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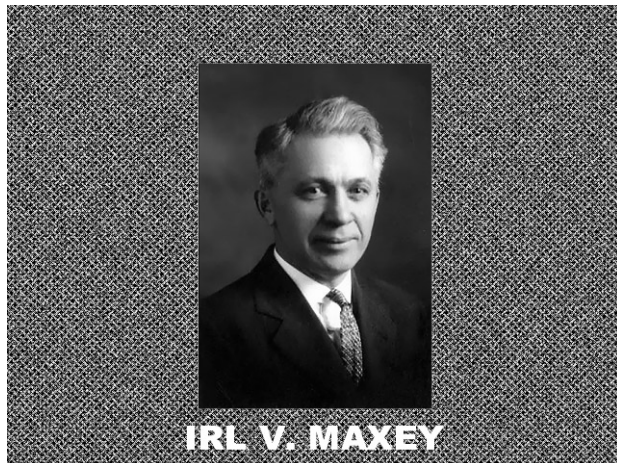
**THE INDIVIDUAL AS A CHARACTER BUILDER
A Sermon By Irl V. Maxey**

**Digitized and Edited
By Duane V. Maxey**

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

This sermon is dated March 10, 1916, and although no location is given in the same notebook it is followed by one dated March 11, 1916 which was written in Ashton, Idaho. Therefore, I assume that this one was probably also written in Ashton. The title is my father's, but I have named and inserted the subtitles as and where I thought they fit.

I would classify this message as "strong meat" but very good advice. It reflects the character my father endeavored to build for himself, what he tried to build into the character of his children, and what he advocated from the pulpit and no doubt also in his pastoral counsel. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, February 12, 2006.

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You will find our text in the second chapter of Second Timothy and the fifteen verse.

SERMON TEXT:

2 Timothy 2:15 -- "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

* * *

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

This are words by that great man Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy. They have been variously used within the last few years, but I want to think of a "workman" -- a studious workman, not ashamed before God and men of his work -- in fact, approved of as a builder and truth revealer. A building and a builder of character to completeness. The word "character" came from a Greek word "kharakter" from "kharassein" = to inscribe, from "kharax" -- a pointed stick.* So, building a character means going through the hard knocks as a coin goes through the mint to have a kharassein, or character, inscribed upon it.* Squeezed, pounded, cut, and stamped, it comes out the beautiful coin which we use as a means of circulation representing wealth.

[*As best I can make out papa's exact words defining the origin and meaning of the word "character" he wrote: -- "The word character came from a Greek word 'Harrass' meaning to harass, a harrassed thing, a charassed [sic] person." However, none of the dictionaries I consulted verified that the word "character" came from a Greek word "Harass". I have given in the paragraph above the Greek word from which "character" IS derived. Further, in checking the origin of the word "harass"

no dictionary connected it in any way with our English word "character". Dictionaries give the origin of the word "harass" as from the Old French "harer"-- to set a dog on, being from "hare" the interjection used to set a dog on -- or, as we say now "sick a dog on." I am inclined, therefore, to believe that papa was mistaken about the English word "character" coming, as he said from "a Greek word Harass" -- and, thus I have substituted the correct Greek origin in the sentences ending with an asterisk in the above paragraph. But, I reverted entirely to his words in the final sentence of the paragraph. Given papa's knowledge of the Greek, I don't know how he may have made this mistake -- but, "to err is human." I hope that this correction does not take away too much from that which follows.]

Both the builder and the building must go through this process, for the builder puts his likeness into building. We hear it so often, "I do not want this work to go from our establishment that way, for it does not speak for us."

* * * * *

01 -- THE TOOLS NEEDED FOR CHARACTER BUILDING

This builder of character will have needs. He will have a purpose, and he will have a workman's result. The workman will need tools with which to do his work. No first class workman would start out today without a good set of tools. No less should one who thinks of building character start out without a full set of tools. In my judgment, the tools with which a man will build a great character are: -- Grace, Will-Power, and Common Sense. If he has them, well and good, but if not they had better be purchased, no matter what the cost.

The character builder will also need material. In the building line these days, the price of material is high, and different in some localities than others. The price of building material for a great character is the same in all ages and that will never be close at hand. I said last Sunday, sometimes it is away yonder in the Lebanon Mountains. But the morning sun kissed the mountain ere it did the plain of Esdraelon. So we see the gleaners of hope, which truth as it is in Jesus, shining where our hardest efforts are put forth to build.

To get the material will require Grace, Will-Power, and Common Sense. However, it will be wise ere we go for the material to see the architect and get the plans and have them explained. Somebody has said, "Every man is the architect of his own fortune." But I want to say to you, God is the Architect of our lives if they are built properly. The dear old book (taking the Bible) is the blueprint. Safe directions are here and He will always give the right one for us.

Cost? That does not enter into it -- the material must be the best. That is the way He drew it into the plans.

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02 -- THE PHYSICAL FOUNDATION OF CHARACTER BUILDING

Now listen to the plans. We are to have a basement, full size. Some excavation is necessary and the heredity of ages may have to be thrown out. Some blasting may have to be done. The basement is the physical life. The superstructure will consist of mind and soul, or spirit.

Now having our plan we can build. The basement must be well made before we start the superstructure. The physical life is the foundation for all life. The early part of this will be animal life. There will be no responsibility of soul and very little growth of mind. [Here papa speaks of physical life in infancy.] How necessary to build rightly the physical life. We will not at this place take up the responsibility of parents in training the early life, but leave that for a future discussion. Buildings are often wrecked and ruined because of poor foundations. The whole superstructure is condemned and in danger of falling. Why? Because of the completion of the superstructure. No. That was seemingly good, but the foundation. Oh, the foundation!

First we must see to our eating, for that is the great builder of the body. This material will cost a great fight. Our mouths will not be filled unless we help fill them. He that will not work can not eat.*

[Once upon a time :o(]

Now that we have labored and brought this material at hand, how shall we eat? when shall we eat? yea, what shall we eat? I am really afraid in what to eat we do not even use animal sense. We must eat that which is food and only use stimulants which have a food value. We must build our body.

Surely we must put the food to bodily use in such a manner that the body can take care of it. here is one of the great causes of all our aches and pains. I have come of late years to believe what Fletcher says: Before food should enter the stomach, it should be liquid. Further, he says when we over-eat and the food is thrown into the stomach it always follows that the person commits some excess elsewhere.

So when to eat should engage our thought. This will depend upon what the person does. Those of sedentary habits should not eat breakfast, and only eat one good meal a day -- a good balanced ration at that -- a light evening meal. Those working at manual labor should eat two full meals and one light.

Then we should drink water, water, water. God's great physical helper is water. We should properly direct our stored energy -- get plenty of exercise, and those of sedentary habits should get a great deal of brisk exercise.

We should rest the body properly. It takes time for brain and brawn to rest -- including night rest and Sabbath rest.

Now I must come again to God's great blessing -- water. As someone has said, Wash yourself every day. Your hands are not "yourself" -- neither your "face" - - wash yourself completely every day. Water is cheap. Wash.

Breathe pure air. Over-eating, improper exercise and improper care of the body are as dangerous to character as is a strain on the mind, or as is a transgression to the soul. Transgress not the laws pertaining to your body. Your body is God's temple.

Properly clothe the body, as would an ancestor of a noble posterity. At this point we can wield our commonsense. Let us not forget, God is interested in this. Let us not think any part of our physical being is unholy. No function of any organ is wrong -- only its abuse can be wrong. Paul bids us yield our bodies as "instruments of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13) unto holiness.

Physically, build a good foundation for character.

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03 -- THE MIND- SUPERSTRUCTURE OF CHARACTER BUILDING

The mind is part of the great superstructure of character. How wonderful is this great mind that God has given mankind. We are here in body, and the next instant, in our minds, we are at the Hanging Lake in Colorado, the next instant we are climbing Pilot Knob in the Ozarks, and then on the shores of Lake Michigan hearing the deafening roar of the mighty waves lash the shoreline.

God intended us to use our minds, or He would have made us with more knowledge or even instinct as an animal. Solomon says, " It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2).

Five things are necessary to building the mind: Proper Reading, proper study, proper reflection, proper guidance, and proper association. Knowing this will help us select our material and build properly.

The heredity of ages lies upon us like a mighty weight, and the environment of our home life also. Probably these things will guide us in our selection. Oh! this mighty force! How often it has helped us select the best material, and how often by it we have thrown out so much good material. Again, I must say we will leave the thought of starting this to a future discussion -- The Home, A Character Builder.

Concerning your thought-life, read, and read only mind-building material. Study, build great convolutions in your brain. Now see to where this leads you.

Reflect, compare, search out. Listen to your parents -- your teacher in what way your own thought trends.*

[*Papa evidently means by the preceding that if you listen to the trend of thought expressed by your parents, you can discover what propensities and inclinations in thought that you have inherited and imbibed from them -- good or bad.]

Associate with pure and great minds. God will help us here. Consult our Heavenly Architect. Read. "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3-5).

Search out all truth and build it into your thought-life. God lives in the blaze of truth. If possible, fathom the very depth of everything to know it, but "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The material of the basement [The Physical] cannot be built into the superstructure. In fact, that would spoil it. Physical sensation never makes cerebral mentation [mental activity]. The mind will be holy, if built properly, and God will approve of it. We are not building for ourselves alone, but for those also with whom we must associate in thought-life, and for our posterity. The mind will be holy, and all unfolding of the mind, if the unfolding was proper. Its abuse is very unholy. You must finish your structure. If you should build alone on the physical, you would be a pugilist. If you built the mind excessively, you would be an atheist. If you build the super-mind, or soul life, alone you would be a fanatic.

Follow your Heavenly Architect's plans. Finish your building. To stop here [with the mental part of the superstructure] and try to live surely would be a mistake -- like living in a half-finished house.

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04 -- THE SOUL- SUPERSTRUCTURE OF CHARACTER BUILDING

You cannot build mind-material into the soul. It would spoil it. You must look to another source. Properly speaking, the mind and body are soul, but the spirit must live because Christ is there, and He is the bread of that life.

Four things are necessary here: -- Have Jesus as a heart-life -- Daily study of God's Word -- Daily prayer -- and, Daily activity.

To truly live is to have Christ. As your heart touches God in daily study of the Word, as you feed on Him in prayer, as you are actively engaged in Christian work, you are building your spirit-life. Remember, this is your life. If you have not finished your building with the God-ordained spiritual building material, the Heavenly Architect will say, "Go on! Fit up your living-rooms!"

[Penciled in between the lines approximately at this point in the sermon, papa wrote: "Build every year" and "poem C. Nautilus". Perhaps he used the entire poem here, but it is the last two stanzas thereof that most fit his theme. He did not have a copy of the poem with the sermon, but I found it online and have inserted it below.]

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS
By Oliver Wendell Holmes

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft steps its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:

**Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!**

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05 -- THE APPROVAL AND ENDURING MONUMENT OF CHARACTER BUILDING

If you have not thus finished your structure you will not appreciate my next. The builder has a purpose: He hopes to meet the architect's approval. "Study to show thyself approved unto God" and not ashamed. If you have followed His plans, you stand a better chance to receive further employment.

Approved of God -- think of it! -- and our life influences others. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

When we start to build a structure, we want it to last. When we build a character, we want it to stand the storms of life and the final test in the Judgment. Certainly we must build Christ into this structure, or it cannot stand when the floods come.

If you will, go with me to Palmyra -- ancient Tadmor. Come with me over that desert highway. Just before we get to the city on either side of the road you will see monuments, or what was once monuments. You read part of them. Some epitaphs cannot be read, all are broken, some entirely gone. What are they? We cannot make them out. It seems that their builders thought more of monuments than of character.

In early days, when a captain safely carried his passengers over a long sea journey, they built him a monument in gratitude. It seems also that when the guide of a caravan led folks to Palmyra across the desert, through bands of thieves, those safely guided to the city took up an offering of gratitude and built a monument to perpetuate the memory of their guide's name. However, now the monuments are gone, and the names forgotten.

In contrast, let us go unto the City of Palmyra itself. We see not monument to Queen Zenobia,* but her name lives on in the traditions of the people. Why? Because Zenobia built God into her life. Her monument was her character.

[*Queen Zenobia, Ruler of Palmyra, 267-272 B.C.]

Rightly build a character that will last through time and eternity. In so doing, you will add to the science of such architecture. Rightly divide the word of truth. Build a solid foundation and superstructure, and complete the living-rooms. You will be building in Christ, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21).

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THE END OF THIS SERMON