

## FAMINE OF CHARACTER

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*"For I know him. That he will control his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment" Gen. 18:19*

**MODERN MAN SUFFERS A FAMINE OF CHARACTER.** The majority of Gods created creatures have never admitted their problem. The Bible pulls no punches in picturing mans failure. *"As it is written. there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongue they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes"* Rom. 3:10-18. No one in history has ever evidenced real character without correcting their relationship with God. Man is born a sinner who cannot lift himself with the boot straps of human endeavor. The only genuine character must be based on man's conformity to the laws of the God that made him and the book of ethical commands that establish eternal guidelines. Man's character out of Christ will always be flawed.

**MOST OF THE WORLD HAS FORSAKEN GOD'S WAY OF CHARACTER BUILDING.** They are a people *"which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness"* II Pet. 2:15. Millions of Americans are sick of our government leaders,

so many of whom promise so much and deliver so little. The business world with its "dog eat dog" ideas fails totally to uphold policies of character that once developed customer trust. Our educational fields are so watered down that 2X2 no longer equals 4. Discipline is a thing of the past and students can no longer compete in the jungle atmosphere of the modern classrooms of learning. The Bible is out, discipline is forbidden. and high standards of educational excellence are forgotten. Most parents no longer teach character to their children while the media glorifies worldly extravagance and ridicules disciplined behavior. The cry is to "do my own thing" while ignoring God's will and commands. Even the church is fast falling away from the proven successful character that sets man apart from beasts. Again, man's relationship to God is the key to genuine character.

**CHARACTER REQUIRES GODLY FEAR** and without this attitude one is doomed to failure. *"Fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth"* Josh. 24:14. *"Fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord"* I Sam. 12:14. These verses and scores of others state *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* Prov. 9:10.

Modern life has moved away from fearing God in fact most today fear man and his failing opinions more than God's proven ways of character. If you feel you are accountable to no one you will have no standard of measurement for personal control. Today's mass exodus from purity, honesty, respect and accountability all stem from the lack of Godly fear. If you cannot stand unashamed before God you will develop little but shame among men. After all He is God and man must please him or give account at the judgment.

**CHARACTER SPRINGS FROM THE HEART** which in its natural state is *"deceitful*

*above all things and desperately wicked"* Jer. 17:9. The well stream of character comes from God and must overflow and cleanse the evil natural condition of the heart. Many have tried in their own strength to correct evil paths and think better thoughts, but this shallow attempt will soon erode to underlying urges never cleansed away. Many speak of reform while the need is for everyone to be re-born. Even then remember *"as he thinketh in his heart, so is he"* Prov.23:7. The spark to sad character ruining acts begins with the thoughts of the heart. You will never develop real character until you bring your heart under the control of Christ. A Christ filled heart will result in a beautiful God honoring life. If you watch eagerly the filth of the world, learn its songs and accept the poison of its false views, your quest of character will escape your grasp. The condition of your heart before God will motivate the actions of your daily life.

**CHARACTER MUST BE SEEN AT HOME.** Each parent is setting the example for those who follow. God commands fathers *"be strong, shew thyself a man"* I Kings 2:2. Upon the shoulders of we men lies the responsibility to show by example a disciplined life of true character. Our children will not inherit character but must grow up in a family that mirrors it. "Do as I say, and not as I do," sends a conflicting signal to your loved ones. All worldly vices, evil habits, foolish excesses, time wasting things and contradictory actions shape your children. Social drinking, smoking, gossip, moral unfaithfulness, laziness and fiscal failures all destroy character. They must see honesty, loyalty, faithfulness, discipline, love and above all Godliness. Parents should honestly be able to say *"be ye followers of me"* I Cor. 4:16. Godly parents and older siblings have great influence upon the family. Those who evidence Godly character will influence others toward the same satisfying path of victory.

**CHARACTER MUST BE TAUGHT AT HOME.** In the Bible it is given great priority. *"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children. and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thy house. and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates"* Deut. 6:7-9. Time must be set aside in spite of our busy schedules to pray and study the Word. This must be observed in every Christian home that desires to develop character. How blessed that God promises *"train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it"* Prov. 22:6. Do not fail to use the tool of correction. Remember, *"foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him"* Prov. 22:15. The Christian family must strive together to develop true character with Christ like obedience to the will of God. In fact the building of character should be the number one family priority.

**CHARACTER DEMANDS FULL SURRENDER.** One does not inherit it nor gain such an attribute over night. Like clay in the hands of the potter our life must be totally surrendered to our Master. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"* Rom. 12:1. I was 15 when at a campfire I decided to give my life totally to Christ and develop a character pleasing to Him. That was over 52 years ago and ever since I have sought to live on the foundation of those things that count for eternity. The verse just mentioned is clear in its teaching. Because Christ has done so very much for us we owe him the complete, willing donation of self. Nothing can be held back. The word present in the verse means total and irrevocable. It must

further be the kind of surrender that is living, vital and easily seen by others. The life of total surrender will be holy and shaped with the character which pleases God. Are you able to remember a time that you surrendered your life to Him? It is impossible to gain great character without being completely surrendered to God.

**CHARACTER REQUIRES CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE.** On this point the battle for victory will be fought on a daily basis. We are told to *"be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* I Pet. 5:8. Satan hates a Godly believer who has chosen to be like Jesus. He will scatter along your path, the rocks and pits he hopes will destroy your quest of Godly character. That which is called wrong by the Bible will always be wrong throughout the ages. Your eyes must be carefully guarded from the enticing visual trash that surrounds you. Hands must not be allowed to reach for anything that will pollute while we are urged to consider carefully the path of our feet. Close friends must be carefully selected and watched to be sure they do not get us sidetracked or compromised. Every friend you have will either lift you up or pull you down. Surround yourself in the councils of Godly believers and they will help you grow in perfection until we see Him face to face. Keep attending a great church that teaches the truth and expects much from its members. Challenges of the Word must be met and promises kept. Spiritual growth is essential to character but the pitfalls are many and the process is one that lasts a lifetime. "Keep your eyes open", is a very good warning as you walk through the jungle of worldly dangers. Our goal is to be like Jesus. This takes eternal vigilance. We are instructed to *"resist steadfastly in the faith"* I Pet. 5:9. Like a prize fighter, be sure to keep your guard up and victory will be yours.

**CHARACTER PLEASES CHRIST.** In the book of II Timothy, Paul outlines what is necessary for a soldier to be effective. He instructs *"no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life: that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"* II Tim. 2:4. Godly parents are always pleased when their children develop with faithful conformity to the challenges of the Bible. Their hearts can also be broken by the departure of an offspring from the path of righteousness. Our goal is to *"know Him"* Phil. 3:10. To truly know Him is to love Him. To really love Him should cause us to please Him. In the quest to please Him our lives will be shaped to be more like Him. True character is to be like Jesus!

**CHARACTER LASTS AND OFFERS GREAT REWARDS.** As the church age comes to a close it makes sense to conform to that which lasts. *"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"* Rom. 12:2. The world has forgotten the very meaning of character and lives in the light of that which is right in their own eyes. The Word no longer is accepted in their vocabulary. Dear reader remember all that is in the world *"passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"* II John 2:17. Heavenly discipline shapes your life for eternity in your heavenly home. Remember He promised *"behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* Rev. 22:14-15. Christian character sets us apart as the children of God.