

Attitude Adjustment Factor

This weekend there was a marathon race that took place in Hartford. As you well know, in marathon running there is a lot of attention given to gradually building up your internal fitness and having good nutrition for a long period of time so that your body is ready to endure the challenge of that 26 miles. Well, *sometimes* with poor preparation, or even with good preparation, late in the race, after many, many miles, someone might get to a point where their tank just feels totally empty and just moving forward seems like an incredible task. The phrase for this is "*hitting the wall*". Someone just suddenly doesn't feel like they can go another step on their journey, or that they are actually moving forward on their marathon journey.

Your Journey

In this Pentecost season in our church year, we have been focusing on your personal journey in your relationship with the Lord. Maybe, there are times in your life where you feel like you have hit a point where you're not sure that you're moving forward at all in your Christian walk. Or, your spiritual tank feels low. Do you ever feel like maybe spiritually you have "*hit the wall*?" Are you not recognizing any growth in your closeness to the Lord? Or, are there some worries that you have, and you are not feeling that your spiritual walk is bringing you as much peace and happiness as it should in life?

Thankfully, you and I and any Christian have an "**Attitude Adjustment Factor**" to tap in to! That is what we will cover today... what is this "Attitude Adjustment Factor"? And how can you continue to grow in your journey here and your relationship with the Lord? Let's start by looking at the Apostle Paul and the letter to the Philippians.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

The Apostle Paul sounds so confident and positive right there, doesn't he? Sounds like he might be living in the lap of luxury with all kinds of things going good in life for him! Think of times in life where you have sounded that way, and the type of things that were going good for you. At the time of writing *this* letter, Paul was actually most likely in

prison and facing a death sentence. Imagine not knowing if that next sound at the door was going to be the sound of someone coming in to get him for the last time. He isn't writing the words "Don't be anxious about anything" from a fancy hotel in the Bahamas!

Here are some of the things that have gone on in Paul's life in the past years before this:

- He was betrayed by some of his own countrymen, on false pretenses
- Almost murdered by 40 men who had pledged not to eat or drink until Paul was dead
- Shipwrecked on the island of Malta for the winter
- Imprisoned a number of times. With beatings included.

If anyone wanted to claim and grab onto the identity of "victim" it could be Paul! He is at danger it seems wherever he goes! And it is in this same sense of danger that Paul writes these words about "not being anxious" and having "peace" inside.

Paul had an "Attitude Adjustment Factor" that he can put into place. Note closely what he says. Rejoice... **in the Lord** always! He is talking of giving thanks "in all things"... not because everything is going great, but right in the midst of **all** things... some of which are **not** so great... to let our minds and hearts remember that the Lord is near. THE LORD Himself! The "Attitude Adjustment Factor" is looking at the world through eyes of faith!

So, with a clear vision of who YOU are, and who it is that loves you (and is near you)... he is saying that you gain a clarity of your identity, and your purpose, and your focus in life... not by being defined by the circumstances that happen to be around you... but by your relationship with the God of Peace... your Lord who loves you... and has made "the way" for you to live in heaven forever. Paul's "attitude" teaches us the important lesson that our inner attitude does NOT have to reflect our outward circumstances. Paul is full of joy because he knows that no matter what is going on around him... Jesus Christ, his Savior, was with him.

You know that too. Jesus is your Savior. Out of love for you, he has freely given you the gift of forgiveness so that you can have eternal life in heaven!

That is the important factor a Christian can have in their outlook! The quality of your life... the joy deep inside... the peace inside that goes beyond understanding... these are centered on the focus of your outlook.

Is your focus on the God of peace? Is it on Him who gives strength inside? In the midst of challenges, think about God's love! Think of His love for you and for others. The old saying is "*Garbage in, Garbage out*". If you want to, you can, and will be able to **always** find something to be worried about, or something to complain about, or someone who is doing something wrong.

Paul shares with us a real truth about "Attitude Adjustment"... just how much one's thoughts influence one's life. What a person allows to occupy their mind with will eventually sink into their hearts and will come out in their speech and their actions as well. It becomes what one identifies with as real and true!

Here is a story that helps with this thought. Uncle George is taking a snooze in the reclining chair when Suzy and Billy decide to pull a little bit of a joke on him. They go to the fridge and they get some gorgonzola cheese. Now, if you have never smelled gorgonzola cheese, it is pretty smelly. They take some of this smelly cheese and they carefully put some onto Uncle George's mustache, right under his nose. They sneak out of sight just as he is popping awake. He sits up and looks around him and stretches a little, and he says "Hey, it stinks in this room." He goes into the other room where a few

other people are and he says "Hey, it stinks in here too." He walks around and very grumpily declares "This whole house stinks." He opens the door and goes out for some fresh air. Still smelling that odor out there he declares, "The whole world stinks!"

There is a clear picture of someone that let what he was "getting in" from the world around him influence him inside and how he saw the world.

It is easy to get *out* of "peace" and away from "joy" if our focus is on the unpleasant circumstances that we might happen to be in. Paul's "Attitude Adjustment Factor" for us to grab onto and remember is in looking at the world through the eyes of faith. Remembering that through the death and resurrection of Jesus we are given **"real and lasting peace"**.

Your Attitude Adjustment comes from centering your outlook on what God has done for you already... on the cross!

Paul knows that if you want to you can look around you at any time in life and find something to worry about, or some problem, or a challenge. He has us focus in a different direction. What does he say? ***"Whatever is true, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things."***

Cling to the truth that the Lord Jesus HAS CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH FOR YOU ALREADY! Forgiveness and eternal life are yours! Hold onto the truth that He is near to you right through all your challenges!

Paul states, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..." You too have the secret of contentment in any and all situations. It is your "Attitude Adjustment Factor"; it is your relationship with Jesus Christ as your Savior, and you can count on that relationship all your days!