

Lay Sermon for Alleys Chapel Website May 17, 2020

The Power of Positive Thinking

Philippians 4:8-9; Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Viktor Frankl, a survivor of the Nazi Death Camps, said, *“Everything can be taken away from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”*

Those situations in life that are most challenging are those over which we seem to have little or no control. It is at those times that we need the strength of a positive attitude but it is also those times when negativism tends to overtake us. Negativism results in a negative attitude which leads to pessimism which in turn brings unhappiness to us and those around us. Prolonged unhappiness leads to paralysis of mind and spirit and then we see ourselves as helpless. You get the picture?

One of the inherent strains of a negative attitude is a sense of hopelessness that leads to the refusal to listen to advice or direction from others. We tend to reject support when we need it most.

The lines of a poem from an unknown author reflect the measure of our choice:

*Some ships go east, and some go west,
Before the wind that blows,
It's the set of the sails, and not the gale,
That determines the way it goes.*

How are our sails set? How do we know how to set our sails?

Here are four ways to *set our sails*.

1. Every day make **decisions** based on God's plan for your life. *Deuteronomy 30:19; "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live."*
2. Do not neglect your **devotional** life. Read, pray, believe every day. *Psalms 119:11; "I have treasured your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*
3. Be **diligent** for God. Seek opportunities to share Christ with others. Sharing with others is always positive. With social media there is no excuse for not doing this. *Proverbs 11:27; The one who searches for good finds favor, but if someone looks for trouble, it will come to him."*

4. Believe that God is providing **direction** and then follow His lead. *Psalm 32:8; “I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with My eye on you I will give counsel.”*

God wants to help us think positively but we have to do our part;

1. Make decisions based on God’s plan
2. Be faithful in devotions
3. Share Christ
4. Depend on God – not on self

When we follow God’s suggestions we defeat negativism. When we defeat negativism we experience the power of positive thinking. This brings implicit trust in God. Peace, love and joy will follow.

Mike Westhoff, special teams coach for the Miami Dolphins, was in the hospital dying (so everyone thought) of cancer. One day head coach Don Shula came to see him. Up to that point, everyone who had visited him had all but acknowledged that Mike’s life was slipping away. But not Shula. He leaned close to his assistant coach and said, “Listen Mike, I need you in training camp in July – on the field and ready to go.” Mike Westhoff recovered from cancer and returned to coach Dolphins special teams. He later said that when Shula visited him in the hospital “he treated me the way I could be, not the way I was.”

There was a time in my life when I thought there was nothing I could not fix. The fact that this was not true was never more evident as I watched the love of life waste away. Slowly, the

cancer took away all those amazing things that Wanda had and there was absolutely nothing I could do to stop it. It was my job to protect her and I had failed. We all encounter an enemy over which we seem to have no power and in that moment we see ourselves as a failure. No one escapes the frustrations and chaos of a world suffering from the effects of the fall. Fate, evil or whatever you choose to call it may seem to have the upper hand but the reality is that God is in control and it is only in Him that we find shelter from the storm, no matter what it is.

In any troubling situation we might find ourself in, God looks at us and sees what we can be, not what we are.

May God bless and keep you.