

# Imago Dei

(The Image of God)

## Genesis 1:26-28 and Ephesians 1:3-14

The “Let us” in verse 26 contains an early implication of triune God. The use of the plural “us” suggests that God has a certain plurality (compare Ps2:7 & Isa 48:16). The revelation of the tri-unity of God does not become clear until the New Testament (see Mt 3:17 & Mk 1:11).

In verses 26-27, we read about the creation of human beings. Chapter 2:4-25 gives more specific details about their creation and environment. These two accounts are complementary and teach several things.

1. Both man and women were a special creation of God, not a product of evolution (v27, Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6)
2. Man and woman were both created in the “image” and “likeness” of God. On the basis of this image, they could respond to and have fellowship with God and uniquely reflect His love, glory and holiness. They were to do so by knowing God and obeying Him (2:15-17).
3. They possessed a moral likeness to God for they were sinless & holy, possessing wisdom, a heart of love and the will to do right (Ephesians 4:24). They lived in a personal fellowship with God that involved moral obedience (2:16-17) and intimate communion.
4. When Adam and Eve sinned, their moral likeness to God was corrupted (6:5). In redemption believers must be renewed to the original moral likeness (cf. Eph4:22-24, Col 3:10).

5. Adam and Eve possessed a natural likeness to God. They were created personal beings with spirit, mind, emotions, self-consciousness and power of choice (2:19-20; 3:6-7; 9:6).
6. In some sense man and woman's physical makeup is in God's image in a way not true of animals. God gave to human beings the image in which He was to appear visibly to them (18:1-2) and the form that His Son would one day assume (Lk1:35; Php2:7; Heb10:5).
7. That human beings were made in the image of God does not mean they were divine. They have been created on a lower order and are dependent on God (Ps8:5).
8. All human life is derived initially from Adam and Eve (Ge 3:20; Ro 5:12).

God made both man and woman in His image. Neither man nor woman is made more in the image of God than the other. From the beginning, the Bible places both man & woman at the pinnacle of God's creation. Neither sex is exalted and neither is depreciated.

The question arises that in what ways are we made in God's image? God obviously did not create us exactly like himself because God has no physical body. Instead, we are reflections of God's glory—our entire self reflects the image of God. He has given us the ability to reflect His character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness and faithfulness. Knowing that we are made in God's image and thus share many of His characteristics, provides a solid basis for self-worth. Human worth is not based on possessions, achievements, physical attractiveness or public acclaim. Instead, it is based on being made in God's image. Because we bear God's image, we can feel positive about ourselves. Criticizing or downgrading ourselves is criticizing what God has made and the abilities He has given us. Let's see what difference does correct understanding of the subject make?

- (a) We are to delight in intimate fellowship with God (Ps 84:2). This verse pictures the psalmist yearning for the experience of God's

presence with his whole being. This reflects his appetite for God. To what degree is our desire for God's presence? Does our time spent with Him in His Word or in prayer feed our soul to the point of satisfaction? What might we do to ensure that our soul benefits from the nutrients Christ offers as the bread of life in John 6:35.

(b) We are to respect all human life (Ge9:6; James 3:9) Here God explains why murder is wrong: to kill a person is to kill one made in God's image. When we interact with others, we are interacting with beings made by God—beings to whom God offers eternal life. God wants us to recognize His image in all people. God works to change us from inside out. When the Holy Spirit purifies a heart, He gives self-control so that the person will speak word that please God.

(c) We can imitate God's love and justice (Dt10:17-19; Mt5:48). God requires us to submit to Him inside, in our hearts, as well as outside, in our bodies. Then only we can begin to imitate God's love & justice in our relationships with others. If our hearts are right with God, cleansed and we have been fully reconciled to God, then our relationship with other people can be made right too.

Ultimate question: How can we restore the damaged image of God in us? By looking up to Jesus and following Him.

1. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God (Phil2:6; Col1:15). Paul called Christ the image of the invisible God". In Greek philosophy, an image wasn't distinct from the object it represented. As God's representation & representative, Christ clarified people's notions of God. In Christ believers see:
2. (i) who God is—creator and redeemer. (ii)What He is like—a God of mercy and love. (iii) what He has done—sent His Son to rescue people from darkness and bring about the reconciliation of all creation. Christ's humility of heart and mind should be

found in us as His followers, who are called to be like Jesus in this life.

3. God's image is renewed in those who are united with Jesus by faith (Romans 8:29). God's ultimate goal for us is to make us like Christ(1-John3:2). As we become more and more like Jesus, we discover our true selves—the person we were created to be. We can be conformed to Christ's likeness, by reading and heeding the Word, by studying His life on earth through the Gospels, by being filled with His Spirit and by doing His work in the world.
4. Christian life is a process of transformation (2 Cor3:18). As we experience Christ's nearness, love, righteousness and power through prayer and the Holy Spirit, it results in our being transformed into His likeness. We are changed into the likeness or image of what we behold, look at and think about. In this age, the transformation is progressive and partial but when Christ returns, we will see Him face to face and our transformation will be complete (1-John 3:2; Rev 22:4).

In his letters, Apostle Paul taught us that because we are in Christ, we have a new identity(Eph1:3-14). Having been created in the image and likeness of God, we now recapture our true nature. Because we are new in Christ, that image comes alive again—created, fallen and redeemed. That is our story on earth. Let us make transformation, a challenge of our life in 2018.

Have a blessed New year of 2018.....Amen.

Dated 04/01/2018