

Sovereignty, Election, And Grace (Part Seven)

The Meaning of Character

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We saw in the last sermon of this series strong evidence that the Bible gives overwhelming credit to God—the Father and the Son—as Creators of this new family, or kingdom, that began with Jesus of Nazareth and is being filled out by those created in His image. Right from its beginning the Bible clearly states, "Let *Us* make man in our image," pointing directly to the Father and the Son who are doing the creating.

In Genesis 3 (where we have the first sin) the first sin does not show the *fall* of man, but rather begins the revealing that mankind was created *incomplete*, and that we (mankind) went astray of God's government almost immediately. There is a confirming statement to this that appears in I Corinthians 15:45-46.

I Corinthians 15:45-46 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

You can see here a two-step process in the creation of man. First, that which is natural (shown in Genesis 1 and 2), and then that which is spiritual, primarily shown with the introduction of the New Covenant, beginning with Jesus Christ.

So *physically*, in the person of Adam and Eve, man was a complete creation. In a building metaphor, only a foundation was laid. The spiritual super-structure remained to be created in order to bring man fully into the image of the Father and the Son. That creating could not be done until after the physical aspect was completed and in operation, because according to the Father and the Son's plan, the spiritual aspect required the freely given cooperation of those called to be worked on, and it was for this purpose that the church was begun by Jesus Christ.

We hear very much about the building of character, but are you aware that the word *character* nowhere appears in the *King James Version* of the Bible? This is in spite of the fact that the *King James Version* is a *literal* translation, and that the Greeks clearly had a word for character. That word appears only one place in the Greek New Testament. I want you to turn to that one place in Hebrews 1:3.

Hebrews 1:3 Who [obviously speaking of Christ] being the brightness of His [the Father] glory, and the express image of His [the Father] person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Here is the one place that the Greek word "character" appears, and it is quite instructive regarding something that I have mentioned in a previous sermon. Jesus is described as being "the express *image* of His person"—that is, the express image of the Father.

The adjective "express" is used to indicate "*exact, specific, clear*"—an unambiguous copy of the Father. It's clear also that the Son is a distinct personality *from* the Father, but at the same time He is a perfect *imprint* of the Father's nature.

The Greek word "character" is derived from a verbal root that means "*to engrave, to cut into, to sharpen to a point, as by scratching.*" Character means an impression, copy, or image, as a coin or a seal, so that the features of the coin or the seal correspond exactly to the instrument that produced it.

As I said, this is the only place this word appears, and that is correct, but it is not the only Greek word used in the Bible that is translated into the English word "image." That other Greek word is one that anyone using a computer is familiar with. It's the word *icon*. *Icon* merely means a representation, a resemblance, likeness, statue, or an image. By itself it does not imply being a perfect likeness. The concept of perfection, or how close to perfection, must be supplied by the surrounding context.

What I have just said here is also true for the word "character," but there is a major difference between *icon* and "character," and this is important. It is

that the word "character"—even standing alone, all by itself, with no surrounding context—gives a fairly clear sense of *how* the image is produced. *Character is produced under some unspecified measure of pressure.* This is confirmed a little bit later by the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 2:14-18, which is said in reference to Jesus.

Hebrews 2:14-18 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be *made* [an implication of creation] like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The context here is expressing why Jesus is uniquely qualified to be what He is today. That is, He is our Savior, and more importantly, in the context of this entire epistle, our High Priest. It is because He lived and He mastered the same range of pressure-packed experiences and testing as those He is serving. He was, as we might say, "*put under the gun*" as it were, and *proved* Himself **qualified** to be our Savior and High Priest.

Let's explain this further. The word "tempt" is #3985 in *Strong's Concordance*. Both *Strong's* and *Zodhiates* show that it is only *distantly* connected to the notion of entangling in sin. The primary idea in the word (#3985) is to assay **worth** by testing. *Strong's* #3985 indicates the putting of one under pressure to *determine* character. In Hebrews 5:8-9, this concept of "putting under pressure" is advanced a bit further.

Hebrews 5:8-9 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: And being *made* perfect [there again the implication of creation], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

The word "suffer" is used to indicate *pressure* being brought to bear on Him—the pressure of suffering. The word "perfect" is not used in relation to His *moral* perfection, but to His being *brought* to completion as our High Priest. "Obedience," is vaguely pointing to what will bring us under the same sort of pressure, suffering and completion.

Jesus then is thus described as being "the express image of the Father," and we see some of the processes that were used to bring Him to the point that He is. Remember, moral perfection is not the issue here. In this case it is *completion*, so that He can be High Priest.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And he [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting [equipping, or enabling] of the saints [the giving of tools for them to work with], for the work of the ministry [or serving], for the edifying [the implication of *building up*] of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity [or the oneness] of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [a complete, a mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

In most modern translations the word "perfecting" will be translated "equipping" or "enabling." The word "edifying" is used to imply *building up*. The word "perfect" used here again does not mean *moral* perfection, although that would be good. It's talking about completion. It's talking about maturity.

This clearly states the Father's goal for us, but Paul's emphasis in this context is for us being brought to this state of maturity, or completion, through instruction in sound doctrine. But our completion is not limited to merely having the knowledge of sound doctrine. We must be tested, or proved, through actually experiencing the practical application of the sound teaching. At least in this context he clearly states the objective, and that is that we are to be in the *express image* of the Son.

We too are to be brought to completion through the same general processes that the Son was brought to completion. Remember, He is High Priest, and

eventually we are going to be *kings* and *priests* , so our character, our integrity, our wholeness, our state of completion, is to be assayed (tested) under pressure being applied. Pressure is often shown in the Bible as being *suffering*.

The Son was not merely a moral robot. He expressed every fine quality that one would desire in a friend, brother, Creator, Savior, Husband that one is having a relationship with. Thus the ongoing work being done in us also involves the creation of such qualities as humility, patience, gentleness, kindness, mercy, and so forth.

I have two books in my personal library that show the history of English words. Both of those reports on the word "character" reveal an interesting evolution of the word into present-day English usage.

As I mentioned just briefly in the last sermon, those of us in the church tend to think of character only in terms of *moral* qualities. This word "character" might be a surprise to some of you, but it seems to have begun in the Sanskrit language of India. It meant there "*to scratch, to scrape away, to rub*" (as one would a cream), or "*to smear*" (as with a cream or paint). It was used there in relation to one's bathing in the "holy" Ganges River in order to rub or scrape away sin as they bathed themselves.

Apparently the Greek soldiers under Alexander the Great picked up the word when they invaded India, and they brought it back to Greece. The Greeks applied it as: cutting a mark or a scratch on a stone in the sense of engraving. Through the centuries it made its way into the French language, and they apparently added to its usage by applying it to a graphic symbol, such as a letter of the alphabet or a number, and thus "character" became a distinctive mark.

The next step is into England, and they expanded its usage further by using it to indicate an aggregate of **distinctive** qualities. In other words, not just one figure or one letter, it became an aggregate of distinctive qualities *in* a person. If you look in modern dictionaries you are very likely to find what I found in my dictionary, that the primary definition is now a **collection** of qualities.

I think this is the most important usage to us. It helps us to remember that God is not one-dimensional. He is not merely moral, but that He is **many** things (in His personality). He is creative. He is artistic. He is wise, understanding, courageous, visionary, generous, forgiving, as well as humble, meek, patient, merciful, and so forth. Thus we are being created in His image. He is working toward the producing of **ALL** of these characteristics in us, and working to develop our minds to put them to the right use at all times. He is working to produce in us what the Bible refers to as "*the beauty of holiness* ."

All of us who remain as part of the remnant of the Worldwide Church of God have our root in the teachings of Herbert Armstrong. I think it good to understand his teachings regarding the building of character as described in his final writing—*The Mystery of the Ages*—to those following his teaching. As shown on pages 69 and 70, he **clearly** believed that God does the creating.

What we are seeing is that **grace** (favor; or *charis* in Greek) and **gifts** (*charisma*) are not one-time factors exercised by God in our behalf *only* at the beginning of the spiritual-creation process (that is, the forgiveness of sin), but both remain as constants, exercised by God as He sees fit, to complete His creation of us in His image.

II Corinthians 3:5-6 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, Who also has **made** us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

I didn't use these two verses during the last sermon, but I want us to see what Paul said at this time. Paul is referring to himself and others of the ministry when he says, "Our [plural] sufficiency is of God." But the principle applies to each and every one of us who is a part of this *new creation in Christ Jesus* . Now listen to this from *The New Testament Commentary* by Hendrickson on II Corinthians 3:5-6:

Not that we are competent of ourselves to consider anything to come from ourselves, but our competence is from God, who has enabled us to be servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

I want you to consider when this was written. This is II Corinthians. It was written seventeen or eighteen years *after* Paul's conversion and appointment as an apostle. He is declaring that God has been enabling him (and of course other ministers) to do his job all of that time. In other words, God just didn't get Paul started. He not only got him started, but He made him competent all along the way. He is saying that any ability to preach the gospel, to provide leadership, and to give counsel to the people, originates with God. He is saying that God's work *in* and *through* us is continuing, that it is an ongoing project, always reaching for, while still maintaining, a higher degree of completion or maturity.

II Corinthians 12:9 And He [Christ] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

We just saw the use of the word "sufficiency" in II Corinthians 3. Now Christ directly says, "My *grace* is sufficient for you."

I think that you know the story here that Paul appealed for Christ to heal him, but he is rejected. His appeal is turned down because it is wiser for Christ to keep Paul humble and dependent rather than lose Paul to pride. That would probably put a person down to have Christ say, "No." At the same time, he is comforted by Christ, assuring him: "*Don't worry about it. I'll take care of you by supplying all you need to do the job despite your affliction. I will keep you competent.*"

One commentator remarked that Paul wrote this in the *perfect* tense, and that the emphasis in the sentence is on the word *sufficient*. Thus it means that the declaration by Jesus has continuous validity. In other words, what Jesus said is true for *any* of His servants *anywhere, anytime*.

In like manner, in John 15:5, Jesus said to His disciples, "Without Me you can do nothing." In that context, He was referring to the producing of fruit following being initially converted. It is a declaration by Christ that all along the way we can't build the right fruit, we can't produce the right fruit, *unless* He is there with us. And so the word "you" (when He said, "Without Me, you ...") includes *all* of us who are part of the new creation, and not just those to whom He was speaking to at that moment. It applies to every part of His body, of which *we* are part. We can't even produce the correct fruit without Him.

Let's see a confirming statement by Jesus on this in John 14:10.

John 14:10 Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?

Let's turn that around to maybe make it a little bit more understandable for us. He said, "*Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.*" I want you to connect this to what Jesus said: "Without Me you can't produce fruit." Now He's saying even the works that *He* did He could not have done without the Father being in Him. In fact, He takes it so far as to say that the Father is actually doing the works.

John 14:11-12 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also: and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.

This declaration here in John 14 was made the same night and is part of the same context as that previous statement in John 15:5 where He said, "Without Me you can do nothing." He's still on the same subject. So producing fruit, or miracles, or words, takes work, but Jesus declares that it is God who does the work. Therefore, God doesn't just give us the tools to do the work, He also does some unspecified measure of the actual work.

I'm going to read Herbert Armstrong's statement again from *Mystery of the Ages*, pages 69-70, with a little bit different emphasis:

So mark well this super-vital truism—that perfect, holy and righteous character is the supreme feat of accomplishment possible for **Almighty God** the Creator—it is also the means to His ultimate purpose! His final objective!

But HOW?

I repeat, such perfect character must be **developed**. It **requires** the free choice and decision of the separate entity **in whom it is to be created**. But, further, even then it must be instilled **by and from the Holy God** who, only, has such righteous character to endow.

But what do we mean by righteous character?

Perfect, holy and righteous character is the ability in such separate entity to come to discern the true and right way from the false, to make **voluntarily** a full and unconditional surrender to God and His perfect way—to **yield** to be conquered by God—to **determine** even against temptation or self-desire, to live and to do the right. And even then such holy character is the gift of God. It comes by **yielding** to God to instill HIS LAW [God's right way of life] within the entity who so decides and **wills**.

Herbert Armstrong describes our part in this process as requiring free choice and decision, voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender, yielding to God, deciding and willing, and voluntary acquiescence, even after severe test and trial. God creates, and we **yield** to what God has already made possible for us to do

Think of it like this: Adam and Eve couldn't even have **breathed** unless God made it possible for them to do it. This is the way it must be, because only He knows exactly what His character is, and therefore only He can create it. If the character-building were left up to us, each man would create what was

right in his own eyes. Man's record shows that we would have **eternal**, never-ending confusion and warfare.

Now, do we have a part in the building of character? Yes we do. Our part is simply and clearly shown in the Exodus and the journeying-to-the-Promised-Land narrative. Our part is to walk; that is, to yield, to obey what God has already enabled us to do. The Israelites could never have walked, following the Cloud in whatever direction it moved toward the Promised Land, if God had not already done whatever He did, whether it was killing the firstborn, dividing the Red Sea, or providing them with food.

That simple process establishes the pattern that we are to follow. God first enables, and then we follow and use what He has equipped us to do. He never requires anything of us that He hasn't first made possible for us to do.

But God's part in the process goes even one step further. We won't turn there yet, but just to pick up what it says in Philippians 2:13: "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do." God works in us both to have the desire to please Him, and to do what He asks of us. This is intimating that in some manner He actually does some part of, or in some circumstances *all* of the work too.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make **YOU** [make **US**] perfect [mature, complete] in **EVERY** good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

That is *clearly* saying that God is working in us. That agrees with what Jesus said in John 14:10-11, that God does the work. Let's see a bit more here. Let's go to Luke 12:11-12.

Luke 12:11-12 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: For the Holy Spirit shall *teach* you in the same hour what you ought to say.

That's working in us. Turn again to John 14, to verse 26. Here we're leading up to that statement that appears in John 15:5—"Without Me you can do nothing,"—and it follows that statement in John 14:10-11, that "God does the works."

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit [which is the Father and the Son], which the Father will send in my name, it shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.

Let's advance this just a little bit further. We won't turn to all of the scriptures, but who was it who gave Samson the strength to do all that he did? Do you get the point? The same principle applies to you and me, but just not to the same degree, or for the same reasons. But just as surely that God gave the strength to Samson to do what he did, He becomes the strength for you and me to overcome and grow.

I'll tell you, the more you see, the smaller our part in the building of character keeps becoming. He not only gives us the tools to do the job, He also gives us the strength, the energy, the vitality to *do* what we need to do as we are *doing* what we need to do.

The sermon takes a little bit of a turn here. From the Genesis story, why were Adam and Eve removed and then barred from the Garden of Eden by God? Was it not because He did not approve of their conduct? God judged that their conduct was not fitting for living in such an environment. God judged, through testing, that their conduct was not right.

Romans 5:3-4 And not only so, but we *glory* in tribulations [or trials].

The word "tribulations" in the Greek is *thlipsis* [#2347], and it means "pressure."

Romans 5:3-4 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations [pressure, trials] also: knowing that tribulation [pressure, trials] works patience: And patience, experience; and experience, hope.

Here is a place where the translators feel that *character* is implied. In most modern translations the word "experience" is translated *character*. Is it not true that the English word *character* must, in most cases, be modified in some way? The answer to that is yes. It is true, because the word by itself tells one almost nothing. As we saw earlier, *character* simply means a *collection of qualities*; thus it will be modified by descriptors such as *good* character, *bad* character, *evil* character, *delightful* character, *disreputable* character, *benign* character, *carnal* character, *godly* character, and on and on.

The Greek word used here I think begins to crack open a door to our understanding of *our* part in the process we are involved in with God. That word translated "experience" in the *King James* is transliterated into *dokime*. It is *Strong's* #1382. The root of *dokime* is *Strong's* #1380 [*dokeo*], and the root means "to think," and it refers to one's opinion: "*I think so-and-so is this-and that,*" and so it refers to one's opinion or one's estimation of something.

For example, you might say when building something, "*I think that board will hold 100 pounds weight.*" How would you discover what you *think*, whether what your estimation is, is true? This is where *dokime* (*Strong's* #1382, that word translated *experience*) enters the picture. *Dokime* is defined as *test, trustworthiness, proof of genuineness, or process of proving*.

Regarding *Strong's* #1382, Zodhiates says, "It must be either the experience itself or the fact that one has **proved** himself true, or the **act** of proving himself true."

In relation to people, ...proving what? This is where the modern translators feel that *character*—a collection of qualities—is implied by the context, and thus the change in the modern translations even though the *King James Version* is more literally correct using the word *experience*. Thus, verses 3 and 4 could very easily be translated in this manner: "*And not only so, but we glory in trial (pressure) also, knowing that trials produce patience, and patience **proof** of trustworthiness, and proof of trustworthiness, hope.*" Failures don't have much hope, but those who have **proved** themselves have a great deal of hope.

II Corinthians 2:9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the *proof* of you, whether you be obedient in all things.

" **Proof** " here is *dokime* (*Strong's* #1382) and it is translated as "**proof**," not "character." The margin in my Bible translates this sentence as: "For to this end also did I write that I might put you to the *test* , whether you are obedient in all things."

Why do teachers give tests? Is it not to assay, to measure, how well his or her teaching is doing? The teacher assigns a grade from that test in order that the student, as well as the teacher, will know where the student stands, and what the teacher needs to do to make the grade better?

Philippians 2:22 But you know the proof [*dokime*] of him [Timothy], that, as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel.

It's interesting here that some translations say: "For you know the proven character of Timothy."

Our word *character*—a collection of qualities—is directly stated only in Hebrews 1:3.

There is one more word I want to throw into the mix, and this is *Strong's* #1384. We have #1382, #1380, and #1384. Every one of those words is related, and in this case it is *dokimos*, and it means *approved*. It means **proved** . It is *past tense*. It is something that is already acceptable.

It is also interesting that Zodhiates said that as *dokimos* (#1384) is used in the Bible, it always means **proved, approved, or acceptable to God**. It never indicates **self**-approval. In normal Greek writing it may indicate self-approval, but in the Bible it always means *approved of God*.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation [pressure]: for when he is tried [*dokimos*—past tense; for when he is **approved** ,

for when he is ***acceptable***] he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him

Now I want to go back to the Old Testament. We're still on the same subject of proving here, but we're going to go back to Deuteronomy 8:1-3 that I used so many times early in this series. What we're going to see here is God's ***Specific Purpose Statement*** regarding why He took the children of Israel through the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, [1] to ***humble*** you, and [2] to ***prove*** you, [3] to know what was ***in your heart*** , whether you would keep his commandments, or no. And he ***humbled you*** , and ***suffered*** [allowed] you to hunger, and ***fed*** you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that he might make ***you*** know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live.

Remember the background here. Israel was redeemed from Egypt by God, and as they left, He could have taken them a short route directly to the Promised Land. That would only have taken a week, or ten days, or two weeks to get there. Instead, He had them make a sharp right turn, and took them directly south that led them to the Red Sea and to all the wilderness experiences out there in the desert.

Remember that the *wilderness journey* is the Old Testament's parallel to our *calling, salvation, and sanctification unto holiness*. Nowhere does God mention to those people *building character*. Both Testaments clearly designate God as the Creator. The walking, following the Cloud, is designated for ***proving*** us.

Those experiences were purposely gone through on their walk to ***test*** them so that God (and they) could discover what was in their hearts. The experiences were to ***prove*** , to test their understanding of what was going on in their

lives, to test their loyalty, to prove whether they would live by every word of God.

We're going to go back into the New Testament once again. Turn to Romans 16:10. Remember we saw that Timothy had "*proven*" character. How was it proved? By the experiences of life, by the witness that he gave to others that he was a trustworthy person, and could be relied upon.

Romans 16:10 Salute Apelles **approved** [*dokimos—past tense*] in Christ.

His character is proved. His integrity was proved in life's experiences, that he was going to follow God no matter what.

Romans 16:10 Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

Turn now to I Corinthians 11:19. This is a very interesting situation here because he's talking about heresies and divisions in the church.

I Corinthians 11:19 For there *must* be also heresies among you, [Now why?] that they which are **approved** may be made manifest among you.

Without saying it directly, he is saying that we had better follow the example of those who have *passed the test*, and not fallen for the heresies.

II Timothy 2:15 Study [be diligent] to show yourself **approved** unto God, a workman [one who is skilled in the way of God] that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Let's go all the way back to the book of Genesis, to chapter 22, verse 1.

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did *test* Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here I am.

Genesis 22:12 And he [God] said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him: for now I *know* that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

This was the occasion when God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was approved and acceptable to God.

In all these New Testament scriptures, the word "approved" is *dokimos*, and this implies interesting and meaningful ramifications concerning work, growth, overcoming, witness, faithfulness, reward, and even whether we will be in God's kingdom, and therefore, resurrection as well.

What's going on in our lives? *We are being tested*. There is far more in regard to testing—**proving** ourselves—than there is on building character. God is the Creator. He is the One who builds the character. Do we have a part in it? Yes we do, but God is testing, testing, testing. In one sense, He is learning as we go through this. Learning what? Learning what He needs to do to build the character in us.

This is where the experience with Jonah comes in handy (as far as understanding). When you are dealing with somebody like Jonah (people with free moral agency, and people who have been corrupted by sin), the variables that free moral agency can create for Him to overcome are almost without number. But God shows us with Jonah, that no matter what kind of crooked thinking and decision-making we come up with, that He is competent to provide something to turn us back to the right direction so that we start making right decisions, even if He has to create a great fish to swallow us up and dump us on shore, and remind us, "*Hey Jonah! This is what I want you to do. Quit running away. That's foolishness!*"

Adam and Eve failed the test in the Garden of Eden. Of course God knew what they were going to do.

Hebrews 8:10-11 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: *I* will put my laws into *their* mind, and write them in their hearts: and *I* will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Hebrews 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

Again, it is God who is shown doing the engraving, doing the imprinting. The New Covenant stated in the context here shows a distinct departure from the Old Covenant. In the Old Covenant God nowhere said that He would do such a thing to the Israelites *until* He inspired Jeremiah to write this as a promise in Jeremiah 31. Zodhiates says that figuratively the word "*write*," as used in Hebrews 8:10, means "*to inscribe deeply*." So once again we get the sense of engraving.

Let's pull some things together. God is clearly the Creator of **the new man** "created in Christ Jesus"—to be in His image. This means the creation of character—a collection of qualities that are in the image of God—that will produce right conduct that is suitable for living in the Kingdom of God.

God created Adam and Eve, and for all intents and purposes, they failed. Their conduct was not suitable as they were, and so He booted them from the Garden of Eden—a type of the Kingdom of God. He then showed, through Israel, many, many years later that mankind was still lacking even though He was directly leading them for forty years. Their conduct was so bad that only two families from the original group to leave Egypt actually made it into the Promised Land. And so Israel also proved themselves unworthy.

Under the New Covenant, the fault in man is being remedied. Something is said in Romans 8:3 that needs to be connected to Hebrews 8.

Romans 8:3 For what the law [meaning in this case the Old Covenant] could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.

The problem was not with God. The problem was with the people. We might say here that the problem was that God was not creating His image in those people yet. He was giving you and me further evidence of the state of man, and the state we are in as we are called. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak *through the flesh* ." The problem is in man.

Under the New Covenant God is putting His spirit in us and creating in us a *new* heart, and inscribing His law in our hearts and minds. But we still must **PROVE** ourselves. We might say, like Adam and Eve and Israel, we must still prove ourselves as " *qualified* " to be in His kingdom.

Maybe this analogy I am going to give here is lacking. It's anthropomorphic. In other words, it applies to man, but I'm going to apply it to God just because it might be instructive in some way. Do you remember the example that we find about Thomas Edison creating the electric light filament? He tried over and over again. In fact, I understand that he used well over one thousand different materials as filament for an electric light bulb until he found one that worked. That was tungsten. Now, how did he find that the others *didn't* work? Every time he tried a new filament, he tested it.

God creates, and then He tests to see whether we get it, to see whether we're going to be willing to use it to glorify Him in our lives. So we prove ourselves by "walking the walk." We prove ourselves by yielding to Him. We prove ourselves through obedience. None of what we do saves us. What it does is prove that God's creative actions by which He is enabling us to conduct our lives in a righteous manner is believed, is understood, is trusted, and is working. So on our part there indeed is an element of building, as Paul acknowledges in I Corinthians 3. There is indeed an element of contributing to growth and making our calling and election sure. But none of this would be accomplished if God did not do what He does first, thus making the building and growing possible.

Finally let's look at Philippians 2 once again. Remember that "We are *His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto (for the purpose of producing) good works."

Philippians 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

I'm going to give you some other translations of these two verses.

The New International Version :

Philippians 2:12-13 For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purposes.

The New American Standard Bible:

Philippians 2:12-13 For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

The Living Bible:

Philippians 2:12-13 For it is God at work within you, helping you to want to obey Him, and then helping you to do what He wants.

The Amplified Bible:

Philippians 2:12-13 For it is God, who all the while effectively at work in you, energizing and creating in you the power and the desire both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.