

SOME DANGEROUS ATTITUDES

By Donald Townsley

As I look at the church, the blood bought people of God (Acts 20: 28), I see many dangerous attitudes among us. These attitudes are dangerous because they are attitudes that will destroy our souls. They are attitudes that are, and will, destroy the church of our Lord. They are attitudes that must be corrected on the part of any of us that have them, if heaven is to be our home.

First let us define what we mean by "attitude". Attitude is one's thinking or mind-set; our attitude is seen in our actions, manner, and disposition. The writer of Proverbs said, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*". (Prov. 4:23). The Living Translation: "*Above all else guard your heart, for it affects everything you do*" (Prov. 4:23).

Let us now begin our study of some dangerous attitudes; attitudes that will cause us to be lost if not changed.

First let us study some dangerous attitudes toward self. Thinking more highly of one's self than one ought to think is a dangerous attitude. Paul warns, "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*" (Rom. 12:3). One thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think when he has a feeling of self-importance. This feeling of self-importance is brought about by pride in the heart. The writer of Proverbs said, "*Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord*" (Prov. 16:5). Peter said, "*For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*" (I Pet. 5:5). This feeling of self-importance brings about contention among brethren (Prov. 13:10). This feeling of self-importance is seen by observing the "*proud look*" or "*haughty eyes*" (NIV) (Prov. 6:17). The man who feels self-important is self-ambitious (Gal. 5:20 NKJ). The self-ambitious man is self-seeking and self-willed. The self-ambitious man is so set on satisfying self that he will please himself at all cost. He is a little man who seeks to be big. Diotrephes was such a man (III John 9 - 10). He loved preeminence among the brethren. It is evident he was proud, arrogant, and insensitive to blood-bought souls. He was power-loving and he did much harm to the church. Diotrephes was not concerned with the peace and growth of the church--he was concerned with being "first" in the church, at the expense of its peace and growth, and he had no concern with the soul who would be destroyed by his self-ambitious actions. He would be "first" and "chief" of all, and at any cost. He would defame the best of men if they got in his way. He gossiped maliciously about John (III John 10 (NIV).

Men who feel self-important in our generation have done much harm to the cause of Christ all over this nation. The "spirit of Diotrephes" has wrought havoc in local church after local church in the last fifty years. Conservative churches have suffered a great set-back because of this self-important attitude. Through this attitude, indeed Satan has hindered God's people (I Thess. 2:18). This attitude brings division in time in any congregation if not dealt with (Tit. 3:10). When division comes there is strife "*confusion and every evil work*" (James 3:16). A church filled with confusion and strife cannot hope to do very much in converting their neighbors. Our actions are a more potent comment on our conception of righteousness than anything we can say. A congregation, by its strife, contributes to the damnation of those it should help save -- young people, neighbors and the world.

Self-righteousness is another dangerous attitude. The Pharisee in the parable of Luke 18: 9 - 14 sets forth the self-righteous attitude. It is an attitude of self-trusting. In his prayer he acknowledged no sin to God; he expressed no desire for God's help in anything. There was no petition offered for anybody or anything. His purpose was to inform God how good he thought he was. His self-righteousness caused him to express contempt for others. The self-righteous are devoid of brotherly love and sympathy. The self-righteous do not reach out to help their brethren or fellowman in time of need. They are highly critical of all that goes on. The self-righteous attitude is very dangerous and soul destroying.

Being just plain selfish is another dangerous attitude. Paul said, "*in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves,*" (II Tim. 3: 1- 2). This selfish attitude is destroying homes and local churches. The selfish man or woman cares unduly for themselves. They are interested only in their wishes, advantages and comfort. They have no regard for the feelings and needs of others. They put themselves first in all things. Selfish men and women tear churches from the center to the circumference and weak brethren perish, "*for whom Christ died*" (I Cor. 8:11), and strong brethren are disillusioned and dismayed. Through selfishness the church can perish from a community or be crippled in influence for a generation.

Selfish husbands and wives are destroying homes, and children are crippled in many ways for the rest of their lives. One of the most selfish acts that is being committed is adultery by the selfish companions. Job said that adultery is a heinous crime (Job 31:11). A crime is "a transgression against the public right; serious offence against the law" (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). The crime (or sin) of adultery subverts the family relationship. It is upon this foundation relationship that the entire society is built. Destroy this God-ordained family relationship (Gen. 2: 23 -24; Gen. 1: 26 - 28; Matt. 19: 4 - 6) and you destroy society. Adultery is gangrene in our society and is eating the very heart out of our society. It is undermining the true welfare of the church, communities and the nation. It is fatal to the sanctity of the home.

Adultery corrupts the character. Character is moral vigor, firmness and self-discipline. Adultery completely destroys the moral qualities of an individual. Let us look at the Bible description of an adulterous person: They will flatter and lie (Prov. 7:15; 7:21; Prov. 2:16); they are stubborn (Prov. 7:11); they flirt with the opposite sex (Prov. 6:25); they wait for an opportunity to take an advantage of another's companion (Job 31:9; 24:15; II Pet. 2:14). Penalties for the selfish sin of adultery:

- Remorse (Prov. 5:11).
- Disease of the body (Prov. 5:11; Rom. 1: 27).
- Impoverishment (Prov. 5:10).
- Dishonor (Prov. 6:33).
- Spiritual death (Prov. 6:32; Rom. 6:23).
- It is the only grounds for divorce on the part of the innocent (Matt. 19:9).
- The Lord is the avenger of this sin (I Thess. 4:6).

Yes, the dangerous attitude of selfishness is destroying churches, the home and the nation. Let us all work to get rid of these dangerous attitudes toward self, before we lose our souls.