

“CHRISTIAN CHARACTER - CHRIST CENTRED”

We will consider the fundamental **essentials** to Christian Character **upon which** the Holy Spirit **builds**. Without these fundamental **essentials** of Christian Character, *sensitivity* and *usefulness* will not flourish. Times in our lives as a Christian & in the life of the Local Church when must **remember** the foundation. However **simple** these truths may seem to us - They are nevertheless vital **reminders** for our walk. It is one of Satan's **chief ploys** as the enemy of souls to cloud the **essentials** of Christian Character. He knows The Holy Spirit **develops** souls that take the **greatest** care of their Christian Character. He knows when we become **lethargic** in this area of Character our *usefulness* & *sensitivity* is weakened. It is quite possible to be **Reformed** in Doctrine but not in **Character** – This must hinder usefulness.

A CHARACTER COMMITTED TO THE WORSHIP OF GOD ALONE

To reverently **acknowledge** God ascribing to Him *praise, thanksgiving & honour in word, thought & action*. Principle of worship in Christian character **essential** for **sensitivity & usefulness** was taught by Paul. Having laid down essential Doctrines of God's **wonderful** Grace and Sovereign **wisdom** to the Church. He then under the **inspiration** of the Holy Spirit writes:

“I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God”

Paul understood that to be **useful** a Christian we must first be **committed** to the Worship of God alone. In this he is **teaching** about a **life lived for Christ** with our **whole-being** as our **primary** act of worship. To **present** our bodies in **acceptable worship** before the Lord involves both **Character & Commitment**. This is the **first foundation** block upon which the Holy Spirit builds **sensitivity** and **usefulness**. What **we are** before the Lord in our person, **governs** “**how we do, what we do**” for the Lord in our body. When we **trace** the lives of those most **sensitivity** and **usefulness** in the Service of the Lord. You will notice that **first** and **foremost** the Worship of the Lord in *prayer, praise & practice* is apparent. Their personal devotion in **worship** before the Lord is the **secret** behind their wholehearted commitment. They could **say** with the hymn writer.

“Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee”

Herein lies the **secret** of true **usefulness** and why some are **used more** than others in the Local Church. It is what goes on in the **secret place** before the Lord that really matters at the **outset**. It is not that God has **favourites** in His redeemed children they are all loved equally. But rather God does **honour** with usefulness those that **honour** Him first in worship especially in secret. They honour Him with their **whole being**— Character and Commitment going together as an act of Worship.

A CHARACTER CONVICTED OF ITS OWN UNWORTHINESS

This may seem a negative downbeat **essential** foundation stone to **usefulness**.

However **conviction** of sin and our own weakness and utter **unworthiness** of God's favour is vital. Without this **conviction** in our own lives our sense of **dependence** upon the Lord's Grace will be **weak**. In turn this will lead to coldness of **heart** regarding Calvary and **hardness** of heart to the **unconverted**.

Without conviction of our own **unworthiness** & sin we tend to become **pharisaic** in our attitude to others
Jesus was **criticised** for allowing the unworthy woman to wash his feet with her tears
This woman was **despised** for such a demonstration of **affection** to her Lord
Jesus replied she **loves** much because she has been **forgiven** much
She loves much because she **appreciates** God's grace and understands her own **unworthiness**
Such a realisation of her own **unworthiness** & God's grace makes her abundantly **useful & caring**
It was this exercise that Christ taught in the *Beatitudes* for those who *mourn over sin & are poor in spirit*.

Quote: The poor in spirit. "Know themselves to be entirely dependent human beings. They know themselves to be inexcusable sinners. They know that in their flesh dwells no good thing. They know they can have no hope but in the Sovereign Mercy of God. They know they have no righteousness to glory in, but the obedience unto death of the Son of God. They know that whatever is right and holy in their character, thoughts, speech and actions is owing entirely to the influence of the Spirit of God. The effect of this realization makes themselves feel to be as dust and ashes."

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps 34:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," Luke 4:18

Christ is most **precious** to those who are **poor** in spirit.

They are the ones who really **love**, **admire** and **appreciate** Christ.

They realise their **dependence** upon Him, they take Him by **faith** on His terms.

They value the **wonders** of His free grace to poor and needy sinners.

This in turn gives them a **compassionate** heart towards the lost

In such a spirit they are both **sensitive** to the needs of others and made **useful** in the Church

It is worth noting that if we study the fruits of Revival we note that **conviction & repentance** are first fruits

Mc Cheyne at a time of Revival in his ministry

As is the common experience of those who walk most closely with Christ, there is a deep consciousness of sin and sometimes self-loathing. McCheyne refers to himself as a worm and a beast of God, and seeks after holiness with "groanings which cannot be uttered", he desires to be entirely filled with the Spirit, and to be fully conformed to the image of Christ in all things. He is constantly aware of the subtlety of personal sin against which he claims "the main defence of casting myself into the arms of Christ like a helpless child, and beseeching him to fill me with the Holy Spirit."

Must alert us to the fact that **conviction** of sin & our **unworthiness** is essential to our union with Christ
Essential to our walk with Him and subsequent **usefulness** in His Service –

A CHARACTER TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE LORD BY FAITH

You will **remember** that Peter in his early walk with the Lord had a spirit of **self confidence** about him
The Lord **warned** him about this and in so doing told him He was already **praying** for him over this matter
Peter felt his **devotion** to the Lord and **determination** was strong enough to keep him faithful
Others **may leave** the Lord but **not me!** Peter at this time still had a lot of **self belief** about him.
Point being that one of the **greatest & hardest** lessons Peter had to learn for usefulness was dependence
Peter must realise that his keeping and security was **dependent** upon the Lord
In the end such a realisation **humbled** Peter to the core
So we read him writing as an old man with a **Pastoral** heart and a **Compassionate** concern for the Lost
“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7

A CHARACTER BLESSED BY PRAYER

The ministers **greatly** used of the Lord are first and foremost men of prayer mainly in the secret place
But this is true for **fruitfulness** in all types of Christian Service.
This is the **pattern** and avenue the Lord has set
This exercise of prayer & devotion **tenderises** the heart & makes us fit for **purpose** in Christian usefulness
When we ask, how are we to be **used more of the Lord?**
How are we to be *more* **sensitive** to the needs of others?
Then we need to **exercise** ourselves unto prayer
Our Lord tells us that *we ought always to pray and not to faint.*
In his book entitled *“The Secret Key to Heaven”*
Thomas Brooks the Puritan gives several key **arguments** to support Private Prayer.
Here are just some of them to encourage us in personal prayer for **usefulness**.
Because it is God’s **will** that we pray!
Because it is **essential** for spiritual growth and fellowship with God!
Because God has **chosen** to build us Spiritually with prayer!
Because God has **chosen** to build the Church together with prayer!
Because without it there can be **no real blessing** on our walk and work for the Lord!
Because there is God’s promise of **reward** from private prayer
Because private prayer serves as a **witness** of the Conscience to our sincerity
Because it is the ministry that satan **opposes** the most
Christ engaged in Secret Prayer so we **follow** the Master
It enables us to **unburden** ourselves unto the Lord – *Great therapy and benefit*
Prayer is the soul’s most **enriching** duty as the Lord manifests Himself in secret - **contemplation**
If we **neglect** private prayer the Lord **will not hear** our public prayer
The Most eminent saints **engaged** in Private Prayer
Secret prayer **distinguishes** Sincerity from Hypocrisy
Secret duties shall have open **rewards**

This life is the only time for **secret prayer**

Private prayer has **prevailing** power

Secret sin needs **secret Prayer**

Secret Prayer **delights** Christ

Secret Prayer sets a special mark of **Favour** upon them from God

Satan is the great **Enemy** of prayer

This exercise of prayer & devotion **tenderises** the heart & makes us fit for **purpose** in Christian usefulness

A CHARACTER INSPIRED BY LOVE

It is impossible to develop in **usefulness** to the Lord while harbouring bitterness, anger and resentment.

In the fruits of the Holy Spirit described for us in Galatians 5 love is described as the **first-fruit**

In fact the fruit from which all the other **fruits flow**.

Love is like the foundation for all the other **fruits**

This Love has its **source** in the Lord Himself

The same word for **love** in the original is used to describe the **Love** of God the Father to Jesus Christ

“And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare [it], that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:26

Exactly the same word for *love* is used to describe who God is. *God is Love*

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom 5:8

Love is a vital fruit in the Christian life as it **reflects** who **God is** and **gratitude** for what **God has done**.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” 1John 4:7-8

Every Christian is **without excuse** on this great issue of **Love**.

Our Lord and Master makes this **abundantly** clear Love is an **essential** fruit in the Christian life

Without it we are **not Christians**

How can this first fruit of the Spirit in our lives be **enlivened & encouraged** in our Christian Character?

By **looking** to Christ and considering the **love** of Christ to us.

*Sweet the moments, rich in blessing, Which before the cross we spend,
Life and health and peace possessing From the sinner's dying Friend.*

*Here I stay, forever viewing Mercy streaming in His blood;
Precious drops, my soul bedewing, Plead and claim my peace with God.*

*Truly blessed is the station, Low before His cross to lie,
While I see divine compassion Floating in His languid eye.*

*Here we find our hope of Heaven, While upon the Lamb we gaze;
Loving much, and much forgiven, Let our hearts o'erflow with praise.*

*Oh, that, near the cross abiding, We may to the Savior cleave,
Naught with Him our hearts dividing, All for Him content to leave!*

*Lord, in ceaseless contemplation Fix our hearts and eyes on Thee,
Till we taste Thy full salvation, And unveiled Thy glories see.*

*For Thy sorrows we adore Thee, For the griefs that wrought our peace;
Gracious Savior, we implore Thee, In our hearts Thy love increase.*

This is the **surest** and most **proven** method for us looking to Christ

It will **inspire** action – it will **maintain** unity – it will positively **effect** how we relate to one another

It will motivate a **love** that is *affectionate – benevolent – understanding – thoughtful – serious – committed*

As you know one of the best descriptions of this fruit of **Christ like Love** is found in *1 Corinthians 13*

Selfless Love – Patient – Kind - Contented – Humble - Dignified – Rejoices in truth – Endures – Hopes

Such **love** never fails! –

Love is the best way to **show forth Christ** in your life style and usefulness for the Lord

This love seeks to do **good to all men** especially those of the Church of the Living God

A Character **inspired by love** makes us **sensitive** to the needs of others

This love as a **fruit** of the Holy Spirit is **unique** to the Lord's people

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Romans 5:5

Love as **fruit** of the Holy Spirit means we will **Love**

God – His Word – His House – His Worship – His People – His Ways – Our Neighbours – Our Enemies

A CHARACTER MOULDED BY HUMILITY

As we have already noted the work of the Holy Spirit is to **develop** within us a Christ-like character

As part of this work The Holy Spirit has **inspired** the Apostles to direct us to Christ's example

So we read in *Philippians 2* how Paul points us **directly** to Christ for the ultimate example of humility

Even though He was the Son of God He took upon Himself **frail** human flesh

He **humbled** Himself and become Obedient to the point of death even the death of the cross

Paul **writes**: *Let this mind be in you which was also Christ*

Let your mind your character be **moulded** by humility as you **contemplate** and follow Christ

Remember how He **took** a bowl and towel and **washed** the disciples feet – The Son of God on His knees

After this gracious action of **humility** in service the Lord said to His disciples

“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” John 13:13-17

Pride is the great enemy to **sensitivity** to others and **usefulness** in the life of the Christian

Pride makes us increasingly **sensitive** about **ourselves** at the **expense** of others

Pride in our character is the **greatest hindrance** to usefulness.

It is likely when we **realise** we are not being useful as others, or not feeling **tender hearted** to others

The problem may well be that of **pride**.

That **pride** has got to **give way** under the new nature to humility

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time.

That He may **use you** in the work of His kingdom for His glory with the **enabling** of the Holy Spirit

A CHARACTER MOTIVATED BY MEEKNESS

So much depends upon the character of the Christian before they can **develop** in usefulness for the Lord

Christian Character **governs** Christian Lifestyle and in turn our **usefulness**

You will know that in the Beatitudes we read that the Lord **deals** with the [Character of the Christian](#)

Then he teaches about the **nature** of [Christian conduct](#) that should *flow out* of that [Christian Character](#).

In the Beatitudes **meekness** is clearly taught by the Lord as an evidence of Christian Character

Meekness in Biblical terms has the **meaning** of a *mild, stable, gentle and humble* attitude.

Concerned **first**, for the honour of the Lord and then for the **well being** of others.

When **meekness** is in action it provides something of the **fragrance** of Christ in a person’s testimony.

It is sometimes described as the **ornament** of the **Christian Character**.

Meekness is a fruit, which is required for all Christian believers and **essential** to usefulness & sensitivity.

But meekness must first be **exercised** in our attitude towards God to be used in a **developing** way by God

Meekness is a humble acceptance and trust in the Ways of God.

David: *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” Psalm 119:71*

A **meek** spirited person says *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* and *means* it.

Meekness means a humble acceptance and trust in The Word of God.

“Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” James 1:21

Thomas Watson the Puritan describes this **meekness** as **flexibleness** to the Word of God.

Meekness in a person means we are willing to be moulded to God’s Word.

As clay in the hands of the Heavenly Potter, that we may be a **vessel** unto honour, not dishonour.

How **flexible** are we to the Word of God?

How **willing** are we to change our thinking to God's thinking?

The meek person says in effect **daily** to the Lord. *"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee".*

Consecrated to God's Will and **flexible to God's Word**.

The Christian believer who has the grace of **meekness**, says

It is me that has got to be **flexible** to the **unchanging** Word of God.

It is me who has to be constantly **developing** my understanding of God's **unchanging** truth.

Meekness means to have the **right attitude** of mind towards God Will and His Word.

Such the Holy Spirit will **help**

"The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." Psalms 25:9

Meekness finds its Inspirational example perfectly displayed in Jesus Christ

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ:" 2Co 10:1

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Mt 11:29

Look to Christ and *pray* that God will make us by His Spirit truly and consistently **meek** and **lowly** in heart.

"On October 2nd McCheyne wrote Rev. Dan Edwards: "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

Meekness is a sign of Spiritual strength in Christian Character

As you are no doubt aware **meekness** is sometimes confused with **weakness**.

This is to **misunderstand** the actual strength of meekness.

Meekness does not need to shout or use aggression to **demonstrate** its strength.

The strength of meekness arises out of an **inner confidence** in God

Is **manifest** in a **quite, humble & constant** spirit.

Meekness means to be firm for God's honour not our own

Moses was by God's grace a **powerful** example of meekness.

Described in Number 12.3 as *"very meek above all the men, which were upon the face of the earth."*

This meekness was **demonstrated** so often as he led the children of Israel.

His patience with the Children of Israel was a **testimony** to his meekness.

His meekness enabled him to be a **bold** and **courageous** leader working in a right spirit.

He was as Matthew Henry says *"Bold as a lion in the cause of God, but mild as a lamb in his own!"*

Meekness is described as a **true view** of oneself **expressing** itself in attitude and *conduct* towards others.

"To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men." Tit 3:2

Meekness controls our **behaviour** in a positive manner consistently to all

Meekness is **not hasty** in spirit

Meekness bears **no malice**

Meekness never seeks **revenge**

Meekness avoids **evil speaking**

Meekness bears **injuries**

Meekness **forgives** really, fully and often

Meekness is the master over our own **self-interest**, the exercising of **self-control**.

Meekness is a daily exercise of **mind** and **attitude**.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;” Col 3:12

Meekness means a person is willing to be **corrected, admonished**

Meekness means a person is willing to accept the advise of a **helpful critic**.

Meekness means a persons approach to teaching and **correction** will be in **humility**

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you are also tempted.” Gal 6:1

Meekness **governs** our attitude in witness.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” 1Peter 3:15

A CHARACTER HAVING A MINDSET FOR OBEDIENCE

Again we **remind** ourselves of the example of Jesus Christ

Who become obedient unto death even the death of the cross

He said on another occasion how His **delight** was to do His Father's will

In the letter to the Hebrews we read that as a Son He **learned obedience** by the things He **suffered**

In the sense that His **obedience** developed into perfect **fulfilment** as He experienced suffering

Obedience is an essential element of Christian character to **develop** in usefulness

When Saul went his own way and **refused** to wait for Samuel he was told

“Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22

Obedience **pleases** the Lord and is one of the **great evidences** of our **union** with Christ for Service

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.” 1 Peter 1:2

Here we see the **perfect partnership** in the Obedience of Christ & its fruits in the Obedience of believers

As the Holy Spirit **builds** Christian Character for usefulness Obedience to God becomes **paramount**

The words of the Lord to all who put their trust in Him is simply *“Follow Me”* My **example** My Word

What saith the Scriptures becomes the **overriding** principles of living & therein is the secret of usefulness

The Scriptures call us to *Pray – Love – Forgive – Serve others – Kindness – Mercy – Charity – Giving*

A mindset to **Obedience** means a life **moulded** by God and His Word

It effects **how** we read the Word – **How** we hear the Word preached – **How** we respond to the Word

A CHARACTER GOVERNED BY TRUTH

When Paul **instructs** us in our battle against the enemy of souls he **exhorts** us to put on the belt of truth

“Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth”

Paul is warning us that **integrity** of character is an area that satan will attack **vehemently**.

The **undermining** of trust and trustworthiness in our life is one of the greatest **hindrances** to usefulness

Our characters are to be **governed** by the standard of Truth **revealed** to us in God’s Word

Then with God’s help this **standard** of Truth is to be **exercised** in love and sincerity.

“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” 1John 3:18

For a **trustworthy** person is someone of **great value** in the work, someone whose word is their **bond**

A person whose **yes is yes** and their **no is no**.

The fact that **truth** and **integrity** was an issue in the Church in Pauls time is confirmed by Ephesians letter

Rather than **pretend** it was not going on. He dealt with the **problem** in an open and honest manner

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour," for we are members of one another Eph 4:25.

Later he **confirms** that **truth** is a **fruit** of the Holy Spirit **affecting** the character of a Christian

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Eph 5:9

CONCLUSION

What sort of Christian Character *enables* us to be *sensitive, useful* and *responsive* to the Holy Spirit?

We have considered the *fundamental* essentials to Christian Character upon which the Holy Spirit builds

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A CHARACTER HAVING A MINDSET FOR OBEDIENCE

A CHARACTER INSPIRED BY LOVE

A CHARACTER GOVERNED BY TRUTH

Friends these **principles** of Christian Character I realise may **seem simple** and **obvious** to us

But the danger is in **despising** their importance to **usefulness** in our Christian walk

We just plough on in our Christian Lives sometimes **serving** according to our own agenda & preferences

We fail to take *Christian Character* seriously – So we have the doctrine and not the **wholehearted** practise

The result is **division** and **discouragement** and a spirit of **despair** in the Churches

The Lord Jesus taught the **importance** of *Christian Character* moulding *Christian Lifestyle*

This was one of the **vital** principles Jesus taught in the Beatitudes and in the Sermon on the Mount

Those most **used** of God most **sensitive** to the needs of others are those who **understand** this principle

Their characters are **moulded** by a sense of their own *unworthiness* and their *dependence* upon God

Their characters are **moulded** by *prayer – humility – love – sincerity – truth – meekness*

So the **secret** to their usefulness is *first* and *foremost* their **walk** with the Lord

They **respect** and **admire** the Lord – “*He must increase they must decrease*” is their motto

Such can be **used** by the Lord and are **willing** servants of the most High God

They are **sensitive** to the needs of others in a spirit of **compassionate care**

Their characters could be summarised simply by being **unselfish** in their *attitude* and approach to life

The work of the Holy Spirit is **moulding** them to *conformity* to Christ

They are **prompted** by the Spirit to **care** in various ways

Maybe given a burden to **pray** for someone or about a situation – to **visit** a person – to **give** hospitality

To **call** a person- To **send** a gift– To write a **communication** of help based on the Word of God

Their lives are **governed** by Christian Service – **Awareness** of the needs of other – **Willingness** to help

Those with a true *Christian Character* are those **most used** of the Lord & **sensitive** to others

Their **character** and **witness** in this world have an **impact** for the glory of God