

## **God's Masterpiece** *Marshall Reid*

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

There are many respects in which we were made in the image of God. For instance, we are moral creatures. No animal has morals. No animal has a sense of right and wrong. Another way in which we're like our God is that we are creative. We appreciate beauty and can create works of art, whether with the palette or with a musical instrument. But our creations pale in comparison with the Creator in both beauty and ability. Nobody can paint a sky like our God. And nobody can create something out of nothing as he did during that first week.

In Romans 1:20, Paul says of God's creation, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and divine nature, so that they are without excuse”. The word for “things that are made” is *poiema*, the same word from which we get our English word “poem”. But this isn't just any ordinary work—it's God's masterpiece, his creation! And as Genesis 1:31 says, it is “very good”.

The other time *poiema* is found in the New Testament is in Ephesians 2:10. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We are the work of God. We were part of the creation, and as majestic as the rest of creation is, we are the pinnacle of that creation! This hails back to Gen. 1:26-27 and the idea of being made in God's image.

Unfortunately, both masterpieces of God were corrupted by sin. The physical world, though still magnificent and awesome, tends towards decay. No more is it a paradise, perfect in every way. It has been affected by sin and was subjected to futility but will also “be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-21). And our physical bodies have suffered the same fate. Our bodies break down and fail. We are not immortal. All of this is a result of sin.

But we can overcome that and attain the design God had for us in the beginning. After all, we are his masterpiece! And as such, we are to live up to the purpose for which we were made. According to Eph. 2:10, we were created to walk in good works.

We weren't made to serve ourselves; we were made to serve others. Through Jesus' humble life, he showed us the way to live for good works. He showed us what it meant to be a servant, to consistently seek out the other person's needs and welfare. We typically think of ministers as the ones who stand before a congregation and preach. However, we are all ministers. We all have been given attributes by God that are to be used for the benefit of the church and of mankind in general.

Selfishness is the underlying motivation for all sin. And selfishness defies the purpose for which we were made. Just as a master painting can be marred by someone who doesn't care or appreciate

the beauty of the artist's creation, we mar God's masterpiece when we live for ourselves and our selfish desires. If we're not attuned to the needs of our fellow man, if we're focused on self, then we're no longer the masterpiece God had made. Instead, we've let Satan come and smear the painting until it's unrecognizable. What a shame to allow that to happen!

Thankfully, the master Creator can remake us in his image once again. He can deliver us from this body of death through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24-25)! And being delivered, we can then serve him and serve others just the way he intended.

One important reminder regarding our good works—they're not good works if they're done to bring honor and glory to ourselves. To God alone be the glory! As Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Just as a painting brings glory to the painter, so we, as God's masterpiece, are to bring glory to our Creator. Live according to the purpose for which you were designed. Walk in good works. Live to glorify God.