

Are You Two-Faced?

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by Alan Allegra



Janus

Once when Lincoln was accused of being two-faced, he humbly replied, "If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?"

In ancient Roman mythology, Janus is the god of beginnings and transitions, doorways, and time. He is a two-faced god, looking to the future and the past. The Romans named the month of January in honor of Janus.

Being called two-faced is, in our modern culture, considered an insult. It implies that one is hypocritical or double-dealing, even deceitful. A two-faced person shows one face or persona to one person, and a different--usually opposite--face to another person for political or social advantage. It can be difficult to tell which is the "real" face.

However, in the Janus sense, having two faces can be a helpful character trait, resulting in spiritual advantage. The ability to look to the future and the past is a great encouragement in

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one's walk with God. This is especially appropriate during the month of January, when we celebrate a new year with its "auld lang syne" and "Bet your bottom dollar That tomorrow There'll be sun!" Optimism for the future seems ingrained in our souls, giving us a kind of hopeful hope for the hereafter.

The Bible exhorts us to turn to the past to remember who the Lord is and what he has done. The psalmist sums this up in Psalm 111: "He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate" (v. 4). During the period of the Judges, the people of ancient Israel constantly returned to sin and anguish because "They set up Baal-Berith as their god and did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side" ([Judges 8:33-34](#)). Moses' final sermon to the Israelites contains over a dozen exhortations to the people to remember their slavery and deliverance; the giving of the law; God's provision during the wilderness wandering; their sins and consequences; their enemies and victories; the source of their wealth; and the history of their fathers. The only way to remember is to look back. Philosopher George Santayana warned, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of God, warned, "Now these things happened to them (Israel) as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come" (

[1 Corinthians 10:11](#)

). This is certainly one good face to have, and the wise person learns from the past.

The second, equally important face is the one that looks to the future. One might argue that, short of a crystal ball or atmospheric prognosticator, it is impossible to know the future. The Bible takes care of that forthcoming shortcoming.

As already seen, the Bible tells us about the past and the God who displayed his greatness in difficult times. It also reveals our sinful tendencies and His mercy. This same book tells us what we need to know about the present and the future. Paul again: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" ([Romans 8:28](#)). Regarding the ultimate future, there is certain hope: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" ([Revelation 12:34](#)).

Our parents warned us to look both ways before crossing the street. Our heavenly Father encourages us to look both ways when facing the day. This January, resolve to be two-faced in the good way!

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