

AS HE THINKETH IN HIS HEART

Proverbs 23:7

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** As Christians we should all be familiar with the fact we are supposed to be “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - A. It is a necessity that we be strong in the Lord (**1 Pet. 2:2**: “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,”).
 - B. We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (**2 Pet. 3:1**: “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder”),
2. From a physical perspective: “You are what you eat”; likewise spiritually: “You are what you think.”
 - A. Consider some wise men of the world:
 - **“Success or failure in any undertaking is caused more by mental attitude than by mental capacity.” (Walter Scott, professor, Northwestern University)
 - **“The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.” (William James, Psychologist, 1842-1910, considered by many to be the founding father of modern psychology)
 - B. ** This truth was recognized many centuries ago in the Bible:
 - Prov. 23:7**: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.”
 - Matt. 15:16-20**: “So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.’”
3. Our attitude reflects who we are as a person. Our attitude reveals what’s on the “inside,” in our heart.
4. **3** Let’s briefly consider our attitude this morning.

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** The Importance of Attitude:
 - A. Attitude is everything! (Prov. 23:7) Our attitude toward life determines life’s attitude toward us.
 - (1) For example if we have a poor attitude toward learning, we will not learn.
 - (2) Or, if we have a sour attitude toward others, more than likely, they will have a sour attitude toward us.
 - (3) What we achieve in life, or fail to achieve, is largely due to our attitude (man who rowed the Pacific Ocean in 274 days!).
 - (4) If you think you can’t, you won’t. If you think you can, you will! (sports: momentum!)
 - B. Christians need a “can do” attitude!
 - Ezra, Nehemiah, Returning Jews**:
 - Neh. 4:6**: “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”;
 - Caleb**:

Num. 13:30: *“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’”*

David:

1 Sam. 17:26: *“For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God ?”*

1 Sam. 17:32: *“Then David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’”*

1 Sam. 17:37: *“Moreover David said, ‘The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’”*

Paul:

Phil. 4:13: *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

Eph. 3:20: *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,”*

C. Does a “can do” attitude describe you? 2 Cor. 13:5

2. **5** Developing a Good Attitude:

A. Before metal can be cast into a desired shape, the mold must first be fashioned.

B. Before a building can be built a foundation must be laid.

C. Here are some ways which will help us develop a good attitude:

(1) Develop a good attitude toward yourself. One who has a bad attitude toward life and others, will of necessity have a poor attitude toward himself (Prov. 23:7).

(2) Expect more good than bad from life (**2 Cor. 4:16-17:** *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,”*).

(a) Some just sit around waiting for something bad to happen! **Ex. 14:15:** *“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.’”*

(b) Most people do not expect things to work out so they usually don’t! **Prov. 17:22:** *“A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.”*

(3) Make a list of reasons why you CAN grow and be strong in the Lord (2 Pet. 1:5; Eph. 3:20).

(4) Believe in the power of prayer! 1 Thess. 5:17; Lk. 18:1-8

(5) Visualize yourself growing in the Lord! **Phil. 4:8-9:** *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

(6) Associate with others who have good attitudes: **Prov. 12:25-26:** *“Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad. 26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray.”*

D. ** Remember: One does not have a good attitude because of his position in life; he has a good position in life because he has a good attitude!

3. **6** Proper Attitude Toward Goals in Life:

A. It has been said, “If we aim at nothing, we are guaranteed to hit it.”

- B. One secret to success is having some goals in life.
 - (1) We've all read about the success stories of those who overcame handicaps and hardships to become successful in life.
 - (2) The key: These people had goals! (e.g., Tiger Woods)
- C. It has been quoted many times, "What the mind of man can conceive and believe—it can achieve."
- D. It has been estimated that less than 5% of all people are working toward a goal.
 - (1) To be without a goal in life would be like a ship without a rudder.
 - (2) In World War II the British were able to sink the greatest battleship ever built, the Bismarck, by first knocking out its rudder!
 - (3) The pilot of an airplane is not able to see his destination 99% of the way, but he knows where he is going!
- E. Two people worthy of emulation in this regard:

Jesus:

John 4:34: *"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.'"* **(19:30:** *"It is finished!")*

Paul:

Phil. 1:21: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Phil. 3:13-14: *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I 4 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

- F. Therefore, let us be determined to follow that example:

All Christians:

2 Cor 5:1-2: *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,"*

4. **7** Decide on One Main Goal:

- A. All of us need to decide that being a Christian and going to heaven is our number one goal in life!
Matt. 16:26
- Matt. 6:33:** *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*
- Matt. 5:6:** *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled."*
- Phil. 3:12-14:** *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*
 - (1) Write it down on a card, carry it with you, look at it several times each day. Think about it often!
 - (2) Remember Prov. 23:7...we become what we think! (cf. Phil. 4:8-9: think on these things: noble, just, pure, lovely, good report, virtue, praiseworthy; if we do so *"the God of peace will be with you."*)
 - (3) We are the sum total of our thoughts (Prov. 4:23: *"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life."*).

B. There are great advantages in setting our goal in life:

- (1) Helps us know why we get up in the morning.
- (2) Motivates us to do what is right.
- (3) Makes life meaningful. Many commit suicide or turn to drugs and alcohol to escape life. Life has no meaning for them (**Phil. 1:21**: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”).

5. **8** Some Areas in Which We Need to Develop Good Attitudes:

A. Attitude toward life itself (**1 Pet. 3:10**: “For ‘He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.’”). We must learn to love life and choose life (**Deut. 30:19**: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”). So we need to be thankful we are alive and have something to live for.

B. Some good attitudes toward life:

- (1) Life is a gift of God (**Gen. 2:7**: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”).
- (2) We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).
- (3) Realize that your life is the target of the devil (**Jn. 8:44**: “He was a murderer from the beginning.”). It’s the devil’s business to destroy the work of God; therefore, Satan made his appearance in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3) and is still working toward that end today (**1 Pet. 5:8**: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”).
- (4) Life is full of choices. We will have to make many decisions in life. We are free moral agents; thus, no one forces us to make right choices (Josh. 24:15).
- (5) Life is brief (Jas. 4:14). Instead of sowing “wild oats,” we need to make hay while the sun shines!

Gal. 6:7-8: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

Ecccl 12:1: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come,”

C. **9** Attitude toward sin.

- (1) “Sin” has almost disappeared from our modern vocabulary. But, sin is still sin and many seem to think that since everyone is doing it, it is “ok.”
- (2) God will not overlook sin in our lives (Heb. 5:9; 10:28-31).
- (3) Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2).
- (4) Sin is deceptive, it looks like there is no harm in it (**Heb. 3:13**: “but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”). Sin only provides temporary pleasure (Heb. 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:12), but its final results are terrible!
- (5) Sin has its consequences; temporal (e.g., results of alcohol, drugs, sexual immorality; Prov. 13:15: “But the way of the unfaithful is hard.”) and eternal (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7).
- (6) Sin is not inevitable (1 Cor. 10:13; **1 Jn. 2:1**: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”).

D. **10** Proper attitude toward work.

- (1) We live in a “the world owes me” society. Many want something for nothing!

- (2) Bible teaches we must work for the things we need (**Eph. 4:28**: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”; 1 Tim. 5:8; **1 Thess. 4:11-12**: “...mind your own business, and to work with your own hands...”; **2 Thess. 3:10-12**: “...If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”).
- (3) We also have to be very careful we don’t get so involved in our work, job, career that we neglect our family, service to God, etc.

D. 11 Proper attitude toward self.

- (1) How we feel about ourselves is important. Many have the wrong attitude about themselves.
- (2) Some think too highly of themselves (**Rom. 12:3**: “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”; **2 Cor. 10:18**: “For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”).
- (3) Many do not have faith in themselves. We are not to exalt ourselves, but we must believe in ourselves (Phil. 4:13; 2:12).
- (4) Must deny ourselves. We live in an age of instant gratification, but we must learn the hardest lesson of all...self-denial (Lk. 9:23; 1 Cor. 9:24-27).

E. 12 Proper attitude toward others.

- (1) We live in a “me first” society. Everybody is so concerned about their “rights.”
- (2) We must put others ahead of ourselves (**Phil. 2:3-4**); Jesus certainly did (**Phil. 2:5-8**).

F. 13 Proper attitude toward death.

- (1) Death will come sooner or later. One of my favorite songs has a line that goes like this, “The sun is the same in a relative way, but you’re older; shorter of breath and one day closer to death.” (*Time*, Pink Floyd)
- (2) We all have an inevitable appointment with death (Heb. 9:27), thus, we need to be making the proper preparations NOW!
- (3) Death is as common as living and part of God’s plan. Death is not the end of things, but the beginning (**2 Cor. 5:1**: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”).
- (4) Death is nothing to fear if we are faithful to Christ (Phil. 1:21).
- (5) Only if we live right can we have the right attitude toward death and die confident (**2 Tim. 4:6-8**).

III. CONCLUSION: 14

1. Remember: Attitude shows what we are on the inside.
2. We all need to keep our thinking straight, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).
3. Invitation

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 30-33.