

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Attitude from Within

Anyone who has ever worked with people knows the importance of proper and positive attitudes. James, elder in the Lord's church in Jerusalem, knew the necessity of the correct focus in his writing to the church at large. "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist," he commented, knowingly, "there is disorder and every evil thing" (James 3:16). The great adversary, Satan, loves to do his part in creating this disorder because it hinders the body of Christ from getting the job done — the job of seeking and saving the lost. Christ, on the other hand, the great Architect and Builder

of the true temple of God, is very interested in harmony and teamwork. The apostle Paul, authorized spokesman for Christ, and with the full authority of this apostleship, was doing his part in this epistle to the Philippian brethren to bring about the proper teamwork and edifying attitudes.

- **No selfishness** — On a personal basis, the warfare inside the individual boils down to *self* vs. *Christ*. Selfishness is the enemy of the progress of the gospel, and is the jackhammer which destroys the foundations of teamwork. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit," exhorts the apostle, "but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Philippians 2:3). What selfishness does is abort the mission before take off. By definition, selfishness has a different mission or goal than what the team or the body of Christ is to accomplish. When it is coupled with what the apostle called "empty conceit," which has to do with an individual's having an inflated opinion of himself, the stated mission truly becomes "mission impossible." Eliminating selfishness and empty conceit requires that the saint honestly look inside himself in the sight of God, and go to work on himself to make the necessary corrections. This is part of the "humility of mind" that Paul mentions. The key, then, in regarding "one another as more important" is recognizing the value of each individual soul, coupled with an acknowledgement that God places each Christian in the body just as He desires. With this in mind, each disciple of Christ will be able to find his function, and the other members will be encouraging in that process.

- **Not looking out for personal interests** — The warfare in laying "aside the old *self* with its evil practices" is so intense and pervasive that Paul has to come back and re-emphasize his point. "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests," he states, "but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). When the team members all make strong efforts to think ahead — to process what is going to make the next team member's work easier or make him more effective — great things happen.

- **Attitude of Christ** — The great and truly shining example of conduct is Christ Himself. Hence the apostle can appeal to the brethren to take a deeper look at the way Jesus handled Himself in accomplishing His mission, and therefore to make application to themselves. "Have this attitude in yourselves," says he, "which was also Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). One noteworthy point is that attitudes are controllable by the individual Christian. The proper attitude was *in* Jesus; saints are thusly exhorted to develop the same attitude *in* themselves. Attitudes are also therefore not determined by external circumstances. Having the correct perspective on this point is critical in the saint's developing the Christ-like attitude orientation. The positive outlook must be generated from within.

If external circumstances dictated Jesus' attitude, He would have been far less than the Savior of mankind; it was for the *joy* set before Him that He endured the cross. Hence it is that the word of God repeatedly calls on Christians to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others, and to offer such sacrifice joyfully. "We know love by this," says the apostle John, "that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

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JAY WILSON