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306 - Quite A Character

1. Introduction

Love for God emanates from the heart as we saw in the last lesson. When we become a Christian we have a need to grow which begins with Bible study and meditating on the word. This involves everything we think, feel and do as we grow stronger in the faith. But growth needs direction. In this lesson we'll discuss how we can build **Quite A Character** that will be pleasing to God and lead to a fulfilling life.

2. Transformation and direction

When we obey the Gospel and become a Christian we're faced with a challenge. Differences between how we lived before conversion and afterward can create internal friction. We may have a tendency to fall back into habits and behavior we engaged in prior to believing. Some find ways to compromise in respect to their faith and behavior but that generally results in conformity not transformation. The scriptures provide a perspective of the life change we've initiated and instructions for how to achieve IT.

In this lesson we'll discuss

- a. Conversion, conformity and transformation
- b. A blueprint for change
- c. attributes of a godly character
- c. Faith, behavior and godly character

Let's take a look at each of these.

3. Conversion, conformity and transformation

Our spiritual journey begins with hearing and understanding God's word. After one has become a Christian however there's a need to continue building on our knowledge and deepening our faith. Too many times some might think that being saved is a matter of receiving the blessing of forgiveness from God and they can resume their lives with only minor adjustments. We need to understand that true conversion is a transformation of one's life and not a search for how to get around God's word so we can continue as we have in the past. One of the reasons for this is a lack of understanding of what's needed or rejection of the idea of making needed changes.

We can understand this better if we comprehend the relationship we have with God through Christ and what conversion entails. Paul writes, "*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. And 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 12.1-2). There are several points in this passage we need to examine.

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First is the idea of mercy. Outside God and Christ there's only the future expectation of judgment by God when we die and Christ returns. The mercy of God was expressed in the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the world. "***Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.***" (Rom 6.3-4). Because Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life to provide the means for our salvation, we owe him a debt of gratitude by sacrificing our will that stands in opposition to that of God. As Paul stated we must present ourselves as "***a living sacrifice***" obedient to his word and will.

Secondly Paul refers to the "***newness of life***" in which our old person is taken away, or as Paul states, we're "***buried with him***" signifying a death to the former way of life. This characterizes a renewal or regeneration of our inner being as Paul states that we're "***transformed by the renewing of your mind***". This is consistent with our discussion of the heart in the last lesson. We must embrace God and his word internally allowing it to strengthen us spiritually and direct our thought and actions. This implies that we're developing a love for God through his word and a willingness to submit to his authority. Being a Christian isn't a matter of attending services and memorizing Bible verses, we have to apply them to our lives. Peter describes how these are to be applied.

4. A blueprint for change

Peter provides a global view of what we should work toward in our spiritual development. "***Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall...***" (2 Pet 1.4-10).

We're given a wealth of information in this passage. We're reminded of God's promise of eternal life and a home with him (John 14.3, Titus 1.2) and escape from the wrath of God that will be revealed against those who fail to obey him (2 Thess 1.7-9). Aside from that, living as a Christian and developing the character the scriptures describe vastly improves our quality of life now. One of the greatest reasons for developing these attributes is so we can have a positive impact on the lives of others as well. Failure to develop these traits while claiming to be a follower of God will not only affect how others see us but will tarnish the image of God.

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The message of the Bible is that we're separated from the Lord. As I've noted in previous lessons the reality we live in isn't what was intended. Satan introduced an influence, that coupled with the weakness of humanity, resulted in a world filled with problems. Left to our own devices we tend to focus on ourselves and our needs. As a follower of God we turn that attention toward others as well, with the realization that there will be an end one day. In short, if we claim to be following Christ we need to show it in what we say, think and do. This will also help us understand the struggles others go through as they face the challenges of life. Instead of preaching at people who are lost we develop the ability to teach and influence them to follow a better course for living.

Failure to do this on the part of believers is common and one of the complaints we hear when trying to reach others is, "I don't want anything to do with those hypocrites". James addresses the disparity in thought and action as he writes, "***But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.***" (Jas 1.22-25). Bible believers aren't the only ones who fail to live up to what they claim to be, but when the idea of serving God is involved, it takes on new life and increases resistance in those we try to reach out to.

Developing these attributes is a matter of increasing our knowledge of God's word. We're told to "***desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby***" (1 Pet 2.2). Failure to learn and grow is condemned by the writer of Hebrews who states, "***For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.***" (Heb 5.12-14).

Spending time with God's word, meditating on it, introspecting or examining ourselves and desiring to be stronger spiritually leads us to make changes in our lives. Changes that will make us more effective in influencing and teaching others. Peter lists the attributes of one who develops a character that will be pleasing to God and increase their spiritual stamina. From Peter's statements we see that certain attributes are to "***added***" to our faith. Beginning with faith as a foundation we can explore each of these to gain a better understanding of them. These are:

- a. Faith
- b. Virtue
- c. Knowledge
- d. Temperance
- e. Patience

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- f. Godliness
- g. Brotherly kindness
- h. Charity or love

Let's examine each of these so we understand them better.

5. The attributes of a godly character

Faith: At the beginning of this series I defined faith as the word of God (substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen - **Heb 11.1**). We noted that faith comes from the word of God (**Rom 10.17**) and an absence of knowledge is condemned (**Heb 5.12-14**). As we study the word and incorporate it into our lives, it has an effect on how we think and what we do. Spending time with God's word deepens our appreciation for what's been revealed and it's power. We also gain wisdom from it as we examine the lives of those recorded, the decisions they made and their eventual end. Paul states, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*" (**Rom 15.4**). We have a saying that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat the failures of the past. Spiritually this is just as true. The Old Testament is filled with episodes in the lives of individuals who succeeded and failed before God. The New Testament provides additional examples but adds specific guidance on increasing and preserving our faith. Everything we hope to become and achieve spiritually has to start with the revealed word. There are no other paths or shortcuts in doing this. Focusing on the word of God begins to change us and teaches us to place value on the word and how to order our priorities in life.

Virtue: A common perception of virtue is one who is morally sound. In a spiritual sense this goes much farther than the subjective appraisals that define the concept for us. We can describe virtue as the adoption of a standard and one's determination to hold to it. Spiritually virtue also implies an excellence and strength of character coupled with one's desire to please God. Coupled with our faith, virtue denotes inner strength and courage that observes God's commands and refuses to be compromised in the face of opposition, persecution or temptation. Joshua exemplifies virtue in his final address to the Children of Israel. "*Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" (**Josh 24.14-15**).

Joshua realized that his behavior and influence would determine the fate of the next generation of God's people. As the Hebrews moved forward taking possession of the land that had been corrupted with idolatry and evil, the temptations and hardships the people would face were well known to Joshua. Joshua however also realized that commitment to God's standard and an unyielding attitude toward compromise would preserve them spiritually. Paul told the Romans to

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“abhor that which is evil” (Rom 12.9) which could only be known from God’s word and a refusal to compromise. Paul told the Colossian Christians to **“set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3.1-2)** encouraging them to resolve to be strong in the faith and exercise virtue.

David was well acquainted with spiritual failure at times as he compromised his virtue and gave in to temptation. The remedy for that, and one that will strengthen our virtue, is stated clearly by David. **“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” (Psm 16.8)**. Virtue in a spiritual sense means that we’ll always be mindful of God, make him our priority and refuse to compromise the values we find in the scriptures.

Similar to this is Peter’s admonishment that we should **“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 within you with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet 3.15)**. The ability to provide an answer or direction when questioned by others reveals that we have a determination to know God, understand what faith is and refuse to waver in the face of adversity, challenges or the complacency of those times when things are going well.

Knowledge: Paul states that faith comes by hearing, or knowledge, and hearing by the word of God (**Rom 10.17**). We can conclude that if we say we have faith in God but lack a working understanding of his word then we’re fooling ourselves. We can’t claim to have a solid belief or trust in something we don’t know about. The Israelites were condemned for their lack of knowledge by the prophet Hosea (**Hos 4.6**). We’ve also seen a similar warning to believers by the writer of the book of Hebrews (**Heb 5.12-14**).

Paul told Timothy, **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2.15)**. This emphasizes a need to apply oneself to a study of God’s word. One aspect of that is self improvement in a spiritual sense as stated here. Paul reminded Timothy that his growth in the word involved a total commitment and would be recognized by others as he writes, **“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” (1 Tim 4.15)**. The process by which Timothy was to achieve this is also stated by Paul as he instructs the young preacher to **“...give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Tim 4.13)**.

Christ stated that **“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt 4.4)**. The word of God is food for the soul and strengthens us. The writer of Hebrews indicates that the ability to distinguish right from wrong is a product of knowing God’s word. The writer states, **“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Heb 5.14)**.

The Colossians were being influenced by false doctrines and notions that were

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incorrect. In his letter to the group, Paul exhorts them to “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...*” (Col 3.16). The importance of God’s word is noted by David and other psalmists throughout the book. David writes “*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*” (Psm 119.97-104).

Gaining knowledge of God’s word isn’t just about learning a bunch of rules we have to follow. Within the scriptures we’re able to understand the relationship between God and humans. We gain wisdom when facing challenges in life. We find comfort in times of grief and distress. We develop a sense of community not just with believers we currently associate with but with all the faithful who have come before us. We find strength, understanding and will grow to be more aware of our own selves and able to make changes that we need to make and reinforce what is good.

Temperance: Temperance isn’t a word that we may use that often. Webster defines it as “**moderation in our thinking , actions and feeling**”. In Peter’s writing the word translated as temperance is *ενκρατεια* (**enkrateia**) denoting self control or more specifically the exercise of one’s will over our actions. Actions are therefore guided by the knowledge we’ve gained from studying God’s word and applying it in our lives.

We talk about impulse control and we’re all familiar with individuals who lack that quality or we may remember times in our lives when we failed to control ourselves. Temperance is demonstrated when we set our immediate emotional reactions aside and refuse to act selfishly in haste. A familiar scenario is the unhappy customer whose expectations of service or speed at which they’re taken care of become obvious to everyone around them, or the driver who expresses road rage at other drivers. The ability to delay such reactions or postpone getting involved in something before we know all the details is an aspect of this. Coupled with that is the determination to simply remain calm and moderate our behavior based on a better course of action.

James describes temperance in his epistle. “*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*” (Jas 1.19-20). Taking the time to evaluate a course of action or the outcome of a decision against what God’s word has to say allows us to avoid doing things that are destructive to others and ourselves. As Christians we also need to remember that if we claim to represent God, unbelievers will make note of our inconsistency, leading them to reject the idea of serving the Lord. Our pride becomes a hazard for us if we don’t understand the scriptures, apply

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them to ourselves and then moderate our behavior for the sake of others and ourselves.

Patience: While temperance is a moderation of our behavior in light of what the scriptures teach, patience is the attitude of enduring over time, or persevering. The two are closely related. Without patience we'll undoubtedly fail at some point in our spiritual lives. We have to expect that as a Christian, especially in the beginning, there will be hurdles we need to overcome. We'll have to delay the gratification of our desire to be better or change as that's a process that will span our lifetime. The ability to wait and endure a situation as we come to terms with it, helps us grow and learn to see things more clearly. Our first impressions of many things change over time as we become more familiar with them.

Patience involves a determination to do God's will no matter what happens. Paul writes, *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 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."* (2 Tim 2.3-4). People often talk about wanting to achieve something and point to those who have succeeded. The failure rate in many areas of endeavor is high due to the fact that the work that has to be done and the accomplishments that need to be attained aren't easy and take time. David addresses a lack of patience in life as he states, *"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."* (Psm 27.14). The greatest enemy we have in regard to spiritual success is ourselves and our lack of patience.

David writes, *"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."* (Psm 130.5). In God's word we find faith. As our knowledge grows we learn to evaluate our lives and the situations we find ourselves in. We learn to control ourselves and be patient as we grow stronger spiritually. Our hope rests on God's promises. Those promises are found in his word. Along with the Lord's promises is the assurance that he'll be with us as we try to grow closer to him. Patience has always been a characteristic of the faithful while a lack of it has brought many to ruin personally and spiritually.

Godliness: We can develop the faith we need based on our belief and God's word. We can determine to achieve the moral excellence we should have as well as moderation in thought and behavior but we need to keep all of that in the context of service to God. There are some believers and some world religions that teach moral goodness and other things but the emphasis is on the value these things have for the individual and their lives. It doesn't matter how much progress we think we've made or are making, we must remind ourselves that the righteousness of God exceeds anything we can do or become.

Paul indicates that pursuing godliness provides a guide and framework in which we conduct our affairs. Paul notes, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Phil 3.13-14). Paul indicates that he was willing to set aside anything in his life that

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detracted from his service to God or interfered with his spiritual development. The religious world is filled with compromise as millions refer to themselves as the faithful of God and yet turn away from commands or principles stated in the scriptures. We always need to question our actions and motives and compare what we think with what the Bible states. Unfortunately there are doctrines that attempt to excuse ideas or practices condemned or not authorized by God in favor of their own desires and opinions.

Peter addresses these attitudes in his first epistle. *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation...”* (1 Pet 1.13-15). The word conversation used in the KJV in this passage means our manner of life. It doesn't matter what I think or want. If my ideas conflict with God's word then I need to make the adjustment in my mind, not attempt to alter what God has directed. Peter tells us that we should *“sanctify the Lord God”* in our hearts (1 Pet 3.15) making him and his word the priority, not ourselves.

An aspect of godliness is a refusal to set God aside or abandon service to him at any time. James states that we're enticed and drawn away from God by our own desires (Jas 1.14). David noted his determination to not allow this to happen when he writes, *“I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”* (Psm 119.15-16). Along those same lines is David's description of the righteous. *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”* (Psm 1.1-2).

Knowledge of God's word builds faith and supplies the knowledge that we need to grow and understand how to behave. As we move forward we determine to conduct ourselves in ways that God approves of and that mirror God's character. We don't want to be guilty of making God look bad and causing someone else to turn away from the Lord.

Brotherly kindness: At some times and in some places the idea of being nice or respecting others is a foreign concept. Some claiming to be Christians have engaged in hateful practices and harbored malicious attitudes toward others because of their beliefs and other reasons. As we explore the doctrine of the New Testament we find that this is completely unacceptable to God. Being united by the word of God we need to see and value others as God does. Paul called on the Ephesians to be united in the faith and notes that this is a characteristic of one who seeks to be righteous.

Paul writes, *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of*

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peace.” (Eph 4.1-3). He goes on to remind the Ephesians that their unity stems from the fact that *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Eph 4.4-6).

Christ’s disciples often argued amongst themselves about which of them would be greatest in the kingdom (Lk 22.24). At one point the mother of James and John came to Christ requesting preferential treatment for her sons (Matt 20.20-22). Christ stated, *“...but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”* (Matt 20.27-28). Jesus showed by example that his disciples were to develop concern for others, a trait that’s foreign to our natural inclinations. Prior to his arrest Christ prayed to God that his disciples would *“be one in us”* with the result that *“the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* (John 17.21).

Paul told the Romans they were to be *“kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Rom 12.10). Logically there can’t be unity, peace or fellowship where there’s division, disagreement and strife. Paul later told the Romans, *“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”* (Rom 15.5-7). The nature of the faith, rooted in knowledge of God’s word, is reflected in the care we have for one another and begins in our mind as we determine to live according to revealed truth.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul states, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Phil 2.3-4). Realizing that we’re recipients of God’s blessings leads us to please the Lord by developing genuine concern for others. This extends to those who are not believers as well. Paul states, *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* (Gal 6.10).

This attitude is expressed in taking care that we don’t cause a problem for others that will cause them to stumble (Rom 14.13). Our attitude toward the faults of others will also be tempered with concern as Paul instructs, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”* (Gal 6.1-2). James clarifies that one who turns one from error will *“save a soul from death”* (Jas 5.19-20). Often when an individual becomes weak or exposes a problem in their life others withdraw, criticize and negatively judge the person destroying any connection that could be helpful. With the proper attitude, based on God’s word, we’ll not only help others but we’ll strengthen our faith, deepen

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our understanding of God's will and what it means to represent the Lord in order to influence others.

Charity or love: Each of the attributes of Christian character we've discussed depend on each other. In a way we can see a progression beginning with belief that turns to faith, a commitment to aspiring to godly values, increasing the knowledge we have while moderating our thought and action. These result in patience and a desire to be more like God and Christ our example. Compassion, fellowship and an attitude of kindness toward other believers and those around us in general demonstrate that we're aspiring to a higher standard set by God and Christ.

Interestingly enough, it's possible to act as though we have our heart and mind in the right place but Peter adds a final attribute that has to be understood - love. The love spoken of in this passage is **αγαπην** which is a form of the word **αγαπέ** (**agape**). This is the type of love that God demonstrated toward the world in sending Christ to die (**John 3.16**). It's a love that's not based on emotion or feeling and may even run counter to our normal instincts or inclinations. It's a form of love that's willing to do what's best for others even if it means making great sacrifices or bringing harm to ourselves. This is exactly what Christ and God did for us.

It might seem contradictory to think that one may have the other characteristics we've discussed and still lack genuine love for others. Paul commented on this as he addressed multiple problems facing the church at Corinth. Paul writes, "***And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.***" (**1 Cor 13.3**). The interesting thing about this passage is that Paul implies that it's quite possible to do a number of wonderful things and yet lack genuine love that God wants us to develop.

Paul goes on to detail what love entails and how it's expressed. "***Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.***" (**1 Cor 13.4-7**). Note that Paul's characterization of love in these verses includes all of the attributes we've discussed so far. Another interesting note is that this passage was written to a group of Christians who were competing with one another over who had the best spiritual gifts - which we'll talk about in the next lesson.

Paul's summary involves all aspects of our being including our mind, attitudes, emotions and actions. Love therefore is a characteristic that causes us to seek the spiritual benefit of others through a number of actions that may include meeting physical and spiritual needs. As we can see this demands that should the need arise we'll be willing to set ourselves aside in order to provide for the welfare of others.

John emphasizes the need for this in our character as he summarizes the love of God and

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Christ for humanity. ***“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”*** (1 John 3.16). Later in the same epistle John once more alludes to this characteristic as a demonstration that we’re working toward being what God wants us to become and how we can’t be pleasing to the Lord without it. Christ stated, ***“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*** (John 15.13). In the first century laying down one’s life many times meant death. In our time this most likely involves setting aside our attitudes and selfishness for the betterment of others.

A final note that serves to provide guidance is Paul’s statement to the Colossians. ***“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*** (Col 3.17). And as Peter states, if we do these things we shall never fall (2 Pet 1.10). Peter also describes the result of failing to achieve this. ***“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”*** (2 Pet 1.9). Peter summarizes the positive side of this as he writes, ***“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Pet 1.8).

6. What we’ve learned

After reviewing the attributes of what God considers a good character we can reach some conclusions that will help us as we grow spiritually.

- a. Belief and faith in God are just the beginning of service to the Lord
- b. We need to search the scriptures, meditate on them and apply them to ourselves
- c. We need to continually compare our actions, thoughts and feelings to the scriptures
- d. True faith involves adding these attributes that God expects us to develop
- e. Falling short in this will cause us to be unacceptable to the Lord

7. Next

Now that we’ve identified what the heart is and the character God wants us to develop how do we achieve it? Many believe change of that order isn’t possible without divine intervention and claim that the Holy Spirit is the agent by which change takes place. In the next lesson we’ll discuss **The Spirit Of The Age** as we review the role of the Holy Spirit in the first century and what that means for us today.