

The Character of Christ

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Let's take a few moments and think about when you were young. We would watch a TV show or read a book that had a character we wanted to be. The person was usually cool and intelligent. For me, it was any gunfighter in the Old West that was a good guy. Maybe for you, it was some type of sport athlete. Back in the day, Wheaties would have great sport stars on the front of their cereal boxes. As we grow up into adults, we usually get away from these childhood dreams. However, we still have people that we admire. They're usually good people with good character and morals. It could be a teacher, business person, or someone who you could totally trust. These types of people are becoming more rare as each day passes. We'll be celebrating Christmas in a few days. We celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus came as a baby and would grow into a human adult. Jesus would still be the Son of God as He walked this earth. He came to fulfill the mission of His Father which was the journey to the cross. He came to give us the gift of salvation. He came to give us forgiveness of sins. He came to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He came to give us joy. Jesus also came as a baby to give us another gift. This gift we'll take a look at today.

Let's turn to Romans 8: 29 to take a little peek to see what this gift may be. Paul tells us this, ²⁹ "For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn^[a] among many brothers and sisters. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" Paul tells us through the Holy Spirit that God wants us to be like His Son. John tells us this in 1 John 2:6, ⁶ "Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" We are to live our lives on this earth as Jesus did. For us to do that, we would need to know the character of Jesus and have the resources to live out His character in our lives. Paul tells us this in Philippians 2: 5, ⁵ "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" Now, we see that we are to have Jesus' attitudes which would include the attitudes about life, about people, and about our attitude

toward God Himself. Finally, we read this in Ephesians 4: 23-24, “²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. (NLT- www.biblegateway.com)” Our new nature through Christ is a nature that is now controlled by the Holy Spirit (or should be) and our thoughts and attitudes will be shaped into the same thoughts and attitudes that Jesus had when He walked this earth. Then, when we think or do things, it will be done in a holy and righteous manner. We don’t just live like we want to. We live to please the Father through Jesus Christ. In fact, a group of Christians should have a lot in common in their thoughts and attitudes because they have the same Spirit within them. Jesus not only came to die on the cross, to offer forgiveness, to bring joy, to give the gift of the Holy Spirit, but He also came so we could become like Him in thought and in heart. That little baby came so we can enjoy living out the character of Jesus in thought and in deed in this sinful world. If the Church would allow His Spirit to work instead of blocking Him all the time, the Church would not have all the problems it’s having. Jesus wants us to become more like Him every day. Jesus had to come as a baby because this wasn’t happening in the Old Testament times.

During the Old Testament times, Israel tried to be like God or being a righteous people by following rules that God had set for them. They had to continuously sacrifice animals to make themselves right with God because of their sin. By doing all this, the people still couldn’t be like God. They continued to sin on a regular basis and they were always complaining. This is why so many Christians today have a problem with blending into the culture and later finding out they are more like the culture than being a Christian. They have allowed themselves to be shaped and molded by the culture so they think and do as the culture does. They have not allowed the Holy Spirit to form their mind and heart to the point where they have developed a thinking that goes along the lines of Jesus thinking and a heart that goes along with Jesus’ heart. In other words, many Christians today have the same trouble as Israel did in the Old Testament. They try to follow rules with their old human nature and that did not work. Jesus came so we can be able to be like Him in so many ways. In fact, Isaiah the Prophet told Israel what the

Messiah would be like when He walked this and this gives us an example of how we are to be today.

Let's take a peek at what Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 11: 1-5 where he states this prophecy we enjoy today, "11 Out of the stump of David's family^[a] will grow a shoot—

yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

² And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—

the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ He will delight in obeying the LORD.

He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

⁴ He will give justice to the poor

and make fair decisions for the exploited.
The earth will shake at the force of his word,
and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.

⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt

and truth like an undergarment. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Isaiah tells us in verse 2 that the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him and we know that prophecy came true because the Spirit rested on Jesus when He was baptized by John the Baptist. Then, Isaiah tells us how Jesus will be when He'll walk this earth. First, Jesus will have the spirit of wisdom and understanding. Jesus came so we could enjoy His wisdom and understanding. Now, this is not earthly wisdom and understanding. This wisdom and understanding are Godly – it's different from earthy wisdom and understanding. What do I mean by this? Paul gives us the answer in Ephesians 1: 15-18 where he states, "¹⁵ Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere,^[a] ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom^[b] and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can

understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

Jesus had wisdom and He and His Father were One. Jesus knew and understood the mission He was on and how to handle it. I'm always amazed how well Jesus could handle the Pharisees and their little traps they would set up for Him. Jesus had this spiritual wisdom that could handle them. We need this same type of wisdom so we can get a better understanding of God and His ways. Without that wisdom, we can't understand God. Maybe this is why so many people in the Church today live for the culture because they don't understand the righteousness of God and why God does not tolerate sin. Wisdom helps us to understand why we are to be a holy people. Those who are afraid of holy living show they lack Godly wisdom. Godly wisdom helps you to understand the need for Holy living. Also, Godly wisdom gives us understanding of the eternal hope we have in Jesus, which means we know all about our glorious inheritance. This helps us to get a better handle of handling the suffering and pain here on this earth and how to understand God's greatness. Jesus came as a baby so we can enjoy Godly wisdom and understanding.

The other part of Jesus that can be given to us through the Spirit is planning and strength. There's no one better at planning than Jesus. It's hard for me to think about how before the world was formed, Jesus already knew the plan for our salvation. That's thousands of years ago. I can plan something and forget most of what I planned 24 hours later. Jesus makes this interesting comment on planning in Luke 14: 28-33, ²⁸ "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. ³⁰ They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!' ³¹ "Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? ³² And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. ³³ So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" Jesus knew the cost of the cross and He knew the need for it for us. I believe one of the reasons Jesus prayed so often was that He prayed for strength to carry out that mission. Our mission is to finish the race the Lord has given us. That means, we need to plan and build up strength to live out

our time slot. I was thinking about this. Jesus tells us that we must count the cost before we begin our work for Him. Before we start a project, we check what resources and funds we need before we start. We make sure we have enough manpower to finish the job. Plus, we have to make sure we are determined to finish the project. How about the time we are living in right now? We need planning and strength to carry out Jesus' mission before our time is up. That means I have to have a healthy understanding about the time we are in. Things are getting worse and we pray for spiritual revival. However, at the same time, if the end of time is near, then things will get worse and revival may not come. We plan with the mind set – we hope for the best and plan for the worse. In other words, we preach the gospel message to others while at the same time making sure we are ready to make that transition to Heaven when Jesus comes back again. For us to be able to do this, we need the same strength that Jesus had to handle the cross. I think many in the American church is scared of what might happen down the road. Jesus knows the plan. Ask Jesus to give you understand and wisdom to handle the time we are in. Jesus will give us the same type of planning and strength that went into the mission of the cross. Jesus was always ready and so should we.

Isaiah tells us that Jesus will have a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. Today, we still seek knowledge of the Lord, but we no longer have a healthy fear of the Lord if we have any at all. The Hebrew term used for fear means “reverent fear” (Strong's Concordance). Reverent means feeling or showing deep and solemn respect. Jesus had a respectful fear of His Father. We should as well. When we do, this respectful fear will help us to worship the Lord in the right way and help us in our relationship with Him. Jesus prayed and obeyed His Father's will in all things. So must we and His Spirit can help us in that so our knowledge of the Lord can grow and we'll develop respectful fear of Him. It was part of Jesus' character.

We'll finish with two more-character traits of Jesus that we need. Isaiah tells us that Jesus will know how to judge. Our knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of God through the Holy Spirit will help us to judge people in the right manner. Jesus doesn't judge by appearances like we do. Jesus doesn't decide cases by hearsay like we do today. Jesus will judge with righteousness and everyone will be judged equal. Jesus doesn't use human nature to judge people like we do. This may be the hardest item for us to correct within ourselves. This is why in many cases we shouldn't judge, but let the Lord to do the judging. He judges with

righteousness peppered with love. The only way we can judge correctly is with the help of the Holy Spirit. We have many bad judges in our country today because they judge from their human nature instead of from the help of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Isaiah tells us that Jesus will have righteousness and faithfulness as a belt. Paul tells us this in Romans 5:1, “5 ^[a] Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have ^[b] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (NET)” We have been made right with God by the washing we go through in the blood of Jesus. His blood takes away all our past sin and we can have a relationship with Jesus because of that cleansing. We need to continue to be righteous with the help of the Holy Spirit so we can keep having that healthy type of relationship with Jesus. We needed Jesus to be born in that manger. Isaiah tells us in verse 1, “A shoot will grow up from the stump of Jesse; a branch will sprout from his roots” (NLT)” The stump and roots didn’t work, so a branch and shoot had to form and we are enjoying that branch and shoot today. The old way didn’t work and a new way through Jesus had to start. Not only can we be saved through Jesus, we can enjoy His character being developed within us. I think the best Christmas gift we could give to the Lord this Christmas is using Isaiah 11; 1-5 as a prayer. We need to ask the Lord to developed His character within us so we can be more like Him. His Spirit will help us in every way. Have a Merry Christmas!

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale: Wheaton, 1996

The Strongest Strong’s Concordance. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001