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# The Bible Student

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## FOUR FEATURES OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

A. McD. REDWOOD

The apostle Paul's most earnest desire as expressed in his letter to the saints in Colossae was, 'that they might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding'; that they might so be enabled to 'walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. . . .' (Col. 1:9, 10). In other words, his prayer is for a true and effective display of Christian character in everyday life, and in every kind of circumstance in which that life is lived. Anything less must be considered as a failure to reach up to the divine standard which God looks for in every Christian.

There are at least four definite characteristics of this Christian life to which we are called, and which claim constant watchfulness; in our prayer life first, and in our everyday life we have to live before the world. They are, in fact, some of the features by which the world not only recognises us in our behaviour and beliefs, but by which they learn something of the Saviour God whom we profess to worship and serve in whatsoever manner. We may speak of them, therefore, as both formative of character and demonstrative in testimony. Let us consider these briefly, beginning with:

1st. '*Walking in Wisdom*' (Colossians 4:5). 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.' Note the *marginal* reading in your Bible: '*Buying up the opportunity*'.

The apostle is speaking of our outward behaviour as being the proof of our inward state of heart, soul and mind, as may be understood from the following verse 6; 'let your speech be always with grace. . . .' True spiritual wisdom is 'from above, gentle . . . full of good fruits . . . without hypocrisy' (James chap. 3:17 ff.)—the consistent, effective testimony which the worldly person often looks for among Christians, though the worldling does not possess it. Read for yourself Colossians 2:6, 7; also ch. 3:7, 8. Then turn the page back to chap. 1:10, where the apostle urges: '*walk worthily of the Lord . . . bearing fruit and increasing in the knowledge of God*'. The more we come to 'know God' the greater will be the fruit-bearing. Such fruits are the evidence of inward character. The apostle himself demonstrates this in his own life-testimony before king Agrippa: 'MY manner of life from my youth up . . . amongst my own nation . . . know all the Jews' (Acts 26:4, 5). Read both verses carefully, and note that his 'walking', or 'manner of life', in those early years was *not* a 'walking according to God'. His earnest zeal was misdirected, and lacked the true wisdom. But when his 'conversion-crisis' took place, all was changed. Henceforth he demonstrated in every part of his eventful life what it meant, and what it still means, to 'walk in wisdom'—which, indeed, is an essential feature of Christian character.

2nd. '*Working Diligently*' (Col. 3:23, 24). The Revised version marginal reading is: '*work from the soul, as unto the Lord and not unto men*'.

How often in life we learn of men and women who have launched out into some great enterprise which has captivated their minds, and for it have been prepared for almost any difficulty or threatening obstacle that would stand in their way. Such is the picture in Paul's mind, but of far greater value and importance: '*Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*'. That is to say, the true incentive and motive of all the varied types of our work, it matters not what, as long as it is centred in and radiates from the LORD, and not in ourselves, let us *work it out diligently*. Such work and service is character-building. But

let us not forget to make a note of the word in chap. 1:29; 'striving according to *HIS working* which worketh in me mightily'.

3rd. '*Watching in Prayer*' (Col. 4:2, and 12). Here again is another essential in Christian character; we might almost say it is the greatest. But thank God it is generally recognised as an essential in the best of Christian circles. First note that in the previous section the emphasis was laid on the 'Source' of our incentive and power to fulfil the purposes of God. But here the emphasis is more the personal active *doing* and *being* what *God wants us to be and do*. And as a kind of background to the appeal there is given us an 'active illustration', as it were, in the person of Epaphras. In fact, this great man's prayer-life takes on the quality of a definite 'standard' to which God would have us all attain unto: a standard reflected also in Paul's own life, as seen in chapter 1:29; 'I labour also according to *HIS working* which *worketh in me* mightily'. And do not fail to read the passage in chap. 4:2 and 12 again. Here indeed is a feature of Christian character that no one who classes himself or herself as a true Christian can afford to treat lightly.

4th. '*We worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus*' (Philippians 3:3 R.V., read the Authorised version also).

It is not too much to say that man was created by God to be a true worshipper: but sin has broken into His purposes. Yet the work of Christ upon the cross has opened up a new way back to God and the true worship of God. 'The true worshippers shall (now) worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship HIM' (John 4:23, 24). The Psalmist of old was imbued with the same spirit and desire: 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker' (See Psalm 95:6, 7). 'Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. . . .' (Ps. 96:8, 9). Here is the supreme evidence of a soul yielded to God, and consequently 'separated' from the spurious idols of the world and of man's making.

Moreover, is it not this spirit and practice of true worship which elevates, inspires, and produces a certain nobility of character in the Christian life? We may not, alas, always express it in behaviour: but that implies perhaps that we may not be

spending much time within the 'presence of God' in prayerful devotion.

There is one aspect of worship we must never forget, namely its intimate relationship to prayer and intercession for other lives beyond our own. Worship can never be sustained by a self-centered character of our prayer life. What leads the heart to worship in 'the beauty of holiness' will always lead to a prayerful intercession for other lives also. Prayer, Praise, Intercession are the concomitants of worship. What was the outstanding feature of Daniel's great ministry for God, and to whom God committed such wide knowledge of His plans both for Israel and even the world of his day at large? Was it not his intimacy with God in prayer and worship? The angelic messenger from God addresses him: 'O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved' (Dan. 10:11, 19).

Few indeed may have reached that standard: and yet, did not such men as Thomas-à-Kempis; Henry Martin of Serampore; Brother Lawrence who served God in the kitchen; Praying Hyde of Sialkot; George Muller of Bristol, to name only a few who attained to heights of worshipful devotion and fruitful living.

## THE MILLENNIUM

W. FRASER NAISMITH

This poor world today lies bleeding at every pore! Paul reminded the Romans that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' (Rom. 8:22). Men's hearts are failing them for fear; and the cold war keeps statesmen bewildered—for when some would say 'peace, peace', there is no peace. The time is not far distant when men shall accept the overtures of a man who will be Satanically inspired, and they will follow him like sheep. When this man comes into view he will introduce a universal rationing system so that no business transactions can be executed without first securing the suitable ration book—the mark of the beast on hand or forehead—(Rev. 13:16-17). The Great Tribulation will run its course; and the Lord has restricted the period to three and a half years, otherwise no flesh