



From Where I Sit . . .

“The Importance of Character”

Webster tells us that character is “Moral Excellence” and “firmness”. I tried to find the word in the Bible, and could not in the KJV; However, the word from which we get “character” is there, and thus other translations including NASV, RSV, and NIV use that very word.

The text of which I speak is **Romans 5:3-5 (KJV)** “**And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, *experience*; and *experience*, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**”

The **NASB** reads this way: “**And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, *proven character*; and *proven character*, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**”

The word is *Dokime*, and is defined as “proof by testing.” It speaks in the Greek of the process of proving, or the result of proving. It is in summary “Tried Integrity.” Synonyms for “character” that help us understand it’s meaning are: Honesty, Honor, Integrity, Decency, Principle, Moral Excellence.

Someone has well said: “Character is what you are in the dark.” It is the measure of the real person, from his inner nature, and not the outer image that he chooses to let us see. A man of character is a man who has to do what is right just because it is his inner nature to do so, and he must be true to who he is.

In the book entitled *Days of Grace: A Memoir* by Arthur Ashe and Arnold Rampersad, we read of the moving account of the tennis great who died of AIDS resulting from a blood transfusion. If anything stands out in this book, it is that Arthur Ashe was truly a person of character. He relates, “One day in Dallas, in 1973, I was playing in the singles final of a World Championship Tennis tournament. My opponent was Stan Smith, a brilliant tennis player but an even more impressive human being in his integrity. On one crucial point, I watched Smith storm forward, racing to intercept a ball about to bounce a second time off his side of the net. When the point was over, I was sure the ball had bounced twice before he hit it, and that the point was mine. Smith said he had reached the ball in time. The umpire was baffled.

“I conceded the point. Later, after the match---which I lost--a reporter approached me. How could I have taken Smith’s word on such an important point? ‘I wouldn’t take just anybody’s word for it,’ I assured him. ‘But if Stan Smith says he got to the ball, he got to it. I trust his character.’ I have tried to live so that people would trust my character, as I had trusted Stan Smith’s. I want to be seen as fair and honest, kind, and polite. I want no stain on my character, no blemish on my reputation.”

We are so badly in need of character in the Community and the Nation. “**Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people**” (Proverbs 14:34). The only hope for having leaders of character is to raise up a generation that value doing what is right.

. . . . Terry Broome