

Some Points on Positive Attitudes From Philippians

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Proverbs 23:7a *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.* The context of this passage was to warn us in partaking with the rich; their heart is not with us. But we also see a generic truth in that our lives are dictated by our attitudes. One of the earliest self-help books (1905) by James Allen took this verse as its title. The main point was that “Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are.” Perhaps this idea of the importance of our attitude is well summed up in Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Paul’s admonition concludes in Philippians 4:6-9 with the things that we ought to set our minds on. These things that we ought to think on reflect the positive characteristics we can find in the world around us and in ourselves. We see this application by Paul in Philippians 3:12-14, as he consider that he does not weigh the past, but lives today for tomorrow.

A Christian needs to work on having the Right Mind. Christians need to see things differently. Peter speaks much about this. He says we need to have a visible hope in the world in 1 Peter 3:15. He says our behavior needs to be chaste and fearful conduct in 1 Peter 3:2. Above all, we need to have a visible honorable behavior in 1 Peter 2:11-12. In applying these principles we are focusing on what is right to the degree that we are seen by the world and commended.

Dwelling on What is Good

Dwelling on things virtuous and praiseworthy in yourself, in our congregation and in our community is not always easy. But there are noble and good things all around us. We need to see them and praise them. We need to acknowledge we are blessed to live in 2020.

Not Dwelling on the Past

In Philippians 3:4-9 Paul describes how he refuses to live in the past. He did not dwell on what was good in his past, such as his pedigree in Judaism or his successes in serving Christ. Nor did he dwell on his failures, either by being a blasphemer of God or of failing to accomplish what he desired in Christ. Paul focused on what he could do now.

We need to be like this. We need to not lament what we have given up (Luke 9:62). We need to avoid dwelling on old wrongs (Matthew 6:15). We also need to avoid resting on past laurels (Isaiah 64:6). In the same way, regret is not something to dwell on either (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Not Grumbling

Paul told the Philippians to “do all things without grumbling or disputing” in Philippians 2:14. Consider grumbling by its other names in Scriptures: complaining, finding fault, and consider disputing: argumentative, contentious. This is an important lesson for us. In Numbers 11:4-34 we read how Israel longed for past delicacies in Egypt to the degree that in their complaint they desired to return to Egypt. Had they forgotten their slavery? This was Offensive to God to insult His blessings. God’s response was to given them what they wanted by sending them meat until it was loathsome. Even as they were eating it, God plagued them for their complaints. In John 6:32-33 Jesus said He was the Bread from Heaven. Jesus sets us free from sin & provides for us; are we obsessed with the delicacies of men?

The Philippian admonition is to have an attitude that people see and want. That attitude includes hope in desperate times, joy in depressing times, and peace in worrisome times, and love in treacherous times. We also need to learn to live in today; measure your success in this day. Don’t dwell in the past and don’t put off to the future. Avoid the pitfall of complaint and self-pity; train yourself to think on “these things”.