

The Character and the Promise

by Thomas Reade

The sermon explores the vital connection between a believer's character and the promises of God, emphasizing the need for self-examination and faithfulness in the Christian walk.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5

Topics: "Christian Character", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches about the inseparable connection between character and promise in the Holy Scriptures. He emphasizes the importance of self-examination through the lens of God's Word to determine one's true character and relationship with God, urging believers to seek the Spirit's guidance for clarity. Reade highlights the need for faith, repentance, love, obedience, trust, fear, humility, meekness, purity, and perseverance as essential traits of God's people, with corresponding promises attached to each. He encourages believers to diligently search their hearts and lives to ensure they bear the marks of true discipleship, as mere outward profession without inner transformation holds no value in God's eyes.

Transcript

41. THE CHARACTER AND THE PROMISE, INSEPARABLY CONNECTED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

But all will be well for those who are godly. Tell them, "You will receive a wonderful reward!" But say to the wicked, "Your destruction is sure. You, too, will get what you deserve. Your well-earned punishment is on the way." Isaiah 3:10-11

There is no evil we have more to fear than self-deception. Pride, naturally begets self-sufficiency. Many are ready enough to apply to themselves the cordials of the gospel, who have no right to them; while numbers of contrite believers refuse to be comforted, although the gospel speaks nothing to them but words of peace.

We find in the word of God the most amplified description of the characters, both of the righteous and the wicked; with the promises made to the one, and the threatenings denounced on the other. If we examine closely the book of God, we shall find our exact character depicted there; and to this character we shall find annexed either a blessing or a curse. Surely, then, it must be the duty of every one to examine himself by the word of Truth, that he may know his real character, either for his conviction or consolation.

'Tis a point I long to know,
Often it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?
Lord, decide the doubtful case!
You who are your people's Sun,
Shine upon your work of grace,
If it be indeed begun.

How important is the question; Am I in the Faith? Do I bear the marks of God's children? Have I the Spirit of Christ, as the Seal, the Pledge, the Witness of my salvation? If this is made clear to my mind and conscience, through the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, then I may freely and fully take the promises for my portion.

The Christian professor who neglects this inward search, this looking into the glass of God's word, that he may see his spiritual character, as a man beholds his natural face in a mirror, will be ready to fancy himself to be something when he is nothing, and thus miserably deceive himself. Such a work of self-examination will be deemed legal, and tending to bondage, though it be the duty enforced upon him by an inspired Apostle; "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates." Respecting the Lord's Supper, Paul also says, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that Cup."

Heavenly Father! make me sincere in my self-examinations. May I come to the light, that so, my whole heart being searched by "the candle of the Lord," every lurking evil may be discovered and rooted out, crucified, and destroyed.

Happy are they who can discern, with humility and a thankful heart, their own state, as justified and sanctified believers in Christ Jesus. All the promises scattered throughout the sacred volume, like the stars in the firmament, are theirs. Every thing that is needful for life and godliness, for support and protection, is theirs; for "Jesus gives us in his word, food and medicine, shield and sword."

Oh! my soul, be thankful for such a Savior, who has said, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." "Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall he not make it good? He who is the Truth will never disappoint the hopes which he has raised, or the promises which he has made.

"How flow firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word."

For Jesus has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The following passages set forth the character of God's people, and the promises annexed to that character. The graces of the Spirit, like the spokes in a wheel, all meet in the heart of the believer. Without

the indwelling Spirit, we have no spiritual life. All profession is vain, and religion but an empty sound. Oh! my soul, these precious portions of God's word may well cause you to make diligent search, whether you are indeed in the way of life- whether you possess these features of the new creature in Christ Jesus.

FAITH. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed." "He that believes on him shall not be confounded."

REPENTANCE. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

LOVE. "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4 "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." John 14:21

OBEDIENCE. "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." Exodus 19:5 "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." John 15:10 "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." 1 John 2:17

TRUST. "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever." Psalm 125:1 "Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." Proverbs 16:20 "Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe." Proverbs 29:25

FEAR. "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." Malachi 4:2

HONOR. "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained." 1 Samuel 2:30

PRAYER. "call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me." Psalm 50:15 "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Joel 2:32 "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21:22

HUMILITY. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3 "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:10 "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." 1 Peter 5:6

MEEKNESS. "He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his way." Psalm 25:9 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5

PURITY. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Matthew 5:8

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12

PERSEVERANCE, OR STEADFASTNESS IN THE FAITH. "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Matthew 10:22 "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.

I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." Rev. 2:10 "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." Rev. 21:7

These beautiful passages delineate the New Creation of God. However plausible our profession of religion may be, if we bear not these marks of discipleship, we have no right to Christian privileges, Christian promises, or Christian prospects of future glory. Though sprinkled with water at the baptismal font; though regular communicants at the table of the Lord; though zealous assertors of certain opinions, and warm adherents to some favorite minister; we are, in the sight of God, if destitute of love, no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Lord! bestow this adorable gift of your divine Spirit, this heavenly love, on me your unworthy servant. Impart it to all those who have it not, and increase it in those who have received it, that your image may be visibly discerned in the hearts and lives of all who call themselves Christians, that they may hold the faith in unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

If I have received the grace of faith, of repentance, love, obedience, trust, fear, humility, meekness, and purity; if I honor God before men; if I live in a spirit of prayer; if I suffer, for righteousness' sake; if I continue steadfast in the faith; I am a member of Christ's mystical body, and all the promises annexed to these graces are my portion.

As the word of God reveals to us our real state and character, so is it admirably adapted, through the Spirit, to comfort the mourners in Zion, and to pour the oil of gladness into the wounded heart. The sorrowful sighing of the humble and contrite, the longing desires of the loving believer, are answered in so gracious a manner, as would forever banish despondencies and fears, were not unbelief and distrust so deeply rooted in our hearts. Lord, remove from me every root of bitterness, that I may not be faithless, but believing.

The following is a specimen of some of the precious answers to prayer, with which the Holy Scriptures abound, for the refreshing and strengthening of Christian pilgrims-

REQUEST- "Save me, O God, by your name." Psalm 54:1. ANSWER- "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." Acts 16:31. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

REQUEST- "But you, O Lord, do not be far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me." Psalm 22:19. ANSWER- "For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." Isaiah 41:13

REQUEST- "Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; rescue me from deceitful and wicked men." Psalm 43:1. "O my God, do not delay." Psalm 40:17 ANSWER- "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

REQUEST- "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." Psalm 51:11. ANSWER- "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." John 6:37

REQUEST- "I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid!" Isaiah 38:14. ANSWER- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

REQUEST- "Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior." Psalm 27:9. ANSWER- "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

REQUEST- "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end." Psalm 119:33. ANSWER- "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

REQUEST- "O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress." Isaiah 33:2. ANSWER- "Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed." Isaiah 49:23. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27. "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9

REQUEST- "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge."

Psalm 16:1. ANSWER- "But now, this is what the Lord says- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3

These are sweet and precious answers to the prayer of faith. So long as the words, "Ask, seek, mock," remain in the sacred volume, so long we may be assured, that all who seek shall find. Lord, vouchsafe to me a praying spirit, that I may approach You in the simplicity of faith, trusting in nothing but Jesus Christ, and desiring nothing so much as to know, and love, and serve you; whom to know is life eternal, and whom to love and serve, is heaven begun.

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