

# Why be thankful?

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Thanksgiving 2018  
11/22/2018

Why should we be thankful?

*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work; (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; While by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection into the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (II Corinthians 9:8-15)*

In the beginning God created us in His *image* and *likeness*!<sup>1</sup> By creating each of us after this manner, both male and female, God made us:

- 1) *agents* or *stewards* of His *image* and *likeness*, and thus
- 2) *representatives* of His *character* and *reputation*.

Our very existence, as all existence, reveals His glory and honor.<sup>2</sup> It speaks of:

- 1) His creative genius and the power of His abilities,
- 2) His very nature and the uniqueness of His character and expression, and
- 3) His intentions towards us and His purposes for our lives.

Because we represent His image and likeness in this world, it matters to God how we live our lives. This is why God has said that He is a jealous God.<sup>3</sup> For how we use and treat His image by our actions and our words or expressions is a deeply personal matter to Him.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, God tests our works and proves our ways.<sup>5</sup> He then rewards us and endows us with eternal abilities and means by which we may further honor His image.<sup>6</sup> He does this according to our demonstrated devotion to Him and according to His eternal purposes and work.<sup>7</sup>

God loves each and every one of us – all of us, not just one or some of us.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, He knows that if we live contrary to His character and will that we will harm and destroy ourselves and others through self-serving motivations and inventions.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, God judges us according to the standard of His *express image*, who is in Christ Jesus.<sup>10</sup> By His Only Begotten Son, by His very *Word*,<sup>11</sup> God thus rewards each of us (both individually and collectively) according to our love and devotion to Him as expressed by our love and devotion to His Beloved Son named Immanuel.<sup>12</sup>

In practical, day to day terms, God cares about two very important aspects of our stewardship of His image:

- 1) How do we *represent* His image by the way we live in this world?
- 2) How do we *view* His image as evidenced by the way we view and interact with each other?

God did not make us to live separately from Him or based solely on our own abilities. Rather, He made us to embody His countenance and glory by way of His Holy Spirit dwelling in us.<sup>13</sup> That is, He made our bodies to be (collectively) the temple of His Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup> He made us to be members of His very own body, called His church.<sup>15</sup> He made us partakers of His glory, which is shown perfectly through the head of the body, who is Jesus Christ, and by whom the whole body is filled with eternal light and love.<sup>16</sup>

However, we all have come short of His glory.<sup>17</sup> By giving way to temptations that defile and deface God's image in our lives, we *separate*<sup>18</sup> ourselves from His Spirit of truth. Such separation comes of the rebellion and carelessness of exercising our wills independent of and contrary to God's perfect will for our lives.<sup>19</sup>

As a result of this separation, our lives become devoid of His presence and the expression of His image and countenance, that of His own likeness and character.<sup>20</sup> In its place comes the ugliness and meanness which is revealed in the vile nature of this present world.<sup>21</sup>

But praise be to God for His unspeakable gift,<sup>22</sup> by whom He has provided a tried and precious *way* for us to be restored to His image and to have His image revealed in and through us each and every day.<sup>23</sup>

In the redemption of Jesus Christ, we have the promise and power of a new birth, a spiritual birth, by which the image of God may be reinstated within us and expressed through us.<sup>24</sup>

This new birth is the only way to be brought back into conformance of God's image and thus back into His true fellowship.<sup>25</sup> This is the only way for His *express image*, who is Jesus Christ, to be able to dwell within us by faith and to be revealed to the world through us.<sup>26</sup>

The gift of Jesus Christ is reason above all to be thankful forever to God for His grace in endowing us with His image.<sup>27</sup> Not only did God create us in His image, He has also provided the way for us, through the death and resurrection of our Savior, to be restored to His image and likeness, for us to become faithful stewards of His character and countenance that He created us to be in the beginning.<sup>28</sup>

The Lord is willing and able to restore His image in each and every person who is willing to receive Him within themselves.<sup>29</sup> He is able to *restore*<sup>30</sup> that which is most precious, that of His very own image which is manifested through His *express image* revealed in Jesus Christ. The question then is, do we want to be like Him in righteousness, peace and joy forever or not?

For everyone who is willing to receive and then abide in His image, who allow Him to abide within them, there is therefore great hope and purpose in living, both now and forever.

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. (Hebrews 13:12-15)*

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- 1 Genesis 1:27,29 with Isaiah 43:5-7, Isaiah 45:11-13,18, etc.
  - 2 Psalm 19:1-14 with Revelation 4:11 Romans 1:20 &
  - 3 Exodus 20:4-6 & Deuteronomy 5:8-10
  - 4 Isaiah 43:7, Isaiah 48:11, etc.
  - 5 Psalm 139:23,24
  - 6 Revelation 22:12-14 with Matthew 25:1-47 & Galatians 6:7-9; see also I Corinthians 15:41,42 with 3:13-17
  - 7 Luke 16:1-13 & Matthew 25:1-47 with Revelation 2:2-4, 2:9-10, 2:13-15, 2:19-20, 3:1-4, 3:8-10, & 3:15-19 with I Corinthians 3:12-18 & D&C 22:23b
  - 8 John 3:14-17 with I John 3:1-3
  - 9 Galatians 5:15-21 with II Peter 2:9-22 & II Timothy 3:12,13
  - 10 Hebrews 1:1-3 with Colossians 1:10-15
  - 11 John 1:1-16 with I John 1:1-5
  - 12 Isaiah 7:14-16 with Matthew 2:6
  - 13 Acts 1:1-8 & Acts 2:1-47 with John 14:15-29
  - 14 I Corinthians 6:19-20 with Ephesians 2:19-22
  - 15 Colossians 1:9-29 with I Corinthians 12:4-31
  - 16 II Corinthians 4:6,7
  - 17 Romans 3:23 & Galatians 3:22 with Colossians 1:9-29
  - 18 Jude 1:17-19
  - 19 Hebrews 3:7-17 with Hebrews 4:1-16
  - 20 Matthew 12:37-39
  - 21 Romans 1:22-25, etc.
  - 22 II Corinthians 9:15
  - 23 Ephesians 3:1-21 & 4:1-16 with Galatians 4:6,7 & 5:13-26 and Colossians 3:1-17; see esp. Romans 8:1-39
  - 24 II Corinthians 5:17-21, Hebrews 1:1-4 with John 1:11-16 & Alma 3:27-70; see also Genesis 6:57-65
  - 25 I John 1:6-10 & I John 2:1-17
  - 26 II Corinthians 4:5-7 & Ephesians 3:14-21 with Romans 5:1-21 & Romans 8:1-39
  - 27 John 3:16,17 & II Nephi 6:19-55 with II Corinthians 9:15
  - 28 John 14:1-6 with I Corinthians 11:12-14
  - 29 Hebrews 7:24 & Luke 1:37 with Philippians 4:13
  - 30 Joel 2:12-32