

# **“Caution: Our Attitude is Showing!”**

*Philippians 2:1-5*

**Intro.** – Niccolo Paganini was a gifted, 19<sup>th</sup> Century violinist. At one performance, standing before a packed house, supported by a full orchestra, Paganini was playing a difficult piece. Suddenly, one string on his violin snapped and hung gloriously down for all to see. Paganini perspired, frowned, but continued to play the piece.

To the conductor’s surprise, a second string broke. Shortly thereafter, a third string broke. Three limp strings were now dangling from Paganini’s violin. He completed the piece, however, and did it on one string. The audience jumped to their feet and shouted in typical Italian fashion “Bravo!, Bravo!”

The violinist asked the people to please be seated. Holding up his instrument for all to see he motioned to the conductor to begin an encore and turning back to the crowd he smiled and shouted, “Paganini and one string!” And with one string, Paganini played the final piece while the audience and conductor shook their heads in amazement. “Paganini and one string!”

Dr. Viktor Frankl, was a courageous Jew who became a prisoner during the Holocaust. The hardships of this man were almost endless. He lost his family, his home, all his possessions (including his wedding ring). His head was shaved, he was stripped of all his clothing and was made to stand before brutal men as a helpless pawn. He literally had nothing. BUT, Frankl realized there was one thing no one could take from him – the power to choose his attitude. Bitterness or forgiveness, hatred or hope, to give up or go on, it boiled down to Frankl and one string!

Both of these illustrate how incredible an impact attitudes have toward life. It has been suggest that life 10% of what happens to us and 90% of how we respond to it. Certainly, most significant decision we each make everyday is our choice of attitude. You see, attitude is that single string that keeps us going or cripples any progress we may make.

Must admit, more of our time is spent concentrating on broken, dangling strings – i.e. things we can’t change. All of which is done to the exclusion of the one remaining string – the choice of attitude. As a result, our attention and energy are often wasted.

What does this mean? IN CHRIST we have available to us a warehouse of encouragement. How? By being of the same mind of Christ! We Christians have God given abilities to put our minds on things that build up, strengthen, encourage and help others and ourselves. The question is, are we taking charge of our minds?

*Purpose: to better understand our need to have the mind of Christ*

## **I VALUE of the Right Attitude**

- “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

### **A. Unselfish Humility (vv 3-4)**

1. This is a mental choice – a decision not to focus on “Me, Myself and I”; instead, on others...
2. It’s a *servant’s mentality* = authentic, gracious and genuine... Illus. – Robert Lillie...
3. Our ultimate example in this = Christ the Lord (vv 5-8)
4. In short, it was an attitude that brought Christ to us – He deliberately chose to come, setting aside the glory of heaven... He realized and valued our need better than anyone can!

### **B. Positive Encouragement**

1. If ever there was a time in history needing such counsel – it is our time!
2. So easy to fall into the trap of grumbling, petulant, complaining mindset...
  - Illus. – Adam grumbling about 39 cent hamburgers...
3. Easy to get into the habit of negative thinking because there are so many irritating things...
  - Illus. – Murphy’s Law:
    - other line or highway lane always moves faster!
    - any tool dropped while repairing a car always rolls to the middle of the floor...
    - repairman never has seen a model quite like your broken appliance or furnace...

- chance of bread falling with peanut butter/jelly side up is in direct proportion to the cost of the carpet on which it falls.
  - friends come and go, BUT enemies accumulate.
4. These are the kind of things that happened in Paul's day – when he writes under the inspiration of God about grumbling/complaining is isn't coming from an ivory palace, he lived it too!

### C. Genuine Joy

- very theme of Philippians = JOY
- 1. Joy isn't fickle or needing "things" to keep it happy.
- 2. Joy is deep and consistent = oil that reduces friction in life.
- 3. Philippians 4:4-7 *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*
  - a. there it is again – *mind*
  - b. our minds will be kept free from anxiety (broken strings) when we unload our cares to Him...
  - c. by ridding stuff that drags us down, more space for joy is created = defragging hard-drive

The value of a right attitude can't be over stated in our walk with God!

## II RESULTS of the Wrong Attitude

- when we deliberately choose to deny joy into our lives... we'll usually gravitate in one of two directions and sometimes both: BLAME and/or SELF PITY:
- A. Direction of Blame
1. Often when things aren't going well, we blame God, others, or even fate... note: seldom blame ourselves...
  2. What a waste of divine and human resources...
    - a. blame God = you cut off the single source of power and deliverance... doubt replaces trust!
    - b. blame others = alienate and poison relationships... cut off another God given source for help!
  3. Blame *never, never* finds nor ever gives relief!
    - Illus. – "One kind of counselee is relatively hopeless: that person who blames other people for his or her problems. If you can own the mess you are in, there is hope... As long as you blame others, you will be a victim the rest of your life."
- B. Direction of Self-Pity
1. This is just as damaging as BLAMING... and sometimes even worse.
  2. When we get hurt and our reaction is *self-pity* = curl up and sing "Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, I think I'll eat some worms."
  3. What else is there to do when the bottom drops out?
    - a. turn it over to the Lord, Who has yet to be handed an impossibility!
    - b. scripture injunction 1 Peter 5:7 *"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you!"*

Wrong attitude leads to blame and/or self pity = results we all can live better without

## III FUEL for the Right Attitude

- since our choice in attitude is so important, our minds must be properly fed:
- A. Fill Our Minds Right
1. Ever hear of G.I.G.O.? = Garbage In Garbage Out = principle largely ignored and forgotten
  2. Philippians 4:8 *"Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."*

3. We are told to fix our attention on six specifics in life: not unreal, far-fetched dreams but on truth; not on cheap but honorable; not wrong but right; not carnal but pure; not argumentative but lovely; not slander/gossip but good reports!

B. Feed Our Minds Right

1. Brings us back to where we started. It comes down to the choices we make each and every day.
2. We must “feed” our mind with that which is eternal in nature and honoring to our God.
3. We must refuse to grumble, criticize without reason and reject that which makes one bitter/petty.
4. Let’s learn to play that single string! Note: it is our choice!!

**Conclusion:** Joni Eareckson was born October 15, 1949. She is the youngest of four girls. July 30, 1967 she dove into Chesapeake Bay and broke her neck. She was and remains a quadriplegic – paralyzed from her shoulders down. We’re sure most if not all of you have heard and are familiar with her life and testimony for Christ she has and continues to share through art, music, and books. She has authored more than 48 books.

Charles Swindoll writes about the first time he met Joni. He said, “I saw this young girl sitting in a wheelchair never again able to walk, but she was singing the following:

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught be to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.”

Swindoll said, “I witnessed in that moment Joni Eareckson and one string!”

How about you and me? Caution: our attitude is showing. What are we showing to the world about us? Is there a striking difference between the way we think and do, i.e. our attitude as compared to the world? Is it Paul Nichols... and one string? Is it (insert your name)... and one string? Is it Christ’s Church at Eaton... and one string?! May our attitude show just how strikingly different we are from the world!!!