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Abbeyville Road Christian Church
551 Abbeyville Road Lancaster, PA 17603-6399
717-393-8821 FAX 717-393-8660
email: office@abbeyvilleroad.com
web site: www.abbeyvilleroad.com



Guided by His Word,
Serving in His Love

Recapturing the Image of God

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

The creation account tells us that man was created in God's likeness. After that, the Old Testament drops the theme immediately. Sin marred that "likeness" and until sin could be removed, any discussion of man in God's likeness was irrelevant. The remainder of the Old Testament narrative is told against a backdrop of estrangement between mankind and His Creator. There are many promises of forgiveness and redemption, but any hint of an actual restoration to the likeness of the Creator is subtle, at best.

Over time, mankind progressively became even less like God, prompting Him to send a judgment by water upon the earth. Even Noah, a righteous man who walked with God is never identified as actually bearing the stamp of God's likeness. From Noah's offspring, Abraham was called to father a holy nation. He was declared righteous because of his faith response to God, but *Genesis* never speaks of him sharing God's image. Indeed, Abraham's sins are featured in the *Genesis* narrative right alongside his virtues.

Moses was called to lead the children of Abraham out of Egyptian slavery. In the wilderness, the Law was given. *JEHOVAH* promised to bless the Israelites in the land He would give to them. He made provision for the ongoing forgiveness of their sins, but He never promised to make them non-sinners by nature, nor did He speak in terms of their "restoration" to the divine likeness. In fact, we later learn that the Law was never intended to make non-sinners out of sinners, but only to clearly showcase mankind's utter sinfulness (*Romans 7:7-13*).

A theme that was abruptly dropped by the Old Testament writers is taken up again in the New Testament. This is possible because of Jesus, Whose earthly life demonstrated humanity in the divine likeness (*John 1:1-14*). The blood of Jesus accomplished what no animal sacrifice could ever accomplish; not a specific temporal forgiveness for a specific misdeed, but the removal of sin as a part of our nature. In other words, Jesus accomplished "restoration" to the image of God, a theme that never really graced the imaginations of the Old Testament writers.

*... The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
- Hebrews 9:13, 14*

We remain, for a time, shackled to the flesh and for that reason, struggling to overcome the sin nature. Nevertheless, God holds our spirits in His hand. His work promises over and over again that He is rebuilding our fallen likenesses in all things.

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
- Romans 8:28, 29*

... Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. - II Corinthians 3:15-18

... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. - Philippians 1:6

... Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. - I John 3:2

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy ... - Jude 24



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