

Images

by Hendrik Joubert

I have dreamt once in pictures (I think they are pictures) but most often, I dream in sounds. These are the words of a person who was *born* blind, and therefore has no concept whatsoever of *visual* images. How would one describe the rainbow to a person who has no concept of color, or of abstract shapes? Try for a moment and you will realize how much we depend on visual images not only to describe, but also understand things.

Have you noticed how we tend to form visual images of the people we hear on the radio, or the telephone? When we get to see them, the person does not look at all like the image we formed? Visual imagery forms an intricate part of our communication and our desire to make sense of our environment.

We often form opinions based on an individual's physical features. Think about the role physical beauty plays in forming relationships. Do you remember making some derogatory remarks about someone's looks? Research projects, although heavily criticized, have been undertaken in an attempt to show a correlation between physical features and criminality.

Consider the pictures of Jesus found in the media. He is a *good* person, therefore the sweet attractive tender faced blue-eyed-boy. Is this the picture the Scriptures draw? ***For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isaiah 53:2-3)***

The image Israel formed of the Messiah was totally different from the Person in real life, resulting in Him being rejected. We may hum, hiss and hah at their prejudice, but are we any different in the way we see God. Although no one has seen God each of us has an opinion (formed an image) of the Almighty God, who created everything we do see. How do you prefer to see God? Do you allow Him to draw that image through His word, or do you manipulate the image by looking at the features you may benefit from? What does your *image* of God look like?

Do you choose to see Him through His love, that wonderfully caring Being who was willing to sacrifice His only Son so you may live with Him eternally? This is indeed a wonderful perspective of the God who ***IS*** love: ***For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)***

Do I focus on this amazing love for sinners and totally ignore what He says about sin, and specifically *my sin*? Does my image of God cause me to miss the exhortation?: ***As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*** (1Peter 1:14-15)

Consider the level of change demanded: ***"YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."*** Do we attempt to offset this by focusing on the grace of God, when His grace ***appeared to bring salvation to all men and instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*** (Titus 2:11-14)

Notice also the hint of sarcasm, or should one say irony, following the exhortation given through Peter: ***If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*** (1Peter 1:16-19)

In **Psalm 50** God calls Israel to judgment. He explains that they are doing the physical things, sacrificing continually, however their *heart* is not *pure*. After calling them to repent He exclaims that the ungodly should not even take His words in their mouths. ***But to the wicked God says, "What right have you to tell of My statutes And to take My covenant in your mouth?"*** (Psalm 50:16) If we call God our Father we need to make sure that we became such as He describes, and that we should act accordingly because we are to be ***the light of the world*** and ***the salt of the earth***.

We may not make physical ***graven images***, however many sinners have created an image of God that would allow them to continue in their sin because they lack the ***self-control*** needed to act ***righteously*** in preparation for ***the judgment to come***. (Acts 24:25)