

PHILIPPIANS BIBLE STUDY

Philippians 2:5-11(b)

Lesson #13

THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST JESUS (Pt.2)

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil 2:5-11 (NASB)

INTRODUCTION

Last week we began our study of these passages of scripture that speak of the attitude of Christ Jesus. And, immediately, in the first sentence (v.5) we are told to have this same attitude in ourselves also. We probably all understand that our own attitude is partly innate and partly discipline. By that I mean that some of what constitutes our attitude is a result of our own personality and character. But some our attitude we intentionally develop ourselves, through practiced discipline, as we deem appropriate and desirable. Therefore I would like to discuss these two perspectives (1) the innate portion, and (2) the studied disciplines, that together constitute what we call attitude. Which is a popular topic today.

1. **The Innate or Inward Formation (or Transformation) of our Attitude**

The act of regeneration, or conversion as we sometimes call it, is the first step toward developing the attitude of Christ. This is performed by a sovereign act of God through the gift of saving faith, as declared in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9. Without a new heart and new mind that has been freed from slavery to sin we can't even begin such a process as that of becoming Christlike in our own attitude. This is described by Paul in his epistle to the Romans:

16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:16-18 (NASB)

Just as a slave in the times of the Roman empire could not make himself free by any act of his own doing; neither can man make himself free from slavery to sin by any act of his own doing. It is not a decision on his part, or a particular state of mind, it is rather a matter of ownership and authority, at a level far beyond the slave's grasp. First someone else had to step forward who was both willing and able to pay for his freedom, because his redemption price was far greater than any slave could ever hope to amass by himself.

Therefore, in like manner to our example, the initial act of this process, that is the innate portion, must be an act of God, performed completely external to ourselves, as we are not equipped with the resources or the authority to accomplish it ourselves, even if we did really want to, which for the most part we do not. Oh yes, even in our unregenerate state we all might have one or two particular sins that we wish we didn't have, but nobody, of his own free will, wants to be freed of everything that God calls sin. Such a desire for absolute righteousness is like that of the Roman slave, it is beyond our capability to amass. Of our own free will we want a little bit of righteousness and a little bit of sin, and we ourselves definitely want to be the one who defines which is which and chooses the proportions.

In our pre-redeemed state of mind, we are willing to discuss and condemn sin as long as we get to define what sin is. Our definition of serious sin is those heinous things that other people do, and our definition of little insignificant sin is all those things we ourselves do that we kind of know we probably shouldn't. But since our God is a loving God, He surely won't hold those little ones against us will He?

It is only when we are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ that our eyes can begin to see clearly, and our minds can begin to function coherently, and we can begin to see sin for what it really is in the eyes of God. This is among the first steps in the development of the attitude that is in Christ Jesus. Who knew no sin Himself, but willingly became sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God, in Him. (2 Co 5:21) Sinlessness defined His attitude.

So, having the attitude of Christ must begin with a clear understanding of sin and righteousness. The Apostle John said that no one who continues to live in sin, and excuses or condones it, has really been born of God.

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. [Made effectual] By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 2:3-6 (NASB)

This is a very interesting verse in that it directly connects what we believe with how we behave. It clearly says that if we believe something then that something will be obviously demonstrated by how we act. And then, for absolute clarity, it states it again in reverse order. That is, if we aren't keeping His commands then we're lying if we say we know Him. By this verse alone it is simple enough to know what we really believe or don't believe.

Simply put, if we love and keep the commandments of Christ then we may have confidence that we are regenerated and we abide in Him. And conversely, if we still love our sins and continue in them without intense guilt and sorrow, then we have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and we are still accountable for our sins.

It really is pretty easy to do a self assessment. We all know what we really love and what we really don't. We may put on a front for others, or even for ourselves, but in our hearts we know how we really feel.

John also wrote:

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

For the sake of clarity now let's define some things. These verses do not say that those who are regenerated no longer feel the temptations of sin. That is not what it says, and that is not what the Bible teaches. But, they do say that the yielding of ourselves to those temptations must progressively and increasingly come to an end. And, in the meantime we are to confess them, not condone them, and agonize over our failures to perfectly resist in every instance.

Do you remember the verses from Hebrews that declare:

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb 4:15-16 (NASB)

If we may indeed take this verse at face value, then we are told that Jesus Himself was affected in His humanity by the allure of temptations of all the same sorts as we ourselves. Yet without ever, even once, succumbing to them. And He is therefore able to truly understand and sympathize with our weaknesses.

From these verses we may take comfort that the temptations that bombard us every day are not an indication that we aren't really Christians. Every believer knows the frustration of temptations that enter his or her minds continually. At the most inappropriate times our minds will come up with a thought or feeling that appalls us and assaults our sensitivities.

And we question how in the world that could happen, and where did it come from. But we know where it comes from. It's from the realm of those principalities and powers of darkness that still have the capability to influence us from the spiritual realm, where they are more capable and we are less knowledgeable. And that's why we are told to wage spiritual warfare with these principalities and powers, and to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, who did exactly that Himself. (2 Co 10:5)

Therefore, we do not judge our authenticity of faith by the presence or absence of temptations in our lives, but rather we judge the authenticity of our faith by how we *react to* these temptations. It is clearly the Father's design that His children come to maturity through a refining process that involves an ongoing warfare with sin and temptations. He could have simply snapped His fingers and immediately zapped us all into perfection, but He didn't choose to do it that way. This was not an oversight or flaw in God's plan, it is His express intent, and I'm certain that He knows what's best for us.

The scriptures show us that although God has a final and definite plan toward which He is working, He nevertheless puts a very great deal of emphasis on the detailed process by which it is finally implemented. For God it isn't just the bottom line that's important, it's also very much how we get there that counts. For this purpose He has given us the scriptures, and He has given us His Spirit, and He has given us His Son as a model, to be both the author and the perfecter of our faith, bestowed by the grace of God. (Heb 12:2; Eph 2:8-9) And we are told that these faith weapons are divinely powerful enough to destroy Satan's fortresses of temptations and keep us from his grasp and control, regardless of his continued ability to tempt and entice us through the weakness of our flesh. (2 Cor 10:2)

It was only fitting and right that our prototype model be perfect, even though we ourselves are not. Nevertheless, the attitude of Christ was an attitude of perfect holiness and obedience to the will of His Father. Though we may have a lesser level of strength than Him, nevertheless our attitude should be no less than His. Our desire and our aspiration in the depths of our heart and mind, if we are regenerated, should be just like that of Jesus Himself. And if so, then our whole life will reflect that attitude. In our affections, in our beliefs, and in our actions, because the word repeatedly tells us that our actions are the authenticator of our true beliefs, and our genuine faith, and our real attitude.

13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Romans 2:13 (NASB)

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter

Matt 7:21 (NASB)

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:4-10 (NASB)

To rightly understand this verse it is imperative to comprehend the distinction between the commission of a sin and the practice of sin. And attitude is very much a part of that distinction. The commission of a sin is not by itself the practice of sin. One certainly must commit a sin to practice it, but the commission of a sin doesn't make it a practice. If it did then there would be no true Christians, as even we who are born again, as Paul describes in Romans chapter seven, still fall into occasional sin. So what is the difference?

First, true believers will never attempt to justify their sin, but will confess it as sin and ask for strength to resist it in the future. The practitioner on the other hand, will not feel sorrowful or ashamed, but will minimize and justify sin and will have no desire to stop whatsoever, but only to justify or excuse it so that he may continue doing it. For him the blood of Jesus is the means to continue in his sin and yet not be held accountable for it.

For the true believer however, the blood of Jesus was to atone for our failure and weakness as we strive to honor Christ by our confession, repentance, remorse, and Godly obedience. (Discuss this issue further)

So what is the point we are seeing? Clearly that the attitude of Christ begins and revolves around the understanding and dealing with sin. Therefore, for us to have in ourselves the attitude of Jesus Christ, we must understand that everything begins with, and revolves around, how we feel about, and deal with, sin and temptations. This is not a background issue for believers, as some seem to think and teach, it is the prime directive for those who are in Christ Jesus. And this is among the most reliable indicators of the authenticity of our faith. Christ's attitude was that of perfect and supreme love of God His Father and joyful submission to his will. And that must be the *genuine heart attitude* of every true believer, because that is what the gift of a new heart means. It means a new heart that loves all that God is in His nature and holiness and righteousness, and a mind that is in full knowledge of, and full agreement with, all that He commands and requires in His holy scriptures. To love God *is* to love His commands also.

Which now brings us to our point number two:

2. The Studied Disciplines of Attitude

Now some of this point was covered in the first point, but this second aspect of the attitude of Jesus Christ is more about our expression of His attitude through learned disciplines, where the first was more about the inward valuation and appreciation and affectionate desires of those things that are holy and divine and Godly in their very nature.

You see, there must first be those affections and appreciations and longings for Godliness, or there will be no progressive conforming toward them. Because this progressive transforming comes with much work and difficulty. One only strives against difficulty if he perceives a valuable enough benefit for doing so. A farmer strives against the hard ground and foul weather and nasty pests because he perceives the benefit of having something for him and his family to eat next winter. Today most of us go to work five days a week doing things for someone else because we perceive the benefit of getting a paycheck for ourselves at the end of the week.

Now if we're fortunate, we have a job that we enjoy and find rewarding, but even so, few if any would still continue doing it if they stopped getting paid for it. For example. It might be argued that continuing to perform our jobs without getting paid for it would benefit humanity and prosper our community, so we should be happy to do our jobs whether we get paid for it or not. Now this is a logical enough argument, but we know that logical or not, very few will be willing to work for nothing whatsoever but the satisfaction of helping the community. As honorable as that might be.

In an examination of attitude, we must consider the fact that we are designed with a logical mind that takes more into consideration than just one aspect. We naturally (that is our normal human nature) weigh the benefits of our actions to others along with the benefits derived to ourselves and our families. We usually try to balance our actions based on *our perception* of their overall priority of importance.

If we agree that this is an accurate evaluation of how humans make decisions, then we are left with the conclusion that our actions, at least for the most part, are driven by our mental perceptions of priority. Now let me say that our priority can be based on many different things. Perhaps tangible needs, perhaps perceived obligations, perhaps personal enjoyment, or a whole host of other possibilities; but in the end we prioritize all the things in our lives by their respective weight of importance as *we perceive it to be* in our rational minds.

Nothing can move up or down on our priority list beyond the level that we understand it and comprehend how it interacts with our own life and welfare. No matter how important something might *actually* be to our welfare, it will nevertheless only be as valuable *to us* as we rationally understand and appreciate that importance.

Now I'm not saying that we must understand exactly how everything works, but rather how it relates to us personally. For instance, someone might love his new sports car above all else, even though he has no idea how the engine and transmission actually work. This person has come to love his new car by beholding its beauty, by driving it around the countryside, and by spending much time using and enjoying and pampering it. His affection for it is based on his direct interaction with it. If it wasn't actually his, but he just saw it drive by his house, or a picture of it in a magazine, then it would hold a very different position on his personal priority list.

The point I'm making here in this discussion of what constitutes attitude, is that everything that we do, the big things and the little things, all have their roots embedded in our mental perspective of life priorities. The things that we do and say are not really just random and spontaneous, but are all influenced by a set of core priorities that are then honed and refined by our personal disciplines and practiced responses. These attributes are then firmly embedded in our minds and hearts. Now, let's hold this thought for just a moment and go take a look at the attitude of Christ Jesus.

Jesus, as a young man, was the oldest son of a widowed mother with four other brothers and at least two sisters. So what was His priority of life here on earth. As the eldest son did he assume the position of household provider after His father's death, and spend the rest of His life providing for His family? That is what was expected of a first born son in that day and that culture was it not?

The fact is, we aren't told much about what Jesus did in His early years, except at the age of 12 when He stayed behind in Jerusalem and debated with the Jewish religious teachers. His father Joseph was still alive then and it's likely that most, or all, of His brothers and sisters were already born by that time.

When the biblical account of Jesus picks back up, He has now passed His 30th birthday, the age required to serve in the priesthood, and He is being baptized by John the Baptist. Now we are going to be introduced to the attitude of Jesus by the four gospel accounts of His life and ministry. What He has done for the previous 30 years we aren't told, so it's meaningless to spend much time speculating. But whatever it was we may be assured that it was righteous in the eyes of God and honorable in the eyes of man.

However, after that day when He was baptized by John, He was also endorsed by God His Father, and ordained into His priestly position as the Savior of mankind and the beloved Son of Almighty God. From that day forward His mission was crystal clear, rock solid, and staunchly unwavering. His attitude was publically demonstrated before all creation. And what attitude was that?

It can be said without controversy that the attitude of Jesus Christ was first and foremost to do the will of His Father who had sent Him. He said it repeated, and it was recorded by the gospel writers, that He came into the earth not to do His own will, but specifically to do the will of His Father who had sent Him. (Jn 6:28, 8:38; Mat 26:39, 42)

Now, for those who like to play word games, this does not mean that He himself would have rather done something else. It is the specific acknowledgment that the plan was instituted and ordained by the Father, and He as the Son, was cheerfully in agreement to walk in His Father's will, and in perfect obedience to fulfill His Father's purpose for His life, no matter what hardships that might impose, or what it might cost Him to do so. And His subsequent life unreservedly authenticated this stated attitude of obedience and submission to His Father's will. What He said with His words, He lived with his life.

It is interesting to note here that the baptism of Jesus was not the conclusion of His ministry, it was only the beginning. And likewise the baptism of every believer into the body of Christ is not the conclusion of our journey but only the commencement of it. And, as I have labored so diligently to point out, our journey will only be as successful as our perception of the value of that journey. How important is it to become like Jesus Christ in our own attitude? Is it a little bit important, moderately important, quite important, or, is it perhaps absolutely imperative to our very survival? Each one has to make that evaluation for themselves. But, let me give you some help. Remember what Jesus told His closest disciples: Be ready now, because I'm going to read some very specific and stark verses from the scriptures that came directly from the lips of Jesus! (Consider this for your next evangelism crusade)

26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. 27 "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. 28 "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? 29 "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit

down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 "Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. 33 "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. 34 "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? 35 "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Luke 14:26-35 (NASB)

So, we ask ourselves, just how important is it to have the same attitude in ourselves that was in Jesus Christ? Is it optional or is it mandatory? How important is this to us, and where does it reside on our personal list of life priorities? As we each decide this for ourselves, we should ask where it seemed to reside on Christ's priority list.

Now returning to our discussion on what constitutes attitude, like the guy with the fancy sports car in my earlier example, we can only set a priority on something in as much as it rationally relates to us personally in our understanding and appreciation. To the degree that we make Him and His attitude a relational part of our daily life, to that degree, and that degree only, will He be important and valuable on our own personal life priority list. (Use it or lose it)

Maybe the real question is, if He isn't the first and highest priority on our personal priority list, then are we really His disciple? Just how many will there be who shout "Lord, Lord", only to be told that He has never known them, because their actions didn't match up with their words? (Mat 7:21-23) According to scripture this group will be the many taking the wide gate and broad path, but only a few find that narrow gate and difficult path. (Mat 7:13-14) Ever wonder just how few?

If our actions don't match up with our words, then it's because our minds and hearts don't really hold those words to be dear and precious. And nothing can or will be more dear and precious to us than the degree to which we understand it and personally interrelate with it. Our appreciation of things is tied to our direct involvement with those things.

Even if we are indeed born again Christians, nevertheless what it amounts to is this. Our appreciation of, and our affection for Christ, and our desire to be like Him in our attitude and behaviors, will never rise above our level of understanding of the value of how that relationship directly affects us personally. In other words, how does my knowing Him affect me with respect to how I think and behave; and what difference, if any, does that make? How important is it that my knowledge of Him influences my daily actions? Do I believe that it really matters a great deal, personally and eternally, to thoroughly know as much as I possibly can about Him, and by that knowledge to be conformed to His likeness, or, are these mostly just very pretty words?

Again I will say that our level of personal importance of the things of Christ will never rise above the level of our personal daily involvement with those things. Our level of priority of knowing and doing the things recorded in the scriptures will never rise above the level of our personal time spent in the diligent study of what those scriptures say. Unless you love the scriptures enough to commit to reading them daily, yes I said daily, then your genuine appreciation of them will never exceed your actual exposure time to them. You cannot wait until you love them to begin to read them, you will only ever come to love them if you first commit to reading and diligently studying them. If you feel no desire to do this then admit it to God and ask Him to give you that desire, for the scriptures assure us that such a prayer will indeed be answered. (1 Jn 5:14-15)

Our personal priority of becoming like Jesus will never rise above our time spent learning to know Him, and the value of that knowledge as it relates to us personally. And our knowledge of that benefit will never rise above our daily commitment to involve ourselves in the process of self denial and willful obedience to His commands, and the immense joy that is derived in that admittedly difficult process. It is in the hands on personal participation of the things divine and godly that the joy is made real and the appreciation is nurtured. Though Christ was called the Teacher, He was certainly not just an academic. He didn't say that He came to **learn** His Father's will, He said that He came to **do** His Father's will.

The attitude of Jesus Christ was one of absolute obedience to the will of His Father. It meant leaving His family alone, giving up His job, living on the move without even a place out of the weather to sleep at night, and preaching a message that repeatedly brought Him much more hostility than acceptance.

And from the onset He knew that it would result in His death at the hands of His own people, and yet He persevered in perfect obedience, all for the joy of fulfilling His Fathers will, and for that infinitesimal little group of humanity that His Father had given Him as His eventual bride, and

to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 9:23 (NASB)

Conclusion:

I have attempted to dissect the attitude of man and the attitude of Christ and put them into workable segments. I've pointed out that attitude is partly that which is innate in our very makeup, and partly that which is learned and practiced by experience and knowledge. I hope from our study we've come to see the several aspects of attitude and how they are formed. Some of it must come from outside ourselves, but much of it must be done by us ourselves, through diligent pursuit and genuine commitment to study the scriptures, and then to practice what they teach, and thus become personally involved with them in our daily lives. We have seen from the verses of scriptures themselves that it is the doers of those scriptures, not just the learners only, that are the true disciples of Jesus and who share His attitude.

The exhortation to have this mind in us that was also in Christ Jesus is one that can only be given to genuine born again believers. The scriptures tell us that the natural mind cannot understand the things of God, indeed they appear foolish to him, and those who do believe them are often held in contempt by those who don't. (1Cor 2:14)

So, it follows, that this command is only to those who have first received His Spirit and now have the capacity to believe and comprehend the deep and profound spiritual truths that are revealed in the holy scriptures. This part is something completely beyond our own control and is granted as a gift to certain elect recipients solely as an unmerited gift of God. (Eph 2:8-9)

But if that was all there is to it, then it would make no sense to call the believers to have something that they already do have. No, this is a call to develop something ourselves by using those gifts that we've received from another. This is a call to first learn, and then put into practice, the will of God in our day to day lives. As Christ our model did when He was here. This attitude of Christ Jesus is not just a way of thinking, it's a way of thinking that works itself out visibly in our daily lives. This is the faith that bears the fruits of righteous behaviors, (Jn 15:1-8) and the faith that shows itself by good works (Jas 2:14-26) The attitude of Christ was two fold. He *knew* the will of God, and He *did* the will of God.

I have endeavored to point out in this message that having received the first part as a free gift, we are now under obligation and command to diligently study the scriptures to learn every possible aspect of the will of God, and then by hands on daily participation, which means obedience to this knowledge, our appreciation of God, and all that He is, grows daily, and that appreciation then manifests itself in visible and public behaviors that bring glory to God in the doing.

Verse 5 says: Have this attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus. So then what is this verse? Is it a suggestion, is it a hopeless hyperbole, or, is it an essential command? What place does this scripture hold on our personal life priority list, and just how important is it in our regular daily life? Well, how important was it to Christ Jesus?

Amen,
Closing Prayer.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church
Robert Andrews, Pastor