

VIGIL



“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

~ I Peter 5:8

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Attitudes Which Prevail**

THANKFULNESS

Sam Willcut

Thankfulness is definitely an attitude that prevails in the life of a child of God. God speaks volumes in his divine word, not just about the attitude of thankfulness, but also the need to express such daily. God designed this attitude to be expressive, and not simply to hold onto it internally. The apostle Paul said, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:15). Johnson Oatman, Jr. wrote the fitting words in 1897, “Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done.” The child of God especially has so much for which to be thankful—material blessings, jobs, family, country, prayer, promises, assurance, hope, church, divine instruction through the Bible and every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). One of the great distinctions between sinners and saints is that Christians even understand the need to be thankful for the difficult moments in their lives (I Peter 1:7-8; Hebrews 12:11). Thus, the attitude of

thankfulness can turn a negative into a positive (cf. Romans 8:28). Joe R. Barnett once wrote that Alexander Wythe, a Scottish preacher, always began his prayers with an expression of thankfulness. One cold, miserable day, the congregation wondered what he would say. He prayed, “We thank thee, O Lord, that it is not always like this” (Gospel Advocate, November 1989). Notice two Biblical reasons why God’s children are to express thankfulness daily.

The child of God expresses thankfulness daily because he realizes God is the source of all blessings. Because God created all things, including the blessings we enjoy and ourselves (cf. Genesis 1:26-31; Acts 17:26-28), we realize that we are stewards of all blessings bestowed to us. If we were more thankful for our rich and abundant blessings, we would become better stewards of them. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psalms 107:1). John wrote in his first epistle, “God is love” (I John 4:7-8). He demonstrated and expressed that love ultimately through

his offering of Jesus for the redemption of all who choose to respond appropriately (cf. John 3:16; Romans 6:17-18; II Corinthians 9:15). Therefore, when one realizes that all blessings, especially salvation from sin, comes from God, one will have no problem expressing such as the Psalmist, “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving” (Psalms 69:30). The child of God realizes, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...” (James 1:17).

The child of God expresses thankfulness daily because he realizes how ugly the sin of ingratitude really is. In one sense, it is worse than the sin of revenge, because revenge is returning evil for evil; ingratitude is returning evil for good and Biblical thankfulness is returning good for either. One reason people drift away from God is that they fail to be thankful. Paul said, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness

Continued on page 8

EDITORIAL

Attitudes Which Prevail

Webster's defines attitude as "a mental position with regard to a fact of state; a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state" (73). Our attitude deals with what we think and how we respond due to our thinking. There are all kinds of attitudes toward every situation. There will always be those who have **BAD** attitudes. Bro. V.P. Black once said that he "wasn't surprised by anything that one did, who had a bad attitude". What is so sad and detrimental to the church is when these bad attitudes prevail. You can have those who are going to have "their way" or destroy the church, such as Diotrephes (3 John 9). Because of this attitude many will not be willing to cooperate for the cause of Christ. Too often there are those who will have a defeatist attitude. We should say, as Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13), but you and I have heard folks say, "It won't work". They choose to be negative and look for the reasons to fail than to succeed. Then there are those who seek the glory or praise. Ananias and Sapphira devised a scheme to make themselves look good, but it cost them their lives (Acts 5:1-13). If the bad attitudes are allowed to prevail, then it is difficult for the Church to accomplish much (3 John 9-11).

What can the Church do? Make sure it is **GOOD** attitudes which prevail and not **BAD**. We must have the attitude of love to be prevalent. Peter said, "...see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Christ said it was by love that "...all men know that ye are my disciples..." (John 13:35). Why is love so important? Love is the basis of actions or at least it should be. Paul said, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Just think of how many problems in the Church could be solved, if we approached them with the attitude of love.

We need the attitude of a servant. What is the attitude of a servant? A servant is humble. Christ taught his disciples to be humble when he washed their feet. He said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). There is a problem in the Church when we have too many chief's and not enough servants! A servant attitude also involves faithfulness. Paul wrote, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). The servants who used their abilities where found faithful and rewarded (Matt. 25:22,23). On the

other hand, the servant who refused to use his ability was not faithful and was punished (Matt. 25:26-30). A servant also recognizes the urgency of his job. Christ said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). If, as a servant, I continue to put off my task, I possess the wrong attitude. As time and opportunities present themselves we must cease them before they are everlastingly gone. God give me the attitude of a servant.

There is no way to discuss all of the good attitudes we should possess. But let me mention one other. We must possess the attitude of forgiveness. In teaching His disciples to pray, Christ said, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). Peter asked the Lord, "...how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? til seven times" (Matt. 18:21)? The Lord's answer was "...Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). Of course this has reference to as often as he ask, we are to forgive. It is imperative for Christians to learn to forgive and forget, so that we can go on about the Lord's work. We cannot accomplish what we need to be doing, if all we ever do is sit around and hold a grudge. We need to give that attitude to the Lord (Rom. 12:19).

God, give us the wisdom to seek good attitudes and the courage to implement them.

ATTENTION VIGIL READERS:

With the cost of publication rising we are always looking for ways to cut the cost. Also, with the rise of computers, another outlet to communicate is in our means. We are interested in sending the *Vigil* by E-mail. If you have an e-mail address we would love to have it, so that you could send you the *Vigil*. Please write, e-mail or telephone us your address and we will put you in our E-mail address book. Thank you

We are pleased to announce these very capable men are the staff writers for *VIGIL*: Andy Cates, Dale Hubbert, Bobby Liddell, Tom Larkin, Jerry Martin, Randy Medlin, James Rogers, Levi Sides, Chuck Webster, Sam Willcut, and Ben Wright. We would like to thank each one of you for your hard work.

Ronnie Hayes, Editor and Ashley Kizer, Associate Editor

SELFLESSNESS

Ben Wright

In Ernest Gordon's true account of life in a World War II Japanese prison camp, Through the Valley of the Kwai, there is an account of a prisoner named Angus McGillivray. Angus was a Scottish prisoner in one of the camps filled with Americans, Brits and Australians who had helped build the infamous Bridge over the River Kwai. A dog-eat-dog mentality had broken out in the camp and everyone was stealing from everyone else. The Scots had a buddy system that they took very seriously. Their buddy was called their "mucker." Each Scot felt that it was up to him to keep his mucker alive. Angus' mucker, however, was dying. Everyone had given up on him, except for Angus. He had made up his mind that his friend would not die. Someone had stolen his mucker's blanket. So Angus gave him his own, telling his mucker that he had "just come across an extra one." When mealtime came, Angus would take his rations and give them to his buddy, stand over him and force him to eat, again stating that he was able to get "extra food." Angus was going to do anything and everything to see that his mucker got what he needed to recover.

This would be a wonderful story if it ended right there. Sadly, it does not. As Angus' mucker began to recover, Angus collapsed and died. The doctors discovered that he had died of starvation, complicated by exhaustion. He had been giving of his own food and shelter. Angus had given everything he had - including his life.

Selflessness is defined as: "concerned more with the needs and wishes of others than with one's own" (Oxford University Press). Surely this was selflessness at its greatest. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

It is required of Christians to be selfless. In a world that has been severely afflicted by "me first-itis," selflessness is a trait that is difficult to acquire. Today's society tells Christians to get all they can for themselves and try not to hurt others on the way to the top. Jesus says, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). The world says that you are your own boss. Jesus says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Examples of this great attitude that should prevail are found throughout the Bible. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his long awaited son. Hannah dedicated Samuel, for whom she had fervently prayed, to God. Elijah battled God's enemies at every turn. All the prophets hazarded their lives in order to get God's message to hard-hearted people. The apostles all willingly gave up jobs and family in order to follow the Lamb of God and proclaim His saving message to all the world.

A portion of that saving message proclaimed by the apostles is to be selfless. Paul said, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13). According to Strong's, "forbearing" means to, "sustain, to bear, to endure." In modern language, one would say it means to put up with someone. In the Lord's church, we must put up with others, which indicates selflessness. Christians are to be willing to put up with some things because the needs and wishes of others are more important than our own.

A Christian is to be selfless in giving financially as well. The Macedonians are a tremendous example of this. Paul relates how they

were experiencing "deep poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Despite this "deep poverty" they gave in a magnificent way for those needy saints in Jerusalem. They did this because they "first gave their own selves to the Lord..." (2 Corinthians 8:5). Think of the great power that could be unleashed if each would first give himself to God. Missionaries would no longer have to beg from congregation to congregation because the elders would be going out to find them. Good works would no longer be forfeited because of a lack of funds, but would greatly increase. A selfless Christian will give, not until it hurts, but until joy is known because of the good that will be done with those funds.

Christians are to be selfless in working in the kingdom. Nights should be given up in order to do personal evangelism. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, "how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Paul did this because he was selfless. If souls are going to be won for Christ, they will be won by selfless Christians looking out for the greatest good of their neighbors who are lost in sin.

Selflessness should be the calling card of every Christian. Church squabbles would end and unity would rule the day if this attitude would be cultivated by all. The words of Paul should be our motto when it comes to this needed attitude: "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Corinthians 12:15).

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LIVING FOR HIM

Hugo McCord

Many gifts from God, as our lives and the air we breathe, are absolutely free. Whether we are thankful to God and live for Him and for others is wholly in our hands.

Thankfulness Some people believe that God exists but are not thankful to Him (Romans 1:21; Hebrews 11:6). Webster defines the word "thankful" as "impressed with a sense of kindness received; ready to acknowledge it; grateful." To be thankless is "not feeling or expressing thanks; not acknowledging favors."

After Jesus had healed 10 men of leprosy, only one of them, a Samaritan, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back and praised God with a loud voice, and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks" (Luke 17:15-16). Nine of those He had healed were thankless, and Jesus asked, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was none found to return to give God the glory, except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17-18).

A song written three thousand years ago is timeless:

Shout joyfully to Yahweh, all the earth! Serve Yahweh with gladness. Come before Him with singing. Know that Yahweh, He is God. He made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name, for Yahweh is good, His kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness is from generation to generation (Psalm 100).

Paul was thankful "that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners, of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15), yet Jesus loved him, and gave Himself for Paul (Galatians 2:20). "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Christians are exhorted to give "thanks to God, even the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). "Give thanks for everything, which is God's will in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Living For Others Jesus not only died for others (Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15), but He is also a prime example of living for others: He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

To believing, penitent hearts (Acts 2:38; 16:31), as their bodies are raised from the water of baptism (Acts 10:47; Colossians 2:12), Christ has become their "everything" (Colossians 3:11). Redeemed sinners ("all have sinned," Romans 3:23) realize that if "one died for the sake of all, then all were dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "[H]e died for the sake of all, that the living should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for their sake, and was raised" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Living for the Lord includes daily Bible reading (Colossians 1:10), daily praying (Romans 12:12), a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), a weekly contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and living for others as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1), and being ready for every good work (Titus 3:1, 8, 14). No matter how selfish and self-centered a sinner was before his baptism, a Christian cannot, and does not want to, live "to himself" (Romans 14:7). Just as Jesus went about doing good, on the mind of every alert Christian is "What can I do today to help somebody?"

Those who live for Jesus not only live to serve other Christians but also look for opportunities to serve non-Christians. Paul taught: "Therefore, as we have an opportunity, let us do what is good to everyone, especially to those who belong to the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10), helping needy saints and showing hospitality (Romans 12:13).

Some at Corinth in A.D. 51 who heard Paul's preaching, believed it, and were baptized (Acts 18:8), were of "the household of Stephanas," a whole family who "set [tasso] themselves to serve the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15). The King James Version says that "they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." The word "addict" (Latin, addere) means "to give oneself over to a thing, and generally in a bad sense" (Webster). The word is used in reference to alcoholics or those given over to drugs.

However, the King James Version uses the word in a good sense, that the Stephanas family "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints."

Sadly, some Christians allow selfishness to take over, and live only for themselves. Phygelus and Hermogenes "abandoned" Paul (2 Timothy 1:15). Demas, who had been one of Paul's "fellow workers" (Philemon 24), deserted him "having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

On the other hand, most Christians crucify selfishness, living for their Lord and for others: "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). During Paul's three years (Acts 20:31) at Ephesus (A.D. 54-57), a Christian named Onesiphorus served Paul in such a way that he could write to Timothy: "You know very well the ways [Onesiphorus] served me in Ephesus" (2 Timothy 1:18).

Later, during Paul's last days in chains in the Mamertine Prison at Rome, in a three-quarter cellar with a tiny window opening toward a cemetery (A.D. 67-68), Onesiphorus was also in Rome, more than 600 miles away from his home in Ephesus. In 67 A.D. Paul wrote that "when [Onesiphorus] was in Rome, he searched diligently and found me. . . . [H]e often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Timothy 1:16-17). Paul appreciated his good friend, and, apparently after Onesiphorus had died, Paul penned two prayers about him in a letter to Timothy: "May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus," and "May the Lord grant that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day" (2 Timothy 1:16, 18). Paul also asked Timothy to greet the family of Onesiphorus (verse 19). In conclusion, "None of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether therefore we live or die we belong to the Lord (Romans 14:7-8).

2-2-03

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PRIDE

Dale Hubbert

Realizing the power of our attitudes can be very profitable. Good attitudes are more powerful than dynamite. Bad attitudes have similar capability. While looking in *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* it was interesting to observe the words associated with pride: boast, vainglory, haughty, and high-minded.

The first time pride is used in the Bible, God is vowing to break the pride of those who would abandon His commands and exalt themselves (Lev 26:19). Additional passages bring into focus the dangerous combination of forgetting the Almighty while trusting in the mortal. It was pride that the brothers of David falsely claimed for a motive to his visiting the army assembled in the presence of the giant Goliath (1 Sam 17:30).

Our attention should be given to the understanding that God hates pride. Proverbs 8:13 discloses the hatred God has for pride and arrogance. In the catalog of things God hates; the proud look tops the list (Prov 6:7). "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov 16:5). A haughty look and a proud heart are identified as sin (Prov 21:4).

King Nebuchadnezzar provides an example of the disdain our heavenly Father has for the exalting of self. True to the prophecy of Daniel this king, because of his pride, ate grass like an oxen, grew feathers like an eagle, and claws like a bird. This helped a haughty king understand that both then and now "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:32). Those that walk in pride God is able to put down (Dan 4:37).

Pride is a vice that will distort our relationship with God. With more ease than we care to imagine, we can

elevate our own self worth without giving God the glory. Pride is a forerunner to destruction and a haughty spirit precedes a spiritual fall (Prov 13:10). We would be wise to give less credit to self and more to God for all that we are and have (1 Chron 29:13-14). As the song eloquently states: "Without Him I could do nothing, without Him I'd surely fail. Without him I would be drifting like a ship without a sail."

To a great degree, it is pride that will cause some to lose their soul. Pride is a major factor that hinders some from admitting wrong and repenting of wrong. Why people would die and go to hell before saying "I was wrong" and "I am sorry" is a mystery and tragedy of the ages. Shame is in sin and not in repentance. Will some ever learn that God's word praises the courage of those who will recognize and admit mistakes (James 5:16)? Genuine repentance is a sign of strength and not weakness.

The attitude of pride is an enemy of unity and a major weapon of discord. Paul approached the church at Ephesus upon the carpet of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and the bearing with one another (Eph 4:2) so we could keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Pride factors into the thinking of "my way or no way". Solomon proclaimed, "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife" (Prov 24:25). Unity presents enough challenge without haughty, boastful, self-centered members.

Timothy was warned about the proud. Paul professed that they were lacking in knowledge, obsessed with disputes, and argued over words (1 Tim 6:4). How sad it is that some have the same disposition today. Damage is done by the attitude of pride and is often never repaired.

According to the words of a wise king, "A man's pride shall bring him

low" (Prov 29:23). There is not an inspired word that is positive or encouraging regarding pride. Those who are lifted up with pride risk the danger of falling into the snare of the devil (1 Tim 3:6). Shame is a companion of pride (Prov 11:2).

What is the medicine and cure for pride? It is not difficult, upon careful reflection and honest inspection, to see the evil and damage pride causes in our own life, the lives of others, and in the kingdom of the Lord. The cure begins with recognition of pride. Does this sin affect us and we are not even aware? The self-examination prescription offered in 2 Corinthians 13:5 is a good place to begin.

Seeing self as we really are is essential. Without God we are helpless, hopeless, and doomed. The learning of true dependence upon Jehovah is a fine place to pour a foundation. Observing the positive difference God makes in our life is a significant part of the remedy. Crucifying the old man of sin and surrendering totally to God will help keep us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Humility is the key. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). By submitting humbly to God, the devil will take a hike (James 4:7). Peter instructs us to be clothed with humility (1 Pet 5:5). May God be our helper so that the attitude of pride has no place in our hearts and lives. May we have the courage to humbly make wrongs right and live peaceably with all men as much as possible.

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HUMILITY PREVAILS

Ashley Kizer

All men desire power over others, but none successfully direct and discipline themselves. Even the most powerful of earthly kings will be unable to contain the vapor of his life when the time has come for it to vanish away (cf. James 4:14; Hebrews 9:27). The preacher reminds us, “There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death...” (Ecclesiastes 8:8). We are commonly deceived into having a false sense of confidence, forgetting that “the way of man is not in himself” (Jeremiah 10:23). This notion gives way to pride and arrogance, which the Lord hates (Proverbs 8:13).

Sooner or later, man will be brought down to his rightful place of humility. Isaiah proclaimed, “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low” (Isaiah 2:11-12). Both the “mean” and the “mighty” man, the “high” and the “haughty” shall be “hewn down” and humbled (Isaiah 5:15; 10:33).

Jesus’ promise of an abundant life was to those sheep that would allow the good shepherd to lead them (John 10:10). How ironic and beautiful is our Lord’s design for prosperity, power, and peace: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23)! Humility is an attitude that elevates the Christian to an altitude beyond that which he is worthy. King Solomon noted its rewards in a proverb: “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life” (Proverbs 22:4). Let us look briefly at these three rewards that are heralded by humility.

Humility heralds God’s hearing. Our country, our families, and our souls are in desperate need of God’s providence. Does He hear us when we lift up our petitions and supplications, even our thanksgiving? Just as sin can separate us from God so that He does not hear, our pride and arrogance will deafen His ears toward us (cf. Isaiah 59:2). One night, He appeared to Solomon saying, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). Conversely, God will not hear those who exalt themselves. Just as the Pharisee described by Jesus who boasted of his own righteousness, “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 18:14).

Also, humility heralds honor. One proverb states, “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit” (Proverbs 29:23). It is tempting for many to aspire to be the greatest in their fields and to be looked upon with esteem. Even preachers sometimes seek to be praised above others for their eloquences. However, there are many in the limelight today that will be gone tomorrow. Jesus defines true and lasting greatness. Surrounded by the innocence of youth, He explained, “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:4). What more could anyone ask for?

As if all other blessings were not enough, humility heralds happiness. Solomon wrote, “Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud” (Proverbs 16:19). The Psalmist praised God for His goodness to the righteous and the needy. In the midst

of this psalm of thanksgiving he wrote, “The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God” (Psalm 69:32). Those who are humble can appreciate God’s blessings, and as a result they are content – even happy.

Those who allow God to humble them in this life will be rewarded in the next. His purpose in our lives will be realized in at least three ways. When we remember His love, we are brought lower. Christians can experience this remembrance much like the Israelites did in the days of Moses. God proclaimed to them, “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee... (Deuteronomy 8:2). We should also be humbled when we receive God’s blessings. Once again, the Israelites experienced this when they were fed in the wilderness with manna that they might be humbled by God’s loving care (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3, 16). Finally, we are humbled when we respond to God’s Word. Even Jesus was obedient to the Father: “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Though God was angry with Judah for their apostasy, He found favor with King Josiah because of his humble reaction to God’s Word (cf. 2 Kings 22:19).

Every country, congregation, and Christian needs the message today that humility prevails. May we each submit, serve, and survive so that God will be pleased and we will be lifted up in due season.

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REBELLION

Chuck Webster

Rebellion. . . flaunting the rules. . . shaking your fist in the face of authority. . . it's always been a problem. We see it in Adam and Eve's refusal to obey the simplest prohibition (Gen. 3), as well as the insubordinate attitude of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. 16). The list of religious "rebels" is extensive: Balaam (Num. 22), the Israelite nation in Moses' day (Deut. 9:24), the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day (Matt. 23), and numerous others.

Outside the religious arena we see signs of rebellion around us. A nation that called upon God's guidance after a calamitous event (such as 9/11) soon mounted transgression upon transgression as it plunged thoughtlessly into the pit of multiculturalism and pluralism. Claiming "In God We Trust" as our motto, our courts—step by godless step—have removed God's system of morality from our society. From the flower children and civil disobedience of the 1960s to the rejection of absolute truth in the present day, rebellion has been the common theme of our society for generations.

It is no wonder, then, that an attitude of rebellion has crept into our lives and churches:

Rebellion in our congregations:

We're not isolated from the prevailing themes of society, and it's interesting (and discouraging) to watch many among us embrace whatever secular philosophy is currently accepted. Many congregations of the Lord's church have abandoned biblical principles for a sort of spiritual agnosticism [e.g., "God's will on most issues is ultimately unknowable"]. The radical feminist movement of the 1970s and 80s soon found its way into the thinking of denominational leaders, and, soon thereafter, into our pulpits and printed publications. Women, our society told us, have been oppressed for centuries, and their equal worth demands that nothing be withheld

from them. Predictably, many among us applied their thinking to the religious arena, rebelling against God's clear prohibition of women in positions of spiritual leadership (1 Tim. 2:9-15; 1 Cor. 14:34-36).

In the last century, professors began proclaiming that truth is relative, morality is not absolute, and right and wrong are defined only in subjective terms. Similar thinking invaded the religious seminaries, and religious relativism became the accepted approach to Bible interpretation. No longer did we debate to discern error from truth, because, after all, what's true for one isn't necessarily true for another. Our own preachers capitulated to their denominational counterparts and acquiesced to the common recognition that the only thing that is wrong is to suggest that someone else is wrong. Many abandoned their previously held positions concerning the necessity of immersion (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38); after all, it would be presumptuous to suggest that we understand the "truth" about baptism when "truth is ultimately unknowable." They no longer preached the oneness of the church (Matt. 16:13-19), because who's to say that "we're right and they're wrong"? They refused to preach on a biblical pattern for the Lord's church, because such preaching would imply that a pattern *must* be followed, which itself insinuates exclusivity (the opposite of today's enthronement of being *inclusive* of all, regardless of what they believe).

Rebellion in christian living:

This rebellious spirit extends beyond doctrine and religious practice, of course. Many who worship with faithful congregations don't believe that God's authority extends beyond the walls of a church building. Like the Israelites of Micah's day, they believe that their public worship completes their responsibility to God (Mic. 6:1-8).

That rebellious attitude let the Israelites lie, abuse justice, and neglect the poor, because they offered the right spiritual sacrifices. His answer to them was the same as His answer is to those today with a kindred spirit: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). King Saul believed that his emphasis on offering sacrifices to God would negate his obligation to obey. God's response was: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. . . ." (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Saul's spirit lives in some today who sing "O How I Love Jesus" on Sunday morning and deal dishonestly with coworkers on Monday. Some eat and drink the Lord's Supper and then forget that their relationship with God extends to *every* part of their lives: how they dress, the movies they watch, their priorities . . . *everything* they do.

Christianity demands faithful worship, but getting the five acts of worship right doesn't cause God to ignore a believer's life. God defines the attitude of one who doesn't live consistently with his worship: It is "rebellion," and such an attitude will invoke His rejection (1 Sam. 15:23).

The key element to every departure—whether doctrine or in life is clearly rebellion . . . a lack of respect for God and His Word. Let us be characterized by a spirit of submissiveness: "For all those things hath mine hand made, and those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2).

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Thankfulness *****Sam Willcut***** Continued from page 1

of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness...Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful” (Romans 1:18-21). Concerning apostasy, he told Timothy, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful...” (II Timothy 3:1-2). In fact, ingratitude is the root sin of any unfaithfulness. How could Eve eat the forbidden fruit if she was thankful for what she had? How could the Israelites worship idols if they were thankful for the relationship and covenant they had with Jehovah? How could Judas betray Jesus if he was thankful for His blessings? Therefore,

Christians should not ever want to be guilty of ingratitude.

The Psalmist proclaimed, “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psalms 100:4). As far as one can tell, the only time Jesus ever expressed disappointment was when only one healed leper returned to express thankfulness (Luke 17:11-19). Thankful people are happy people. Thankful people are giving people. Godly people are thankful people. We can cultivate the attitude of thankfulness by removing selfishness (Matthew 16:24), replacing pride with humility (Matthew 20:26-27) and realizing our blessings. We express thankfulness through prayer (Daniel 6:10; Philippians 4:6), praise (I Corinthians 15:57; II Corinthians

2:14; Ephesians 5:19-20) and godly philanthropy of life (cf. I Chronicles 16:8; II Corinthians 8:7-9). “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thessalonians 5:18). Doris A. Orth wrote the following poem:

I thank Thee, Lord, for all the things
I take for granted every day.
Please help me show my gratitude
In everything I do and say.
The very air I am breathing now,
The flowers, birds and trees,
The beauty that surrounds us all,
I thank Thee, Lord, for these.
For all the friends and loved ones
I met on life’s pathway,
And especially for Thy endless love,
I thank Thee every day!

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