

“An Attitude Adjustment”—Philippians 2:5-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “An Attitude Adjustment”, is Philippians 2:5-8 → *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Have you ever caught yourself thinking or saying, “Man! He really needs his attitude adjusted . . . and I know just the guy to do it!” Such a statement comes from frustration whenever you encounter a “bad attitude” from someone. You feel like they’re “giving you attitude” in the sense that they are incorrigible, belligerent, negative or simply disagreeable and it’s “rubbing you the wrong way.” It can easily provoke you to anger, producing a bad attitude in you as well. True to the nature of sin, it strives to breed itself.

Attitude is simply a reflection of the focus of our minds. Ever caught yourself having a bad attitude and wondering how you could make an attitude adjustment? It’s hard enough to live with ourselves let alone anyone else putting up with us. Even worse is simply believing that

everyone else has the bad attitude. Maybe needing an “attitude adjustment” and knowing “just the guy to do it” is a good commentary on our text when Paul says in verse 5 → *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*. Actually, attitude adjustments are in order all the time for us sinners and Jesus is just the Guy to do it.

Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians to have an attitude adjustment by taking on the *mind* or “attitude” Christ Jesus took on as He dealt with us bad attitude sinners. Such a statement comes from the impression we get in his letter that they struggled with issues of disunity while ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the Church in the city of Philippi.

This is reflected in Philippians 1:27 → *Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that . . . I may hear . . . that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*. In Philippians 2:2 he told them to make his joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Fulfilling such a request is very difficult for people as they work together with so many varied ideas, methods and concepts. To function together with a like-mindedness definitely requires a proper attitude since the only people to work with are sinners.

A bad attitude is a product of our struggles with sinful pride and selfishness. Thus, an attitude or mind which goes against God’s Word

and Will is sin and must be dealt with in only one way—by faith in the one Who is the just the Guy to do it—Jesus.

Paul pointed them to the mind of Christ for us sinners. He reflects on the fact that Jesus humbled Himself and served us in His earthly ministry, thus practicing what He preached. What did He preach? Listen to His instructions to the Church in Matthew 20:25-28 → *You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.* While Jesus walked this earth in His public ministry He came to serve **so that we sinners can be forgiven and saved.**

Paul is telling Christians to act in the same humble, serving manner. This command is based upon the fact that Christians have experienced the wonderful grace and forgiveness of God because Jesus served them by obeying God's Law perfectly in their stead and being the perfect sacrifice for God's righteous judgment upon their sin. He's not simply presenting some moral ethic to follow but a reason to obey based upon the moral ethics followed perfectly by Jesus. He did it all for you so that you can do all for Him.

The attitude which Jesus had was also revealed in the life which He

chose to live during His earthly ministry. Think about it: Leaving heavenly glory; being born into a messed up sinful world of ingrates; submitting Himself to the very Law over which He Himself was Lord; allowing Himself to suffer and die for ungrateful people. Wouldn't you think that a huge "attitude adjustment" of sorts would be in order? I wonder how many times He was tempted by satan to doubt if it was all worth it? I wonder if He was tempted to give up? Certainly the devil was working his best to make Him give up.

Instead, verses 6-7 of text tells us that, *though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* It actually required a **huge** attitude adjustment on His part, one which involved choosing to not fully utilize His divine powers. It is the humiliation of God in its ultimate expression.

Being fully human and tempted just as we are, Jesus had His mind completely focused on God's desire of the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life. That takes an "attitude adjustment" of sorts. Think of how difficult it is for you to suppress yourself when you have the power to do something. Try training someone to do a task and not jump in and do it for him as he is struggling or on the verge of failure. It's hard to back off and let him go through the struggle because you have the power and ability to get it done quickly. Try not to express your knowledge when

somebody is talking about a subject of which you have a better understanding. You want so badly to correct him and “set him straight,” or at the very least give him your opinion. Think of how hard it is for you to resist reacting sinfully when you’ve been hurt by others. It makes the command from Philippians 2:4 a huge challenge: *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

Jesus, Who was constantly sinned against, had to keep His focus clear in order to deal with us sinners and still be perfect. As a result of this kind of an “attitude adjustment” that Jesus underwent for you, you have benefitted greatly. Because of it, you have the gift of the forgiveness of sins and a share in God’s glory in heaven.

With such an “attitude adjustment” of this kind, Jesus, by His humiliation, was obedient to God’s Will even to the point of dying your death. Verse 8 of our text says: *And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Death on a cross (i.e. tree) was considered the most cursed kind of death according to Scripture (cf. Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).

This all had to do with His humiliation which started at His conception. Even His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday showed that Jesus was a king of **humility**. It was pictured by His riding on a donkey as Matthew 21:5 states: *Behold, your king is coming*

to you, **humble**, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden. It was all to picture the humiliation of Jesus in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

This life of humiliation eventually led to Jesus' exaltation because He was faithful to God's plan for you. He was exalted so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (cf. Philippians 2:9-11). This includes you and me. It is God's will that you bow before Jesus as a humble sinner, confessing your sins **and** confessing that Jesus is Lord. It is God's Will that you have an attitude which is "adjusted" by your Savior through faith in His suffering, death and resurrection **for you**.

For sure, you need an "attitude adjustment" everyday and Jesus is just the Guy to do it! His "attitude adjustment" humbly confesses that He *is Lord* and changes your attitude toward life and those with whom you live and function. How do we confess it in the Apostles' Creed? "I believe . . . in Jesus Christ, His only Son, **our Lord**." Thus, involved with His being your Lord, is the fact that you are His servant who desires to obey His will in your daily life. When your heart is changed by the Holy Spirit working through God's means of grace, you go through an attitude adjustment which will display itself in your life of service to others. Amen.

*You were taught in . . . Jesus, to put off your old self,  
which belongs to your former manner of life  
and is corrupt through deceitful desires,  
and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.*

(Ephesians 4:21-23)

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