

# Restoring the Image of God in Humanity

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Human beings were created in the image of God:

God said, **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”** So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them**” (Genesis 1:26, 27 NIV84).

We were created in the likeness of the infinite Creator God of love, who is a living, intelligent being with individuality and the ability to reason, discern, decide, and act; and God created us with a power modeled after one of His: the power to think and act, to reason, comprehend, and choose. It is this power that gives us the foundation to love, for love operates only in an atmosphere of freedom. Robots cannot love, computers cannot love, puppets cannot love; without our own individuality, without our own ability to think independently and choose freely, we cannot love. God created us in His image as free-thinking beings with the ability to choose for or against Him, to choose for or against love.

And God will not use His power to actively destroy His image in us—even if people sincerely pray to

Him and ask Him to do so. While you may have never heard someone pray, “Lord, please destroy your image in me,” you have likely heard other prayers that, if God were to grant what was asked of Him, would result in the image of God being destroyed in that person. Can you think of any?

Have you ever heard anyone pray something like this: “Father, You take control. I surrender my mind to You. I don’t want to decide any more, Father; I just keep messing up. So, I give over the driver’s seat of my life to You for You to be in control of what I do. You tell me the answer, You decide for me, and I will do it, no questions asked. I don’t want to do it wrong, so You take control”?

If God were to grant this request, what would happen to the person? What would happen to the image of God in them? They would become robots, puppets, programmed beings in which God chooses for them; thus, their individuality would be erased and their capacity to love destroyed. God will never do this!

## **What It Means to Surrender**

When we surrender ourselves to God, it is never for Him to control our power of choice; that power is a gift from God that we are to exercise.

No, when we surrender to God, we surrender our hearts, motives, desires, and plans to Him for purifying, cleansing, and renewal in righteousness. We are to surrender our sin-sickness for healing, our guilt for removing, and our shame for cleansing; we are to open ourselves up for the rejuvenating power of the Holy Spirit. And when the Spirit enters our hearts and minds, He enlightens with truth, inspires with love, convicts of what is wrong, and impresses with better motives—but He *never* chooses for us. The Spirit *always* leaves us free to say yes or no. And when the Spirit has His way, when we say yes to all that God will do in us, we develop certain traits of character that the Bible calls fruits. The last fruit listed, as the Holy Spirit restores God’s image in us, is “self-control”—not God control but “self-control” (Galatians 5:22 NIV84). God restores within us the ability to think clearly, discern wisely, and act righteously.

The Bible tells us that the mature are those who have developed by practice the ability to discern the right from the wrong (Hebrews 5:14). God wants us to be mature—to grow, to understand, to comprehend, to do what is right because it is right, because we understand and agree with Him and choose it not merely because He has said to do it but because we actually prefer it and freely want it.

However, God is not the only supernatural being who is working to have his image reproduced in humanity.

## **In the Image of Sin**

Satan is also working to reproduce his image within us, and this is the real focus and ultimate outcome of the war between Christ and Satan—who we become like. The war between Christ and Satan is a war for hearts and minds. These two beings—Christ and Satan—stand at the head of two divergent systems, two antagonistic kingdoms, two opposing governments that operate in diametrically opposite ways. Every intelligent being in the universe decides on whose side they will be by the methods, principles,

and laws they prefer and choose to practice in their life.

It is by our choices in whom we trust and whose *methods we choose to employ in how we live and treat others* that determines whose kingdom we become members of.

Do we prefer:

- Truth or deception?
- Love or fear and selfishness?
- Freedom or coercion, force, and control?
- Design law or imposed law?

It is a law—the law of worship—that by beholding we are changed. If we worship a god that is like Satan in character, one who makes up rules and uses threats, intimidation, and inflicted punishments to coerce and control and calls it justice, then we become like that god and will use those methods upon others.

But if we worship Jesus, who would not use power to punish His crucifiers but left His creatures free to reject and kill Him, then we, like Jesus, present the truth in love and leave others free; we live out the principles of God, cooperating with the Holy Spirit to have His law written into our hearts.

We are either being washed, purified, and prepared by Jesus Christ to be a temple for the indwelling of God via His Spirit, or we are being corrupted and turned into what the Bible calls a synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9).

Every intelligent being, angels and humans, are created to be living temples in which God dwells by His Spirit. It is Satan's goal to displace God from the throne of our hearts and minds and to establish himself as the ruler of our being. He does this by getting us to choose his methods, principles, and laws over God's, even while we claim to be worshiping God or Jesus. Satan does this by getting us to have faith in the wrong god, the wrong methods, and the wrong law (imposed vs. design) and to prefer the god who is like a dictator.

Remember, the Jews in Christ's day claimed both Abraham and God as fathers but were told directly by Jesus that they belonged to their father the devil (John 8:44). Yet they were certain that they were obeying Scripture and that it was Jesus who was teaching heresy. They were not hostile toward Jesus because they didn't believe in God and Jesus did; they were hostile toward Jesus because He presented a different God to the one they believed in.

Calling oneself a Christian, a follower of the Creator God, even a follower of Jesus, does not establish one as a temple of God—a person who is restored to the image of God. What does? Worshiping God in truth, as Jesus revealed Him to be in character, principle, and method, and thereby surrendering in trust to the true God of love and having His living law of love, the operating system upon which we live, breathe, and function, restored into the heart. Meaning, we love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbors as ourselves. We live out God's law—we live the truth in love while leaving others free to decide for themselves.

## How to Become His Temple

We don't live victoriously in our own strength. The strength is God's; the choice is ours! It is our choice to trust God, to receive His strength, and to act in harmony with His will. **God never chooses for us, but we can never accomplish any victory over sin by our own ingenuity, wisdom, or power.**

All the saving power comes from God! The truth that displaces the lies and wins us to trust comes from God. The love that drives out fear comes from God. But the choice to *respond* to the truth and love of God is ours.

When we make the choice to trust God and open our hearts to Him, He enters the sanctuary of our souls with His healing and cleansing presence and removes the guilt, takes away the shame, and purges the corruption. He imbues us with new motives and new desires—new longings for purity, goodness, love, kindness, and honesty. As we identify with these new motives and choose to apply them to our daily activities, decisions, and practices, we receive power to carry out those choices. But we don't receive the power to overcome until we make the choice to overcome. The power is God's; the choice is ours.

When we have moments of human weakness and don't do what our renewed heart desires but, instead, allow an old habit to control, or allow a situation to irritate us into an impulsive act that we regret—like Moses striking the rock—we are not cast off by God. We grieve in our hearts and go humbly to God, regretting our weakness and longing for His strength to never let Him down again. And we receive God's forgiveness, grace, acceptance, love, and reassurance that He is not done with us yet, and we arise stronger in our connection with God, equipped and empowered to succeed.

We are created in the image of the infinite God of love, and it is God's plan, God's wish, God's desire, God's intention to restore His image within you and me. All that is necessary for that to happen is for us to choose to trust Him and follow where He directs.