.”

Deity is plural. When God speaks, He speaks in conversation with another Person. And both having the same image, He says “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.”

Now we might not be able to understand how God can be a plurality (actually God is three persons) and still be One God. But that’s alright. We don’t need to figure that out. What we do *need* to see is that we’ve been made in *His* image. So, when God formed us, He formed us similar to Himself. We are like God. We’re *not* God. We’re not Deity. We aren’t divine beings. We’re *human* beings.

Mormonism, for example, teaches that we were God and we’re now man and we’ll become God again. That’s not what we read here. We’ve been made by our Creator and in His image and likeness.

So, what are you? What is Adam? As you’ve often heard me say, look at Adam if you want to see the image of God in man.

Genesis 1:26 “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

Immediately what we see is that God granted to him the ability to oversee the animal kingdom. God placed man over His creation. Adam was made to exercise dominion over the animals. And it means just what it says. Adam and the human race are to subjugate the animal realm. God put man over the animals.

Doesn’t that say something about both man and the animals? If anything, it tells us that *we* are not the animals. Never does the Bible say that He made man equal to animals. And the animals are *not* human beings.

But it also tells us something about the LORD’s image in man. It says that the image of God in man includes the ability to reason. How else could Adam take charge over the animals? He had to think. He had to exercise his will. He had to make decisions. He also was given the responsibility domesticate them.

Is not this at least a part of God’s image in man? Can you see that Adam was like God in his ability to reason and think and decide? So each day of your life, you are reflecting His image. Do you think? Do you reason? Are you able to take charge? Can you exercise your will? Certainly you can. You’ve been created in God’s image.

Folks, you are a thinking, reasoning, willful creature of God. And, each moment of your life, you live inside this image. You’re like *Him*. God made you like *Him*. And in this sense, God made a copy of Himself when He made man.

Also, isn’t it obvious that just as God is a thinking, reasoning, deciding Person; so is man a thinking, reasoning and deciding person?

First, then, the image of God in man includes your ability to think, reason, and make decisions just like your Creator.

This is what we mean when say that man has a soul. Your ability to reason is a function of your soul. Actually, what man created on the six day of creation was a “living soul.” Genesis 2:7 *“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.”*

Can you agree with me today as to what you are? You stand at the top of God’s creatures of earth. You’ve been made in His image. And you’ve been given the charge to think and reason and decide because you have something the animal kingdom does not. You stand above the creatures of the earth.

Now, someone might say “Well, aren’t there a lot of creatures that are stronger than humans?” Of course, there are. But an elephant is among the strongest of the animal kingdom. And yet, haven’t you seen a child leading an elephant as he worked for the child?

Man has in him the ability to exercise dominion over all of them. Here’s what the Bible teaches. James 3:7 *“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:…”*

So, size and strength are not match for reason.

First, the image of God in man includes your ability to reason.

Second, the image of God in man includes your ability to communicate with God. The LORD made the first human beings with the ability to speak. He gave Adam and Eve language.

It’s been said that a German born man, Mr. Emil Krebs, spoke no less than 68 languages and could write in 120 languages. Mr. Krebs died in 1930.

There are some 6,900 languages in the world at this very moment [as per Summer Institute of Linguistics in 2009; found on www.linguisticsociety.org]. How is this possible apart from the LORD of Heaven and Earth creating all these languages?

And further, did you know that you need two basic things for language and the ability to communicate? You need words and you need grammar. That’ true for every language everywhere on the planet. And it’s true for every baby who begins to utter his or her first words. And a little child can easily learn two or even three languages at once and keep them separate in his mind.

Why is that? It’s because we’ve been made in God’s image. We know we’ve been made in the image of God because we can speak and communicate with each other. Communication and language ability are just innate. Adam was granted this miraculous ability from this very first day of his existence.

And yes, animals communicate. But they weren’t created with language capability. Mankind, though, you and me, we can speak and communicate with language. One of the things that clearly makes us human and not animal is our ability to speak to each other and to God. We can express a lot by our words. We can do so simply because we have God’s image in us.

And look again with me at Genesis; Genesis chapter two. Here’s what we find in the very first chapter of the Bible. We find God speaking to Adam. Genesis 2:19 *“And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. (20) And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field;…”*

Genesis 2:16 *“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*

Folks wherever you are, at any moment of the day, you can speak. You can express yourself to the LORD. And, as well, at any moment of the day, you can choose to listen to Him speaking to you. Having been created in God’s image has put you in a highly unique position in the world. You can talk with God Himself. Just that, in and of itself, is a reason for you to live with praise continually on your lips to Him.

You’ve been wonderfully and tremendously blessed to be made in His image.

First, the image of God in man includes your ability to reason.

Second, the image of God in man includes your ability to communicate with God.

Third, the image of God in man includes your ability to make moral choices. God’s moral nature is basic to all that He is. And so, when He chose to make a copy of Himself in the creation of man, He had to make him a moral creature. Your basic nature is a moral nature. Your morality is the basis for all your choices.

In the beginning God gave to Adam the ability to populate the world. Marriage was man’s first moral choice. Look at Genesis 1:28 *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [fill up] the earth,...”*

When you chose to marry and to bring children into this world, you made a moral choice. That ability to make a moral choice is God’s image in you. As you can see, your moral nature is a reflection of His image. Every time you make a moral choice, the image of God shows in you.

Now, let me add this one final thing. Every person you know is a moral creature. Every day, all day long, you and everyone else makes moral choices. You’ve got, like God, a basic moral nature.

And with your moral natural comes a huge problem. You have the ability to both obey and to disobey God. *Your* moral nature has something in it that it not in God’s nature. You have the ability to choose sin; which is exactly what Adam and Eve did. They both ate fruit from the tree that God said they were never to eat of. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. And in that moral choice, they and we too, fell from our high moral position. No longer do we perfectly reflect His image. Since the day of Adam’s fall, the entire human race has plunged into a world of sinful choices. We easily choose wrong and we choose sin. And when we are told by God or His Word or His law to do one thing, we think we know better and we tend to disobey. When you are told to *not* to something, something inside you insists on doing just the opposite.

So, for all practical purposes, God’s image in you and me has been marred very deeply. What once was a wonderful reflection of God’s image in man, has now been deeply affected by the choice we made in the Garden. Both Adam and Eve, and, in essence, you and I, chose to disobey God when we proceeded to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Now, we are in great need. Our sins separate us from God. And we easily choose to sin and we even make it a habit. And just like Adam, we try our best to cover it up from the eyes of man.

Yet, fortunately for us, God is a God of great grace. He has graciously responded to our choice to sin. On that very day, He promised to send Someone to repair the damage done in the Garden. God so loved us that He sent His Son into the world to remedy this huge problem.

And folks, Who do you think is the One Who is the True Remedy for your sin? Let me show you what the NT says about it. Turn with me to II Corinthians chapter four. Find with me II Corinthians 4:3 *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is* ***the image of God****, should shine unto them.”*

Do you see Who it is that God sent into this world to deal with the sinfulness of our basic moral nature? He sent Jesus Christ, Who is “the Image of God.” Folks, you and I were created *in* the image of God. The LORD Jesus Christ *is* the image of God. And, as you can see, the devil (he’s called the god of this world) blinds us from this Good News.

Now go with me to Colossians 1:14 *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (15) “Who is* ***the image of the invisible God****, the firstborn of every creature:…”*

Next, Hebrews 1:3 *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and* ***the express image of his person****, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;…”*

Jesus Christ, the Image of the Invisible God; He and He alone, went to the Cross of Calvary one day. He was crucified for your sins. He “by Himself purged our sins.” He completely dealt with your fallen moral problem.

And why? Why would the Father send His Son into this sinful world to become our Substitute and pay the penalty for our sins? Here’s why. So that He could save you and then, each day of your life, change and conform you into the image of His Son.

The goal of the Cross of Christ; your new destiny is that you be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul says this in 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.”*

Each one here today needs help. We need moral and spiritual and mental and emotional and rational help. We need physical and material help. And being so needy, God has devised a way for us to be conformed to the image of Christ. He’s chosen to, day–by-day and bit-by-bit remove the flecks of sin out of your life and transform you into the likeness of Christ.

The Apostle John said it like this. I John 3:2 *“…, we shall be like him…”*

Folks, you, as a repentant child of God, one who has trusted in Jesus Christ alone for your eternal security, are becoming more and more like Him. You see, originally you were created in His image and today He is re-molding you into that same image. That’s what really going on in your life each and every day.

Now, imagine yourself today, by the working of His power in you, becoming more and more like Him. What else do you think He is doing with you? Why else would He bring you through the things He’s already brought you through?

Right now, this very moment, God is dealing with you to get all the sins of your heart and mind and actions out of you. Now, the LORD simply does not want any sin in your life. So, each hour of each day He’s at work in you removing them, patiently, persistently, carefully, and faithfully working on those sins and conforming you to the image and likeness of Jesus.

And how are you responding? Would you like to know the typical response? It’s resistance. He’s daily dealing with your resistance to His work on you. His goal is to conform you to that image of perfection called Jesus. And He won’t give up on you. He can’t give up on you.

But I can also tell you how to make the process a whole lot easier and much more wonderful. Here’s how. Right now God is waiting to hear you say to Him, “LORD, I’m giving you my entire life, my spirit, my soul, and my body. I surrender all I am to You. Work out your will upon me today.” When you pray that prayer, you’re giving the LORD full permission to pour out His grace upon you to the development of Christ’s character.

Here’s what the Bible teaches. Philippians 2:13 *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

What’s His good pleasure? That you be re-formed into His own image. Imagine what your attitude towards this process would be if you knew that in everything God was doing in your life, He had your absolute best interests at heart. If you knew that every single thing that was going on in your life was part of His conforming you to that image so that you’d become a copy of the Original. You will be like Him. Would you resist? Why slow up the process with your stubbornness when you can enjoy it in its entirety?

Folks, your greatest freedom comes when you are allowing the LORD to have His way with you completely and when you really know that He does have your best interests at heart. Like one man said, “Everything up till then might just be your fighting against His attempts to do His conforming work.”

Now, if we went back to Genesis, I’d show you that another aspect of His image in you is your creativity. God gave Adam complete permission and authority to give whatever name he chose to every single animal, insect, and bird on the planet. So, He must have given him the ability to be creative. And last, God gave man the ability and the drive to work and to work hard. This too is an expression of His image in you.

So, let me conclude with this.

First, the image of God in man includes your ability to reason.

Second, the image of God in man includes your ability to communicate with God.

Third, the image of God in man includes your ability to make moral choices.

Now where does that put you?

I hope it puts you right here. “LORD, I am like You. You’ve made me in Your own image. Today, right now, I submit all that you have made of me back to you so that you have both the full right and my full permission to conform me to your own image. I can think. I can reason and I can decide.

I can speak with understanding and I have a moral nature. I have the ability to be creative and I can work hard. LORD, remove any and all sin from my life and pour your grace upon me so that all I do is accomplishing your will.”

Now, will you pray this prayer with me? Will you turn your heart to Jesus Christ and let Him have His way with you moment by moment?

Pray this prayer today and find that your willing spirit becomes a constant prayer to your Heavenly Father, asking Him to work out His blessed will upon you.

Lastly, a word to you about what it means to trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. Here is the greatest need in anyone’s heart. Our largest problem in life is our sin and the way sin separates us from God. The Bible teaches us that our sins separate us from God. Yet, out of love, God sent His son to become your Substitute.

The Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans says this. Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* and Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

There’s only one way to receive Salvation. It’s through God’s Son. And here’s how. The Bible says Acts 20:21 *“… repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Will you repent and exercise faith towards Him?

Today is the day of Salvation? What will you do about the condition of your heart for eternity?

To “repent” means “to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.”

To “believe” means “to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.”

Here’s the Salvation prayer if you’ve never prayed it.

“LORD, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of your grace. I believe that You sent Your Son to the Cross to die for me. Please forgive me of all my sins and make me Your child. Thank you.”

Now, please turn with me to a hymn # \_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_”