

The image of God restored Part 2

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[0 : 00] In verse 15 of chapter 1, we're told about Jesus Christ, that he's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. And then in chapter 3, verse 10, we're told they were to put on the new man, which has been renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

And again, we're brought back into this theme of the image of God and how that image is being renewed through the work of Jesus Christ. The work of Jesus Christ is a restoration work.

It's like a craftsman who's working at restoring an old building or an old piece of furniture. They work painstakingly to restore and to create once more the image of what it was like originally.

And Jesus Christ, if you take that example, but in a much greater and fuller way, that is what Jesus Christ is doing. In those who trust in him. That those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ become the object of his work.

And he spends our lifetime making us once more like himself. And like the original image, in fact, even better than the original image as it was in Adam.

[1 : 14] He is there to rebuild. His work is a builder. We often think when Jesus Christ, and maybe I'm guilty of it as much as anyone, when we talk about Christ saying that it is finished on the cross.

That he then went back to heaven and doesn't do anything anymore. But far from it. Christ is a master builder now in glory. And he is building with his power and with our cooperation.

He is remoulding us and rebuilding us so that we're going to become more like the original image as it was. So that we're going to turn on its head Satan's work.

Because we remember that everything Satan's done has been to destroy the work of God. God's lovely creation. Satan wanted to go in there and turn it around with a knife and screw it about and make a mess so that there would be nothing but a tainted, spoiled, horrible image.

And his work has always been to destroy what God created and what God made. But in Christ Jesus, Christ, in his power, which is stronger than the devil's, retrains or restores the image of God in us.

[2 : 22] And he is out to wipe away in Christians the effects of the fall. The effects of all that is bad about what Satan did.

And in this passage we're reminded, just to begin with, that Christ himself is the perfect image of God. We see Jesus Christ, we see the perfect image of God.

See, in Adam we saw an image, a likeness. But it wasn't the same as what Jesus Christ is. In Jesus Christ we see more than just a likeness, more than just an image. We see actually God in the flesh.

That is what we see when we see Jesus Christ. God in the form of a man that we can understand. You see, that's what made the incarnation, Jesus becoming man. That's what made it possible. Because we were originally as people made in God's image.

God, Jesus Christ, and I'm speaking respectfully here, Jesus Christ couldn't have become a lion. He couldn't have become an animal. Because the animals don't have the image of God at all.

[3 : 23] But Jesus Christ could become a human being. Because there was already within that being the image of God. When we see him, we see God. In Hebrews 1 verse 3 we're told that Christ is the exact representation of God.

Of his being. So when we see Jesus Christ, we see a mirror image of who God is himself. He radiates God's glory. See Jesus. See God. See him.

And you know that you've seen God. You know we have very divergent pictures of God and Jesus, don't we? We sometimes think Jesus is lovely, meek and mild. And we think God, a big hard man in heaven looking down and full of oppression and full of judgment and full of harshness.

And we can't reconcile the two. We think, well Jesus is a nice part of God and God is the hard part of God. But the two are the same. Anything you can predicate of Jesus Christ, you can predicate of God.

God is Christ. Christ is God. We see in Jesus Christ everything that God wants us to see about himself. And in Jesus Christ, we who are Christians are reborn.

[4 : 37] We who are Christians have lost this thing of death. And we have this massive change of status so that we are now Christ's. And the reign of death is over.

And the reign of sin is over. And the image of God is being renewed. We are to become Christ-like. When we're Christians, we are to work for all our lives to make the image of God as perfect as it can be.

And that means becoming Christ-like. So for a few minutes this evening, I'd like to look at the image renewed.

We saw the image as it was originally. And we've seen it perverted. And this evening, we want to look at the image renewed. And what that means to us as Christians, primarily.

Because in Christ and through Christ's power, he is there to mold and to work and to restore the lost image. And we as Christians are to mirror Jesus Christ in our lives.

[5 : 42] And we are to do it three ways. Not optional. Not for the odd few. But all. We are to mirror God. Mirror Christ in three ways.

First of all, as we've seen it before, in our relation to God. We saw the relation to God originally. We saw how it's been all perverted. And how it's renewed in Jesus Christ.

The relation to God is renewed. The empty space is filled by God. The empty void that Christians, the unbelievers, have in their hearts is filled by Jesus Christ.

And again, we have this three-dimensional part to us that says we're looking Godward. That we have God in our lives and in our hearts and in our souls, which we didn't have before.

We're God-centered. The empty space is filled. And it's given us three dimensions. And it's given us a look towards heaven. We have a walk. We have a fellowship. And our whole direction of life has changed.

[6 : 39] And that is one of the greatest changes to anybody that can ever happen. It's not just a minor thing. No matter where we've been brought up in a Christian home or not. Whether we've come from drugs or not.

Whatever our difference. Whatever our background. When we come to Christ, whoever we are, there's been a massive change. Because a godless life becomes a life that is pointed towards God.

And we begin to change the whole way of thinking of our lives Godward. Because self is replaced by God. And God becomes important in our lives.

The relation to God becomes real. We use the gifts that he's given us to glorify himself. We begin to use the tongues that he's given us to praise his name. We begin to use our lives, which before we never thought of anyone else but ourselves and our own good things.

We begin to use our lives to serve Christ. To give him back some of what he has given to us. We begin to mold our wills so that our wills obey Christ.

[7 : 40] See, before we've never obeyed anybody. Not in important things. We've always had our own will. We've molded our own will. And we've decided, well, maybe sometimes I'll obey if it's for my own good, if it's for my benefit.

If it saves me getting a thrashing, I'll obey my parents. And if it saves you lot getting a thrashing down there, then you would obey the minister too. But anyway, we recognize that when we come to God's house, when we come to God's place, that we listen to what God has to say.

And we begin to use our wills to obey God. Not just when we want, not just when we choose, but all the time. That we begin to see that he is in command of our wills.

Not just when we choose, but when it is right to do so. Our desire is changed from being for ourself to being to God.

As it says in the letter that we read there in chapter 3, verse 2, We begin to set our mind, our hearts, on the things that are above. See, our mind was never before set on anything above.

[8 : 44] But in Christ, the relationship to God has changed. And we begin to set our mind on the things that are above. We begin to be able to say, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

There's a massive renewal, a massive change of direction. And we begin to be able to live and look heavenward. Our consciences begin to be guided and led by the Holy Spirit.

Your intellects, your time, your lives, given to advance his interests, to support him, to stand on his behalf, to be his ambassador, to want his glory, not our own.

We become duty-bound to follow him, to worship and glorify him. And that means that our lives become anything but ordinary. They become anything but plain.

And it's bad when we see plain, drab Christians who ought to be filled with God. And we're all plain and drab when we consider what we could be, what the potential is to be filled with God.

[9 : 54] And yet we are ordinary and unchanged. The relationship is hardly moved. We've only kind of gone by degrees. When he asks us to take a whole 360 degree turn, 180 may be even better.

But we belong to Christ. And we look heavenward. And there's a whole change of relationship, a whole change of life. I wonder if that reflects our Christian lives, that our lives are Christ-centered and Christ-directed.

Is that who we live for now as Christians? When you take and you stand on your life the name of Jesus Christ, and you say, I'm a Christian, then is that how your life is going?

Is that how your life is being directed, that it is now Godward? Lord, when we look back from eternity, and we look back onto our life, and it'll be like no more than a tiny little speck of sand on an enormous great seashore.

When we look back on that tiny speck of time, tiny, tiny speck of time, in the light of eternity, when we look back on our lives, we'll be able to look back and say that I serve God. We'll be able to look back and say that I love God.

[11 : 10] Will I be able to look back and say that I lived for God in this life? In relation to God, but also in relation to each other.

Not only is the relation to God changed, but the relation to each other in Jesus Christ has changed. Generally, the relationship to each other has changed in Jesus Christ, because again, self has been replaced by Christ.

And who is Christ like most? Not, sorry, not who he was like most, but how did we see his love most? We saw it in his relation to others, and how he served others.

And that is how we are to show that we belong to Jesus Christ in our relationship to others. Because the brokenness, the division, the walls, the barriers that sin has created are to be taken down in Christ.

And we have a duty, we are bound as Christians to heal the barriers, to unify people, to mend broken relationships, to encourage in this divided world.

[12 : 16] We are there to fuse together people and bring people together. We have a command to forgive other people when before we might have held grudges and been bitter.

We're asked to love our enemies where before we went along with the rest and hated our enemies. We are to be those who lead the world in giving to the poor, in giving to the needy, in giving to the starving.

We are to lead the world in fighting for equality and for democracy and for justice, because these things bring people together rather than divide and separate, which is the effects of sin.

You see, it's easy, it's easy to be a Christian on Sunday and to curse your neighbour on Monday. Easy. But in Christ, the relationship to God is to change, but also the relationship to one another.

We are to be those who don't fall into the world's standards of scandalising, gossiping and swearing, hating and mistrusting. We have to have changed as people, changed in our outlook, changed in our attitude.

[13 : 22] God demands that with his life inside us, we change in relation to himself and in relation to each other. And that also affects the church, of which we are a part, because the church is Christ's body.

And Christ's particular work is to sanctify his body. That is to make his body of people holy. He is his active role in doing this. And we are asked to cooperate in this work.

He doesn't do it on his own. He doesn't make us holy against our will. He demands our cooperation. And if we will not cooperate with him, then we will not be holy. He demands that we work with him.

He will not do our work for us. And we need to ask, if we, as a congregation, and look at ourselves and see, are we, in relation to one another, renewing the image of God?

Are we making right the image of God that was wrong before? Are we, as a congregation, showing the image of God as a group in a way that nobody else can do so?

[14 : 27] Because when we're with each other, we're to be towards each other, looking in, caring for one another. We are to be enriched by one another, inspired by one another, sustained by the prayers of one another, because we're God's image.

And God made his image, man and woman, society, togetherness, not to be islands, but to be together, enriched and sustained. We are to make the effort to make this church a sanctified body of people.

It's not everybody else's job. It's ours to make the church of Christ, of which you're a part, sanctified. And we can only do so by being committed to God's body here, to take personal responsibility for when you see the mistakes and errors in the congregation and the faults and the things you don't like, to make them right.

If you think there's strangers coming in and aren't being spoken to, then you go and speak to them. I go and speak to them. We take on board our own responsibility to sanctify the congregation, to take an interest.

If other people will not take an interest in me, then I'll take an interest in them. I'll go and speak to them. I'll go and reach out. Even though they're not my type, even though they're not the kind of person I would normally speak with, in Christ there's neither Jew nor Greek.

[15 : 48] There's neither rich nor poor, slave nor free, male nor female. We are to be toward one another. That is to restore the image of God. That is what He commands us to do.

We're not to come to God's house to get our daily, weekly fix of sermons. And then leave as if it's not our duty or our business or part of our life.

But it is to be our ongoing, committed involvement in the body of Christ to restore God's image in this body as believers.

So that people outside can look in and say, that is a people who know where they're going and who image God and who reflect God and who shine the glorious gospel of God in their relationships with one another.

We must allow God to do His work, to renew His image in this congregation together so that we will have an effect on the world outside.

[16 : 51] outside in relation to God, in relation to each other, and also the images renewed in Christians, even in relation to creation.

And we saw these things before. But as Christians, with God in our lives and our hearts, we ought to have a new relationship with creation.

creation. Because mankind was originally given creation and then they were at enmity and the enemies one with another because of the fall. But in Christ, that image is renewed.

And our rule and our stewardship over the creation ought to change when we become Christians. You know, Adam was the first friend of the earth long before any of them came around in this century.

And God gave principles that it has taken mankind centuries of abuse before they've recognized. God gave all these principles of conservation, of preservation, of caring, of loving, of being concerned about nature and about the world in which we live.

[18 : 01] Not mankind. It's not the Green Party's idea. They're centuries behind God. It was God who gave us this mandate to look after or the world in which we're apart.

And that is to be renewed in Christians. We are to be concerned for wildlife, for resources, for responsible conservation.

Not conservation that puts mankind completely out of the picture. But we are to be responsible for, we are to be involved with responsible conservation.

We are to be opposed to waste, to pollution, to desecration. We are to be people that are concerned about easing famine relief, the effects of disease and of flood and of famine.

We are to be Christians who are involved in developing third world countries. Look at the great tier fund and the work they do. Not only in throwing aid, but in developing different things which meet the needs of particular communities.

[19 : 07] We have a cultural Christian mandate to honour God in every single field of human endeavour, in every investigation, in every research, in every exploration, in this life or in planets, wherever they happen to be.

There are no frontiers beyond which Christ and his kingdom can develop. In Jesus Christ, we have a plan, a personal salvation plan to renew God's image, but we also have a political, ethical, social, environmental and ecological set of principles.

Christ affects every part of our lives. What then, briefly in conclusion, can we say about this restoration work that goes on? Two things briefly.

Firstly, the restoration of God's image in us as Christians is all-embracing. It covers every part of life. There is nothing that isn't covered by God's work as Christians in our lives.

It's a way of life. It's an injustice and it's a bit strange really to call Christianity a religion. There's hundreds of religions, but Christianity is a whole world view.

[20 : 26] It's a whole way of life. It's this whole change where our lives change from becoming death-orientated to being life-orientated, filled with the life of Jesus Christ.

The principle of death is removed and the principle of life is enthroned. Self is replaced by Christ. That has great implications for us in our lives as Christians.

It means that Jesus Christ becomes Lord of our business, of our house, of our relationships, of the company we keep, of our employment or our unemployment, of our language, of our passions, of our TV watching, of the clothes we wear, of the money we spend.

Every single part of life comes under the authority and power of Jesus Christ. Christ. And there's a danger. And here I'm going to use a big word and I ask for your forgiveness but it's a great big word and it means, it covers so much of what it means.

The danger of compartmentalization. 20 letters. Compartmentalization. The great danger of putting Christ into a compartment of our life.

[21 : 40] We compartmentalize our lives so that Christ is in one little piece and then we can do what we want with all the other little pieces of our lives. God becomes no more than a hobby.

No more than something or somebody that we spend the odd occasional time with. We have kind of Christ on a valve that we can move and adjust to how we see fit.

We leave the great danger of not seeing Christ as relevant to every part of our lives so that every time we put down our Bible we put down Jesus Christ as well.

When we leave the Bible at the back door realm we leave Jesus Christ there too because he has no part in my life. No part in the ongoing life and the ongoing pattern of life that I'm living.

He only plays a part. Lord I'll give you so much. I'll be a part time Christian. I'll give you a part of my life. But we don't take Christ and his principles which cover every part of life.

[22 : 43] we don't take him with us. So that means it's okay to come staggering out of a pub on a Saturday night and then come to worship God in the Lord's day because we compartmentalize and we make Christ just a little part of our lives.

But that kind of Christianity my friends is no Christianity at all. That is not biblical Christianity. There's no place for part timers. There's no place for putting Christ on hold on the back burner while we live out our sinful passions and then come back and say oh Lord will forgive me because that's the way he works.

The standard for minister and hearer alike is be holy because I am holy. And that holiness is to affect every part of our lives. Every relationship.

Every moment of every day. Because be holy because I am holy is the end product of restoration. It's restoration to become like Jesus Christ.

That is our aim. That is our passion. That is our goal. Our goal is to image Christ wherever whatever we're doing. Otherwise we aren't Christians.

[23 : 59] The restoration is all embracing and the restoration is ongoing. ongoing. It's always ongoing. We're always being renewed. We're always becoming or seeking to become more like Christ and it will not be complete until the final resurrection.

There's always going to be in every one of us sin to root out. There's always going to be fruit that we need to bear. We're always going to need to be restored. And in order to become like Christ Jesus we need Christ Jesus.

We need his power. we need the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification because that is what he does. The Holy Spirit works cooperating with us to make us like Jesus.

And he gives us tools to use. The word, God's house, prayer, fellowship, the Lord's supper, all these things given to us in order to help us to be more like Christ.

And we are to cooperate with him. We are to put ourselves into the places and the pathways of obedience. As I said before, it's a joint work. It's a work in salvation where Christ works alone.

[25 : 09] Nobody works jointly with Christ for our salvation. He finished that work in Calvary. But for our sanctification, for that big word, for our being renewed in God's image, it's cooperation.

He works, we cooperate. We need God. God uses us. If we will not cooperate, he will not work. If we will not pray, this church will not grow.

If we will not strive to follow Christ, then we will find it very difficult to do so. We are to be those who are constantly cooperating with Christ's Holy Spirit, being in the places where he does his work and where he will help us grow, and that way the image is constantly being renewed.

The Christian is to be the person in constant flux, in constant movement, flexible, changing all the time. There's no proud boast in saying that you're the same as you were 20 years ago, because there's nothing worse than a stagnant Christian, except for a shrinking Christian.

Because if we're standing still, then we're becoming less like Christ. It's like the garden. If we're not doing any work in it, then it doesn't just stay the same, it gets worse.

[26 : 33] The weeds grow. And so it is with our souls. If we don't let Christ do his work, then be sure Satan will do his work for you, and he will make sure that we don't grow and don't become more like Christ.

We have this great work of cooperating with the Holy Spirit so that we will become like Christ. Christ. And that is why these prayer meetings and Christian basics and fellowship meetings and home meetings and church are all so important not to plug up numbers.

Who cares about numbers if that's what we're looking for? But because they're used and they're good for our souls when they're used aright and when we see them as God would like us to see them.

it's the image being renewed in my life and yours. How is our lives imaging the person of Jesus Christ?

Because remember Christ is the perfect image of God. And the more Christ-like we become, the more God-like we become. So our task, our privilege, our ongoing work as Christians is to be like Jesus.

[27 : 45] Has anybody ever said that we're like Jesus? Have you ever noticed that you're like Christ? Are you changing? Am I? Are we changing? I wonder if I'm changing at all.

Sometimes I think I'm going backwards. But we're to be those who are constantly seeking to renew that image. Because when we persevere, when we keep on going, then we know that one day in glory, the image will be perfected.

And we will have attained what Adam failed to attain. and we will have the security for the everlasting life that Adam never had.

That in glory when we persevere, when we keep right on to the end of the road, not just a few weeks, not just a year, not just two years, but when we go right on to the deathbed, and when we persevere for Christ through thick and thin, through good and bad, then we will be rewarded with a glorious, new, perfected body.

And next time, God willing, we'll see what the Bible has to say about that. Amen. Let us pray. Gracious God, we ask for your blessing upon your word, and we ask for your Holy Spirit to play his part.

[29 : 08] we know that your Spirit is so willing and so keen to do his work, and that the problem is always our unwillingness, our barrier building, our shame, and our lack of commitment, that we often say, no thanks, Lord, not today, maybe sometime again, when I'm feeling more like it.

We know that so often we say, no, Lord, I want to keep this sin, I want to keep this particular style of life, I want to keep this behavioral attitude, I want to keep this bitterness and this hate in my heart.

And, Lord, while we do so and while we find these things tear us up inside, that they also tear up the image that is to be restored, and that we end up worse than never being saved at all, almost, sometimes.

We pray for forgiveness for that, and ask that we would be jointly and separately, in private and in public, those who will follow Christ.

Because above all things, we know that Jesus Christ hates hypocrites. They were the ones that he hated most on this earth in terms of their sin and their behavior, and he still hates that attitude of hypocrisy, for we are one thing with one lot, and another when we're apart.

[30 : 34] gracious Lord, you said that you will spew such people out of your mouth, because they're neither hot nor cold. May that judgment not be a judgment that comes near this particular church, or the particular people here, but may we be those who seek to restore God's image in our own lives.

For Jesus' sake, Amen.