

# MINTED OR MUNTED?

(The Carving of our Character) by Ps Terry Calkin – 18 April 2010

## Part 2

We are continuing our study in the development of character. Let's quickly review part 1. We are Image Bearers – made in God's image. That image, because of Adam's fall, has become twisted and broken, distorted. So likewise our character. God's plan of salvation deals with the restoration of His character in the life of a believer.

Now God made man originally in mint condition. Rebellion created the munted condition. Salvation is the starting point of the restoration process back from muntedness to mint condition.

***Paul in Philippians 3:21 – “The Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body (Greek SOMA – the whole man) that it may be conformed to His glorious body”. i.e. The Church in resurrection power.***

So we can say – salvation is the point, character is the process.

Next we said it is important that we do not confuse personality with character. Personality is what you are born with, character is the result of what you choose. Personality is seen externally, character is to do with the integrity of the heart. So often we judge others by personality instead of by character. (Con men versus salt of the earth = personality versus character.)

Then LASTLY we discussed the two Greek words that are translated image in the New Testament – EIKON = a replica of the original ie a print of an oil painting original is an icon. The second word is CHARACTER = the exact likeness of the original so as to be indistinguishable from the original eg 2 oil paintings exactly identical, or 2 newly minted coins. They each have identical character. This is the character God wants developed in us – his character.

***Hebrews 1:3 – the only place in the New Testament where the Greek word character is used, talking of Christ himself “who being the brightness of His glory and the express image (character) of His person (God's person).***

It's amazing how heresies which have been around for ages, never die, they just keep on raising their heads – like weeds in a garden. The trinity is under attack like never before – well like it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. The doctrine of the Trinity says that the Father and the Son are separate yet indivisible and this is what express image means. Character – the same. In nature and character and image He is indistinguishable from the Father. ***John 14:9 – Jesus said “He who has seen me has seen the Father”.***

Now character has to do with the integrity of the heart and this morning we are going to look at 2 people in the New Testament to see how their Godly character was expressed. When we talk about integrity and character, we mean that integrity is the adherence to truth regardless of what others think. Hypocrisy is the opposite of integrity. We are going to look at 2 events in 2 people's lives – Jesus and Paul. They may not be what you expect, but they should make us think.

**1. JESUS** I recall as a child, my Mother teaching me to say my prayers at night. I started off – Gentle Jesus meek and mild, listen to a little child – and I suppose in our society in a generic sense there is an attitude towards Christ that regards Him as being a person who is sweetness and light and turns the other cheek and just lets the world go by. In fact an integral part of character is a resolute and determined passion for truth. Integrity stands for truth when the rest of the world packs it in.

(i) Turn with me to ***Matthew 23:23*** ***““Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone”.***

Here Jesus is taking to task the religious leaders of the day. The Scribes and the Pharisees who were meticulous about the trivial things of life but overlooked the major principles of morality.

***Read verse 24 “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel”.*** Strain - strainers were used in the mouth of decanters to remove foreign matter and thus maintain ritual purity.

Jesus is saying you missed the gnat but swallowed a camel.

**Verse 25** “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence*” – you clean the outside but leave filth on the inside.

**Verse 26** “*Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also*” – clean the inside first

**Verse 27** “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness*” – you are like a whitewashed tomb. Outside looks nice and clean and in order, but inside you are rotting flesh – a stinking mess. Gentle Jesus meek and mild?

(ii) Turn over to **Matthew 26:38**. This is the night of Christ’s arrest. He is in the Garden of Gethsemane – **verse 38** he says “*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful.*” Greek – perilupos. Literally grieving all around. All Jesus could see as he looked forward to the cross was grief, pain, heaviness and sorrow **and He prays in verse 39** – “*O my Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me.* The pain, the load was almost too much but then His character steps in – ***nevertheless, not as I will but as You will.***

Last week we looked at **5 things** that bind our Godly character. One of them was Faith i.e. obedience to the Word and Will of God. Here was Jesus the man subjecting Himself to the Word and Will of the Father. Imagine if Jesus had said “no” to God. He was capable of doing that as the man. You and I would not be here today worshipping God. It was the integrity of Jesus’ heart that took Him to the cross to pay the price of my rebellion against God. That’s character – obedience to the truth.

**2. PAUL** - Paul was a character. A slight man, weedy, not a great speaker, but a great author. A man who was passionate about truth. What does the Psalmist say? **Psalm 51:5** – David says ***I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my Mother conceived me.*** ie my Mother was sinful and so am I. He counter poses that fact with the next verse. **Verse 6** – *Behold you (God) desire truth in the inward parts* – and who knows the inward parts? Only God. So never judge or second guess another person. How often I have been wrong.

Turn with me to **Galatians 2:11**. Let's look at an incident that reveals something of the integrity of Paul's heart.

**Verse 8, 9 – Peter = CEPHAS**, was a big shot, some say the big shot of the church. He was one of the 12 Apostles, but he was a bit naughty. Because when he went to Antioch (it was North of Israel in Syria in Gentile territory and the missionary centre of the early Church) Peter dropped doing all the Jewish things related to dietary laws etc and became as we are today – just obeying the 4 laws in **Acts 15:20 – to abstain from meat polluted by idols, sexual immorality, eating things strangled to death and eating blood.**

But as soon as some Jewish believers came to Antioch who were friends of James – another pillar of the Church in Jerusalem – Peter reverted back to the old Jewish customs. So Paul fronted him – directly – in his face.

**Read verse 11** *“But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed”.*

**Verse 13 & 14** *“And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews”?*

When truth was at risk, Paul stood up and was counted. It wouldn't have won him many friends on the day – it was apparently a very ugly encounter. But it reveals a heart that is committed and passionate for God's truth. And it was this heart and character that God breathed on and inspired and so he wrote over two-thirds of the New Testament. Read **Romans and Ephesians** and stagger at the writings of a man with a heart of integrity.

Turn with me to **2 Corinthians 12**. I am going to read a few verses - **vs7-10** *“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”*

***Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong".***

Here's the gist of it. Early in his Christian walk, Paul had a vision and God showed him certain things. Then to stop Paul being puffed up with pride over what he had seen and heard, Paul was given a thorn in the flesh – ***"A Messenger of Satan"*** to remind Paul he was human also. He asked God 3 times for deliverance from the thorn – we are not told what it was. But God simply said to Paul – keep walking ***"My strength (re Christ's) is made perfect in you Paul's weakness"***. Paul's response ***Verse 10 – "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses – for when I am humanly weak then I am truly strong in divine strength"***.

So in summary. Character is developed when in the midst of life's trials, disappointments, failures and let downs we trust God.

***Romans 5:3 – "and we also glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation produces perseverance and perseverance produces character"***.

***Romans 8:28 – "All things work together for good to them that love God and are called accordingly". AMP – to His design and purpose – Romans 8:29***