***Our Thought Life & Imagination (Losing Weight) - PH84-02
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:8-9***

In Philippians 4:8, we read, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." We have found that the Bible teaches that genuine personal happiness is ultimately an emotion which is generated by a divine viewpoint mentality. For this reason, people who are not born again can never be genuinely happy. People who are not Christians can only experience a certain pseudo kind of happiness.

The apostle Paul lists here, in Philippians 4:8, a series of things upon which a believer should focus his thinking in order to secure the divine viewpoint mentality which is the basis for all personal happiness. These are categories of things, and many different kinds of specific examples would fit under these categories. These things we have found to be six, first of all, in number, and they were: things that are true (conforming to reality); things that are honorable (which people will respect); things that are simply right (according to God's standards); things that are pure (according to God's moral viewpoint); things that are winsome; and, things that are attractive. Then he gives a general summary of the Christian's mind as a place for things that are lofty and things that are praiseworthy.

This list constitutes the noble qualities which are exemplified throughout Scripture in Bible doctrine principles for Christian living. That's the whole point of knowing doctrine. If you know doctrine, this kind of a mental pattern will evolve in your thinking. That's why it is of utmost importance that you constantly maintain your instruction in the Word of God. You can keep your eyes open, as you read through Scripture, and find how what God lays down as principles for living fall under these various categories.

**Our Thought Life**

The reason that such a thought life is required of us as believers, and is urged upon us, is that this kind of thought life produces personal happiness from God – a happiness which God gives, and which He then uses to guard our lives as believers. This is a happiness which God uses to guard us in our thinking from the things that destroy happiness. He does this by the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Bible doctrine truth which we have programmed into the part of our mind that we call the subconscious.

When we learn the Word of God, taking it into the conscious part of the mind (these types of things that Paul has enumerated), and we receive them with positive volition, they are put into our subconscious, or into our directive mind. They are stored in the human spirit so that it influences the subconscious. Out of the human spirit, God the Holy Spirit directs up to the subconscious (to the directive mind), from which actions spring, the information that has been stored through the study of doctrine. In this way, the subconscious is programmed to act. We're talking about something that is part of your rational process.

This is something that begins with you facing a Sunday, for example, and saying, "Here it is Sunday morning, or here it is Sunday night. I'm not going to be any place else on the face of God's earth except in Bible class." That is because in Bible class, I'm going to get information into my conscious mind which I will receive; I will accept; and, I'll go positive toward, and God the Holy Spirit will place it in my living human spirit and cycle it up to direct (to program) my subconscious mind, which is the guiding mechanism of my life. Everything I do is the result of that subconscious mind and how it has been programmed. Even if my conscious mind wants to go in this direction, if the subconscious says, "My instructions are to take you in this other direction," you will be taken in the direction of the subconscious mind. Your will will be overridden. Your emotions will be overridden.

It is important to understand that. Psychiatry and psychology in our time has demonstrated this very conclusively. This is why the apostle Paul has concluded verse 8 with the statement that you are to focus your concentrated attention upon these kinds of things. Think on these things in order that the subconscious may be brought into alignment with divine viewpoint. Then, having taken that rational act upon your part, God the Holy Spirit will have the information to guide you.

Remember that He guides through the Word of God. If you do not have the Word of God available in your living human spirit, the Holy Spirit is not going to talk to you audibly. He is not going to give you a vision. He is not going to give you a dream. He is not going to speak to you in some way that, perhaps, he did speak to people in ages past. He does not work like that today in the era of the completed canon of Scripture. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you and I are able to enter into a full, well-rounded understanding of God's thinking and of His principles as recorded in the Word of God.

So the leading of the Holy Spirit upon the things which we have recorded here in our subconscious is then used to produce learned behavior patterns. These learned behavior patterns produce personal happiness for the Christian. In other words, happiness in the life of a Christian tells you something about that believer. A happy Christian is a person who has the divine viewpoint in his subconscious necessary for successful living. The Christian who does not have divine viewpoint in his subconscious sufficient for successful living is going to be an unhappy person. He will never be happy until he gets that subconscious programmed to God's divine viewpoint.

So I'm saying that happiness is very much indeed within the control of the individual believer. That's why you'll remember that in Philippians 4:4, the apostle Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice." These are imperatives. These are commands for you to be happy. That would be ridiculous if it was not within our grasp to take the steps necessary to ensure happiness in our lives.

The reason we can control this is because it is up to you to focus your thinking on whatever kinds of things you choose to focus it upon. If you want to follow the Bible's advice, you will focus it upon these things that Paul has enumerated. If you follow your human viewpoint thinking, you will focus your attention upon all the things that the world has to offer. Then these are the things which reprogram your subconscious; these will lead you in your daily activities; and, these will lead you into grief.

The qualities which Paul lists as suitable materials for a Christian's mind are summed up in the term "Bible doctrine truths." When we speak about Bible doctrine, we're speaking about the kinds of things that Paul has enumerated here. It is the subconscious mind which creates your emotions, and thus directs your will in accordance with the beliefs that you have fed into the subconscious. It was President Abraham Lincoln who made a remark one time that pretty well summed this up when he said that most people are about as happy as they decide to be. That's exactly the truth. At least for Christians, this is exactly the truth. Most Christians are about as happy as they decide to be.

What we are doing today is explaining the biblical pattern for executing the decision to be happy. You don't just wake up tomorrow morning and say, "Well, I'm going to be happy today if it kills me." That's not going to do it. You're going to be happy if you follow the biblical pattern of proper programming.

**The Subconscious Mind**

So let's take a look at this subconscious mind a little more in action. A person becomes whatever he focuses his attention upon. For example, evil thinking programs you to evil conduct. Human-viewpoint thinking programs your subconscious toward human viewpoint conduct values and goals. All that goes into the subconscious is fed into it through the five senses. Remember that. Therefore, you must protect your five senses. You must protect the input into the senses. That's why the apostle Paul is speaking about things which can affect the subconscious, because these things that he has listed are things that come in through your eyes; through your ears; through your sense of smell; through touch; and, so on.

So meditating upon that which is evil is dangerous. For you to buy literature which is pornographic, and to meditate upon it is very dangerous because you have programmed your subconscious accordingly. And you will put yourself in the position, in time, where you will act according to what you have read in that magazine, and to the images which have been created through the eye gate. If you sit and imagine yourself participating in sinful activities, you have programmed yourself for that activity. If you perform that sinful activity, you program your subconscious to do that again. Whatever you do, you program your subconscious to do it again.

However, there is something you must remember about the subconscious. It does not know whether the information you are sending it is via an experience you are actually having, or via a mental experience you are having. The subconscious cannot tell the difference, and it doesn't really care. Whether it's an actual experience or an imagined experience, the results are the same. You program yourself internally now, under certain conditions, to act in a certain way.

For this reason, people who did not think they could ever perform, for example, an act of immorality, having programmed themselves through imagination to perform such an act and having imagined themselves going through the steps of such an act, suddenly found themselves with opportunity, and then to their horror and bewilderment, they followed what they had already programmed themselves to do. The subconscious took over, even while consciously they said, "This is wrong. This is sin, I can't do this." Yet, the subconscious propelled them to that act, because that's how they had programmed themselves through imagined experiences.

So meditating on evil and permitting evil to flow in through the senses is a very dangerous practice. When you do it, be sure you understand what it is that you are doing to yourself – that your subconscious is just sitting there like a sponge absorbing it, and you are programming yourself to that evil that you're taking in. That's why television is such a tough thing for us as believers today – to program yourself with evil. So a person is inevitably what he focuses his thinking upon.

Let's take an example of the effect of a negative focus. Here is a girl. She grows up in a family that has a father who is an alcoholic. Over the years, this girl has many memories of the grief; the pain; the humiliation; and, the disgrace which this drunken father has brought into his family – upon the mother, and upon the children. This girl focuses her attention upon this drunken father and in all the mental images she has of him: staggering home from the tavern; falling down in a drunken stupor; throwing up and vomiting all over himself; and, sleeping in his own stew. She despises all that is associated with the rage; the irrationality; and the insensibility of someone who is demented with alcohol. As she views her father, she just despises everything that he stands for, and everything that he is.

She vows to herself that when she gets married, she will never marry a man like her father. She will never put herself in the position of grief and agony that her mother experienced. Now unbeknownst to this girl, her bitterness and her despising of her father have led her to concentrate her focus upon this man. Unbeknownst to herself, there was a reaction backward into her mind (into her subconscious) that programmed her with the image of a father who is a drunkard, and with all that has been associated with that in her experience. Now, she doesn't know that this is what she's doing. No one has ever told her that her attitude of antagonism toward her father was going to rebound against her in this way.

She meets some young man to whom she is attracted. She discovers that he drinks heavily. Her conscious mind tells her that this man is a potential repeat of her father. This man, as a husband, would be a potential hazard to repeat what she has gone through and watched her mother go through with her father. Therefore, her conscious mind tells her, "Have nothing to do with him. Do not marry him."

But you would be surprised at the statistics that have been compiled on this on how many times, almost with regularity and inevitability, a young woman in this position will override her conscious mind, and the warning of what she knows from her own experience. And, in spite of herself, she will marry that man; indeed he will become a drunkard; and, she will find herself repeating her mother's agony and her mother's grief all the way down the line. She wonders how that happened.

Well, the reason it happened is because her focus upon the image of a drunken father programmed her subconscious to drive her toward just exactly that kind of man. Do you see why mental attitude sins are dangerous? The person that you despise, whoever he may be; for whatever reason you dislike that person; or, for whatever reason your antagonism is toward that person, when you do not set aside that mental attitude sin, you program yourself to become just like that person, and everything you hate in that individual is going to become true of you, sooner or later. That's why the apostle Paul says, "Do not think on things of that negative type, but focus your attention upon the positive things represented by God's divine viewpoint.

This young woman's emotions and her will are moved by her subconscious programming toward this alcoholic drunkard. The result is that her happiness is destroyed. Things would have been different had she'd follow the scriptural pattern of dealing with mental attitude sins, and that is to put them aside; confess them to God the father; and, then to forget them. Had she put aside her hatred and her bitterness toward her father; had she recognized the agony and the grief that had come into their lives because of this father's use of alcohol and the drunkenness that was involved; and, had she recognized that much, she would have been programmed by what she saw in order to preserve her from that. That is because putting aside the bitterness would enable her to take a different focus.

Instead of being focused upon that father, she would now have been able to be focused upon Bible doctrine, and thus to be preoccupied with Christ, so that her eyes, through doctrine, were focused upon Jesus Christ. Preoccupation with Christ then would also have had a reverse effect upon her thinking. Except, this time, her thinking would have been programmed with the image of a divine viewpoint husband. Before anybody ever picks a husband or wife, this is what you need – a divine viewpoint image of a husband or a wife that you want to select. If you don't have this divine viewpoint etched into your subconscious, even when you see things in a person, and even when your conscious mind is screaming out warnings to you, you will not be able to override it, and you will willy-nilly follow the leading of the subconscious with its human viewpoint sense of criteria on which to pick a mate.

This daughter should have forgiven the abuse; the disgrace; and, the heartache of the drunken father, and should have fixed her conscious mind on the biblical image of a divine viewpoint husband. Then her emotions and her will would have been moved, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, as a result of this information in her subconscious, and God the Holy Spirit would have led her subconscious to pick the right kind of man.

This is the same pattern that you find often repeated in the child who has grown up with a father who has been tyrannical; who has been abusive; who has been a tyrant over the child; and, who has destroyed the volitional expression of the child. This child, (this boy, say, for example) looks upon this father, and he thinks back upon the agonies of his childhood and his teenage years. He vows to himself, "When I'm a man, if I ever have children, I'll never be like my father. I'll never treat my children the way my father treated me."

Well, he's doing exactly the same thing that this girl was doing. He hates his father. He has a focus of bitterness toward his father. This is what he broods upon. Every time he looks at his father, he has this image of what repulses him in this man, and he is determined that he never will be like that. Well, unbeknownst to himself, the reverse effect has taken hold, and his own subconscious is programmed to the image of this kind of abusive parent. When he gets children, lo and behold, what does he do? He abuses them just the same way. He does exactly to them what his father did to him.

**Imagination**

I trust that that gives us a sense of appreciation for the tremendous power of the subconscious and whatever has been programmed into it. With that as background, I want to call your attention to one of the most powerful factors in programming our subconscious, and that is imagination. Whatever is placed in the subconscious mind, we have said, is going to govern your activities. Problems 23:7 tells us that: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." One of the most effective factors in programming the subconscious is your imagination. Information is placed into the subconscious in three ways.

1. The first way that information is placed into the subconscious is by learning something with the conscious mind that you believe. This is how doctrine works. You learn doctrine. You respond positively toward it with your conscious mind, and your subconscious is programmed according to that doctrinal principle.
2. You also program your subconscious by experiences which you have, and which you are positive toward. Your experiences that you are receptive toward will program your subconscious. They can be good experiences; honorable experiences; experiences that fall in the category of these things that Paul has enumerated; or, they can be evil experiences. Either way, your experiences program your subconscious.
3. Then the third way is to take your conscious mind and turn it loose in imagination, and to imagine yourself in various situations. You can do fantastic things with your life by simply imagining yourself in various situations, because what's happening is that you are programming, again, through imagination, your subconscious so that it is geared to act in a certain way. Imagination is perhaps one of the most powerful means of programming the subconscious.

So as the imagination goes, so goes the subconscious part of your mind, and so go your activities. You can immediately see that imagination could be used creatively, or it could be used destructively. Remember that the subconscious does not determine whether the information fed into it is true or not. The subconscious does not pass any moral judgments upon what you put into it. It does not determine whether this is a good thing for you to do or a bad thing for you to do. The subconscious makes no decisions concerning whether it should guide you in this direction, or whether it should not guide you in this direction. It's just a mechanism which you as a person control, and which God has put together with certain physical factors, including the brain, the nervous system, and all that's involved in conveying information and triggering the muscles into action. The subconscious simply acts. Whatever you feed into it, right or wrong, is not the issue as far as the subconscious is concerned.

However, what ideas you do put into it will trigger the kinds of actions that you will take. Ideas will determine the results of your actions – the actions that you follow, and the results of your living. Now, whatever the images formed in the conscious mind are the goals, then, that you as a person are going to pursue through the subconscious.

**Losing Weight**

So overweight people sometimes wonder why they can't resist the problem of putting on more weight. One of the reasons for this is that their wills, of course, cannot handle this. And one of the most fantastic reasons for this is their imagination. I can tell you on the testimony of hundreds of people that one of the first steps toward reducing weight is to use your imagination, and to view yourself the way you would like to be. You need to view yourself in whatever slender level you would like to achieve. You will be surprised at the results when you imagine yourself in that way. Of course, it takes time. It sometimes takes a while for the programming to take effect, but it will. It will give you a mental image of yourself such that your subconscious will come into play when you are faced with the things that put on weight, like something that you shouldn't eat. Where before, you could not resist it because you had such a sweet tooth or something, now you will find that you don't want it. Why? Because you have set in your thinking a visual figure of yourself as you envision yourself. You'll be surprised how you can take off weight.

We're going to put up a mirror in the hallway here at Berean Academy. We're doing this so that our students can help see themselves as others see them; and, our teachers too. But our main purpose is to raise an esprit de corps spirit of personal appearance. People who have a good appearance tend to be good students. They tend to apply themselves to the business of being students.

However, I told our principal that when we purchase the mirror, we must be very careful not to just get a cheap mirror. That is because you can go to discount houses and buy these ready-made mirrors. But I found out something about them. Some of those mirrors are fat mirrors. If you haven't noticed, they are. You can buy fat mirrors.

I was at a salvage place here one time and I walk by a mirror; I looked at myself; I stopped; and, I looked again. I looked at that mirror, and that was a fat mirror. I knew that some poor lady was going to buy that mirror to put up in her bedroom so she could view herself as she dressed, and before she went out, and she was always going to go out with a certain depression upon her because of this fat mirror. The salesman's pen was laying there, so I took the pen and I wrote across it, "Fat mirror - distorts image," so that somebody wouldn't buy it without knowing they were buying one like that.

However, you can also buy mirrors that are skinny mirrors, or slenderizing mirrors. If you over at my house sometime, I'll show you the difference. We have a mirror in our master bedroom, and it's a fat mirror. We have a mirror in the hallway, and it's a slenderizing mirror. I always finish up looking in front of the mirror in the hallway. I don't like the one in the bedroom because I get a much better impression of myself in front of the slenderizing mirror than I do in front of that mirror.

But whatever you think of yourself (and you are determined in a true image mirror to see that what you have set out as a goal is what you want to see coming through that mirror) is going to happen because you have programmed your subconscious to that end, and you will be surprised how the food you could not once resist, you will not be able literally to stomach. You will find that you will be able to do something about the weight, because you have an image you have created. Imagination is terrifically powerful, and people have not generally appreciated the effects that it can have on us.

The subconscious can be programmed to slenderize you. The conscious mind can be filled with all kinds of images. You can imagine yourself in your anger: that person who said something to you; that person who rejected you; or, that person who abused you. You think to yourself, "I wish I had said this and this to them." You imagine yourself going up to this person, and you nail him to the wall; you cream him; you put him in place; and, all of your bitterness comes flowing through your mind. You imagine this thing. What's happening inside? Down inside, the guidance mechanism is clicking and taking all this information – the subconscious is just taking it in; just recording it; and, just processing it, and sure enough, the next time you get in a situation like that, that's exactly the way you act. That's exactly the way you pour out your bitterness. That's exactly the way you just let loose.

Then what do you do? You say, "Well, that really isn't me. I was, you know, a little tired. I just had a bad day. So that's why I talked to my friend the way I did. It's because of all these things." No, it isn't. The reason you talked to the person that way is because you have programmed yourself, under those conditions, to react that way. You have programmed yourself by imagining yourself through that situation.

So all of us have been tempted in our minds to really put somebody in their place. We think of what we would have liked to have said. How many times have you heard somebody describing a confrontation and saying, "Oh, I wish I had said this to him. Boy, I wish I had said that." The computer says, "OK, we'll click that in there. Next time we'll use it." And the next time, the guidance system of the subconscious has you ready to use it.

You can learn skills this way through imagination, believe it or not. The football teams know that. They call it skull practice. They sit down, and they think through plays mentally. They view themselves going through the motions of their particular role in that particular play. The result is that they produce a proficiency of performance.

I know that that works. There are times (more than once) when we have had our annual spring banquets here at Berean Memorial Church, when we have been putting on some of these dramatic programs. I can remember many times we get to the night before, and we have hacked out the program: done it; stopped; corrected; reworked; and, tried it again. Finally, we have the thing all put together; the evening is over; the hour is late; and, everybody feels we need to go through it again. What we do is we sit down and we go through skull practice. We just sit in a circle, and everybody goes mentally through his part. It is fantastic how that final sitting down and imagination practice provides the little bit of extra practice we need, and enables us to do the thing usually fairly commendably right. In other words, your personal effectiveness in the task can be greatly improved by imagining yourself through the steps of the job.

I want to read you a rather amazing example of how this works in another realm. I'm reading from a book called Psycho Cybernetics by Maxwell Maltz where he has this example of the power of practice by imagination: "In a controlled experiment, psychologist Dr. R. A. Vando proved that mental practice in throwing darts at a target, wherein the person sits for a period each day in front of the target and imagines throwing darts at it, improves aim as much as actually throwing darts. Research Quarterly reports an experiment on the effects of mental practice on improving skill in sinking basketball free throws. One group of students actually practice throwing the ball every day for 20 days, and were scored on the first and last days. A second group was scored on the first and last days, and they engaged in no sort of practice in between. A third group was scored on the first day; they spent 20 minutes a day imagining that they were throwing the ball at the goal; and, they were scored on the last day. When they missed, they would imagine that they corrected their aim accordingly.

"The first group, which actually practiced 20 minutes every day, improved in scoring 24%. The second group, which had no practice, showed no improvement. The third group, which practiced in their imagination, improved in scoring 23%."

Those who did the actual practice improved 24%. Those who just imagined themselves throwing free throws at the basket improved 23%. That is no fairy tale. Imagining yourself through a process actually enables you to program your subconscious so that when you do it, you do it effectively. That is, you make a dry run mentally through some operation or some activity.

So the imagination of desired goals is very important. It forms the target for the subconscious. In the life of a Christian, these goals must be of the Holy Spirit, and all that the Bible teaches of God's principles should be imagined as being fulfilled by us. When you hear a Bible doctrine principle, imagine yourself fulfilling it. Imagine that, and it becomes a goal toward which your mechanism of the subconscious will direct you.

Creative imagination is based, of course, on divine viewpoint principles. That's why God the Holy Spirit uses it to guide the subconscious into the will of God. The Bible principle is always to maintain a positive imagination. It says, "Forget the negative past." We learned that earlier in Philippians 3:13-14, where Paul says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (to have arrived). But this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The apostle Paul removed the negative concepts in his thinking, and imagined himself reaching that goal which was before him in Christ Jesus. Consequently, he programmed his subconscious for successful living as a servant of Jesus Christ.

The guidelines of the Word of God are always to transform your life by renewing the conscious mind with Bible doctrine principles. That's what Romans 12:2 means when it says, "To transform our minds (and to not be conformed to the world) by the renewing of our minds." We are to transform ourselves into the image of Christ, and into the pattern that God has for us.

**Self-Image**

There is an intriguing thing about the influence of the self-image. One thing that's important is how you view yourself, and to accept yourself. Everyone today has some kind of mental picture of himself. This self-image is another area of the imagination which programs the subconscious. How you view yourself is just another piece of imagination. A person is what he thinks he is, even if he's wrong about himself. The image that other people have of you is really not as important as the image that you have of yourself – your own self-image. So whatever your self-image is, it's part of your imagination, and it's going to affect your behavior; it's going to affect your productivity; and, it's going to affect your success in life.

That's why somebody who has a great deal of talent, but has a bad self-image, is not as productive as somebody who is considerably less talented, but who has a good self-image. The person with the good self-image will outproduce the person with a bad self-image every time. It is this view of ourselves that produces and that guides our subconscious to produce a great deal of what we do.

The formation of a divine viewpoint self-image is important. To do that, you must, first of all, not let the opinions of other people influence you about what you think of yourself. What other people think of you couldn't be less important. It couldn't matter less. So don't get hung up on what other people think of you. Just forget that, and put it aside. It has no bearing upon your self-image before God. People may rate you wrong. You may either be good or bad. People may rate you wrong one way or another. They usually do. As a matter of fact, you may be so far ahead of people that they're incapable of evaluating you correctly.

So don't let the opinions of other people affect your self-image. People may not get the real picture of you, or you may not get the real picture that they think of you. People say certain things. How many times have I heard somebody come to me and say, "I wonder if someone feels this way about me?" I'll ask them, "Why?" They'll say, "I heard them say this." Usually, when they say that to me, I say, "Yeah, you heard him that. So what?" But to them, there was a significant meaning remark that was reflecting how they felt about him. That's the danger of letting yourself be influenced by what other people think of you, because you may not get the story straight as to what they really do think of you.

Furthermore, never compare yourself to other people. Only compare yourself to what God can make of you. Do you realize that when God made you, He literally did throw away the form (the mold)? Do you realize that you can't compare yourself to anybody because there's nobody else like you? Isn't that wonderful? There's not another one like you in the world. The only way you can compare yourself to another person is to find another one like you. Everybody is different. Therefore, you can't have a basis of comparison. All you have is the standard of the Word of God. Therefore, all you can do is compare yourself to God's standard. Your only comparison is with yourself as to how God views you. That's what's important.

If you get a bad self-image of yourself, that's bad imagination. A self-image is Satan's way of neutralizing your Christian service. This is why sometimes we find kids in school who do poor school work. When we try to help them, we frequently get the remark, "I just can't do it. I'm dumb." You'd be surprised how many times children say that: "I can't do it. I'm dumb. I'm dumb in arithmetic." Anytime a child says that (and if your children say that), you should absolutely get on them. You should tell them you don't ever want to hear them say that again – that they are dumb, because some of them might believe it about themselves.

What we try to do in a situation like that is to help a child to see: "No, you're not dumb. You've got problems with arithmetic. Here's why you have problems with arithmetic. You didn't memorize your multiplication tables. You didn't memorize your addition and subtraction combination, so we're going to memorize those." I can't tell you how often we've seen somebody just blossom out.

We had a little kid in one of the grades last year who was the poorest reader in the class, and he was constantly in tears. The other kids were pretty good. They'd read away, and they just could read, and man, they were doing the job. But every time it came around to this guy's turn, he'd stumble around and break up in tears. Do you know what that self-image was? "I'm a bad reader. I can't read." So his subconscious took that in and clicked. Every time he opened the book, the subconscious came up and said, "You can't read." The subconscious doesn't want you to betray it. The subconscious makes you feel like a traitor. This kid couldn't read, and be true to himself. He would violate his own image.

The reason for his problem was some phonetic misunderstanding, and some lack of drill that he needed. So the teacher proceeded to do that, and proceeded to set goals. As a matter of fact, the teacher had various levels. They were called "student," and "scholar," and something else. They could progress through these various stages. What was he doing? He was creating different self-images of these children. When they achieved a certain proficiency, they were able to be called a "student." When they reached another level, they were able to be called a "scholar," or wherever they had reached. This particular boy, because of the drill at the right point that he needed it, and the training that he received, suddenly found that he could read. His image of himself began to change, and he finally took the viewpoint that he could read. The result was there were times when he was the best reader in the class, and he was very smugly pleased with himself too, because of it. He'd had his days of tears and of looking at himself as a clod. But when the teacher helped him to change his image, it also helped him to become a good reader.

So a false image is Satan's way of destroying us. Imagination can be used creatively, or it can be used destructively. Paul is saying, "Think on these things. Use your imagination for divine viewpoint thinking so that all the way down the line, you create that which is ennobling and which is conformable to what a Christian should be, and to what God can make of you." Removing the negative image will do worlds for you.

**Success**

However, I want to warn you that your negative image that Satan wants to create for you is to give you the idea that you're not worthy to serve Jesus Christ. Satan tries to tell you that you have something in your life in the past, and that disqualifies you from being used of Him. That's baloney. Change that image immediately. That's human viewpoint perception. God has nothing but use for you. Remember what Romans 8:28 says: "All things work together for good to those who are called according to His purposes for them." What's that saying? That is saying that God has built success into your being, that God has built success into you as a believer. If you get that subconscious programmed correctly, that's exactly where God is going to see to it that you're going.

By the way, He's going to take you there, and you can learn it from the Word of God. You can get good mental pictures and good imagination and good concepts, or the Lord is going to set a fire under you and He's going to beat your brains in until you decide to change your image and change your subconscious accordingly. Because you're going to be successful, I'd suggest that you do it the easy way. Get access to doctrine; be positive toward it; and, use your imagination in the right direction.

You don't have to dredge up the past, by the way, in order to improve your self-image. Never followed that advice of psychiatry to lie back and dredge up the past, and to bring up all of the weaknesses; failures; defeats; and, all that. That is satanic, and don't do it. The Bible principle, as you know, is to forget and to move on. Dwelling on the shortcomings will program your subconscious all over again for you to repeat those shortcomings. Failures are to be viewed only in the respect that they are feedback for you to correct the guidance systems of your subconscious, and that's all.

Changing your conscious mind about yourself, and getting a proper mental image of yourself will change your performance as well. Doctrine works to help us to change that image. A negative image very frequently is really the result of illogical thinking. You assume things about yourself that you have no right to assume. Be careful of that.

I heard of a man that somebody walked up to and said, "Can you play the piano?" The man says, "Well, I don't know." The man asked him, "So what do you mean you don't know? Can you play the piano or can't you?" The man replied, "I don't know. I never tried." You think he should have said, "Oh, no, I can't play the piano?" What do you mean? Is that a logical conclusion? How does he know he can't play the piano until he sits down and tries it? Dennis Williams thought this one time. Now he plays a hot lick of "Alley Cat" like nobody's business. You can't assume. There is so much we assume about ourselves. What we do is that we add to our grief; to a problem; or, to a weakness we have because we had our own assumptions; our own bitterness; our own self-pity; our own resentment; and, our own anger. So a negative self-image is often moved along by illogical thinking.

I commend you to Paul's advice. First of all, get your mind straightened out, and focus your attention upon the kinds of things that he has listed here in verse 8. The result will be a subconscious that is programmed for victorious spiritual success every time, until you move in and, in some way, you foul up the success mechanism (the guidance system) that God has placed in you. All you have to do is put it into operation. In eternity past, God built it in you. Now, through the Word of God, He has explained how to apply it. Through modern studies in psychiatry and psychology, we have learned why this works this way. God help us to do it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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