

# THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

03-66

Dear Reader

With this issue we will complete our study of *attitudes* by looking at a few verses in 2 Corinthians through Revelation. We do not by any stretch of the imagination claim to have found all references to attitudes, so there's room for much more personal study. Also, it may be difficult to tell when something is an action versus an attitude. The verse we started with in Proverbs 23:7 indicates that our actions proceed from our thoughts or attitudes. Let's begin with 2 Corinthians .....

## 2 Corinthians

The attitude of **desiring to comfort or console others** (1:4-5) is simply following God who is "the God of all comfort." This attitude is most pleasing to our Lord. May we exhibit it often!

The attitude of **caring for others** is seen in Paul's actions in chapter 2:4 and many other locations. Although necessary, it was anguish to have to rebuke those he loved. Do we love to find fault or is it only done if really necessary for the person's spiritual good? The Corinthians sadly and wrongly had **reserved affections** for Paul, but it was very much one sided (6:12). See Galatians 4:19.

Paul insists on a **forgiving attitude** even when someone as bad as the immoral man of 1 Corinthians 5 had caused them much grief (2:7-8), once confession had been made. Do we *fully forgive* a repentant sinner when he or she has hurt us or our family or our close friends?

How careful are we **not to offend** (6:3)? If we have a me-first attitude instead of a people-first attitude, we are likely to offend many and often. Some people seem to have a knack of offending others. Such are surely not being led by the Spirit! Do you offend others by your attitudes?

How many of us can say honestly that we "**take pleasure in infirmities**" (12:9-10)? Paul knew that God was over all and if some health restriction was given him, it was necessary for his spiritual good! What a remarkable attitude! Many of us experience some infirmity. How do we feel about it? How do we respond to it before God?

Many **bad attitudes can be found in an assembly** and Paul feared he would find contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits and tumults at Corinth (12:19-21). Think about these

obviously bad attitudes! Are any true of you? I fear they are seen all too often among the Lord's people.

## Galatians

When we deal with attitudes, when we see kindness and meekness (not demanding one's rights) we sometimes get the impression that one can't be firm. But we need to always have a **God- or truth-first attitude** as seen by Paul standing against those who would subvert the truth, but still done in true love for them. This is seen too in Paul publicly withstanding Peter "because he was to be blamed" (2:11-12). Peter was wrong; he was leading people astray; and he had to be immediately corrected.

For some reason the Galatians had developed a **determined attitude to reject the truth** (5:4,7) and even to bite and devour one another (v.15). No wonder Paul said, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" (3:1). This attitude is sometimes sadly seen when dealing with headship issues in the home and assembly. Chapter 5:19-24 contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. Which set of verses match your attitudes? Do we not too often see manifested the works of the flesh, indicating attitudes that do not come from God? Note also verses 25-26.

"Stand fast ... in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" (5:1). Using this liberty to serve one another (5:13) would give us right attitudes towards our brethren in love, **instead of biting and devouring one another** (5:14-15).

"**Bear one another's burdens**" (6:2). This is a Christ- and people-first attitude instead of one thinking he is something special, being deceived (v.3). We, at best, are only the Lord's servants or slaves! The Christlike attitude of bearing burdens may be a thankless task, but if our attitudes are right, it will be done for Christ. "Let us do good to all" (v.10).

## Ephesians

Paul over and over again showed the wonderful **attitude of being thankful for others and for their blessings** (1:15-17). "Giving thanks always for all things" (5:20).

The great apostle Paul showed a **wonderfully meek attitude**: "I am less than the least of all the saints" (3:8). No service was too low for him. He never gave an "I'm superior" attitude as he worked among many classes of people. This is seen in his prayer of chapter 3:14-21, where his desire for the good of the brethren is so very evident. He

wanted this same “**lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering and bearing with one another in love**” (4:1-3) which he exhibited, to be the attitude of the Ephesian brethren ... and of us! Is it, dear brethren?

Ephesians 4:22-32 is full of attitudes, good and bad. What is our *intention* when we speak? Is it an **attitude of truth or lying**, maybe twisting the truth to our advantage. Do we sin in our anger: do we have an **attitude of anger**: are we known as an angry person, not pleasant to be around? Is the Holy Spirit grieved by our attitudes and resulting actions? Has all bitterness, wrath, anger, quarreling, evil speaking and malice been judged and put away? Rather, are we kind, tenderhearted, forgiving – as we have been forgiven? My experience is, dear brothers and sisters, that unscriptural attitudes and resulting actions are often seen. We need individually to seriously ask, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me ... and see if there is any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps.139:23), keeping in mind how serious the Lord considers disobedience in the assembly: “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” God is not mocked!

The **attitude of genuine love** is found over and over again. “Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us” (5:1-2). This is imitating Christ. Instead of being characterized by sexual innuendo, we need to be known as ones who give thanks – a thankful attitude (vv.3-4).

An attitude of **spiritual carefulness** is seen in verses 15-17 – a life lived careful before God of what and when we say things and do things, careful to use our time wisely, careful to act in the Lord’s will. God says that doing the opposite is being a fool! Strong words!

Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1 and 1 Peter 3:1-7 give **proper Christlike attitudes in the family and work environment**. Wives are to submit because the husband is the head of the wife; husbands are to genuinely love their wives; children are to obey their parents in the Lord and always honor them; fathers are not to provoke children to wrath; employees are to obey their bosses and not just when they are being watched; employers (bosses) are to treat their employees well. All this is done unto the Lord because it is his will.

Several times we hear of **Tychicus** (6:21; Col.4:7) who must have been a most Christlike person with marvelous attitudes, for he was both a “beloved brother” – one people loved to be around – and a “faithful minister in the Lord -- one who never compromised with the truth.

## Philippians

As before, we see in Paul’s prayer (1:3-11) **his humble attitude and his love** for the brethren with the “affection

of Jesus Christ.” He prayed that their love would increasingly abound, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness.”

Even **those who preach Christ can do it with an attitude of envy** (selfish ambition) and strife (1:15-18) while others have the proper attitude of goodwill and love for God and for people. God will deal with those who preached Christ with a wrong motive: Paul was happy that Christ was preached. His attitude was, “to live is Christ”! Are we performing any Christian service with a wrong attitude? What a serious question!

Be likeminded. Have the same love. Be of one accord. **No selfish ambition. No deceit. Rather, be lowly. Esteem others better than oneself.** Although not neglecting one’s own interests (we have to live and function), look out for the interests of others (2:1-5). Since Paul mentions these attitudes so often, they must have been a real threat to the early believers and their assemblies. If then, how much more so now! Is Satan using you to threaten the very viability of the local assembly? Or is the Holy Spirit using you to further the assembly’s and God’s interests? Solemn question!

“**Do all things without complaining and disputing**” (2:14). Do we love to complain or dispute? Are we known by these attitudes? Both brothers and sisters need to take Paul’s admonition to heart, for we too easily have this attitude problem. Are we too fearful to confront it because it would be uncomfortable to do so?

An **attitude of desiring worldly gain instead of spiritual gain** (2:20-22) was widespread in Paul’s day: how much greater is the danger in our materialistic society! Thankfully, Timothy and Epaphroditus (v.25), like the apostle, desired spiritual gain for themselves and others. Paul counted that which was normally thought of as “gain” by the world, as loss, as rubbish, that he might gain Christ (3:7-14). He “pressed towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Contrary to the popular saying, the truth is, “He who dies with the most toys, *loses!*” Ask the Lord to show you where you fit into this serious matter.

“Let your gentleness be known to all” (4:5). To be known as having a **gentle attitude** is a wonderful thing. I know of brethren like that and it’s a pleasure to be around them.

“I have learned ... to be content (4:11). “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim.6:6-10). Instead of a **contented attitude**, so many agitate for change, whether in physical things (as in Philippians) or in spiritual things (1 Timothy) and cause constant turmoil in the assembly. Are you a contented or contentious person? See Hebrews 13:5.

## Colossians

A **legalistic attitude** is seen in 2:20-23. Some want to force rules not found in Scripture. “These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion.” People who deem themselves to be wise, of superior gift or knowledge or spirituality, are perhaps most susceptible to this kind of legalism because they deem their way (although Scripture is silent) to be more spiritual. It is a serious threat to the well-being of God’s people!

The opposite of the above is seen in the **attitudes of tender mercies, longsuffering**, bearing with one another (our different personalities, etc), forgiveness, seeking the truth, and above all, love (3:12-16).

When we “**hold fast to the Head**” (2:19) we will develop **Christlike attitudes**. And even if there is a legitimate complaint about someone (3:13), we should forgive, having a humble attitude combined with love.

We need to be constantly in the **attitude of prayer** (4:2) and **gracious speech**, seasoned with the truth (v.6) and godly zeal (v.13).

## 1 and 2 Thessalonians

The Thessalonians were a **young assembly with great attitudes** (1:3-7) – their works of faith, patience and enduring persecution became examples for all. Paul wanted their love to *abound* (3:12; 4:9-10). That love was to be seen in minding their own business and working with their hands (4:11), never rendering evil for evil (5:15). This good attitude was still seen in the second epistle (1:3).

Satan spoils what he can. What only required a gentle warning in the first epistle was found to be a **sinful attitude on the part of some of being disorderly, being busybodies, refusing to work, in the second epistle**. Paul commanded that such change their ways (2 Thes.3:11-12). Do any of us display such a sinful attitude? If not stopped they will spread and characterize an assembly.

## 1 and 2 Timothy

Note the attitudes required of an elder or overseer (and deacons too) in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9. It is a worthwhile study which you can do on your own. Perhaps the reason why there are so few qualified elders whom the Holy Spirit appoints (Acts 20:28) is because our attitudes have become so poor, so self-centered, so worldly.

A requirement of a servant of the Lord is to have the **attitude of impartiality, without prejudice** (5:21). Race, language, place in society, degree of wealth, or any other such matter should not influence any service for the Lord. The

rich might be in special danger of this (6:17). James 2:1-9 makes God’s view of being impartial very plain. Please read it.

An **arguing attitude** (6:20-21) is to be avoided, perhaps here bringing in worldly wisdom (like evolution) to the things of God. Those who haughtily argue either a long or short time since creation, often despising each other when neither can be proven from Scripture or from science, might fall into this class. See 2 Timothy 2:23-24.

Don’t have the **attitude of being ashamed** of anything having to do with the truth, so argued Paul (2 Tim.1:8). I’ve heard of those ashamed to bring their friends to small assemblies where the singing and preaching doesn’t meet the glitter of large choirs and great, trained orators. If this attitude is prevalent, no wonder assemblies don’t grow.

Onesiphorus has gone down in history as having a **diligent attitude** (1:17). He sought out Paul very zealously or very diligently ... and found him! Isn’t much of our lack of understanding of things such as assembly walk, because of our lack of zeal in searching out the truth? God intimates that if you are *diligent*, you *will* find the answer from Him.

The **terrible attitudes displayed in 2 Timothy 3:1-5**, and their consequent actions, require “turning away” from those who practice them. Think carefully on these things. Do you see any of those attitudes in yourselves? The people referred to evidently are believers (contrary to much opinion), for we are never told to turn away from those of the world who we may work with, go to school with, and who live in our neighborhoods. See 1 Corinthians 5:10.

Finally we see the **attitude of “itching ears”** – wanting to hear what one wants to hear, a deliberate attempt to turn away from the truth while soothing one’s conscience at the same time (2 Tim.4:3-4). I fear this subtle but most dangerous attitude is all around us! Rather, we are to have a **watchful attitude** (v.5) for such ploys of the devil.

## Titus, Philemon and Hebrews

**Attitudes of older women** are delineated in Titus 2:3-5 – reverent in behavior, teachers of good things especially to younger sisters. Young men also are to exhibit the attitudes of sobriety, good works, sound doctrine, integrity, sound (wise) speech (2:6-8). All are to exhibit the attitude of subjection to authority, careful speech, being peaceable and gentle, showing humility to all (3:1-2)

“Reject a divisive man.” (3:10). A person with an **opinionated attitude** seeks a following, seeks to divide the saints based on his own opinions. He may think of himself as a great teacher, as the most spiritual, but his opinions are his own, not something clearly seen in Scripture. This is a

most dangerous attitude which we have seen before in our study of attitudes. Do what God says: reject such people.

We see many **good attitudes in the examples of godly men in Hebrews 11**. Note for example Moses (vv.24-26). He had it made, being next in line to the throne of Egypt. But he had a God-centered attitude and loved God's people, the Israelites. He chose "to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing [temporary] pleasures of sin." Do we make such spiritually-wise decisions? Will we "lay aside every weight" that ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us"? (12:1-2)

## James

James 1:2,12-14 shows the **attitude of joy in trials**. Only the new nature can do this. Also prominent is the **control of one's tongue** (1:26; 3:6-11) which requires a humble attitude in the control of the Holy Spirit. See 1 Peter 4:12-17 for more on trials and our proper attitudes therein.

A **bitter, self-seeking attitude is a lie against the truth** (3:14-18), and confusion and every evil thing are its companions. On the other hand, the godly attitude – the wisdom from above – is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, without partiality or hypocrisy [pretending to be what one isn't]. I've seen bitter attitudes bring in many evils. What are your attitudes in relation to these verses?

**The attitude that desires worldly pleasure** (4:1-4) are said to also multiply evil. Meditate on these verses!

**Grumbling against each other** is an attitude that brings God's condemnation (5:9). Such attitudes need to be confessed to God and to one another (v.16). Such attitudes seem to get integrated into some personalities and are excused as the person just being himself or herself. But that's wrong! *It's the flesh*, one's sinful nature, being active!

## Peter's and John's Epistles

"Love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Pet.1:22; 4:8-9). Once again this **attitude of love** is strongly stated because we so often fail in it. This includes hospitality and a humble attitude (5:6). 1 John 2:7-5:3 is so full of the contrast between a loving and hateful attitude that it would take several pages to adequately take it up in detail. Please read and seriously consider the contrasts given by divine inspiration. Giving up truth is not showing love to either God or our brethren. See also 2 John 5-6. But this is no excuse to be hateful. If others hate us, so be it. But we are not to return the favor.

A **chain of godly attitudes** is seen in 2 Peter 1:5-8. Study them! The promise is that if these attitudes abound in us, we will be neither spiritually useless nor unfruitful.

A wonderful attitude-verse is 2 Peter 3:18: "**Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord.**" If these two things were constantly seen in us, what happy people we would be, in happy assemblies growing in the knowledge and practices pleasing to our Lord.

A **confessing attitude** is seen in the famous verse, 1 John 1:9. It seems sometimes we will do anything but confess sin, as if we were too superior to humble ourselves to that point. I've seen many a sin go unconfessed! Then we wonder why we aren't blessed more!

John's **loving attitude that rejoiced in other's blessing** is seen in 3 John 1-4. Are we genuinely pleased with material and other blessings experienced by our brethren? The contrast is Diotrephes who sought personal prominence and power above others (1:9-10). Are our attitudes like John's or Diotrephes? John would righteously deal with Diotrephes: John's loving attitude could not allow such unrighteousness to continue to hurt the brethren.

## Jude and Revelation

Note some of the bad attitudes of evidently unsaved men – evil speakers (Jude 9-10), **mockers walking according to their own lusts** (vv.18-19). Please don't have attitudes like them! Rather, "keep yourselves in the love of God" (v.21).

In the epistles to the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 there are many attitudes seen which we will have to leave to your study. One of the most tragic was that the Ephesians had "left your first love" – their love for Christ – which negated so many good things. How much do we really love Him? It is a very serious question that will greatly affect our millennial reward as we reign with Him. The contrast is seen in 3:8 where those of the Philadelphian assembly had kept the Lord's word and had not denied His name (3:8). The Lord meant everything to them.

## RPD

While somewhat repetitive we trust this study of attitudes has been seriously and prayerfully considered by brothers and sisters alike, younger and older alike too. I trust you have looked up the many references. I'm convinced the matter of our attitudes is Satan's most effective attack of the day to hinder the Lord's work and take away our enjoyment of Christ. Just as Paul confronted Peter, we need *in true love* to confront unscriptural attitudes whenever and wherever found, calling them what they are – the works of the flesh and tools of Satan. It won't be easy, but great blessing is the expected outcome!

A new doctrine called *the pre-wrath rapture* is gaining many adherents. It wrongly has the Church going through much of the Tribulation. We plan to confront this next.