



What Attitudes Really Count?

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What Attitudes Really Count?

- How do we bring our thoughts & emotions into line with God's will?
 - Prov 4:23 (NIV) Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.
- We need to know what God wants our attitudes, thoughts & emotions to be.
- One passage which is very helpful in this regard is Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

23 (NIV) This is what the LORD says:
"Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom
or the strong man boast of his strength
or the rich man boast of his riches,
24 but let him who boasts boast about this:
that he understands and knows me,
that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,"
declares the LORD.

Don't Boast About (and So Misuse) Your Abilities

Jeremiah 9:23

Wisdom

- The Hebrew term is rather broad.
 - Not just knowledge or intelligence
 - Closer to common sense
 - Includes both theory & practice/skill
 - Includes both secular & religious areas
- It is certainly something:
 - That is desirable to have
 - That not many people have
 - That can be very valuable for success in life.

Strength

- Basically physical strength:
 - In the Bible, usually in the context of battle
 - In all ages and cultures, this has been a valuable characteristic.
 - Even in our times, when technology has replaced physical strength in warfare...
 - Physical strength & ability are highly regarded and athletes are often well-paid.
- So many people (especially men & boys) very much wish to be strong.

Wealth

- Wealth has always been:
 - A means to gratify one's desires
 - An important form of power
 - A valuable form of security
 - So long as your wealth itself is secure
- So of course, everyone should wish to be rich, shouldn't they?
- No, not if they wish to please God.

Why Not?

- You can't match God in any of these areas.
 - So it is foolish to set yourself against God's will.
- You didn't earn your abilities.
 - 1Cor 4:6 (NIV) Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Why Not?

- These abilities finally guarantee nothing.
 - Eccl 9:11 (NIV) I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.
 - This is not to say that these abilities don't often win races, battles, food, wealth, or favor, but they don't always do so.

Why Not?

- In any case, you cannot keep them.
 - Psalm 49:16 (NIV) Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; 17 for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him. 18 Though while he lived he counted himself blessed and men praise you when you prosper and 19 he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light [of life]. 20 A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

Boast About God's Character & Seek to Imitate Him



Jeremiah 9:24

24 (NIV) but let him who boasts boast about this:

that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Health, Wealth & Wisdom

- We live in an age when health, wealth & wisdom are among the chief goals in life, though this has probably been the case through most of history.
- This even has a large influence in the church, though God does not approve.
- God wants us to know He values something else, and we should too.

Boasting

- Let him who boasts boast about this:
 - Probably ironic, since there are many who boast about knowing God, but don't really know Him.
 - Consider the case of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable (Luke 18:9-14)

The Pharisee

Luke 18:9 (NIV) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Boasting

- In any case, God does not boast about His wisdom, strength, wealth.
- If we really know Him, we will care about what He cares about.
- He cares about his kindness, justice & righteousness.

Kindness, Justice, Righteousness

- These are all character traits which those who concentrate on wisdom, strength & wealth will tend to overlook.
- Instead they will tend to use their wisdom, strength & wealth to take advantage of those who are ignorant, weak & poor.

On Earth

- I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth.
- Just as God exercises these traits “on earth” n that is, here and now n so should we.

In These I Delight

- God is wiser, more powerful, and richer than anyone in the universe, yet He delights in kindness, justice, and righteousness.
- If we want to be like God, so we should delight in what He does.

Conclusions

- So, let us seek to imitate those traits of God that He delights in:
 - Kindness
 - Justice
 - Righteousness
- Yet even imitating God is far beyond our abilities...
- But God will give us some measure of success in this...
- If this is what we really want to do.

