

Preparing a Place

Commentary for June 15, 2016 — By Fritz Winnail, 2009¹

In this political season, with candidates projecting false “personas” and making personal attacks on each other, here are some thoughts by author Fritz Winnail on the many ways our “personas” are seen by ourselves, by others, and by God and Christ in our lives. Enjoy. *DWS*

Testing Is Necessary and Mandatory

As Christians, we learn to accept good times with times of trials, knowing that this testing produces patience (James 1:2–3).

Christ’s disciples were young in the faith and needed to be taught how to handle trials. Like us, some of their troubles were real and some of their troubles were imagined. Their arguments as to which one of them would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom of God were very unrealistic (Matthew 18:1). However, their fears of the Pharisees were well-grounded (John 5:16). So, Christ instructed them by saying,

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”

• ***John 14:1–2***

Similarly, God is preparing a place of safety for Philadelphian Christians, where they will be protected from the coming tribulation (Revelation 12:14).² But we are also being prepared, individually and collectively, to be ready for that place of safety — as well as for the coming Kingdom of God.

Do we expect to make it to the prophesied place of safety? Christ is preparing us right now for exactly that. He would not be doing so if He did not expect us to make it. Right now, He is giving us the opportunity to build into our own character the very holy and righteous character of God, so we can qualify for a position in God’s coming world-ruling Kingdom and can help others He will later call to do the same.

When the Father and Jesus Christ look at us, called by name out of this evil world for their purpose, they see the person we are now, but they also see the person we can potentially be upon maturity if we use the Holy Spirit that we have received. In order for us to reach our potential, we need to examine the person we are now, and to examine the gap between that person and what we will become when we are born into God’s Family as Spirit beings when Jesus Christ returns. For us as human beings, this gap is so huge that it is very hard to fully comprehend.

¹ Fritz Winnail originally presented this talk at a 2009 Feast of Tabernacles gathering.

² The flight to the wilderness in Revelation 12:14 does not apply exclusively to the Philadelphia *ekklesia* of Revelation 3:7–13, but to anyone in the Jerusalem area who is part of God’s *ekklesia*. *DWS*

Only Three Characters?

It has been said each of us has three characters: [1] the character we show other people, [2] the character we privately think we possess, and [3] the character we actually possess. The difference between these can tell us much about our need to grow as Christians.

Another way to look at our character is to think about our different personas — the identities we now have or that we want to have in the future. Just as in a novel not all personas are real, some of our own self-assessment about our personas may not be real. Others may only exist in other people's minds as they look at our conduct. It is up to each of us, using God's Spirit, to discern reality and develop God's character in our own lives.

What are some of the main personas we need to consider?

- **There is the person other people say we are.**
- **There is the person other people think we are.** This is our real reputation, regardless of what people may or may not say to our face.
- **There is the person we want others to think we are.** This is an area where we need to be on guard for "wishful thinking."
- **There is the person we think we are.** If we are plagued with self-doubt we may underestimate ourselves, but if we are prideful we may overestimate ourselves.
- **There is the person we really are.** This can be the hardest persona to discern, but if we are really humble and strip away all facades, being totally honest with ourselves in our hearts, this is the person the Father and Jesus Christ see as we strive to overcome.
- **There is the person we want to become.** There should be some "wanna-be" in each of us, not in a self-deceptive way, but in the sense that we should aspire to become better than we now are.
- Finally, **there is the person God calls us to become.** This is the person who, having overcome carnal human nature through the help of the Holy Spirit, has qualified for a position in the Kingdom of God.

God the Father and Jesus Christ see all these personas — the real ones and the unreal ones. They want us to grow from the person we are now — likely a person with some unrealistic ideas about self — to the person we can become as a future member of the God Family. Thankfully, we know from many accounts in Scripture that God can see us not just as we are, but as what He wants us to become, and knows we can become. Consider these biblical examples:

- Hannah brought young Samuel to train under Eli, the high priest. Though the world saw Samuel as a mere altar boy, God could see a mighty prophet for Israel.
- Even when David was a young shepherd, God saw him as a king.
- Though the people of Nazareth saw only a carpenter of no reputation, the Father could see the Savior of mankind.

- Where the early Christians saw Saul, persecutor, oppressor and tormentor of God's people, God saw a powerful Apostle.

Regarding this last example, consider that even after Paul's conversion, many were at first afraid of him and did not believe what had happened. Ananias was fearful about visiting Paul, even after God instructed him in vision to do so: **"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel'"** (Acts 9:15).

Never Underestimate Potential!

One lesson we can take from this is that we should never underestimate the potential of one whom God has called, with whom He is working through His Holy Spirit. This also applies to our own potential! Remember, even before we recognized God's call, long before our minds were opened, the Father and Christ were watching us for years, reviewing events and influences in our lives. They could see what each of us would be able to bring to God's Church. With God's Spirit working in each of us, we can individually and as a Church bring something unique to God's Kingdom.

Think about it! If God did not believe we could make it, why would we have been called? Why would God work with us so long — answering our prayers and giving us what we need to build our spiritual character? Many times it seems that God has more faith in us than we have in God!

How, then, do we cope with the vast gap between what we are now, and what we can eventually become? We need to realize that if we do not make a consistent plan to grow and to accomplish, our spiritual growth will stagnate. Godly character does not grow by itself. In fact, if we leave it alone, it shrinks away and is replaced by carnality. As we know, carnal nature by itself is a terminal disease. **"To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"** (Romans 8:6).

Many people we meet in the world will say, "Have a nice day!" Of course, we know that often they could not care less about our day. But we, as Christians, cannot settle for an ordinary day. To do so can become a deadly habit. Rather, we need to maintain a prayerful attitude each day and continually put into practice what we are learning. **"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing [each day, we age physically], yet the inward man is being renewed day by day"** (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Day by day, we must grow in spiritual character. We can start each day by praying that God will teach us something new, like cutting a new facet on a diamond. The more facets there are on a diamond, the more it increases in value. The same is true with our spiritual character. We may gain inspiration for growth during our Bible study, or in our meditation, or in a conversation with a fellow Church member. One way or another, we must always be learning, and applying what we learn in our lives.

God wants us to write on our hearts and minds His laws, statutes and teachings. Anciently, the kings of Israel did this physically. Notice:

“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear YHWH his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.”

• **Deuteronomy 17:18–20**

Jesus Christ told us, **“I go to prepare a place for you”** (John 14:2). God sees us as we are, right now, needing to grow more deeply in holy and righteous character. But He also sees us as what we can become. Are we doing our part to prepare, so that when the time comes we will be ready to receive what He has in store for us?

Fritz Winnail, 2009

Addendum by David Sielaff

The founder of ASK, Dr. Ernest Martin wrote: **“Paul came to see that mankind is NOW reckoned by God the Father to have been ‘in Christ’ even before the foundation of the world.”** He understood this to be the case from Ephesians 1:3–4.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”

• **Ephesians 1:3–4**

The second use of the verb “blessed” is present active (aorist) tense. This means that God at this moment **“is blessing** [as it should be rendered] **us with all spiritual blessings ... in Christ.”** The word “chosen” in the next sentence is also active present (aorist) tense. This means that God is “choosing” us moment by moment to **“be holy and without blame before Him in love.”**

What this means is that God sees us “in Christ” as legally being seated with Christ at the right hand of God the Father at this moment. This is how God sees us now. This means He loves us as He loves Christ. He loves us because He loves us through Christ. We are blessed beyond what we can imagine.

This would be my only addition to the analysis Mr. Winnail writes in his article, his last point: “Finally, **there is the person God calls us to become.**” What God thinks of us is of the highest importance. What God has done and is doing through Christ, and how they legally view us is also of the highest importance. Their continued actions ensure God’s faithfulness to us.

We are loved more than we can ever understand at this present time. Only after our resurrection will we begin to understand the love that God and Christ have had, now have, and will have in the future for each of us.

“Your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

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