

“ATTITUDE AND SUCCESS”

Text: Romans 1:8-15

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February 15, 2015.

INTRODUCTION:

1) Those who care about success: Most people believe that among all the disciples, the Apostle Paul was considered the most successful in terms of results in gospel ministry. We all can see it from the records in the Book of Acts and his writing of many letters to the early churches. Some may argue that in serving the Lord, we shouldn't care too much about success, all we need to care is being faithful. You may be right. But remember what Jesus said in the parable of seed sowing? He said, “Still other seeds fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred times, sixty times and thirty times what was sown.” (Matthew 13:8)

2) Those who take a common ground: We all remember what Paul said about growth and fruitful: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” (1 Corinth 3:6) Some emphasize the “God made it grow”, while others put their emphasis on “I planted the seed and Apollos watered it” still about human efforts and success. Biblically it is true that only God causes all we do to grow and fruitful. But the Bible also teaches us the importance of our efforts, attitude in things we do and serve that contribute to the results. Let's see how Paul's attitude or spirit in serving the Lord that caused his ministry so fruitful and successful.

A THANKFUL ATTITUDE: “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is being reported all over the world.” (1:8)

1) Paul thanked God and people: This is a very important issue: most people are good to thank God, but not as good to thank people. These people think it is spiritual to thank God, but not spiritual to thank people, but they are so wrong. In his writing, Paul thanked those around him for many reasons: for their love to God, for their faith in Jesus, for the good work they have done. Of course we need to thank God all the time, but we shouldn't neglect to thank those whom God has placed around us to help us serve and grow.

2) Paul thanked all the people: This is so important: we usually thank God for the good and the faithful, those whom we love and those who helped us to serve God better and more. Paul thanked all people, including those who may not be as faithful as he wanted them to. When God places people around us, we are to thank God for them regardless of their strength or weaknesses.

3) Paul thanked them for their faith: Many people will thank others because of personal benefits: people who have done good things for us, helped us through our difficult time and gave us a hand to pull us up. Paul looked beyond human benefits to give thanks to God for them: He thanked God for their faith, the spiritual quality in these people. The focal point of our gratitude to and in others also reflects our own spiritual condition: what are the things we see as important in others. Paul deemed faith in God's people more important than anything of personal benefit.

A PRAYERFUL ATTITUDE: “God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times, and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.” (1: 9-10)

1) Paul put first thing first: The first thing in his ministry is not work harder, but pray more. Too many people, pastors and laymen alike, trust more on how much they work than how much they pray. These people may be very busy and get lots of things done, but with little or no spiritual results: no souls saved and no spiritual growth among themselves. Seeking God in prayers is always more important than getting busy with work.

2) Paul constantly prayed: “Constantly” means keep praying, non-stop. This is where most of us are guilty of: we can't keep on praying, particularly for things we don't see answers. This is about our faith in God when we pray for people and things: we want to see immediate answers. Building a habit of constant prayer is a very important step in our spiritual growth. Setting a time for prayer and keep praying for all people and all things. Don't quit God or God may quit you.

3) Paul prayed in obedience: When Paul prayed, he prayed for God's will be done, both in his preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and his desire to see the beloved Christians at Rome. This is one thing many of us are wrong with: we want our will be done and ask God to help us achieve them. We have a plan, we want something, we pray that God will DO what we ask for. That isn't the way Paul prayed. He respected God much more than respect his own will. He insisted on accomplishing God's will in his prayers instead of asking God to make things happen the way he wanted them to.

A FRUITFUL ATTITUDE: “I long to see you so I may impart some spiritual gift to make you strong, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each

other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the Gentiles. (1:11-13)

1) Be fruitful is the will of God: “God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:28) God blessed the Israelis and multiplied their number, even under persecution of the Pharaoh. In the New Testament, Jesus asked that we be in him and he in us, so we may bear much fruit to glorify our Father in heave. (John 15:5,8) The Bible is clear to record increase numbers of growth in the early churches. There are people who will argue that quality is more important than quantity. They said Jesus had only 12 disciples, but they forgot God gave the first church 3,000 new converts. No one may argue that quality is important, but that doesn't mean quantity isn't important. Jesus wants us to “make disciples of all nations”, no limit to vast numbers. This is true not just in churches, it is also true in personal life: we are to be productive and fruitful for the Lord.

2) Be fruitful in many ways: Besides being fruitful in numbers, God wants us to be fruitful in spiritual qualities: In faith, in strength, in endurance and in steadfastness. Just as numbers of soldiers is important in winning a war, the fighting capacity of them is also important to guarantee a victory. We need both great numbers and great qualities of all God's soldiers to win the battle.

3) Be fruitful in one another: Paul anticipated fruitful ministry both in the Roman Christians, he also looked to have a fruitful ministry to increase his own faith. Spiritual growth is seldom happened in individuals, but mostly in group settings, like in a church. Both the teachers and the members will be encouraged to grow in their faith and strength. It is mutually beneficial thing.

A DUTIFUL ATTITUDE: “I am obligated to both Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles.” (1:14-15)

1) We owe it to God and men: Paul used “obligated” to describe his duties to spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ. To obligate is “to owe” what is “in debt.” Paul saw his assignment to preach the gospel not as a choice, but an obligation, something he “has” to do, like to pay off a debt. Paul felt he owed it to God to preach the gospel because God called him for that reason. He

also felt he owed it to men because that is the purpose of his calling from God. Any reasonable and responsible man would settle his debt to others for a clean reputation and dignity. To be Jesus' followers, we don't have the option if we want to preach the gospel; but we need to. It is a duty, a debt.

2) We owe it to all kind of man: Paul didn't reserve his preach the gospel to certain kind of people, like his kind. He didn't preach the gospel to those who are friendly and of good receptive hearts. He preached the gospel to all kinds of people, those who are easy and those who are difficult. We need to have that panoramic perspective of the gospel purpose: God's message is for all the people, any people, the good and the bad, those we like and those we don't.

3) We must have that eager heart: Being eager is being fervent, full of desire and passion. If you have an eager heart, you will seek any and all opportunity to do what your hearts leads you to do. Eager may be translated as “badly” or “passionately”, we want it so much and will do our best to get it. How nice if we all have that “want to do it” drive in sharing the gospel, more souls are to be saved, and God's heart will be satisfied.

APPLICATIONS:

1) If you are a Christian: “If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands, the Lord your God will set you high above all nations on earth. All these blessing will come upon you and accompany you...You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.” (Deut 28:1-2, 6) You need to know God means business in our life to be fruitful and successful. This is not prosperity theology, this is God's intend. He has given us a road-maps to achieve his goal in our lives. All we need to do is to find out the map and follow the lead. His plan for your life is always much better than your own choice. So, don't waste time to find your own way, seek God's guidance.

2) It you aren't a Christian: “Jesus said to him: Today salvation has come to this house...for the Son of man has come to seek and to save what was lost.” (Luke 19:9) Zacchaeus was seen by many as a sinner, an outcast, too bad to deserve God's grace or love. But Jesus chose to stay in his house and brought salvation to him and his household. The fact that you are here today is God's plan of salvation for you and your family. He has a wonderful plan for your life. All you need to do is to allow Jesus into your heart, and receive his grace the rest of your life. Say a prayer to Jesus: “Lord Jesus. I trust you, I believe in you. Save my life with your grace and forgive all of my sins. Amen.”

