

Attitudes Toward Preaching

"Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him" (Lk. 8: 18).

The Savior used these words to instruct His disciples concerning their reception of the truth. In order to accept His words and conform their lives to His teaching, His followers would have to possess the proper attitude. Moses had prophesied of Christ: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall come to pass that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22,23). With respect to the seriousness of that statement, each person should re-examine his attitude toward the preaching of the gospel.

The book of Acts contains examples of various attitudes men manifest toward the truth of God. As these attitudes are examined, let each reader conduct an honest self-examination to determine his own attitude.

Indifference

Many people display the outward appearance of indifference. Gallio, a Grecian deputy, is an example of such a deplorable attitude (Acts 18). When the Jews had kidnapped Paul, forced him to court against his wishes and made false accusations against him, Gallio refused to sit in judgment over the case. Then the Greeks brought the chief ruler of the synagogue and physically beat him in the presence of Gallio. The inspired record says: "And Gallio cared for none of those things" (v. 17).

All too often we come in contact with this type of individual -- too busy, too important, or too bored to be bothered with religion. Indifference is a most unfortunate response to the word of God.

Ridicule

Almost every Christian has run into this attitude. "Religion is just for children and old ladies." "Only a sissy would be a Christian." There are numerous manifestations of ridicule. As Paul was preaching to King Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 26), Festus interrupted to inform the inspired apostle that he was crazy. "Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" (v. 24) Many believe that when Agrippa said, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (v. 28), the words were not spoken from a sincere heart, but rather with ridicule or sarcasm. Such may have been the case.

Ridicule is often used as a cover-up for ignorance. Rather than admit a lack of knowledge, a sarcastic remark seems a convenient response.

Closed Mind

The Jews constantly exhibited this attitude. The envious Jews of Thessalonica are an excellent example (Acts 17). Rather than hear simple truths of God's word, they started a riot and attempted to kill Paul and Silas. Not even willing to listen to the apostle's doctrine, they closed their minds. Jesus expressed the situation this way: "For the heart of this people has grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their heart and turn, So that I should heal them" (Mt. 13:15).

Open Mind

In contrast to those mentioned above, there are some honest and sincere people who will receive the gospel, examine it, and then obey it. The Jews of Berea were such people (Acts 17). "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (v. 11). All should manifest this attitude. This is the person that Christians must always be looking for.

How is your attitude?

- by Roger Hillis

A Biblical 'Need-to-Know' Policy

The term 'need-to-know', when used by government and other organizations, describes the

restriction of information which is considered very sensitive. Under 'need-to-know' restrictions, even if one has all the necessary official approvals to access certain details (such as a security clearance, etc.) , he still would not be given access to such information unless there was a specific 'need-to-know'; that is, access to the information would be necessary for the person to conduct of his official duties.

Sometimes our work in a local church must also honor a sort of 'need-to-know' policy. For example, a certain member might become aware of a sinful situation involving another member of the congregation. Action must be taken, but there is no justification for spreading this news to others. They have no 'need-to-know', at least not yet, and to include them would compound the problem rather than solving it. Notice how Jesus taught a gradually widening circle of those who would 'need-to-know' such a thing:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matthew 18:15-17)

As this procedure is implemented, one of two things will happen: 1) the erring brother or sister will repent, and the problem will be solved; or, 2) the matter may need involvement by others and ultimately be presented to the whole church (as Jesus prescribed). In either case individual Christians should understand and respect this scriptural 'need-to-know' policy.

Unfortunately, some Christians feel 'left out' or think others are withholding 'news' that they have a right to know. Some may begin to gossip or backbite via an unofficial 'grapevine' that spreads throughout the congregation. This, of course, is sinful and counter-productive. If they are never brought into the case they should see this as something to rejoice in because the problem has been solved. It is certainly not a thing to resent.

Often those with the first exposure to such sensitive subjects will be the elders of the church. They have a heavy burden of responsibility in regards to each individual member in the congregation (Hebrews 13:17) and therefore will need to act promptly and correctly in dealing with the news they have learned. Others in the church need to respect the elders and honor their unique role as overseers (Acts 20:28). It is their specific business 'to know'. Others have no 'need-to-know' and should not do anything to interfere – at least not until it has reached the point where their involvement would be helpful and authorized by God's 'need-to-know' policy.

- by Greg Gwin