

The Season of Pentecost

Spiritual Transformation #3: Developing Christlike Character

INTRODUCTION

I. CHARACTER - WHAT IS IT?

A. Not Just Right Belief

*¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe-- and shudder!
(James 2)*

³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God." ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" (Luke 4)

B. Not the Same as Our Aspirations

*³ The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts.
(Proverbs 17)*

*²¹ The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise
(Proverbs 27)*

Character defined:

Character is the moral virtue of the individual as revealed in the course of life and through the events of life

C. Character and Testing

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jam 1:2-4 ESV)

"Count it" - to engage in an intellectual process of considering or regarding a matter ...

"Trials" - an attempt to learn the nature or character of something

"The Testing" - the process or means of determining the genuineness of something

"Steadfastness" - the capacity to hold out or bear up in the face of difficulty: endurance, fortitude

II. WHY IS CHARACTER SO IMPORTANT?

A. God Is Seeking Character Transformation above All Things

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom 8:28-30 ESV)

B. Without Transformation, God Is Limited in How Much He Can Bless Me

¹⁸ Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him. ¹⁹ *For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you.* ²⁰ *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.* ²¹ *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.* (Isaiah 30)

C. Christlike Character is Preparation for Eternity

⁹ *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,* ¹⁰ *nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Corinthians 6

⁵ *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* Ephesians 5

¹⁵ *Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* Revelation 22

D. Christlike Character is "Truth-telling" About God

1. Authentic Religion

²⁶ If someone thinks he is religious yet does not bridle his tongue, and so deceives his heart, his religion is futile. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God

the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1 NET)

2. Authentic Witness

² ... [Saul asked] for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (Acts 9)

⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. (Acts 19)

¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,.... ²² But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case." (Acts 22)

III. HOW SHALL WE MEASURE IT IN OURSELVES & OTHERS?

ACTIONS

Patience (Μακροθύμια) - forbearance under provocation

Kindness (Χρηστότης) - the quality of being helpful or beneficial to others

Goodness (Αγαθωσύνη) - generosity/interest in the welfare of others

Faithfulness (Πίστις) - fidelity to our commitments

Self-control (Εγκράτεια) - restraint of one's emotions, impulses, or desires

EMOTIONS

Love (Αγάπη) - esteem, affection, regard for others

Joy (Χαρά) - the experience of gladness

Peace (Ειρήνη) - a sense of well-being

Gentleness (Πραΰτης) - the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance

IV. HOW IS IT DEVELOPED IN US?

God is eagerly concerned to form the image of his Son in us.

1. See the goal as desirable as God does

- Do you love Jesus enough to want to be like him?

2. Be committed to serious honesty with yourself

- Do you have courage that humility requires?

3. Pay attention when your conscience speaks: take the actions the Holy Spirit is speaking to you about

- Are you willing to do the hard work required to be a "Jesus-kind of person"?

4. Be in it for the Long haul

Time + Circumstances + Action of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace = Transformation

¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1)

A Wonderful resource:

Conformed to His Image, By Kenneth Boa (Zondervan, 2001) – available in several formats through Amazon.com