

## ATTITUDE (a 3-part Bible study), 7 pgs, PART 1

Much of the Old Testament speaks like this, *listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe ... that you should act according to them ... be careful to observe them ... Be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you ... you shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you ... Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes ...*

This way of looking at God's dealing with Israel has the rigid feel of a heavy burden due to the overwhelming sovereignty and holiness of God. Obedience, requirements, obligations, and duties characterize this way of approaching God. Though this is true, it is a mistake to view God only in this way because it is only a partial view of reality. There is another way to approach submission to God. Notice what God focuses on in the following passages:

In Dt.14:22-27, In anticipation of bringing Israel into the land God directs His people each year to travel to the place where He has chosen to make His name abide and present a tithe of their produce. If it is too far to travel with the tithe, the people could exchange goods for money and buy whatever your heart desires. They were to eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. The families were to celebrate in the presence of God by eating a portion of the tithe in happy fellowship with the priests, Levites, and the poor.

Dt.15:1-11, again in anticipation of Israel's occupation of the land, speaks of the forgiveness of debts every 7th year. you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his needs, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, The seventh year of release is at hand, and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing [warning against yielding to greed] ... You shall surely give to him and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him ... You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and needy, in your land.

Dt.15:12-18 continues the same idea of generosity for slaves due to be released after their service period of 6 years. you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. Then the reason or ground supporting these attitudes is given, You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you ...

In Dt.27:11-13, the tribes of Israel are divided to pronounce blessings and curses. During the curses for disobedience, comes a remarkable judgment upon Israel's attitude (28:47-48), Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything ...

Describe Israel's attitude. How was it displayed?

The Bible speaks of (1) actions (what we do or don't do), (2) motives (why we do or not, what governs our actions, moves us), (3) attitudes (how or in what spirit we go about doing or not doing), and (4) beliefs (ideas taken into one's heart that govern his perception). It is this area of attitudes that

we focus on here, the disposition of our mind and heart toward God. The manner in which we do a thing indicates our attitude or spirit at the time.

It is in the freedom of God's love that we enjoy Him and appreciate His sovereignty and holiness. We can understand why there could be no other way to accomplish our redemption than for Christ to bear our sins. Therefore, we know for sure two things about the events and circumstances of our lives: (1) the consequences of sin and the evil that is in the world will touch us all in various ways; (2) but, *nothing has the power to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom.8:31-39*. The whole picture liberates us to place a positive construction upon the events and circumstances of our lives (ie, to construe them in a positive way in favor of God's good intent as opposed to being angry with Him and imagining that He enjoys our suffering) because *in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, Jn.16:33*.

to think further along these lines, look carefully at attitude in **Col.3:1-7 & Phil.2:1-18**.

## ATTITUDE, PART 2

God was very much aware of Israel's **ungratefulness**. Last time we ended by considering our attitude toward God, that we should honor Him and think well of Him by thinking positively upon the events and circumstances of our lives. Even though *tribulation* will definitely be part of life, Jesus' victory over sin and death gives us reason to *be of good cheer (Jn.16:33)*.

Let us further consider Israel's attitude. **Num.14:1-4** is an account of their refusal to enter the land God had promised to give them. It was typical of their response to difficulties that arose during their journey across the wilderness (**Ex.16:2; 17:3**). In **Dt.1:26-33**, Moses recounts the incident and speaks of the people's contrary attitude by articulating what was really in their heart, *because the Lord hates us, He brought us ... [here] to destroy us (v.27)*. They construed God's intent as evil. In spite of all that God had done to deliver them from slavery in Egypt, *they did not believe God (v.32)*. To put it another way, *they did not believe in God*. **Ps.106:24-25** comments, *They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word (v.24)* in spite of the fact that God had revealed this time to them when he made a covenant with Abram ... *your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own [Egypt] and that they will be enslaved and mistreated [there] ... In the fourth generation [400 years later] your descendants will come back here [the very land on which the covenant with Abram was made] ... On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, To your descendants I give this land [all that was taking place was foretold and promised] ... and he named the peoples that occupied the very land the Israelites had refused to displace, Gen.15:13, 16, 18-19*.

Moses understood that the people's reaction to him was really **an accusation against God**, *Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord? (Ex.17:2-3; see Ps.78:5-12, 17-19, 40-42, 56-59)*. **Heb.3 & 4** comment on their *rebellion, the day of trial*. The immediate introduction says we are **Christ's household** *if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end (3:6)*. As it was with Israel [God tested them through difficulties, **Dt.8:2-5, 14-17**], so it is with us. *It is God who tests our hearts (1 Thes.2:2-4; see Ps.119: before I was afflicted, v.67 ; it is good that I have*

been afflicted, **v.71**; in faithfulness *You have afflicted me, v.75*). Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you ... but rejoice ... that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy, **1 Pt.4:12-13**. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials (**Jas.1:2**). And you became followers of us and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit (**1 Thes.1:6**). Rejoice when you are mistreated for Jesus sake (**Mt.5:12**) as the apostles did (**Acts 5:41**). Everything God does and allows has a good reason and a good purpose. As we wait for the Lord and the completion of our redemption we often *do not know what we should pray for as we ought (Rom.8:26)*, but we do know that *He works all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose [and anticipate his appearing with eagerness] (Rom.8:28)*.

Reading through **Phil.2:1-18**, one is confronted by the spirit in which we approach all of life. Our disposition is to be like-minded as Christ (**v.2-3, 5**) having a spirit of humility (**v.3-8**), the opposite of attitudes of pride and conceit (**v.3**). Paul says that it is up to us to set our heart to live in the light of our redemption (*work out your own salvation, v.12 [perseverance of the saints]*). **With fear and trembling (v.12)** is a warning of the seriousness with which we are to trust God. It is the equivalent to beware in the Old Testament. *[conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear, 1 Pt.1:17]*. **God's work in us, v.13** [*preservation of the saints*], **is toward converting us** (*that you may become, v.14*) into people having the character of His children (**v.15**), changed from a surly and bitter old man with his sordid life (one of the *crooked and perverse generation*; see **Rom.6:6**) into a new man starting off clean as a young child (*blameless and innocent, v.15*). And, what is it that characterizes us, noticeably sets us apart from our old life and the rest of humanity? We have a different spirit. We *do all things without grumbling and arguing (v.14)*. **This is a way of stating in negative terms living and maintaining a grateful and hopeful disposition no matter what**, founded upon the finished work of Christ (**v.16**). I find it helpful to begin and end each day by giving thanks to God and blessing Him for His work (*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks [see Beyond Abraham, p.11-12]; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you 1 Thes.5:16-18*). There is rejoicing and gladness, v.18 ].

We find the same call to become a new man in **Col.3:1-4:6**. **V.3:1** states the unseen reality (what we say and think we believe) and a course of action that corresponds to it. **V.2** continues with the mindset and focus commensurate with that reality. **V.3** relates the past reality with its present results. **V.4** expresses the future reality and our expectation. **V.5** is a conclusion, a necessary internal course of action. **V.6-7** remind us of a fact of our personal history [*old man*] to reinforce commitment to that action. Note that among the things which characterize the new man are thankfulness (3:15, 17; 4:2) and a heart full of song [*joy*] **3:16**; see **Acts 16:25**). Why song? *In this [salvation] you greatly rejoice, 1 Pt.1:6. you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, v.8*. Remember how it was around the time of Jesus' birth. Mary visits and the babe (John) kicks in Elizabeth's womb *for joy (Lk1:39-44). I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all people Lk.2:8-14*.

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Next time we'll look to **Dt.4-9** for answers to the tough questions. **How do we put on the new man, love God, work out our own salvation, etc. without turning our efforts into more commands to obey, like the other duties and requirements** Israel was directed to keep?

### ATTITUDE, PART 3

*we ... are fellow workers for your joy. (2 Cor.1:24) Your statutes have been my songs (Ps.119:54)*

LET'S BEGIN WITH AN EXERCISE. [answers at end of lesson]

- 1. List 8 nouns, like commandments, that describe the kinds of things the Bible tells people to keep or do (see **Ps.19 & 119**).*
- 2. List 8 verbs, besides keep and do, that describe how we are to treat those commandments, etc.*
- 3. List 3 verbs that call us to a certain attitude toward those commandments, etc.*
- 4. List some nouns or verbs that honestly depict your disposition toward keeping or doing those commandments, etc.*

Though translations may vary, **there are 3 concepts we can use to hang our how-to on: KNOW; REMEMBER; UNDERSTAND.**

The **knowledge** God gives us comes in the form of personal experience interpreted by propositional truth. It is this knowledge that we are to learn, teach, and remember. Remembering implies doing (obeying) [just as hears the word and understands, Mt.13:23 does; see Listen below and Jas.1:22-25] and means keeping the knowledge fresh in our thoughts. This knowledge is intended to mature and lead to understanding. **Understanding** means: making sense of the facts (knowledge); integrating facts so explanations and purposes are revealed; putting together what and how with why; making sense of the facts so we realize what they mean and how important they are. The secret of **how to** is maintaining awareness of (remembering) my redemption in Christ. [Though this answer raises its own question of, How, the answers are apparent.] *If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth [About?], and the truth shall make you free [From?] (Jn.8:31-32).*

**EXERCISE IN DEUTERONOMY** [Not everything of importance is copied, the rest of these verses are helpful also]: **find the above 3 concepts** in the following verses and mark them to distinguish one from another.

**4:1**, ...*listen to the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ which I teach you to \_\_\_\_\_* ... [The command to listen to Jesus (**Mt.17:5**) is parallel] Listen in the Old Testament is comparable to *He who has ears, let him hear in the New*. Listen! Something is being said, taught; something to hear, to learn as well as to do >> **v.8**

**4:2**, Don't alter or modify the word commanded [as the Pharisees did], but think about it as He gave it in its context and carry it out completely (**5:33**) without rationalizing changes (**5:32**). [God has carefully drawn patterns of substance in this realm to convey truth pertaining to His unseen nature and character, **Ex.25: 40**]

4:3-4, you personally experienced God's judgment and are alive because *you held fast*.

4:6, God's statutes and judgments are wisdom and understanding for us. [??]

4:7, Our God is real and approachable.

4:9, *Only take heed to yourself [How?], and diligently keep yourself [?], lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart...and teach them.*

4:10, *Gather the people ... and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me ... and that they may teach.*

4:11, You were there at the mountain.

4:12, The Lord spoke, you heard.

4:13, He declared His Covenant and wrote the ten commandments.

4:14, Moses taught them (4:5).

4:35, *To you it was shown, that you might know ... [What?]*

4:39, *Therefore know this day, and consider in your heart ... [What?]*

6:6, *these words ... shall be in your heart.*

6:7, You shall teach them ... [How?]

6:8, bind them ... [Say what?]

6:9, write them ... [Where? What for?]

6:12, *beware, lest you forget the Lord who delivered you from bondage in Egypt.*

6:20-25, When your son asks you the meaning ... [What will you reply?]

7:9, Therefore know ... [What?]

8:11-14, *Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God ... [In what way? What is the emphasis?]*

8:18, You shall remember ...

9:3, Therefore understand ...

9:7, Remember! Do not forget ...

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***NOTICE The Interplay of these Concepts in Other Scriptures and Their Effect on Our Lives.***

KNOWING - Read aloud 2 Pt.1:2-9; 2:20; 3:17-18 and discuss. What does life in 2 Pt.1:3 refer to?

REMEMBERING - Read aloud 2 Pt.1:12-18; 3:1-2, 8 and discuss. [Note the parallel between Dt.4:11-12 and 2 Pt.1:16-18]

UNDERSTANDING - Read aloud 2 Pt.3:16; Lk.24:45 and discuss.



**PRINCIPLE** – A love does not need to be supported by discipline, but discipline is necessary to learn to love. [Apply this to yourself in the area of meditation.]

### ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

1. 8 nouns - Statutes, laws, ordinances, judgments, testimonies, precepts, ways, word
2. 8 verbs - Observe, walk in them, listen to, obey, take heed, act in accord with, seek, turn from, meditate on, remember, do not forget
3. My disposition - *Lack of motivation (desire), guilt*
4. 3 verbs - *Love, delight in, rejoice, incline my heart, hate (reject) false ways*

### ATTITUDE, EPILOGUE

**The mark of a true believer is the fact that a particular kind of change is occurring. What kind? Is that change taking place in you? What makes you think so?**

*that through these you may become partakers of the Divine \_\_\_\_\_, 2 Pt.1:4; but grow, 3:18. be transformed by the renewing of your mind, Rom.12:2. we...all are being transformed, 2 Cor.3:18. Now I rejoice ... that your sorrow led to repentance ... for Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation [growth and progress in the Christian life], 2 Cor.7:9-10.*

Many years ago, my boss used a number of adjectives that exactly described my negative, sultry attitude at work. It was obvious that he had rehearsed his comments and that he had been praying about it. I realized that God had so blessed me in Christ that I had no reason to be negative, and from that day I decided to go to work each day with a grateful heart and maintain a joyful spirit. And by God's grace, I did. Every once in a while the old discontent begins to surface, so I have a little talk with myself. I remind myself of the huge thing God did for me in opening my eyes to the Gospel, of forgiveness and righteousness before Him. My life changed and I bless God as a regular natural part of secret worship.

One Sunday this year, while I was staying at a friend's and working on his house in Tennessee, we went to a small local Baptist church for Sunday school and morning service. When I walked in the front door, I was handed a paper cutout of a key with a girl's name, Rachel Butler. Everyone attending that Sunday was given a different name. The church was preparing for "Vacation Bible School" and we were asked to pray for kids who attended last year. Sometime prior to this, I had realized that I lived much of my life without giving careful thought to comments, events or encounters such as this. If God had something to show or teach me, what would it take for Him to get my attention? I had already formed the habit of giving further attention to sermons. So, I prayed for Rachel the rest of my stay in even though it is unlikely that I will ever meet her or visit that church again.

This principle of the second look (giving more careful consideration) is really what **meditation** is about. Thinking about things (things you already know) is the process of remembering and leads to gaining understanding (realizing the meaning). It is the focus of **Jas.1:22-25**, where the end result is to become a doer of the work ... that He might ... purify for Himself His own special people,

**zealous for good works, Tit.2:11-14 ... be careful to maintain good works, Tit.3:4-8. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, Eph.2:8-9.**

One thing is certain: A true believer is deliberate in following Christ.