
Lessons on
Attitude



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Table of Contents

Struggling with Attitude	2
Proper Attitudes Toward the Bible	6
Proper Attitudes Toward Sin	9
A Contrast in Attitudes	11
Attitudes in Conversion: The Example of Cornelius	14
Proper Attitudes Toward the Word and Its Proclamation	17
The Spirit of Sacrifice	20
Series: Attitude Is Everything	
Proper Attitudes Toward God and Ourselves	23
Proper Attitudes Toward Our Brethren	26
Proper Attitudes Toward the Work of the Church	29

Struggling with Attitude

Text: Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction

1. The most troublesome sin to me is that of a bad attitude
 - a. I am not alone for this sin is quite common.
 - As a matter of fact, all sin stems from an improper attitude toward something. (Prov. 23:7; Jas. 1:13-15)
 - b. It identifies me with Paul—perhaps the greatest apostle but also the "chief" of sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15; cf. Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 7:19; 1 Cor. 9:27)
2. Carnal attitudes do great damage: Not only to our own spiritual lives but also to the well-being of another person, an entire congregation and even the cause of Christ in general.
3. If I am going to be the kind of person God wants me to be and if I am going to do my part to see that the local church is what it ought to be, I must give attention to my attitudes.

I. Peace and Unity Stem from Proper Attitudes

- A. The example of the church at Philippi. (Phil. 4:1-9)
- B. It is vital for every Christian to be deeply honest before self and God in order to eliminate sinful attitudes. (See 2 Peter 1:5-11)

II. Acknowledging Sinful Attitudes

- A. The Christian must acknowledge that bad attitudes are just as sinful as bad actions.
 1. They are part of "the works of the flesh." (Gal. 5:19-21)
 2. Carnal actions come out of carnal attitudes. (1 Cor. 3:1-3)
 3. Sinful attitudes can ultimately be traced to the influence of Satan. (John 8:44; Jas. 3:13-16)
- B. The Christian must become dead to the world and to sin. (Eph. 4:22-24; 1 John 2:15-17)
- C. Where there are problems—in family, school, work and/or church—there are sinful attitudes.

III. Identifying Sinful Attitudes

A. Attitudes of pride.

1. Factious: selfish ambitions. (2 Cor. 12:20f; Jas. 3:14,16; Gal. 5:19ff; Phil. 2:3).
 - To have self-seeking ambition, to obtain followers.
2. Puffed up: conceited. (2 Cor. 2:20f; cf. Col. 2:18)
 - Inflated with pride, arrogance.
3. Vainglory: selfish ambition. (Phil. 2:3) Pride.
4. Doting: obsessed with disputes and arguments. (1 Tim. 6:3-5)
 - One whose obsession over a doctrine or theory comes partially from a heart of unhealthy pride.

B. Inner feelings and attitudes.

1. Jealousy. (2 Cor. 12:20f; Jas. 3:1-4ff; Gal. 5:19ff)
 - Sinful excess toward others which includes suspicion and to have or be as others.
2. Envy. (Gal. 5:19ff; 1 Tim. 6:3-5)
 - Similar to jealousy but worse. It would deprive the other person of what he has or is.
3. Evil suspicion(s). (1 Tim. 6:4)
 - a. The attitude which underlies all evil gossip and judgmental feelings. (Matt. 7:1f)
 - b. The mind goes off into all directions of mental alienation and accusation before getting the full information, before really getting to know the person or circumstances.
4. Anger. (Eph. 4:26,31; Col. 3:5-9)
 - The emotion of anger is a part of our created makeup but it must be controlled spiritually by developing greater love, patience, forbearance and longsuffering.
5. Malice. (Col. 3:5-9)
 - A deep, hateful attitude toward another person which displays a hurtful and vicious character often manifesting itself in "Christians" in hidden barbs and veiled insinuations instead of outright abusive language.
6. Inordinate affections: passions, inordinate desires. (Col. 3:5-9)
7. Bitterness. (Eph. 4:31f; Jas. 3:14).
 - Coming from being deeply hurt, it can "eat you up" emotionally and spiritually.
8. Hatred, enmity. (Gal. 5:20)
 - c. A deep feeling of hostility in the heart.
 - b. The opposite of agape love.

C. Attitudes of words and conduct.

1. Wrath. (Eph. 4:31f; 2 Cor. 12:20f; Gal. 5:19ff; Col. 3:5-9)
 - An extreme degree of anger, a terrible sin of passion often brought on by one's own pride and insecurity or one's own inadequacy and sin.
2. Strife: debate. (2 Cor. 12:20f; Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 3:3)
 - Manifested in contention with enmity in the heart motivated by pride and ego.
3. Clamor: loud quarreling. (Eph. 4:31)
 - The tumult of a prevailing controversy as people show escalating sinful attitudes of heart.
4. Backbiting: slander. (2 Cor. 12:20f; cf. Gal. 5:15)
 - To falsely speak evil of another person.
5. Whisperings. (2 Cor. 12:20f)
 - Secret slander that appeals to the carnal, sinful appetite. NASV: "gossip."
6. Blasphemy: slander. (Col. 3:5-9)
 - Speaking against people but especially against God and His word; to desecrate the holy.
7. Lying. (Col. 3:5-9; Jas. 3:14)
 - To tell lies about another, to misrepresent what one said, to exaggerate the wrongs of others.
8. Wranglings: perverse disputings. (1 Tim. 6:3-5)
 - Conduct arising from constant friction and mutual irritations.
9. Tumults (2 Cor. 12:20,21; Jas. 3:16).
 - The disorder which comes from constant disturbances.

D. Resulting divided conditions

1. Divisions. (Gal. 5:19-21)
 - A related term is schism, a cleft, rent. (1 Cor. 1:10).
2. Sects. (Gal. 5:19-21)
 - a. Divisions coming from self-willed opinions substituted for submission to the power of truth.
 - b. The consequences of head-strong attitudes, a "party-spirit" and a sectarian outlook.

Conclusion

1. "How could a Christian ever act like that?"
 - The only way he could is that he possesses attitudes which are contradictory to all Jesus taught and to what all Christians believe and teach.

2. "Why do such attitudes so often seem to prevail in a congregation supposedly of God's people?"
 - Sinful hearts have not yet been brought into conformity to the will of God and the mind of Christ.
3. The need is obvious:
 - a. More consistent study and teaching needs to be done not only to correct negative attitudes but also to acquire godly attitudes taught and demonstrated in Scripture.
 - b. Each Christian must give closer attention to humility in both feelings and attitudes.
 - c. Each Christian must be given to prayer, praying to develop proper attitudes.
 - d. Godly attitudes must be emphasized with as much intensity as are doctrinal truths.
4. We must "put to death" sinful attitudes and change bad attitudes, words and conduct. (Rom. 13:11-14)

The Proper Attitudes Toward the Bible

Introduction

1. How do you view the Bible?
 - a. Some think it is foolishness.
 - b. Some think it is a collection of myths and fables.
 - c. Some view it as having some good principles in it and thus on a par with other philosophical works.
 - d. We must view it for what it is—THE WORD OF ALL-MIGHTY GOD.
2. Having a proper attitude toward the Bible is vitally important for only then can we truly profit from its message.
3. In this lesson, we will:
 - a. Present the proper attitude one must have toward the Bible.
 - b. See some things we will not do if we have the proper attitude toward the Bible.
 - c. See some things we will do if our attitude toward the Bible is correct.

I. The Bible Is Unchangeable

- A. The Bible does not change for the words of Christ will not pass away. (Matt. 24:35)
 1. Jesus is God's exclusive spokesman today. (Heb. 1:1-2)
 2. The words of Jesus will judge us in the last day. (John 12:48)
- B. The enduring nature of the word of God is presented in 1 Peter 1:22-25.

II. The Bible Is Verbally Inspired

- A. The words of the Bible are not the words of men but the words of God.
 - Consider the assertions of the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; and 1 Corinthians 14:37.
- B. Every word in the original manuscripts is a word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
 1. "All Scripture" (ASV: "Every scripture).
 2. No prophecy of Scripture is of human origin. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

III. The Bible Is Complete

- A. It was "once for all delivered." (Jude 3)
 1. Once for all men for all time.
 2. As Christ died "once for all." (Heb. 7:27)
- B. Its completeness is seen in that it:
 1. Provides all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3)
 2. Thoroughly equips for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- C. When taken in its entirety, the Bible is complete in its message. Consider the message of Genesis to Revelation (Sunrise to Sunset).
1. Genesis answers the question, "How did it all begin?" while Revelation answers the question, "How will it all end?"
 2. In Genesis, access to the tree of life is lost (3:24) while in Revelation, access to the tree of life is attained through Christ (22:14).
 3. In Genesis, there is the beginning of sorrow and death (3:16-19) while in Revelation, there will be no more death (21:4).
 4. In Genesis, evil triumphs through the serpent (3:13) while in Revelation, there is the ultimate triumph of the Lamb (20:10).
 5. In Genesis, the walk of God with man is interrupted (3:8-10) while in Revelation, that walk is resumed (21:3).
 6. In Genesis, sin is seen in its beginnings while in Revelation, sin is seen in its full development in the Harlot, False Prophet, Beast and Dragon.
 7. In Genesis, the sentence of condemnation is passed on Satan while in Revelation, that sentence is executed.
 8. In Genesis, there is the first promise of a coming Savior while in Revelation, that promise is seen in its glorious fulfillment.
 9. Genesis causes anticipation and anxiety while Revelation gives hope and assurance.
 10. Genesis is the foundation stone of the Bible while Revelation is the capstone laid at the very apex to indicated completeness.

IV. The Bible Is Authoritative

- A. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:18-20)
1. Thus, the words of Jesus, God's exclusive spokesman today, are authoritative.
 2. While on earth Jesus taught as one having authority. (Matt. 7:29)
 3. The Father has given His approval of that which the Son commands. (Matt. 17:1-5)
- B. Therefore, everything must be done "in the name of" (by the authority of) Jesus. (Col. 3:17)

V. Some Things We Will Not Do If We Have the Proper Attitude Toward the Bible

- A. Pervert it. (Gal. 1:6-9)
- B. Wrest the Scriptures. (2 Pet. 3:16)
1. Wrest: To twist what the word says to suit one's own ideas and opinions.
 2. A person must humbly accept what the word of God says. (Jas. 1:21; 1 Thess. 2:13)

C. Corrupt it. (2 Cor. 2:17 ASV)

1. "Kapeleuo...primarily signifies 'to be a retailer, to peddle, to hucksterize' (from kapelos, 'an inn-keeper, a petty retailer, especially of wine, a huckster, peddler,' in contrast to emporos, 'a merchant'); hence, 'to get base gain by dealing in anything,' and so, more generally, 'to do anything for sordid personal advantage.' It is found in 2 Cor 2:17, with reference to the ministry of the gospel." (*W.E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*)
2. One is not mix impurities such as the traditions or doctrines of men with it. (Matt. 15:9)
3. One must speak and accept the a"whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:17)
4. One must neither add to nor take away from it. (Rev. 22:18-19)

D. Reject it. (Acts 13:46)

1. Many, even in our day, reject the Bible and its teachings but in so doing, they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life.
2. We must not reject it for we will be judged by it. (John 12:48)
 - If we will be judged by it, we must live by it.

VI. Some Things We Will Do If We Have the Proper Attitude Toward the Bible

A. Investigate and study it. (Acts 17:11)

1. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness. (Matt. 5:6)
2. We should seek to fill ourselves with the knowledge of it. (Col. 3:16)

B. Accept it as an infallible guide.

1. It leads us in the paths of righteousness. (Psa. 23:3)
2. It guides us as to how to live properly. (Titus 2:11-12)
3. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Psa. 119:105)

C. Be doers and not just hearers. (Jas. 1:22-25)

1. We must be obedient if Christ is truly to be our Lord. (Luke 6:46)
2. To be able to enter heaven, we must do the will of the Father expressed in the word He has given through His Son. (Matt. 7:21-23)

D. Teach it to others. (2 Tim. 2:2)

1. One who has the proper attitude toward the Bible will seek to share its message with others.
2. Faithful people teach others.

Conclusion

1. We must endeavor to learn and maintain the proper attitude toward the word of God.
2. We must then strive to instill that attitude in others.

Proper Attitudes Toward Sin

Introduction

1. No subject has a greater bearing on any of our lives than sin for it is common to all.
 - a. "There is none righteous." (Rom. 3:10)
 - b. "All have sinned." (Rom. 3:23)
2. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the reality of sin, the nature of it and to have the proper attitude toward it.

I. Identifying Sin and Its Causes

A. Sin is:

1. Lawlessness. (1 John 3:4)
 - "Transgression of the law."
2. All unrighteousness. (1 John 5:17)
3. What is not of faith. (Rom. 14:23; cf. Rom. 10:17)
4. Not doing good. (Jas. 4:17)
 - God has shown what is good. (Micah 6:8)

B. The causes of sin.

1. Negatively.
 - a. One is not born a sinner. (Deut. 1:39; Matt. 18:1-3)
 - b. One does not inherit sin. (Ezek. 18:20)
2. Positively.
 - a. One sins because of his own lusts, strong desires. (Jas. 1:13-15)
 - b. One's own sins separate him from God. (Isa. 59:1-2)

II. The Nature of Sin and Its Causes

A. The nature of sin.

1. Deceitful. (Heb. 3:13)
 - It promises that which it cannot deliver.
2. Hardens the heart. (Heb. 3:8)
3. Progressive. (2 Tim. 3:13) Consider:
 - a. The brothers of Joseph. (Gen. 37)
 - b. King David. (2 Sam. 11)
 - c. The apostle Peter. (Matt. 26:58-75)
4. Short-lived in its pleasure. (Heb. 11:25)
5. Exacts exorbitant wages. (Rom. 6:23)
6. Deadens the conscience. (1 Tim. 4:2)

B. The consequences of sin.

1. Separates the sinner from God. (Isa. 59:1-2)
2. Causes spiritual death. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1-2)
 - a. While still physically alive. (1 Tim. 5:6)
 - b. It is the second death. (Rev. 21:8)
3. Brings vengeance. (2 Thess. 1:7-9)
4. Punishment. (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9)
 - a. Which is just. (Rom. 3:23-26; John 3:16; Matt. 10:28)
 - b. Which is eternal. (Matt. 25:46)

III. Proper Attitudes Toward Sin

A. Hate it.

1. Some love sin, especially the pleasures derived from it. (Heb. 11:24-26)
2. We are to hate evil. (Amos 5:15; Psa. 97:10; Rom. 12:9)
3. We are to hate every false way. (Psa. 119:104)
4. We should follow the example of Jesus—He hated evil. (John 2:13-16)

B. Shun it.

1. Many seek out sin and those who practice it.
2. We are not to enter into the path of evil. (Prov. 4:14-19)
3. We are to flee from evil. (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 6:18)
4. We are to pray for deliverance from temptation. (Matt. 6:13)

C. Resist it.

1. We must recognize it can be resisted with the help of:
 - a. God. (Phil. 4:13; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 2:9)
 - b. Brethren. (Gal. 6:2; Heb. 10:24-25)
2. We must resist Satan. (Jas. 4:7)
3. We must be willing to resist even “to blood.” (Heb. 12:1-4)
4. We must take up the whole armor of God. (Eph. 6:10-18)

D. Conquer it.

1. Sin can be conquered with the help of God and Christ.
2. Children of God should strive to rid themselves of the practice of sin. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 3:1-11)
3. We should “cut off” that which would cause us to sin. (Mark. 9:43-47)
4. Those who overcome sin will be rewarded. (Rev. 2:7, 11)

Conclusion

1. If one is going to be saved eternally, he must develop the proper attitude toward sin.
2. One must seek to keep from sinning and always strive to stay pure.

A Contrast in Attitudes

Text: Luke 18:9-14

Introduction

1. The words of the parable in the text:
 - a. Constitute one of the most scathing rebukes ever uttered by our Lord.
 - b. Are words of comfort for the downcast and heavy-burdened.
2. There are three sharp contrasts in the parable that we will observe in this lesson.
 - a. The two men.
 - b. The two prayers.
 - c. The two answers.

I. The Two Men

A. The Pharisee.

1. The Pharisees were the “fundamentalists” of that day.
 - As far as religious ceremony was concerned, they were more “religious” than anybody.
2. Picture this man as he struts into the temple and finds the most conspicuous place to do his praying.
 - Jesus warned against such. (Matt. 6:1-6)
3. Not everything about this Pharisee was bad—he had some good virtues.
 - a. He was devoutly religious. (Luke 18:12)
 - 1) A lesson: It is not enough just to be religious.
 - 2) His failure was in spite of his being religious not because of it.
 - b. He was decent and upright in his daily life. (Luke 18:11)
 - 1) If we can believe his own testimony, he was a man of integrity.
 - 2) Such was not true of all Pharisees, e.g., some robbed widow’s houses. (Matt. 23:14)
 - c. He was liberal in the use of his wealth. (Luke 18:12)
 - 1) He gave ten percent of all he possessed.
 - 2) Such does not make one a saint. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

B. The tax collector.

1. Think of how different tax collectors were from the Pharisees.
 - a. They were among the most despised of men.
 - b. They had bad reputations.

- c. Most were “wheeler-dealers” and more than likely extortioners.
 - d. They were considered traitors by most Jews because they were collecting taxes for Rome.
2. Jesus was condemned by the Pharisees for eating with tax collectors. (Luke 15:1-2)
- But this parable shows Jesus’ preference for the tax collector.
- C. The words of these man reveal the kinds of men they were.
- “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matt. 12:37)

II. The Two Prayers

A. The Pharisee.

1. He had a good concept of himself—a “good self image.”
 - a. He was confident God would have the same view of him as he had.
 - b. He saw no need to change anything about himself.
2. As he prayed, he thanked God that he was not like other men.
 - The fact is, he was just like all others.
 - 1) He had sinned, like everyone else. (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10)
 - 2) He was a man of the same passions, weaknesses, and temptations as anyone else.
3. He had a bad concept of others.
 - His mottos could have been such things as:
 - 1) “I’m so much better than you.”
 - 2) “I am somebody and you are a nobody.”
 - 3) “You are a low-life sinner.”
4. In reference to the tax collector, he:
 - a. Had nothing good to say about him.
 - b. Did not mention him except to compare himself favorably to him.
 - c. Did not pray for him.
 - d. Had no remorse over his sins.
 - e. Apparently rejoiced that the contrast between them was so vivid.
5. He had no real concept of God.
 - If he had, he would have felt a deep sense of sin but he felt none.
 - 1) When Isaiah had a vision of God he cried, “I am a man of unclean lips.” (Isa. 6:5)
 - 2) When Peter realized that Jesus was deity he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8)

6. He acknowledged no sin before God and gave no true thanks to Him.
 - a. In reality, he saw no need for God.
 - b. His prayer was actually self-congratulatory.
 - c. His focus was on self, not on God.
- B. The tax collector.
 1. He had a real sense of faith.
 2. He really talked with God.
 3. He had a sense of helplessness (reliance on God).
 4. He had a sense of guilt.
 - a. He acknowledged himself as a sinner.
 - b. He was not looking for some excuse for sin.
 5. He said nothing of the hypocritical Pharisee—he had his eye on God.
- C. Their prayers are over. The two men are on their way home. What is the result?

III. The Two Answers

- A. The Pharisee.
 1. The result is not good even though he thought otherwise.
 - a. His mind is at ease.
 - b. He was confident he had done his duty.
 2. He is worse off than if he had not gone at all. (1 Cor. 11:17)
 - He was still in his sins.
 3. He was too full of himself to ask for and receive a blessing.
- B. The tax collector.
 1. He enjoyed great success—he was justified.
 2. He went away pardoned and cleansed.

Conclusion

1. The apostle Paul was a Pharisee who became a “tax collector” in terms of recognizing his sin and his need for mercy.
 - a. He had trusted in himself and despised others. (Phil. 3:1-6)
 - b. But he came to realize his own sinfulness. (1 Tim. 1:15)
 - c. He concluded that he could not rely on his own righteousness (Phil. 3:7-9) so he submitted himself to the will of God.
2. All must have the attitude of the tax collector.
 - a. Realize you are a sinner.
 - b. Reach out for and accept the mercy of God.

Attitudes in Conversion: The Example of Cornelius

Text: Acts 10

Introduction

1. Many sermons have been preached about Cornelius.
 - a. Most of them take his goodness into consideration—that he was devout, prayed, gave alms, etc. and it is then shown that in spite of all these things he was lost.
 - b. The message: Goodness alone will not save anyone.
2. This lesson will approach the study of Cornelius differently.
 - It will consider the attitudes that led up to and were involved in his obedience to the gospel seeing that attitudes play a most important role in one's salvation. (Matt. 13:13-15)

I. Three Miracles Which Changed Attitudes

- A. Worldly attitudes must be changed for one to come to the Lord.
- B. The first miracle.
 1. It was intended to change the attitude of Cornelius. (Acts 10:1-6)
 2. Cornelius had to realize that even though he was a "good" man he was still seriously lacking.
 - a. He had to hear "words" by which he could be saved. (Acts 11:13-14)
 - b. This is a very real problem for people today who think they are already saved.
 - 1) No angel will be sent to them.
 - 2) The gospel is the only means by which their thinking can be changed.
- C. The second miracle. (Acts 10:9-16)
 1. Peter's attitude was changed by this miracle.
 2. Peter later realized from his vision that he was not to call any "man" common or unclean. (Acts 10:28)
 3. Peter's conclusion in Acts 10:34-35 is the principle upon which salvation is offered to all mankind.

D. The third miracle.

1. This was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 - It was intended to change the attitude of the six Jewish brethren who accompanied Peter and then later the Jewish brethren at Jerusalem. (Acts 10:36-48; 11:15-17)
2. Acts 11:18 clearly shows why God sent the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household: To show that the Gentiles were now granted repentance to life—that they could now be accepted into the kingdom and receive the blessings of the New Covenant.

II. The Proper Attitude Toward a Preacher

- A. “As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.” (Acts 10:25)
 - a. Obviously, Cornelius went too far and was rebuked by Peter.
 - b. But consider: Cornelius was trying to show respect for God’s messenger.
 - Some have shown great disrespect for God’s messenger. (Jer. 38:6; Matt. 23:31-36)
- B. The importance of Peter, or any preacher, is not to be found in his person but in his message.
- C. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace...” (Rom. 10:15)
- D. We need to have a good attitude toward any true messengers of God today.

III. The Proper Attitude Toward the Word of God

- A. Cornelius’ attitude toward the word of God can be seen in Acts 10:33.
 - He and others wanted to hear what God commanded.
- B. There was no doubt when Cornelius learned what the word would have him do that he would immediately do it. (Acts 10:48)
- C. Consider the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 2:13 in relation to attitude toward the word.
 - “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”
- D. In order to receive the benefits from it, we must have the right attitude toward the word of God. (Jas. 1:22-25)
 - We must have a humble, submissive attitude toward God’s word realizing that it, and it alone, is the power unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16)

IV. The Proper Attitude Toward Friends and Relatives

- A. Cornelius had the proper attitude toward the salvation of his friends and relatives. (Acts 10:24, 27, 33)
- B. Can you begin to imagine with what excitement he told them of the appearance of the angel and the pending visit of Peter who would tell them how to be saved?
 - We need to have that same attitude and enthusiastically share the message of salvation with those we care about or any who will listen.

Conclusion

1. We can learn from Cornelius that attitudes we need to have toward:
 - a. The messenger of God.
 - b. The word of God itself.
 - c. Obedience to God's word.
 - d. Our friends and relatives and all who need to hear the word of salvation.
2. If we develop the same attitudes in these things, we will obtain the same salvation—both now and in eternity.

Proper Attitudes Toward the Word and Its Proclamation

Introduction: How the Bible Came About

1. Our ability to access and know the will of God is one of our greatest blessings.
 - The Bible is the word of God in which He states His will for us.
2. Certain men were separated by God to reveal His will to man. (Gal. 1:11-12)
 - a. These men did not teach according to their own wills. (2 Pet. 1:19-21)
 - Private interpretation. “Considering this as a first principle, that no prophecy of the Scripture, whether that referred to above, or any other, is of any private interpretation—proceeds from the prophet’s own knowledge or invention, or was the off-spring of calculation or conjecture. The word *epilusis* signifies also impetus, impulse; and probably this is the best sense here; not by the mere private impulse of his own mind.” (Adam Clarke, Clarke’s Commentaries)
 - b. The things they taught and wrote were the will of the Lord, His commandments. (1 Cor. 14:37)
 - c. They spoke and taught the words revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:9-13)
 - d. Inspiration fully qualified them in both their teaching and their writing. (Matt. 10:19-20; Acts 2:4)
 - e. These men were inspired to great depth and detail. (Gal. 3:16)
3. Thus, having the will of God expressed to us accurately in the Bible, we need to have the proper attitudes toward it in our teaching and practice and live up to the responsibilities we have in regard to it.

I. Respect for the Word and Its Proclamation: The Example of Nehemiah 8

- A. Nehemiah 8 contains a wonderful example of how the people of God should respect God’s word and its proclamation. (Neh. 8:1-9)
- B. Background information.
 1. In 536 B.C. the decree of Cyrus the Great was issued which allowed the Jews to return from their homeland following their 70 year captivity in Babylon.
 2. 50,000 Jews under the leadership of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding the temple.

3. Adversaries of the Jews succeed in stopping the work and it laid dormant for 16 years until Haggai and Zechariah urged them to once again begin the rebuilding process.
 - The temple was completed 20 years after it was begun.
 4. In the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes, Ezra led a second group in returning to Jerusalem.
 5. Artaxerxes' cupbearer, Nehemiah, was sad over the poor conditions of his homeland because the city of Jerusalem still laid in ruins—its wall and gates were a pile of rubble.
 - Artaxerxes allows Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem in the year 444 B.C.
 6. After surveying the situation, Nehemiah rallies the people and they finish the wall in only 52 days.
 - a. With the completion of the wall there is a return to Jewish life.
 - b. Attention is then turned to God and His word.
- C. Nehemiah 8: respect for the word.
1. All the people willingly assembled. (1)
 2. The people came at morning. (3)
 - Footnote in NKJV: "from the light."
 3. Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all. (5)
 4. At the Book's opening, all stood up. (5)
 5. Ezra "blessed" the Lord. (6)
 - The people said, "Amen, amen!"
 6. Ezra read distinctly from the Book. (8)
 7. Ezra "helped them to understand the reading." (8)
 8. The people stood in their place until midday. (3, 7)
 9. The people were "attentive" to the Book of the Law. (3)
 10. The people "wept" when they heard the words of the Law. (9)
 11. The people "bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." (6)

II. The Responsibilities of Teachers

- A. Those who teach the word are to proclaim the "whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:26-27)
- B. Those who teach the word are not to tickle "itching ears." (2 Tim. 4:1-4)
- C. Those who teach the word to apply it equally to all. (1 Tim. 5:21)
- D. Those who teach the word are to take heed to themselves and their teaching. (Rom. 2:21; 1 Tim. 4:16)

III. The Responsibilities of Hearers

- A. We are to hear the word with a “noble and good heart.” (Luke 8:15)
- B. We are to allow the word to “cut” or “prick” our hears. (Acts 2:37)
- C. We are to gladly receive the word. (Acts 2:41)
- D. We are to receive the word with meekness. (Jas. 1:21)
- E. We are to be discerning in regard to the word. (Acts 17:11)
- F. We are to be eager to hear the word and what it commands us to do. (Matt. 5:6; Acts 10:33)
- G. We are to desire to hear and know **all** the word. (Acts 10:33)
- H. We are to desire only the word of God. (Matt. 15:9)

Conclusion

1. How blessed we are to have His word so that we might know the will of God.
2. But not only has God given us access to His will, He has given it to us in a form that we can understand.
3. How do I know that we can understand the word of God?
 - a. God commands it. (Eph. 5:17)
 - b. The promises of God are conditional upon it. (John 8:32; 2 Pet. 1:5, 10)
 - c. The testimony of men—they understand it. (Psa. 119:130)
 - d. The Lord has promised it. (John 7:17)
4. Whether as hearers or teachers, let every one of us have the proper attitudes toward and respect for the word of God.

The Spirit of Sacrifice

Introduction

1. An outstanding characteristic in the lives of God's people in every age has been a spirit of sacrifice.
 - a. It is commanded by God. (Rom. 12:1)
 - b. It is exemplified by the Macedonians. (2 Cor. 8:1-5)
2. Christians must cultivate this spirit.
 - a. Many do not even want to be inconvenienced.
 - b. We are abundantly blessed but we still want to sing, "Showers of Blessings."
 - "There shall be showers of blessing:
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Savior above.

Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need:
Mercy-drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.
3. The history of God's people in prosperous times is sobering.
 - a. Most of the time, they left God and went off in other directions to ease, idolatry, etc.
 - b. Usually it was during times of suffering and want when they sought God and His approval.
 - c. I believe that is one of the reasons for Jesus stating how difficult it is for a rich man to enter heaven. (Matt. 19:23-24)
4. We must ask ourselves, "What will happen if a time of oppression should come?"
 - a. What would be our spirit?
 - b. Would we take a stand?
 - We will if we develop the spirit of sacrifice that is characteristic of the faithful.

I. The Spirit of Sacrifice Exemplified by God's People in All Ages

- A. Patriarchal age: The example of Abraham. (Heb. 11:8-10)
 1. Abraham was called upon to sacrifice his son Isaac, the son of promise. (Gen. 22:1-3; Heb. 11:17-19)
 2. Abraham's sacrificial spirit enabled God to bless him. (Gen. 22:16-18)

- B. Jewish age: The example of Moses. (Heb. 11:23-27)
 - 1. Though he lived in the most prosperous nation as the son of the most prosperous man, he sacrificed all that was his in Egypt to serve God.
 - 2. God blessed him and they sing in heaven of him. (Rev. 15:3)
- C. Gospel age: The example of Paul.
 - 1. Paul sacrificed greatly to serve the Lord.
 - a. He had been born in a wealthy country, Cilicia.
 - b. He was a highly educated man having been taught by Gamaliel, the most pretigious rabbi among the Jews.
 - c. He had the potential of being a great leader, a national hero and an influential and rich man.
 - 2. Paul counted all these things as “rubbish” in order to gain Christ. (Phil. 3:3-9)

II. The Spirit of Sacrifice: A Primary Requirement for the Followers of Christ

- A. To properly follow Jesus requires sacrifice.
 - 1. While He was on the earth Jesus explained that sacrifice was an integral part of following Him. (Matt. 5:10-12; cf. 2 Tim. 3:12)
 - 2. He always tried to find out whether or not those who desired to follow Him would be able to “stand the test,” i.e., live sacrificially
- B. Luke 9:57-62 illustrates the spirit of sacrifice one must have to follow Jesus.
 - 1. You may not have a bed in which to sleep—the animals are better off. (57-58)
 - 2. While it is not wrong to pay one’s last respects to a family member, if one had to make a choice, will he love God or man more. (59-60)
 - 3. Is the one who looks back really committed? Is he really willing to live sacrificially? (61-62)
 - a. Did Abraham look back when he left his homeland?
 - b. Lot’s wife did look back. (Luke 17:32)
- C. For one to follow Christ, he must deny self. (Matt. 16:24-25)

III. The Spirit of Sacrifice: Do You Have It?

- A. When you miss the services of God’s people for frivolous reasons using some anemic alibi?
- B. When you only give “leftovers” to the Lord?
 - 1. Old preachers used to say that many people give to the Lord like they were feeding the dog.
 - 2. Not just money but time and abilities.
- C. When you refuse to use your talents?
 - 1. Many are content to be nothing more than “benchwarmers” when they have the ability to do far more.

2. They usually end up being more like spectators at a football game— always ready to say what should have been done.

D. When you are deaf to the needs of brethren? (Jas. 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18)

Conclusion

1. I wish I knew how to instill in people the spirit of sacrifice demanded by the Lord and exemplified by His people.
2. Are you willing to start a life of sacrifice in which you let no sacrifice be too great, no burden too heavy, no journey too long and no night too dark to keep you from doing the will of God?
2. All of us need to be willing to live a life of sacrifice. If we will, the rewards are great. (Rev. 2:10)

"Attitude Is Everything"

Lesson One: Proper Attitudes Toward God and Ourselves

As Christians work together in a local congregation, having the right attitudes is essential. All the talent in the world cannot make up for wrong attitudes. With the right attitudes our efforts in service to the Lord are enhanced and live up to their full potential.

There are four general areas of concern: our attitude toward God, our attitude toward ourselves as individuals, our attitude toward brethren and our attitude toward the work we do together as a church. In at least these four areas we must be sure to maintain the proper attitude. This series of lessons is designed to focus on these attitudes so that we can better accomplish that which God desires of the local church and each one of us.

I. Attitudes Toward God

A. Love.

1. We must have the right kind of love toward God.
 - a. Jesus defined that love for us in Matthew 22:37.
 - b. "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" (Matt. 22:37)
2. All of us must ask ourselves, "Do I love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind?"
 - a. "Am I fully devoted to Him with all my being?"
 - b. "Do I prize my relationship with Him above all other things?"

B. Faith and trust.

1. Faith is a strong conviction and trust in things one does not see. (Heb. 11:1)
 - Without faith, it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6)
2. All of us must ask, "Do I have the kind of faith that pleases God. (cf. Rom. 10:17)

C. Thankfulness.

1. Every Christian should have an attitude of gratefulness to God. (Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:20)
2. God's righteous indignation is toward those who have become unthankful. (cf. Rom. 1:18-21)
3. An attitude of thankfulness for the blessings we have will help allay the bitterness that often destroys the spirit in any congregation.

II. Attitudes Toward Ourselves

A. Humility.

1. A humble estimation of one's self is very important. (Rom. 12:3, 16)
2. Humility includes a willingness to serve—even to do “menial” tasks.
 - a. Jesus set that tone in the upper room when He stooped to wash the disciples' feet. (John 13:6-17)
 - b. “Show me a man who cannot bother to do little things and I'll show you a man who cannot be trusted to do big things.” (Lawrence D. Bell, an American industrialist who was the founder of Bell Aircraft)
3. All of us must ask the question, “Am I humble enough to serve my brother?”

B. Teachability.

1. To be teachable is to be wise. (Prov. 15:31-32)
2. Teachability includes:
 - a. An eagerness to learn and grow.
 - b. The ability to learn from correction, to profit from advice and criticism.
3. Those who are old, as well as those who are young, need a teachable attitude.
 - “Education is too good to limit to the young.” (Elton Trueblood, former chaplain to both Harvard and Stanford Universities)

C. Honesty toward mistakes.

1. This includes a willingness to admit our mistakes (Jas. 5:16) and a willingness to correct them.
2. Everyone makes mistakes but a congregation that functions well and grows is one filled with people who learn from their mistakes.

Conclusion

1. Ideal attitudes make for ideal working conditions among members of the local church.
2. Having the attitudes considered in this lesson will help the cause of Christ in any congregation.

3. The attitudes we have studied will:
 - a. Improve our relation with God and ourselves.
 - b. Make us “useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Tim. 2:21)
4. Each must ask, “Do I have or am I developing the right kind of attitudes?”

"Attitude Is Everything"

Lesson Two: Proper Attitudes Toward Brethren

As Christians work together in a local congregation, having the right attitudes is essential. All the talent in the world cannot make up for wrong attitudes. With the right attitudes our efforts in service to the Lord are enhanced and live up to their full potential.

There are four general areas of concern: our attitude toward God, our attitude toward ourselves as individuals, our attitude toward brethren and our attitude toward the work we do together as a church. In at least these four areas we must be sure to maintain the proper attitude. This series of lessons is designed to focus on these attitudes so that we can better accomplish that which God desires of the local church and each one of us.

Introduction

1. In the first lesson of this series, we saw the attitudes we are to have in relation to God and ourselves.
 - a. Attitudes toward God—love, faith and trust, and thankfulness.
 - b. Attitudes toward ourselves—humility, teachability, and honesty toward mistakes.
2. This lesson, the second in the series, will focus on attitudes we need to have toward brethren so we can better accomplish that which God desires in the local church.

I. Attitudes Toward Brethren

A. Love.

1. Jesus taught the necessity of loving our brethren. (John 13:34-35)
2. We have been born again so that we might love one another fervently. (1 Pet. 1:22-23)
3. If we truly love one another, how can we not work together as we should?

B. Cooperation.

1. This involves a willingness to work together as God intended. (1 Cor. 12:21)
 - a. We need to be able not only to work but to work together.
 - b. "It marks a big step in a man's development when he comes to realize that other men can be called on to help him do a better job than he can do alone." (Andrew Carnegie, American industrialist, founder of Carnegie Steel)
2. Where there is cooperation, there will be productivity.

C. Appreciation for others.

1. We need to appreciate what others are doing. (1 Cor. 12:14; 1 Thess. 5:12-13)
2. True appreciation for others will eliminate destructive criticism, gossip, divisiveness, etc.
 - "Expressing appreciation is like grease on the gears of a machine...It makes others do their work much better." (Anon.)

D. Submissive.

1. We are to submit to one another. (Eph. 5:21)f
2. We are to submit to those in positions of leadership. (Heb. 13:17)
 - "Too many chiefs and not enough Indians" is a common problem in many organizations.

E. Hospitable.

1. Christians are to be hospitable. (Rom. 12:13)
 - This includes both hospitality to strangers and to brethren. (Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9)
2. A factor in the rapid spread of the church in the first century was the hospitality extended by the Christians. (3 John 5-8)

F. Warmth, friendliness and openness.

1. We see this expressed by those in the church at Jerusalem. (Acts 2:44-47)
2. It continued with the saints at Antioch of Syria—those who comprised the first Gentile church. (Acts 11:27-30)

G. Gentleness, meekness.

1. This is especially necessary when dealing with those who are spiritually weak. (Gal. 6:1)
2. It is also essential when dealing with those who oppose us. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

H. Forgiveness, forbearance, patience, longsuffering.

- All of these attitudes overlap and are very important. (Eph. 4:2, 32)

Conclusion

1. Ideal attitudes make for ideal working conditions among members of the local church.
2. Having the attitudes considered in this lesson will help the cause of Christ in any congregation.
3. The attitudes we have studied will:
 - a. Improve our relation with God and ourselves.
 - b. Make us “useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Tim. 2:21)
4. Each must ask, “Do I have or am I developing the right kind of attitudes?”

“Attitude Is Everything”

Lesson Three: Proper Attitudes Toward the Work of the Church

As Christians work together in a local congregation, having the right attitudes is essential. All the talent in the world cannot make up for wrong attitudes. With the right attitudes our efforts in service to the Lord are enhanced and live up to their full potential.

There are four general areas of concern: our attitude toward God, our attitude toward ourselves as individuals, our attitude toward brethren and our attitude toward the work we do together as a church. In at least these four areas we must be sure to maintain the proper attitude. This series of lessons is designed to focus on these attitudes so that we can better accomplish that which God desires of the local church and each one of us.

Introduction

1. In the previous lessons of this series, we saw the attitudes we are to have in relation to God, ourselves and brethren.
 - a. Attitudes toward God—love, faith and trust, and thankfulness.
 - b. Attitudes toward ourselves—humility, teachability, and honesty toward mistakes.
 - c. Attitudes toward brethren—love, cooperation, appreciation for others, submissive, hospitable, warmth, friendliness, openness, gentleness, meekness, forgiveness, forbearance, patience and longsuffering.
2. This lesson the third and last in this series, will focus on attitudes we need to have that will allow us to be successful in meeting the responsibilities God has given to the local church.

I. Attitudes Toward the Work of the Church

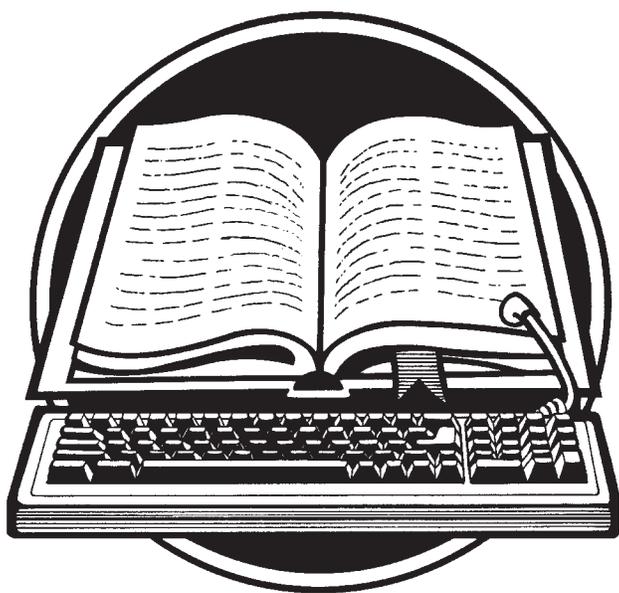
A. Gratitude for the privilege.

1. This is gratitude for the privilege of our work—for the fact that we can be useful to our Lord.
 - Paul certainly possessed this attitude. (1 Tim. 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:9-10)

2. Do we appreciate what an honor it is to be able to offer service in the kingdom of our Lord?
- B. Enthusiasm, eagerness.
1. Remember, for instance, that God loves a “cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9:7)
 2. Even that which is easy becomes difficult if done with reluctance.
 - Nothing is so hard that it cannot be made easier with enthusiasm.
- C. Industriousness, diligence, energy.
1. Like those in Nehemiah’s day, we need a “mind to work.” (Neh. 4:6)
 2. If we are to serve men “heartily,” how much more the Lord? (Col. 3:23)
 3. “Some people are like blisters—they never show up until the work is almost done.” (Anon.)
 4. The slothful person is just as harmful as the destructive person. (Prov. 18:9; 24:30-34; 21:25)
- D. Initiative.
1. Initiative has been defined as the willingness to do what is right without having to be prodded.
 2. We should not have to be constantly reminded of our responsibilities. (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6)
 3. “When you see something that needs to be done, don’t criticize—energize!” (Anon.)
- E. Positive outlook.
1. We are to do things “without complaining and disputing.” (Phil. 2:14)
 - NASV: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”
 2. The chronic complainer and the negative thinker are obstructions to the work of the congregation.
- F. Persistence.
1. We must have the attitude of Christ—not just to do but to finish the work of God. (John 4:34; 6:38)
 2. We must not become “sluggish.” (Heb. 6:12)
 3. If we persist in serving the Lord and accomplishing His work, then we can say with Paul, “I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7)

Conclusion

1. Ideal attitudes make for ideal working conditions among members of the local church.
2. Having the attitudes considered in this lesson will help the cause of Christ in any congregation.
3. The attitudes we have studied will:
 - a. Improve our relation with God and ourselves.
 - b. Make us “useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Tim. 2:21)
4. Each must ask, “Do I have or am I developing the right kind of attitudes?”



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