

Attitude #4 . . . Honesty

Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." Matthew 5:6

I honestly examine myself in the light of God's Word.

How can what I am doing not be a problem if what I am doing has caused most of my problems?

Much of what we learn in life we can and do learn by our experiences. How we choose to learn from our experiences will be determined by personal choice. For example, if my experience is a negative experience and is caused by my own rebellion then I am challenged with certain choices. One, I have the choice of learning an easier way by honestly taking responsibility for my choices and learning how to not make them again. Two, I have the choice of learning the hard way by denying, ignoring or being deceptive about my rebellion and then in turn suffer to a greater level somewhere down the road. Or three, I can choose to never learn at all and stay the way that I am. Sadly, I will learn that when I live in rebellion it's impossible to stay the same. Rebellion either stops or it gets worse, it never really stays the same.

Much of the Christian life is gaining knowledge and as we gain knowledge, we pray for the wisdom to apply the knowledge that we have gained. Knowing is not enough; we must begin and continue to apply what we know. When I am honest with myself, and I begin with a desire to please the Lord, I will admit that I do not know nearly enough in order to live a practical, consistent Christian life. However, since we know that's God's will for our lives, we also know that He will help us to experience it.

Psalms 66:16-20 - Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: 19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

Psalm 66 could be described as a "Psalm of thanksgiving". It does not appear that it was written as the result of any occurrence or circumstance. In the latter part of the psalm and in our text we see the psalmist praising God for his own experiences of the goodness of God toward him.

What we can learn:

1. Vs. 16 - A personal experience. Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

It would not be possible for the writer or anyone else to share this testimony unless it was his own personal experience. But sadly, there are many and I have been one of the many that are determined to make others think they are doing well when they are not.

To declare means to "recount or rehearse." The psalmist testifies that he was personally aware of the things that the Lord had done for him.

Psalms 107:2 - Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

Psalms 145:9 - The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

God is good to all and if this is not our experience it is either because we refuse to see it and/or we refuse to acknowledge it.

2. Vs. 17 - A personal choice. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

To cry out or to call out, this was the choice of the writer. To extol means to lift up or to exalt. While he cried unto the Lord, he also felt his obligation to exalt the Lord. It honors God when we pray; we are showing Him our dependence upon Him when we pray. When we pray, we not only declare our requests but we also acknowledge our depravity.

Psalms 3:4 - I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

Psalms 30:8 - I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

Psalms 77:1 - I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

Psalm 40:17 - But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

The question that is worth asking is, if we do not cry unto the Lord, to whom will we cry?

3. Vs. 18 - A personal warning. If I regard (perceive, see it) iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

It is of significant importance that we have an understanding of this warning lest we fail to heed the warning and reap the consequences. To “regard iniquity in our heart” is to, we might say, to have favorable thoughts of it, to allow myself to indulge, to make provision for it and to be reluctant to part from it. Notice that all of this is kept in the heart and so we are to think ourselves capable of concealing it.

Luke 12:2 - For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

There are so many dangers to un-confessed sin and herein is one of them. Not only will it get worse when we cover it up, God will not hear our prayer, be pleased with it or can we ever expect an answer to it.

Proverbs 28:13 - He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

4. Vs. 19,20 - A personal benefit. But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The response of the writer is so interesting when we take a closer look at it. His first response is that “**God heard him and He attended to the voice of his prayer**”. When we hear of what he said in the prior verse regarding the hiding of iniquity in his heart and the Lord not hearing his prayer, he may have feared that his prayers would be rejected. Yet to his consolation he found that the Lord was pleased to consider them because he was not guilty of what he mentioned in verse 18.

Psalms 8:4 - What is man, that thou art mindful (to remember, call to mind or be thought of) of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest (attend to, care for) him?

Instead of taking comfort to himself, which we can be sure he had, he gives praises to God; “**Blessed be God**”. Always remember, whatever the principle, whatever the aim, whatever the objective, God's glory must always be the conclusion. What we gain by prayer we must always respond with praise. When we do not praise God for what He has done we are in part saying that

we had some merit in the provision. The writer makes it clear that it was not his prayer only that provided the deliverance, but he also ascribes it to *God's* mercy.