LEADING TRANSFORMATION #13:
THREATS TO GOOD CHARACTER

We may be clear in our minds on what good character is. We may even be desirous to be people of good character. But somehow the things that we want to do we are not able to do, and the things that we do not want to do we find ourselves doing. What is the explanation for the failure to exhibit good character in spite of our knowledge of what it is and what its advantages are?

We can answer this question by looking at the following threats to good character.

1. SELF-CENTEREDNESS
We have found the enemy and it is us! Our natural wants are at war with the desires and values of God. We want experiences that will satisfy our selfish wants and impulses. These self-centered and sensual desires are generally considered by society as human rights. What is right or good is therefore subjective. We have difficulty in determining the limits and boundaries to what we know as acceptable human behavior.

2. SOCIAL PRESSURE
The pressure from society is another powerful influence on our choices. Whatever is fashionable is expected of all people. Using anger and outbursts of rage to make our demands strong is fashionable so we go for it. Those watching us congratulate us for being leaders who get things done. Society gives bribes as tokens of appreciation and we fall for it. Once again, we are congratulated for being kind and generous. The list goes on. The cumulative effect is that we are so shaped by society that we cannot pursue the kind of integrity that will lead to life-enhancing transformation.

3. CULTURE AND TRADITIONS
Culture and traditions are strong threats to character. “This is the way we have always done it.” “Who do you think you are?” “When we were we where were you?” “These practices identify who we are.” These are all statements that support the continuation of traditions. Good character sometimes demands a break with traditions. But it comes at the price of being accused of not being faithful to the traditions of our forefathers and foremothers, pioneers, or founders.

4. THE LAW OF COMPETITION
The “Law of Competition” calls for winners and losers. There may be two friendly teams playing a championship football match. In spite of the good thoughts and feelings they have toward one another there can only be one winner of the championship. As a result of that, they have to play to win. This inevitably involves planning and working for the other team to lose.

In global economic considerations, Europe may not really hate Africa. But the law of competition requires that Europe continues to get cheap raw materials from Africa in order for her industries to continue to thrive. For now, it does not seem practically feasible for Europe to maintain its industries, exports, and jobs, if Africa should experience an industrial revolution that is based on raw materials from Africa. Therefore, the law of competition forces Europe to support Africa’s raw material based economies in order to maintain its manufacturing based economies.

Europe may well want an industrialized and prosperous Africa. But the law of competition is a real challenge. Therefore, in spite of the knowledge of what is best for Africa, Europe is likely to continue to choose what it has done for the past centuries; keeping Africa hoping and waiting for new rules of the game.

5. METAPHYSICAL FORCES (I.E., SPIRITUAL FORCES)
We are all familiar with “the devil made me do it,” excuses. Yes, it is true that the devil comes like a flood into our life situations to influence us to make decisions that derail us from our God-given destinies, and rob us of joy and peace.

To be of good character, we must allow God to fight our spiritual wars for us. The victory comes through submission to the Spirit of God the Creator.