

SINS OF ATTITUDE

Philippians 2:3-4

Phil. 2:3-4 (NIV) ³*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* ⁴*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

WHY ATTITUDE MATTERS

The Chinese Olympics Team has surpassed its expectation to win 20 gold medals and performed exceptionally well in many events in so many unexpected ways, such as Men's 110 m Hurdle, Women's 10,000 K, Women's Double Tennis and many Diving Events. The Athens 2004 Olympics Game is an excellent learning example for our Chinese Olympics Team to learn how to prepare for the Beijing 2008 Olympics Game.

Olympic gold figure skater Scott Hamilton, who was a four-time world champion and the 1984 Olympic gold medal winner, once said, "The only disability in life is a bad attitude." You may recall that Scott Hamilton had a lot of obstacles to overcome on his way to becoming an Olympic gold medallist since 1981, when he won the first of eight consecutive national and world titles. Even from his early childhood, Scott was fighting with disease continually; and in Mar 1997 he was diagnosed with testicular cancer. He remained optimistic, however, and never gave up. He had a good attitude even in adversity.

What do we mean, then, when we talk about attitude? According to Webster's Dictionary, one definition is "a manner showing one's feelings or thoughts; one's disposition, opinion, etc." Attitude can be good or bad. T.W. Hunt, noted author of *The Mind of Christ* and former professor at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, recently told seminary students, "You will not know the spiritual world through natural faculties...Being a spiritual person is **a daily way of life.**" To make that truth a part of our lives is the main purpose of this study on the Sins of Attitude.

The way we view ideas, events, or circumstances in life has its roots in our thinking and the conclusions we reach. Most non-Christians look at issues not situations from a world-view that is often in stark contrast to the biblical view. A Christian whose spiritual life is not what it should be can easily fall prey to the distortions of a world-view perspective that leaves God out. God is not only interested in our actions; He also evaluates the attitude behind the action

Today, we will review eight different areas of contrasts: (1) A lukewarm vs. fervent attitude toward God, (2) Sin of Pride vs. Humility, (3) Sin of Vanity (self-centeredness) vs. Christ-centeredness (4) An attitude of prejudice or partiality vs. impartiality, (5) Sin of Unbelief vs. faith, (6) An angry or disagreeable vs. kind attitude towards people, (7) An unloving vs. forgiving attitude, (8) The sin of materialism vs. Holiness with contentment (which is a great gain!)

(1) Contrast 1 (lukewarmness - fervency)

When a Christian is lukewarm toward God it becomes apparent that his love for God is not as great as he thought it was.

Rev. 3:15-16 (NIV) ¹⁵*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!* ¹⁶*So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

Are you willing to stand up for Christ? Attitude Diligence

Gideon was industrious; he was threshing out corn in the winepress. He did his work in that most unlikely and unsuitable place in order to hide it from the Midianites. The days were so evil that very little seemed possible, and indeed most of the people had fled to caves and holes, being paralyzed and impotent because of their ever-present enemies.

The Lord is certainly not "with" a slothful person, since to Him diligence is an essential quality. "In diligence not slothful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11) describes the kind of man God looks for, and in the person of Gideon He found him.

"The Lord turned toward him". The Lord always turns toward those who are alert to seize even small opportunities of service. The same principle applied to the ten thousand who were taken down to the river to get a drink (**Judges 7:4**). The last thing that could have occurred to those men was that their method of drinking was really a test, but once again God's decision and choice was based on a gesture, a gesture which revealed those who were putting divine interests before their own personal affairs.

(2) Contrast 2 (pride – humility)

A proud, self-righteous person sees little need for spiritual cleansing and growth in his own life. Think about this: Why is it so difficult to recognize self-righteousness in ourselves? Beloved, as we continue our journey with God let us be ever mindful to humble ourselves before our Mighty God.

1 Pet. 5:5 (NIV) ⁵*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

Humility is the prime mark, the hallmark, of spirituality. With Gideon there was no pride of person, for far from thinking highly of himself he clearly rated himself very low. He had no pride of family, being ready to confess that his was the poorest household in Manasseh.

Gideon was a man of a genuinely humble spirit. No wonder it says that "The Lord turned to (looked upon) him (v14)"! He did not harbor any sense of superiority over the people around him in spiritual matters. He put himself among them and recognized himself to be one with them in their poor spiritual state. If we are proud of our more advanced understanding or of our imagined spirituality; if we look down on others in a critical fault-finding way; then the Lord will never look upon us as He looked upon Gideon nor choose us as His instruments.

God found Gideon in a humble spirit at the beginning, and He subsequently took pains to reduce him and bring him even lower, for lowliness is the ground of the presence and the power of God.

(3) Contrast 3 (vanity; self-centeredness, Chris-centeredness)

God is not pleased with the person who is overly concerned with himself and his own needs and desires. Have the group turn to item #3 on the worksheet entitled "Meditation." and read it silently. (Or it may be read aloud.)

Phil. 2:3-4 (NIV) ³*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* ⁴*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Gideon was not one of those introverts who are always pre-occupied with their own condition. He might well have been filled with self-pity and complaints at being involved in such a sorry situation, but instead he was concerned about the troubles of others and

was ready to pray and act on their behalf. Nobody can serve the name and honor of the Lord **by doctrines, by clever interpretations of the Scriptures or by mystical perspective of spiritual truths.** The Lord will not spend much time looking towards the theorizers; He is watching for men with hearts that are as burdened as Gideon's was, burdened with inward suffering over the unhappy state of His people.

(4) Contrast 4 (prejudice - impartiality)

God is no respecter of persons but loves all people equally. Tragically, prejudice comes in many subtle forms and is all too common. God expects believers to respect and care about people of every race, culture, class and creed just as He does.

James 2:1 (NIV) ¹*My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. James 2:4 (NIV)* ⁴*have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

(5) Contrast 5 (unbelief - faith)

Believers of weak faith tend to experience doubt, worry, and fear for the future rather than trust God who has promised to be with us no matter what. He has promised perfect peace to those who choose to trust Him. (Isaiah 26:3)

Heb. 11:6 (NIV) ⁶*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Boy, can we have some doubts now? A small congregation taking a faith challenge of ADDITIONAL \$100,000 by October 3! Are we going to have an attitude of unbelief? Or are we simply going to faithfully pray and ask that God provide?

God told Gideon to raise an army of Israelites to fight against the Midianites, Amalekites, and other enemies of Israel who had crossed over the Jordan River. Gideon sent messages to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali. They responded, and sent Gideon large numbers of fighting men.

God was not pleased that so many had responded. "*The LORD said to Gideon, 'You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, 'Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.*" -- Judges 7:2 - 7:3 (NIV)

God still was not pleased. He wanted to perform a miracle that Gideon and his people would never forget. So He told Gideon to reduce the size of the army even more. "*But the LORD said to Gideon, 'There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go.*" -- Judges 7:4 (NIV)

(6) Contrast 6 (unbridled anger - kindness)

An angry, contentious attitude is in direct contrast to what God desires for His people. The Spirit cannot work in an angry heart.

Eph. 4:2 (NIV) ²*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

(7) Contrast 7 (unloving - forgiving)

God is love, and He expects believers to develop toward others a loving spirit that refuses to hold grudges, is willing to forgive, and practices kindness.

1 Cor. 13:4 (NIV) ⁴*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 1 Cor. 13:7 (NIV)* ⁷*It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Christ has given us an alternative—to forgive each other for the oppositions we face, internally or externally. A spirit to agree to disagree in our opinions. That allows us to stay together and stay warm.

(8) Contrast 8 (materialistic - content)

Americans have lived in an affluent society for many years. Many of us have come to consider the things we want as necessities. What are some wrong attitudes that some people to be more materialistic? (Possible answers: covetousness, pride, greed, discontent, poor management)

1 Tim. 6:6 (NIV) ⁶*But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 John 2:15 through 1 John 2:17 (NIV)* ¹⁵*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Sofa \$100 – Alex thought it cost us \$1500 to \$2000. Ken & Karen's sofas were a lot worse in terms of quality – the pads are broke and I was sitting on the springs. Can we be happy? Yes. Can we be unhappy? Yes. It is all up to us when it comes to attitude. To date, May and my bed still does not have headboard even. We've been praying about it, for keep pushing back. Sometimes we she would say, 'if we would just skip one CSP pledge, we would be able to do a lot of what we want with our house. Indeed, we could have gone to a furniture store to get it. But that money belongs to God from the date we made the commitment back in May of 2003!

In fact, human greed is the reason making many of the Internet scams successful, such as the Nigerian scam, which is hugely successful. According to a 1997 newspaper article: "We have confirmed losses just in the United States of over \$100 million in the last 15 months," said Special Agent James Caldwell, of the Secret Service financial crimes division. "And that's just the ones we know of. We figure a lot of people don't report them." These scams have been making the e-mail rounds for the last few years...and was actually prominent before e-mail became common. Many of them are now modified to purport being from other countries. Or, claim to be Christians. There are people actually falling for these. They receive a check or money order (usually drawn on a Canadian bank--taking longer to clear) in exchange for a small security fee of a few thousand dollars. By the time their monetary instrument is proven to be counterfeit, their own check has been cashed and the are left holding the (proverbial) bag.

If we are to climb to the height God reveals, it can never be done later—it must be done now. And the sacrifice must be worked through our will before we actually perform it. (Oswald Chambers, November 11, 2002)

Invitation:

Do I have wrong attitudes I need to work on? Record these thoughts on the Prayer Journal. Share with the group if you wish.