

This month, I'd like to talk to you about the subject of self-image.

Self-image is essentially *one's own opinion of his or her self-worth*. The problem we face is that our opinion can often be wrong. There are serious dangers in not addressing this subject through the lens of Scripture.

In **Galatians 4:19**, Paul writes, *"My little children..."* (Paul refers to the four churches in the province of Galatia—churches he had established—which is why he calls them "his children.") He continues in **verse 19**, *"for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you."*

Evidently, the seed he had planted in them was not growing as it should. In fact, it was in danger of being aborted. We know this from his writings here in the book of Galatians. Some individuals had entered the churches and were persuading these "children" to return to the law—a law that only serves to reveal the nature of the flesh. Paul was deeply concerned that they would abandon the Spirit of Christ within them.

Galatians 3:2-3 addresses this directly:

"This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

Your self-image originates from your first birth into this world and is greatly shaped by your upbringing, including the people who raised and influenced you. The word *image* says it all—it's something formed (or deformed) inside of you. You may see yourself as who you want to be or as who you don't want to be; in either case, your self-image can be positive or negative.

Whatever dominates your thought life will dominate your entire life—whether for good or for bad. Our self-worth is often tied to what others think of us, how we've been treated in the past, or what we're currently experiencing. These influences shape our inner dialogue and outward behavior, which in turn greatly affect how we view ourselves.

But does the Bible offer guidance on how we can evaluate ourselves properly?

Proverbs 23:7 says, *"For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."* The word *thinketh* in Hebrew (**sha'ar**) means "to split, to open, to act as a gatekeeper." This implies that it is our responsibility to control what we allow into and out of our thinking. In ancient times, the city gate was where business, social interactions, and even justice were conducted—it was the place of controlled access. Sometimes the term *gate* even referred to the government itself.

In the same way, we are the gatekeepers of our thoughts. God treats people as if they already are what they are meant to be, and He provides the means for them to become what they are capable of being. The world rarely offers this kind of hope—unless motivated by God. As one minister put it, *"Every event forms a process for our lives,"* and this is true even of the gospel.

The event of our new birth gives us an opportunity that God Himself planned from the beginning. Even though our self-image has been formed by our upbringing, friendships, workplace, and every interaction

we've had in the world, God has made a way to reshape our identity—both the positive and the negative aspects—through Him.

In **John 3:3**, Jesus says, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Then in **verse 6**, He adds, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* Here, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit birthing something new within us that impacts our human spirit. Similarly, **Galatians 5:17** tells us that *"the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."*

We find this echoed in verses like **Romans 7:5**, **Romans 8:9**, and **Galatians 3:3**. It's critical to recognize that, when we are born again, we are empowered by the Spirit to make distinctions. Isn't this new identity through our second birth the key to seeing ourselves the way God wants us to?

Jesus does not judge us from a distance, apart from His ability to identify with us. Even in our weaknesses—many of which were formed through the environment in which we were raised—He truly understands. **Hebrews 2:17–18** tells us:

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."

It is only by becoming like us that God is able to make us like Him—restoring us to His image.

In our next letter, we'll explore the specific attributes of self-image and how they can dramatically impact our lives, especially as we are in the process of being conformed into His image.

Love,

JANN T. BUTLER

COMING UP

MAY 11TH - HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY
MAY 31ST - HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND SEMINAR [BYHISWORD.ORG/EVENTS](https://byhisword.org/events)
JUNE 8TH - WATER BAPTISM | [BYHISWORD.ORG/EVENTS](https://byhisword.org/events)
AUGUST 2ND - CHURCH PICNIC [BYHISWORD.ORG/EVENTS](https://byhisword.org/events)

