

Sunday, August 14, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD (24)
Pursuing Holiness (8)
Godly attitudes and character

Today we continue our theme for 2022, Closer to God. The past 2 months we have been studying the subject of holiness. Having established the holiness of God we now want to begin examining how it affects the various areas of our life. In our last lesson we noted that if we are pursuing holiness, we will devote ourselves to Him, faithfully serve Him, live lives separate from the world and live lives of purity. Holiness is something that is going to affect every area of our lives. So today, let's start talking about the various areas of our lives. Today, we want to discuss our attitude and character.

- I. Pursuing a godly attitude
 - a. Attitude – a good, bad or neutral mental orientation toward something – a person, group, subject or action. It is the way one acts toward what is going on.
 - b. We understand the importance of attitude – it can define you. One's overall attitude is a character trait. Do you have a good attitude (a positive and pleasant approach toward life)? Or do you have a bad attitude (a negative and sullen approach toward life)? Or are you somewhere between the two?
 - i. An example of an overall bad attitude – consider Israel most of the time, especially in the wilderness.
 - ii. Examples of good attitudes include Paul who was willing to change, Cornelius, and numerous other examples of conversion in scripture.
 - c. The NKJV does not use the word "attitude." But you cannot read your Bible without seeing it everywhere. The NKJV speaks of how we think and about our mind, our countenance and other descriptive qualities associated with attitude.
 - d. The NASB uses the word 9 times and gives us some insight (Note: This is a good illustration of how comparing versions can give you clearer understanding of words). Some of the examples in the NASB (NKJV description given for comparison)
 - i. Genesis 31:2-3 speaks of the attitude of Laban toward Jacob. NKJV uses the word countenance.
 - ii. Jeremiah 12:3, "But You know me, O LORD: You see me; And You examine my heart's *attitude* toward You." (NASB) NKJV, "And You have tested my heart toward You." The word is added for clarity (while not in the original)
 - iii. Luke 1:17, concerning John the Baptist as a forerunner, he would "turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children and the disobedient to the *attitude* of the righteous." NKJV says "the disobedient to the *wisdom* of the just." The word is one that means thinking or the process of the mind to consider something. Wisdom is the better word, but certainly this wisdom involves a proper attitude.
 - iv. Philippians 2:5, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (NASB). The NKJV, "Let this mind be in you..." Again, the word is about the way we think and here clearly INVOLVES our attitude. The mindset of Jesus reflected His attitude toward obeying God.
 - v. Philippians 3:15, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this *attitude*; and if in anything you have a different *attitude*, God will reveal that also to you"; (NASB) The NKJV, Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this *mind*; and if in anything you *think* otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. AGAIN, this shows attitude involves our way of thinking.

- vi. Colossians 4:2, the NASB says to keep alert in prayer “with an attitude of thanksgiving” while the NKJV says simply, “with thanksgiving”; James 2:1, NASB speaks of “an attitude of personal favoritism”, while the NKJV says, “with partiality”. In BOTH of these, the word attitude is not in the text, but added for interpreted clarity. (NOTE: Both thanksgiving and partiality are attitudes).
- e. The Bible and attitude
 - i. Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things*. Dwell on these types of qualities.
 - ii. Romans 12:2, *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
 - iii. Ephesians 4:23, also speaks of being renewed in the spirit of your mind.
 - iv. Philippians 2:14-15, *Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*
 - v. 1 Peter 4:1, *Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.* Defined as a particular way of thinking or one’s mental attitude (also found in Hebrew 4:12 – “intents of the heart”)
 - vi. Galatians 5:22-23, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* This is a great passage to illustrate one’s disposition. Notice that it does not say, “fruits of the Spirit” (plural), but “fruit” (singular). That’s because it is ONE fruit that will produce ALL these qualities and you might add, “and such like”.
 - vii. Colossians 3:23, *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,*
- f. These verses, along with many others, manifest the importance of a Christian attitude. IF we are to pursue holiness, we need a godly attitude. And it is going to be reflected in many different attitudes.

II. Attitudes that manifest holiness

- a. **Determination** – we must be heaven focused – Colossians 3:1-2, my mind needs to be on things above. This was the focus of our last lesson as we noted we are devoted to Him. That determination is a foundational attitude that will drive everything else in our lives. I am reminded of Paul in Acts 21:13 on his way to Jerusalem to be arrested and mistreated, *“Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*
- b. **Reverence** – again, we have addressed reverence on numerous occasions, especially dealing with holiness.
 - i. Reverence toward God is where our attitude toward holiness in Him will begin (Hebrews 12:28). We CANNOT be holy if we do not reverence Him (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16).
 - ii. Here I simply want to remind us that if our attitude is what it ought to be, we will NOT want to do or say anything that would belittle or disrespect God or His ways. We will be cautious and on guard to ensure that does not happen. And it IS a matter of attitude.
- c. **Love** –
 - i. Christian love is about caring that leads to sacrifice. It is at the pinnacle of our Christian lives and the motive behind every relationship we have and why we do what we do for others.
 - ii. We love God and therefore we strive for holiness – Matthew 22:37 – with all our heart, soul and mind. If we love Him, we will obey Him completely – 1 John 5:2-3. 1 John 4:19 – we love Him because He first loved us. This reflects attitude. Why do we serve and obey Him. Because we love Him.

- iii. We will also love others – as noted, EVERY relationship in the life of a Christian is rooted in love. We love one another as brethren - John 13:34-35, Ephesians 4:2 – bearing with one another in love; We love our neighbors – Matthew 22:39, Roman 13:9, etc.; We even love our enemies – Matthew 5:43-44.
 - iv. I have to care – striving for holiness in Christian love, I will care what others think (w/o compromise) and I will be concerned about how I am perceived by others. Recall 1 Peter 2:11-12.
- d. **Well-pleasing** – If we are striving to be holy, our goal is to be “well-pleasing” to Him. 2 Corinthians 5:9, *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.* I want to hear, “Well done good and faithful servant.”
- e. **Contentment** –
 - i. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 – Godliness with contentment is great gain;
 - ii. Philippians 4:11-13 – Paul had learned to be content regardless of what condition he found himself in.
 - iii. How often does the pursuit of stuff hinder our holy lives. Luke 8:14 – the thorny soil – cares, riches and pleasures of life choked out the word.
 - iv. In pursuing holiness, I need to be willing to live with what I have. And this is an attitude that I can CHOOSE.
- f. **Gratitude** – continually scripture reminds us to be thankful.
 - i. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 – in everything give thanks. Philippians 4:6 also.
 - ii. Colossians 2:6-7, *As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.*
 - iii. Be reminded of the failures of Israel, both in the wilderness and after they inherited the Promised Land. Continually, they rebelled against God. One of the prime factors was ingratitude. They complained about the manna, lack of water, etc.
 - iv. 2 Timothy 3:2 – a manifestation of the latter days when men act selfishly.
 - v. If we are going to be holy to God, it will hinge on being grateful for all that He has done. (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:15 – thanks be to God for His indescribable gift)
- g. **Humility and meekness** –
 - i. Another foundational quality of the Christian life is humility.
 - ii. James 4:10, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble
 - iii. Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in Spirit and Blessed are the meek - Matthew 5:3-5
 - iv. Philippians 2:3-5 – we have the perfect example of humility in Jesus.
 - v. Holiness will cause us to not think too highly of ourselves – Romans 12:3 – rather I will think soberly. We will keep our place.
 - vi. Concerning Paul’s thorn in the flesh – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. It was there lest he be exalted above measure...
- h. **Peaceable** –
 - i. Matthew 5:9 – blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called sons of God. Romans 12:18 – as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Hebrews 12:14, *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*
 - ii. If we are to be set apart, as we have noted recently in frequent lessons (about 1 Peter and some in our study of holiness), we are not seeking to draw undue attention to ourselves. Instead, we do our best to represent God by living honorably among men (1 Peter 2:12, Hebrews 13:18 – in all things we desire to live honorably).
 - iii. In so doing, we bring honor to God (cf. Matthew 5:16), and we demonstrate we are not trying to be troublemakers in this world.
- i. **Kindness** –

- i. Christians ought to be kind to others. 1 Corinthians 13:4, Colossians 3:12, Ephesians 4:32, Galatians 5:22, etc.
 - ii. As with the previous point (peaceable), this is an attitude that needs to be present in our lives as we let our lights shine.
 - iii. It also shows our holiness as we do not retaliate or act hatefully.
 - iv. As I have noted, a major concern I have seen in recent years, is Christians sinking to the ungodly levels of the world in retaliation or reply. That should not be. We are spiritual foreigners. It is what it is when this world stands opposed to God.
- j. **Impartiality** –
- i. Recall that God is an impartial God – 1 Peter 1:17, Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34, etc.
 - ii. We are called upon to be impartial too – 1 Timothy 5:21, James 2:1, 9, 3:17 – the wisdom from above is without partiality.
 - iii. If we are to be holy, we will welcome ANYONE who is willing to submit to Him will – cf. Galatians 3:28.
 - iv. It is just the right attitude to have.

And thus we can see some attitudes we must manifest as we strive for holiness. As we continue our studies, we will see how it will affect everything about us. In our next lesson, we will continue with attitudes as we discuss our character – some qualities that manifest holiness. May we resolve that we will pursue holiness without compromise. Think about it!