

## The Work of Art

People had gathered all around to see the beautiful statue of a famous sculptor of antiquity. Part of the nose was missing, an arm was gone and throughout the marble image of art were chips and chinks. Art connoisseurs were making audible sound of approval. After someone said, "Oh, isn't it beautiful!" a young child who had been observing the whole pandering after the "work of art," spoke up and remarked, "Beautiful? Look at it! It's a piece of junk; it's missing parts and there are chinks everywhere!" They were both right. Yes, it was missing parts and there were chips and chinks throughout, but overall the experts who had studied art all their life knew they were looking at so much more than a piece of marble - they could see the unmistakable, inimitable touch of the master's hand throughout the sculpture.

The Bible says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them*" (Genesis 1:27). Man fell, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 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*" (Genesis 2: 16,17). After Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit the Scripture records, "*So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life*" (Genesis 3:24). After the fall we have been born under the curse, but yet the original touch of the "Master's" hand remains. When I attend school and hear the teachers give wisdom, I see no gathering of apes or the law of the jungle - kill or be killed. When my wife and I, at the invitation of one of our church members who was in medical student, observed open heart surgery, I knew while watching these doctors - this was no evolved species doing the work that had originally risen from some primordial slimy soup. When I see one of our young men and look with him down the aisle at his beautiful bride dressed in white, I realize this is not the way of the animal kingdom. I am in awe when officiating at the funeral of a believing saint and listen to the favorite hymns and see the tears at coffin's edge, while loved ones peer into the face of one who, like themselves, still bore the image of the Creator.

### I. Be insightful of the original design of the Creator.

Yes, in the midst of our chaos and havoc in this fallen world I have learned to love men, women, boys and girls for whom Christ died. We might look like pieces of junk right now outside of salvation, but look closely and you will see a treasure waiting to be unearthed! I was recently on a plane coming home from a preaching event. I had a wonderful encounter with a man seated next to me. He had commercially produced and sold well over five thousand pieces of art. He had helped design the model for Star Trek. He had worked for Universal Studios and other prestigious organizations. When he reflected back on his life, he talked about the drugs and other things and readily admitted that the old hippie movement was leading in the wrong direction. He could admit to the destructive tendencies to which it all led. His name was David. I thought about Michelangelo's masterpiece, David. Then as I looked at him, in need of the Savior, I realized this is a greater David than the artist of the world could have formed. Why, this man even yet in his fallen state is of far greater design, intelligence and had something the cold marble did not have....purpose!

God's Word tells us, "...for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7). A few verses later God said, "*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise*" (Isaiah 43:21). In the New Testament the Bible reads, "*...forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God...*" (I Corinthians 11:7). Let us see the Master's touch under the rubble and dust of man's ruin!

### II. Be involved in restoration.

Jesus was confronted by the skeptics, hypocrites and religious people of His day, always challenged on every plane. When once the skeptics were trying to trick him about taxes, He showed a beautiful truth. Jesus said, *“Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s”* (Luke 20:24). Now He told them to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar’s and then He made a great point for people to render to God that which was God’s. As you study, this truth will come off the page. In other words, Christ was saying, you and I are made in God’s image; therefore, give yourself back to your Creator!

After man fell, we reverted to Adam’s image which is the marred likeness of fallen man, even though we still bear the image of God. *“And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness...”* (Genesis 5:3). Then later Christ came to earth and perfected the fallen image, giving mankind a second chance through the second birth! The Bible says of Christ, *“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature”* (Colossians 1:15). When we come to Christ, the Bible says we have the privilege of starting all over as spoken in the Scripture: *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”* (Colossians 3:10). I love the way Paul said it to the Corinthians, *“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”* (II Corinthians 3:18).

When we become soul winners, we are partnering with God to help in restoration. It is fascinating when a modern artist will go to some ancient mural and carefully follow the lines with matching colors. They are not redoing the art; they are simply bringing out the original design. Our work in the Lord is basically the same thing. Let us have the vision and follow the Creator’s lines.

### **III. Be aware of the redemption plan.**

We may get discouraged as we try to partner with God in this restoration business of evangelism and discipleship, but understand we are not in the finished stage of what the Master is yet to perform. Get the picture: man has fallen through the first Adam. Christ became the second and last Adam. He is second and final chance for full recovery. But just you wait! We shall be like Him, *“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”* (I John 3:2). So don’t give up.

In closing, let me show you the future of the Christian as promised in I Corinthians 15:45-49, *“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”* Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

- Pastor Pope -

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