

RIGHT ATTITUDES

1 Thess. 5: 12-18

¹²We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

This text is packed with positive instructions to all Christians. Paul by this time has seen a lot of turmoil in the church and the problems and hurt this brought to a congregation. Rather than dictate or try to order these Christians, Paul appeals to them as a brother in the Lord. He has had issues with those outside the church everywhere he goes and Paul desires a respite when he is with those in the body of Christ.

As Paul writes here, he is teaching us to watch ourselves and more specifically, watch our attitude toward others. In my Christian life I have observed many within the church that do not possess an attitude of gratitude. When we honestly remember that we are simply a sinner that has been blessed by the salvation that Jesus offers in His blood it ought to help us be extremely liberal in our assessment and acceptance of all others.

We cannot afford to possess the attitude that I have witnessed that we are the one true church; we have the truth; everyone else is wrong in their understanding of the scriptures and only the church of Christ members are going to heaven.

Now having said that, I believe I have the truth – it is called the word of God. I believe I am a member of the Lord’s church – the one in heaven which the Lord keeps and is therefore perfect. I’m also a member of a local congregation full of frail human beings including the leadership that try to oversee the congregation. I believe that my current understanding of scripture is correct – but I’ve been wrong in the past. I believe you must be a member of Christ’s church to go to heaven – but not all “churches of Christ” are doing what God wants.

I believe that good attitudes are critical to our quality of life. If our attitude is positive, we are likely to be positive about most things in life. Good attitudes also affect the health of every local church.

A rigid, legalistic attitude about the work and worship of the local church where God has not commanded is to be avoided. This is the reason that Paul talks to us about attitudes in this passage.

So, this morning I want to appeal to this text and study it together so that we can appreciate what Paul is asking us to do. I want each of us to examine our attitude in certain areas and see if it please God. There are **four groups** that we must have a good attitude about.

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Let's Look At The Four Groups.

1. ELDERS

1 Thes. 5:12-13 *“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”*

Some things Paul tells us about elders:

- a. They *“have charge over you”* – speaks of one who is out front leading; one who rules; an overseer.
- b. They *“diligently labor among you”* – speaks of hard, strenuous, continued labor.
- c. They *“give you instruction”* – admonish; have a serious, straight forward talk with someone either to advise them or warn them.

The attitude that we are to have toward those who lead:

- a. *“Appreciate them”*; vs. 13.
- b. *“Esteem them”* – think highly of them; vs. 13.
- c. *“Live in peace with one another”*; vs. 13.

I have been blessed over the years to serve with some wonderful Elders. I can say without hesitation that nearly all of them were diligent in their desire to care for the flock. They spend many hours together talking about the needs of the congregation and at times the need of individual sheep. All those I've served with were not paid – it was voluntary. Hours of time given for Christians that they love and want to help get to heaven.

I've witnessed ungrateful and mean-spirited brethren regarding their treatment of Elders.

I've heard Elders referred to in inappropriate ways using inappropriate language. I've known Godly men in many places that were well qualified who would not serve because their Dad or Granddad had served, and they saw the abusive treatment of Christians toward their loved one. This should never happen in any church of Christ.

So many churches of Christ do not have Elders because men don't want to put themselves in the position of being abused and unappreciated for their efforts.

2. THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING:

Vs. 14: *And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.*

“Brethren” – this is something that we all as Christians are to do.

“Admonish the unruly”: **Unruly** – speaks of one who is “out of step” or “out of line”; the brother in Christ who is not walking as a Christian should. **Admonish** – warn him; this word has a note of seriousness behind it; it is sitting down and saying, “The Lord is coming again, and you need to live in a way to be ready.”

“Encourage the fainthearted” **Fainthearted** speaks of one who is timid; ready to give up; the tired; the weary. **Encourage** – stand by His side; come along beside and take them with you.

“Help the weak” **Weak** speaks of those who are not very strong. (Didn't grow up in a Christian home; Lacking in Bible study; Meeting a lot of resistance; Not sold on the idea; Not mature in knowledge.) Our duty is to support them in any way we can because it is commanded of us. This kind of attitude toward our brothers and sisters in Christ will make the church healthier.

“Be patient with all men” – the unruly, the fainthearted, and the weak will try your patience, but we are to keep on admonishing, encouraging, and helping if there is still hope.

3. THOSE THAT INJURE YOU

¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.

Persecution and trials have a way of wearing on our patience. Paul says, “Don't retaliate; don't strike back even if a brother wrongs you.” Instead, seek after that which is good for all men.

4. GOD:

¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Why should we always rejoice? Because, we recognize in this life there will be suffering but even then, we belong to Jesus. And we know that one day, when the Lord comes back, there will be no more pain. We should also rejoice because we know the hope of the resurrection. We should rejoice because we are forgiven and can continue to be forgiven. There should be no reason for us as Christians, even in the worst of times, to not find joy because of the hope that is ours in Christ. Therefore, we can rejoice always

This constant joy then finds its expression in talking to God. ***“Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”***

No matter what is going on in our life, we can always find something to be thankful for in **every** circumstance if we keep Jesus at our center. Each situation can help us grow and be more like Jesus and allow His light to shine through us.

“This is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Paul simply tells us that God wants us to rejoice always; wants us to pray without ceasing; wants us to give thanks in everything in life. In other words; **It is God’s will that I have a right attitude in all things.**

Throughout this short letter Paul exhorts every Christian to do certain things and to abstain from others. It is imperative that we develop a love for Jesus that makes this almost second nature to us.

If I am critical, grumpy, and have a sour attitude all the time I am as much out of the will of God as someone who has not become a Christian. God intends for us as His people to have a proper attitude toward all people in and out of the church. He demands that we have a proper attitude toward Him. And God tells us this is for our own happiness.

CONCLUSION

Attitude is something we each control. I can choose to get out of bed each morning grumpy or I can choose to make myself content and as happy as is possible in every given situation. That is a **Choice**.

As Joshua said in Josh. 24:15 – ***“choose this day whom you will serve....”***