

Sunday, January 19, 2014

## From the book “The Ministry of Salvation” (3)

# God’s gifts to Man

### 1- What are the gifts which man received by being created in God’s image?

Man differs from the rest of the creation in being created in God’s image. Therefore, he received many gifts and privileges that the rest of the creation did not have.

#### A. **The mind:**

Man was created a rational being, something that is unique to him compared to the rest of the creation as St Athanasius mentioned: *“He bestowed a grace which other creatures lacked - namely the impress of His own Image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the Mind of God even as He does, though in limited degree they might continue forever in the blessed and only true life of the saints in paradise”*. (The incarnation of the Word).

B. **Being Eternal:** Man became eternal as a result of being created in God’s image. If man preserves God’s image within him, he would become an eternal being i.e. lives forever, as the book of Wisdom says:

*“For God created man incorruptible, and to the image of his own likeness He made him”* (Wisdom 2:23).

C. **The knowledge of God:** Man is the only creation that knows God, his creator. This is a natural result to being created in God’s image. In this regard, St. Athanasius said: *“When God the Almighty was making mankind through His own Word, He perceived that they, owing to the limitation of their nature, could not of themselves have any knowledge of their Artificer, the Incorporeal and Uncreated. He took pity on them, therefore, and did not leave them destitute of the knowledge of Himself, lest their very existence should prove purposeless. For of what use is existence to the creature if it cannot know its Maker? How could men be reasonable beings if they had no knowledge of the Word and Reason of the Father, through whom they had received their being? They would be no better than the beasts, had they no knowledge save of earthly things; and why should God have made them at all, if He had not intended them to know Him? But, in fact, the good God has given them a share in His own Image that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? Simply in order that through this gift of Godlikeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father; which knowledge of their Maker is for men the only really happy and blessed life”*. (The incarnation of the Word).

According to the words of St Athanasius, knowing God is very important to man, as without it man won’t be different from other irrational creations. At the same time, it is impossible for man to know God on his own, as it is impossible for the limited creature to know the unlimited creator. Therefore, it was important that God creates man in His image and after His likeness as in St. Athanasius mentioned: *“God has given them a share in His own Image that is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, and has made even themselves after the same Image and Likeness. Why? Simply in order that through this gift of Godlikeness in themselves they may be able to perceive the Image Absolute, that is the Word Himself, and through Him to apprehend the Father”* That is to say man is a creature, created in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, the Logos. Therefore, he can know God the Son, and through man’s knowledge of God the Son, he would be able to know God the Father, so man can acquire the true knowledge of God.

D. **Freedom:** Man was created with free will, and we can’t imagine man who was created in God’s image to be without freedom. Otherwise, God’s image in man becomes distorted. If God has absolute freedom, then man who is created in his image must also be free.

E. **Authority over the creation:** since God created man, He granted him authority over the whole creation so it was subjected to Adam and obeyed him, as it was mentioned in the book of Genesis *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’.*” (Genesis 1:26)

*“Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature that was its name”*. (Genesis 2:19)

In short, these are the gifts that man attained by being created in God’s image: **The mind, eternity, the knowledge of God, freedom, and the authority over the creation.**

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