

Continuously Build on the True and
Sure and Firm Foundation, Christ Jesus:
Never Cease Building as Long as You Live!

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Study Outline

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Significance of Ongoing Character Development

- When a matter is important to the people of God, He prefaces it with the phrase: Take heed. Six examples follow:
 - “Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst” (Exo 34:12, NKJV).
 - “...Take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deut 4:9, NKJV).
 - “Take heed unto yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make you a graven image...” (Deut 4:23).

Significance of Ongoing Character Development

- When a matter is important to the people of God, He prefaces it with the phrase: Take heed. More examples follow:
 - “...Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing,/[drink excessively], drunkenness and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly” (Luke 21:34, NKJV).
 - “Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak” (1 Cor 8:9).
 - “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12).
- **Take heed, take heed!** Paying attention to advice has the same connotation as: Remember!

Purpose of Ongoing Character Development

- “...A fool rages and is self-confident” (Prov 14:16, NKJV) and such self-confidence becomes the basis for disappointment (Job 6:20, NKJV); therefore, “...let him who thinks he stands **take heed** lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12, NKJV). We must heed the apostle Peter’s command to “...**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...**” (2 Pet 3:18, NKJV). “**The refining influence of the grace of God changes the natural disposition of man. ...The propensities that control the natural heart must be subdued by the grace of Christ before fallen man is fitted to enter heaven....**” (The Acts of the Apostles, {AA}, 273.2). Grow in the grace of Christ.

Be Careful About Your Self-Confidence

- “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and mother.’ [And some of you can truly say]: ‘...All these things have I kept from my youth’ [and yet may fail of attaining to holiness]” (Luke 18:20-22, NKJV). An example follows that may help to clarify humanity’s deep need for Christ!

Be Careful About Your Self-Confidence

- “...This was the iniquity of... Sodom: ‘She and her daughter, [neighboring city], had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; ...[she didn’t]... strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination, [Lev 20:13; Gen 19:4 & 5], before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit*” (Eze 16:49-50, NKJV & Gen 19:12-22, NKJV). We should remember that “a proud look...” is one of the seven abominations... God hates (Prov 6:16-17).

Seemingly Harmless but Deadly Sins

- “The evil that led to Peter’s fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is proving the ruin of thousands today. There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as **pride and self-sufficiency**. [‘**The pride of your heart has deceived you...**’ (Obad 1:3, NKJV). It is one of the contents ‘...of the heart of men... [that] defile a man’ (Mark 7:21-23) and which must be eradicated ‘...if a man desires the position of a bishop...’ (1 Tim 3:1-6, NKJV). ‘A man’s pride will bring him low...’ (Prov 29:23, NKJV). ‘Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall’ (Prov 16:18, NKJV).]. **Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable**” (Christ’s Object Lessons, {COL}, 154.4).

Deadly Sins Creep Upon You Imperceptibly

- “Peter’s fall was NOT instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence, [Matt 26:33], led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. **Never** can we safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation” (COL, 155.1). **Always** abide in Christ (2 John 1:9, NKJV & John 15:5, NKJV).

Keep a Closed Door to Deadly Sins

- “Those who accept the Savior, however sincere their conversion, should never be taught to say or to feel that they are saved. This is misleading. Every one should be taught to cherish hope and faith; but even when we give ourselves to Christ and know that He accepts us, we are not beyond the reach of temptation. ‘...Many shall be purified, made white and refined’ (Dan 12:10, NKJV). [And] only [those] who endures the trial will receive the crown of life” (COL, 155.1).

Keep a Closed Door to Deadly Sins

- “Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are **in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant need of divine strength.** They are unprepared for Satan’s devices, and under temptation, many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. **Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ” (COL, 155.2).**

Keep a Closed Door to Deadly Sins

- “There will be a *continual reaching out of the soul after God*, a *continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin* and *humbling of the heart before Him*. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall *know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone* and shall make the apostle’s confession our own: [‘...Nothing good lives in... my sinful nature...’ (Rom 7:18). And in response to the work, which God is doing within each of us, we will forever *acknowledge that ‘every good gift... is from above and comes down from the Father of lights...’* (Jam 1:17)] (AA, 561.2). **Keep the door closed to deadly sins by repressing self-promotion!**

Keep a Closed Door to Deadly Sins

- “Let the recording angels write the history of the holy struggles and conflicts of the people of God; let them record their prayers and tears; but **let not God be dishonored by the declaration from human lips, ‘I am sinless; I am holy.’ Sanctified lips will never give utterance to such presumptuous words**” (AA, 561.3).
“...**Glory... [only] in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...**” (Gal 6:14). “We do not think one noble thought that does not come from [Christ]” (S.D.A. Bible Commentary, Vol 6., {6BC}, 1105.6). We owe all to Jesus Christ!

An Example of a Closed Door to Deadly Sins

- “The apostle Paul had been caught up to the third heaven and had seen and heard things that could not be uttered, and yet his unassuming statement is: ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after’ (Php 3:12). Let the angels of heaven write of Paul’s victories in fighting the good fight of faith. Let heaven rejoice in his steadfast tread heavenward, and that, keeping the prize in view, he counts every other consideration dross” (AA, 562.1).

Take Home Lesson from the Example

- “Angels rejoice to tell [Paul’s] triumphs, but Paul makes no boast of his attainments; [he was emptied of pride; therefore, he did not have an exalted opinion of himself]. The attitude of Paul is the attitude that every follower of Christ should take as [s/he] urges his/[her] way onward in the strife for the immortal crown” (AA, 562.1). A brief description of that attitude follows.

Take Home Lesson from the Example

- “...Dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, **I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us**” (Php 3:13-14, NLT). This is the attitude that all who will be saved must have. Let us examine one example of the work of pressing-on.

Next Steps in Our Advancement in Christ

- “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor 11:31). Our own, natural hearts are compromised (read Matt 15:19); therefore, “let us NOT... judge one another anymore...” (Rom 14:13). “...Men... are liable to... make very grave mistakes if they engage in [the] work... to criticize, to climb upon the judgment seat and pronounce sentence. **How much better would it be for the spiritual advancement of such to look well to their OWN shortcomings and defects of character through watchful examination of their OWN hearts, to try to remove from [themselves] the beam of faultfinding, [Matt 7:3-5], of evil surmising/[guesswork], of evil speaking, [Eph 4:31; 1 Pet 3:10], of bearing false witness, [Exo 20:16], of hatred and accusing of the brethren” (6BC, 1105.10).**

Advancement Does Not Occur in a Vacuum

- “Gain courage from [Paul’s]... experience.... [Though] he had many trials (Acts 16:37; 2 Cor 11:25), [he] ...allowed nothing to hinder him from his work” (Acts 20:23-24 in 6BC, 1106.5). “...[He] met difficulties from various sources, and amid all... conflicts and discouragements he did not lose his trust and confidence in God. ...The devisings of human beings and... the enemy against him were to him, a means of discipline and education, and he declares that: thus, he gained most excellent knowledge, because he made the Lord Jesus his dependence. ...[The] gospel enriches the garden of the soul, enabling it to produce... precious fruit” (6BC, 1106.6). Suffering is a tutor of obedience (Heb 5:8).

Make the Christian Journey Fragrant with Joy

- “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ...and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart”(Pss 32:11). “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance” (Pss 89:15). “The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor... shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 29:19). “...The ransomed, [that is the redeemed], of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa 35:10 & 51:11). **Sadness flees when Christ is near!**¹⁹

Make the Christian Journey Fragrant with Joy

- “...The Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden...; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa 51:3). “...Unto them that mourn in Zion, [God will] give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (Isa 61:3). In view of these promises: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? **Hope in God**, for I shall yet **praise Him**, for the help of His countenance” (Pss 42:5, NKJV). “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, **my soul shall be joyful in my God...**” (Isa 61:10) “...for **the joy of the Lord is your strength**” (Neh 8:10).

Release Whimpering to Accelerate Growth

- “Although the fig tree shall NOT blossom, neither shall the fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield NO meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be NO herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. [Why]? The Lord God is my strength; ...He will make my feet like hinds’ feet; ...He will make me to walk upon... high places...” (Hab 3:17-19). How? “The Lord... in the midst of thee is mighty...” (Zeph 3:17) and “...the thoughts... [He] thinks toward... [us are] thoughts of peace..., to give [us] a future and a hope” (Jer 29:11, NKJV); therefore, “...we... joy in God through our Lord, Jesus Christ...” (Rom 5:11).

The Road to Heaven is Narrow

- The journey to heaven requires strict discipline “because **strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which [leads] unto life, and few there be that find it**” (Matt 7:14). “**Not everyone who calls out...: ‘Lord! Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.** Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter” (Matt 7:21). **Doing noble works is no substitute for holiness, i.e., character development** for “on judgment day, many will say...: ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons... and performed many miracles...’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you...’” (Matt 7:22-23, NLT). **What is the benefit to you of spending years as a church member and yet lack the fitness for heaven? Get on the narrow road!**

Implications of Ongoing Character Development

- Jesus said to His Father: “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work... You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). “So when [He] had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30, NKJV). “In Christ God beheld the reflection of His own image. ‘...God was manifest in the flesh...’ (1 Tim 3:16) because of the entire identity of His character with Christ’s character” (The Signs of the Times, {ST}, April 15, 1897, par. 10). And to continue this transcendence, “...we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor 4:11). “Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ” (A Call to Stand Apart, {CSA}, 15.7). To “...be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19), which was seen in the life of Christ (Col 2:9) is the pathway to perfection (Eph 4:13)!

Implications of Ongoing Character Development

- “The work of gaining salvation is... a joint operation; ...co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. ...[People are] to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders... perfection [by being] ...wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from [us; but we] ...must draw ...power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness [and] absolute helplessness” (AA 482.2)!

Implications of Ongoing Character Development

- “God wishes us to have mastery over ourselves. [From the beginning, it was God’s stated policy that ‘...sin shall NOT have dominion over {us}...’ (Rom 6:14, NKJV); and for that reason God made everything good (Gen 1:31). And after the entrance of sin, the partnership between God and humans required ‘...a willing heart...’ and obedience (Exo 35:5, NKJV)]. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation. **The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties.... Of ourselves, we are NOT able to bring the purposes, ...desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are willing to be made willing, the Savior will accomplish this for us...**” (AA 482.3). Submit to Christ!