

Attitude determines action. This is what some may call a platitude, or if they are being generous, a principle. Scanning the web, there are thousands of these sayings. Here are a few more you may have heard...

“Excellence is not a skill, it’s an attitude.”

“Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen.”

“If you can’t change your fate, change your attitude.”

“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.”

Even the Incredible Hulk, Lou Ferrigno, has one –

“The attitude is very important, because your behavior radiates how you feel.”

I have even seen the letters of the word attitude turned into their corresponding numbers of the alphabet and added together to make the point that attitude is 100% of the reason for our success. Further, the word ‘knowledge’ is only 96% and ‘hard

work' is only 98%, as this method goes, but attitude, yep, it is what really matters.

While I wouldn't go that far (after all, the word negativity gives you 132%), I think it *is* fair to say that our attitudes, or rather, what we believe, what we hold as our convictions, these really do shape our behavior. As we know from Scripture, Proverbs 23:7 **“as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”**

Attitude is defined as a feeling or opinion about someone or something, an outlook, a frame of mind, a viewpoint, or if you like, a point of view. It could be correctly stated that our attitudes come from what we really believe about something. And this is the basis for our actions, we live and express ourselves based on what we believe. Luke 6:43-45 **“43“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, 44for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 45The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth**

speaks.” In other contexts and places we hear words used like volition, will, predisposition, predilection, propensity, affinity, or even nature. In church we spend a fair amount of time explaining that our will is bound up in our nature, and that while we do things according to our willingness to do them, that will is either a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness. Prior to our new birth, we are free to choose any sin we wish to do – and even what we think is good is really bad-good. After being born again by the grace and mercy of our loving Lord, we have a new nature and the ability to obey and serve and willingly do really good works – the ones that He prepared for us to do, for His purposes and glory. So if our beliefs create in us an attitude, and that attitude leads to actions, then we need to first of all believe the right things - and that will ultimately lead to behaving in a way that honors God. It reminds me of Christians being controlled by the Holy Spirit, and letting the word of Christ saturate our thinking. When we do this, the natural outflow of our lives is fruitfulness. If natural men try to please God, it is like hanging plastic fruit on a

dead tree. It might look the same for a moment, but the source is different and the fruit isn't real.

The only way to have a life that is continually producing is to be IN the vine, abiding in Christ, and attached to life-giving source, God himself.

This is our joy, and our privilege, but it is not always easy to do - especially in our culture today. While our state and our country it is still relatively easier to live out our faith than many other places around the world, we still have our daily challenges.

Everything is relative, and we know that we were placed here in this time by God to be faithful in this place. (Acts 17) So the question is, what should our attitude be in a world that is no friend of God? How do we approach a society that has little room for grace or mercy? How must we respond to a me-first, defiant, in your face culture? In an environment where your personal happiness and fulfillment is placed as the highest priority, what

should you do when your needs aren't being put first?

Thankfully, we have a clear message from Scripture about what our attitude is to be, so that our actions will ultimately please God.

A few weeks ago we had the opportunity to look together at the Scripture, specifically the inspired words of God written by the Apostle Peter. We looked at his second epistle and discussed the progress of faith, where Peter admonishes the readers to add to their faith knowledge, and self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Tonight, I'd like to back up to his first epistle and talk about another helpful topic, one that will help us cultivate a proper attitude to meet our culture head on – this is the topic of Thankful Obedience. Turn with me to 1 Peter Chapter 1, starting in verse 3. And I want to just walk us through a good portion of this text and look at how he is instructing them, and then make

application to us. Verse 3 says **“3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”**

Peter begins this epistle reminding the believers that are scattered throughout the region of modern day Turkey, of what a great salvation they have. He

calls them elect exiles according to the foreknowledge of God, and says it is because of God's great mercy that he has caused (them) to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which secures their inheritance – one described as imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for them, who are being guarded by God's power through their imparted faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. And this would have been very welcome news to them, since they were experiencing 'various trials' and being tested for their association with Christ. He also mentions something to them that I must confess I have never realized or seen as I have read this book before. He says in chapter 1 verse 10 **“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11inquiring what person or time^a the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the**

subsequent glories. 12It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” Now that is really

something, isn't it? The prophets from long ago had the Spirit of Christ IN them and indicating to them that Christ would come and suffer – and they were inquiring and searching, trying to understand when this would be and who it would be – while this was going on, the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven revealed to them that they were actually serving another future generation by writing these things down – and Peter tells his readers that they were the ones being served by the prophets of old.<pause> And how were they encouraged? By the things announced, namely the sufferings and the glories of Christ, the gospel. The events that were predicted by the prophets, that were fulfilled in Christ, these were meant for the benefit of these believers and

this fact is being communicated by the apostle Peter here to those who were in dire need of encouragement. So what *specifically* would encourage them about the prophecies fulfilled in Christ? Many things, but in a word, they had hope. Verse 1, ‘you have been born again to a living **hope**’, verse 13, they are told ‘set your **hope** fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, verses 20-21 “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last time for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and **hope** are in God. So this is, as Peter says in the last verse of chapter 1, ‘the good news that was preached to you’ and they no doubt gladly welcomed these words.

These reminders coming from the apostle Peter form the foundation of belief for these Christians scattered throughout Asia minor. But Peter has

more in mind than just reminding them of why they are believers. Their salvation is secure because God is faithful, that much is settled. Their future in heaven is promised and gloriously awaiting them. But there are also practical implications of this salvation that necessarily spill over into *this* world. We see these expressed in attitudes and behaviors all throughout this letter that he is commanding them to obey – We have 5 things and they are as follows:

1. Rejoice in trials

v 6-7 “**6In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**”. A few things that stand out about this verse..first of all ‘In this you rejoice’. The word rejoice here is a strong word meaning an intense feeling. It could be translated exceedingly joyful, or

extremely glad, overjoyed. The ‘this’ he is referring to goes back to what he has just told them, that their salvation is secure, they have an incorruptible inheritance, and that God is guarding that in heaven. Good times are coming, but right now they are going to face trials. They are to be exceedingly joyful, get this, not because of the trials, but because they know who is ordaining the trials. Peter would have been very familiar with how this works. Remember in Acts 5, when the apostles were arrested for teaching about Jesus in Jerusalem? Turn to Acts 5:12 and let’s follow the account. **“12Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. 13None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. 14And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. 16The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those**

afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

The Apostles Arrested and Freed

17But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. 19But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20“Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” 21And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, 23“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” 24Now when the captain of the

temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. 25And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” 26Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

27And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” 29But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men.** 30The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

33When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. 34But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. 35And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, 40and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were

counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” They went through trials, and they knew how severe the punishment could be for following Christ, yet they didn’t stop at the first sign of resistance, they kept on going – why? Because they knew they must obey God rather than man.

Trials are a part of life, and God allows them for our benefit. This is a theme not only for Peter but also other NT writers. James says in James 1:2-4

“2Count it all joy, my brothers,^b when you meet trials of various kinds, 3for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” So count it a joy when you have trials, why? Because when you believe in a Sovereign God, you know that there is a greater purpose and that He is ordaining it for His glory and our ultimate good.

Remember, He is working all things, the good and the difficult, for our good if we love Him and have been called according to His purpose. (Romans 8) Paul also told Timothy in 2 Tim 3:12 that **“all those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”** He also tells him in 2 Tim 2:3 **“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”**

You’ve heard the phrase, “Getting old is not for wimps?” Well, following Christ is not for wimps either. The difference is, we have His energy that he powerfully works in us to endure suffering and trials. And one more thing, what is the effect of enduring trials? We see it right here in verses 7 and 8, that our faith proves to be genuine and it results in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It gives us assurance that our faith is real, and it brings Him glory because he has caused us to persevere.

2. Pursue holiness – The next thing Peter encourages the reader to do is to pursue

holiness. Again, after spending some time initially talking about their great position in Christ, he tells them starting in verse 12

“13Therefore, preparing your minds for action,^b and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 14As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 17And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 18knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 20He was foreknown before the foundation of the world

but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.” In studying this passage of Scripture, I came to understand that there is some debate about whether this letter was written to Jews or Gentiles. The region is primarily Gentile, and some of the language like verse 18 that talks about being ransomed from your futile ways inherited from your forefathers doesn't necessarily sound like Peter could be talking to Jewish audience. But there are other places in the book where it he uses phrases only ever used to describe Jews, like calling them elect exiles of the Dispersion at the beginning. There are other ramifications about Israel and the Church which I won't get into here – suffice it to say that many commentators fall on both sides of this issue. Regardless, our application still remains the same. Be sober minded, prepared for action, and be holy. This goes for all followers of Christ, no matter your previous life. Sober minded – what is that? Well, it

means to be sensible and serious. Not under the influence of things that would distract you from clear headedness. Does that mean we can never have fun or joke around with our friends? I hope not, or I'm in trouble. But it does require a maturity to know what is appropriate and when something is better left unsaid. As the saying goes, timing is everything. And what Peter has in mind here is that because of what he is about to tell these believers who are under intense persecution about the brevity of life and how it is like grass that withers and a flower that fades away, he is stressing here the importance of keeping their eyes on the prize. Sure you can have joy and laugh and all that, but you have to remember to keep the first things first. He also says be holy or set apart. He then quotes the OT and gives the rationale, because God is Holy. We as a church are to be set apart just as the nation of Israel was set apart to be an example of how to live and how to fear God. There should be a

difference in our behavior and the behavior we see around us. This is how you impact a culture, by being separate from the world, not just like it. Martin Lloyd Jones said **“The glory of the gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she inevitably attracts it.”**

Peter also gives the reason we should do this – because Christ, who was ordained before the foundation of the world came to earth at just the right time, gave of Himself, died at the hands of sinful, ungodly men to ransom other sinful, ungodly men, to satisfy the wrath of a Holy God, and to accomplish through His perfect life and perfect sacrifice what nobody else could – our redemption. And for that reason, we should strive to be holy and set apart, out of a love and thankfulness for all that Christ has done on our behalf. <pause> So, rejoice in trials, be holy, next is love one another.

3. Love One another - v. 22 **“22Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a**

sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 23since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.” Peter says you have been born again by the word of God, recreated with a new nature, and the character of your new birth is something that will not ever die. It is imperishable, eternal, everlasting. For this reason, you should love one another from a pure heart. When we think of the way that God the father set His love on us eternally and the extent to which Christ was willing to go to secure our pardon, and the way the Spirit works to accomplish all of this in our lives, is it too much to ask to love others? I mean, when we think of the vast difference and distance between ourselves and God, and then we compare that to the distance between ourselves and other people, we realize that there is no good reason to treat others with anything but love and

kindness. God reached farther down than any of us will ever reach out to others – we are without excuse. The command is to love, and that means love (as much as we can) like Christ loves us – sacrificially, humbly – even when we don't receive the same treatment from them. **This** is where we are used as the means by which God shows the world His love. Two more for tonight, what to get out of you, and what to put into you... First,

4. Put off ungodliness. Chapter 2 verse 1 – **“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”** Peter says Rid yourself of these evil behaviors of anger, lying, lack of integrity, covetousness, and telling lies about others. The word So means therefore, or then, or since what I have just told you is true, now do this...Because you have this attitude, now obey by behaving correctly. Notice, he is not telling them that they become righteous by doing or not doing something first – no, rather their

behavior is the result of what is already true about them – and a true heart attitude will produce this true fruitful behavior. We see this command in many of the epistles, for example,

2 Corinthians 12:20

For I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you as I wish, and you may not find me as you wish. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, rage, rivalry, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorder.

Ephesians 4:22

to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one another.

Ephesians 4:31

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, outcry and slander, along with every form of malice.

These were believers, this was a problem...

James 4:11

Brothers, do not slander one another.

And one more that leads into our next point...

James 1:21

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and every expression of evil, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save your souls.

Do you have a problem with any of these behaviors? Do you envy what others have, or do you find yourself talking about other people in a negative way? Are you the same

everywhere or are there places where you put on a good front? If this wasn't a problem for them, he wouldn't have written it. Paul wrote it, Peter wrote it, James wrote it – most importantly, God wrote it. And if it wasn't a problem for us today, God wouldn't have needed to preserve it. Think about it, and do what is necessary to rid yourself of any of these. And the best way to do this, is to be in the Word...

5. Thirst for nourishment/Longing for the Word
Chapter 2, verse 2 says **“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.”** If you are a believer, and you have tasted that the Lord is good, then you will now behave like newborn infants, longing for milk. Isn't it amazing how God makes everything with an innate ability to know what to crave for survival? Our family was walking in the woods recently and we found a

nest hanging in a tree that we later discovered was built by a bird called a vireo. It is a small warbler, like a finch, and it has a distinct nest that looks like a funnel that is attached to a branch and hangs down from a tree, usually near water. Now, how did that adult bird know how to build a nest like that, and why do all of that type of bird do the same thing? They don't hang around for years and years and see their mother do it again, and to my knowledge, there is no technical college for nest-building in the bird world. I mean, most birds don't even go to college – let's be honest. But really, who teaches the birds how to build nests? God puts this in them and does this type of thing for all of His creation – we know that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. And babies crave milk – they will let you know that they have to have it. Am I right, mothers? When was the last time you longed for the Word like that? You just wouldn't be satisfied until you had the 'pure spiritual milk'

of the Word? Peter is telling us here to have a hunger and thirst for God's word because he knows that this is the only way to grow and become more mature – he says 'that by it you may grow up into salvation'. Paul says it like this – Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...The only way to do that is to have the word implanted in us. The word makes us wise and gives us the foundational beliefs that dictate our behavior – without it, we depend on the wisdom of men – not a place we want to be. As Paul Washer aptly puts it "When is the best time to plant an apple tree? 30 years ago – that's the best time to plant an apple tree. When's the second best time? Today. So if you've been neglectful of the Word, Stop being neglectful of the Word."

Let me encourage you with these words from Psalm 19 – **7The law of the Lord is perfect,^c reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure,**

**making wise the simple;
8the precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
9the fear of the Lord is clean,
enduring forever;
the rules^d of the Lord are true,
and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
11Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.”**

So, our beliefs and attitudes shape our behavior – and as believers, as recipients of such Grace and promises still yet to come, let us as sojourners and exiles rejoice in trials, be holy, love one another, put off the old life and all that entails and be consumed with the word of God, which is able to save our souls. Let's pray.