

Defeatism

Introduction:

1. As Christians, we encounter many “isms” which adversely affect our efforts to effectively serve the Lord and to advance His cause – such “isms,” as: Agnosticism, Alcoholism, Egoism, Hedonism, Materialism, Socialism, Universalism, Catholicism, Denominationalism, etc., etc.
2. One “ism” which, on a personal and practical level, serves as one of our greatest hindrances to growing as Christians should, and advancing the Lord’s cause is called “Defeatism.”
 - a. Defeatism defined: “The attitude or behavior of a defeatist; conduct tending to bring about acceptance of defeat,” **World Book Dict**. “The acceptance of defeat without a struggle,” **Wikipedia**.
3. Some synonyms of Defeatism: “Despair, gloom, hopelessness, pessimism, bleakness, negativity, anguish, anxiety, capitulation, deference, dejection, depression, desperation, despondency, distress, melancholy, misery, resignation, sorrow, surrender, wretchedness,” etc.
4. It is quite probable that most of us, at times, manifest a defeatist attitude, without even being aware of it.
 - a. Illus. We cite “Murphy’s law,” basically a “law” which says “if anything can go wrong it will.” Hence, expecting things to go wrong from the outset, it generally happens!

Discussion:

I. Some Bible Examples of a Defeatist Attitude.

- A. Esau, Genesis 25:29-34.
 1. Esau gave up so much in order to obtain so little. He sold his birthright for one meal! He could have waited a while longer. It is inconceivable that Rebekah, his mother, could not have provided something to eat – maybe not what he wanted, but enough to “keep body and soul together.” But he was a defeatist.
- B. The Ten Spies, Numbers 13.
 1. Who they were, Num. 13:1-2.
 2. Their commission, Numbers 13:17–20.
 3. Their report upon return, Num. 13:25-29, 32-33.
 - a. They ignored all that God had already done for them.
 - b. They ignored all the promises God had made to them to bless them if they were obedient.
 - c. They said we are not “*able to go up against the people*,” Num. 13:31.
 - d. They developed a grasshopper attitude, Num. 13:33.
 4. Their defeatist attitude rubbed off on the people, Num. 14:1.
 - a. And it resulted in all the people, age 20 and over, dying, without entering the promise land, Num. 14:33-34.
- C. Elijah, I Kings 19:1-4, 9-10,14.
 1. On the surface, it seems that Elijah would have been a poor candidate for a defeatist attitude, especially in view of the great courage and faith he manifested in I Kings 18:17-30.
 2. Perhaps by now he was tired. Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab, meant business. At any rate, he ran for his life, and then even began to despair of life!
- D. The One Talent Man, Matt. 25:14-30.
 1. The problem with the one talent man. Note Matt. 25:24-25, “*I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.*” He had a defeatist attitude!

II. Throughout the Land, many brethren have become defeatists!

- A. Rubel Shelly
 1. Who, some years ago, said “the gospel I obeyed will not work today.”
 - a. Many churches have bought into that idea, and have concluded we can’t grow until we bring in the social gospel
- B. Others who are taking the name “church of Christ” off the signs in front of the meeting house.
 1. They are fearful that that designation might be a deterrent to people in the denominational world.
- C. Others who are doing virtually nothing in their communities to share the gospel with the people.
 1. We preach that the church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*,” I Tim. 3:15.
 2. Yet we leave the gospel seed, Luke 8:11, “*in the barn*,” Haggai 2:19, because we have decided “no one is interested!”
- D. Others who have ceased to be militant, Jude 3; I Tim. 6:12, in their labors as Christians.

1. It is true that we must “*speak the truth in love,*” Eph. 4:15. We must be diplomatic, Col. 4:6.
2. But we must **speak the truth!** John 8:32. But many people become angry when they hear the truth, so many brethren want us to tone it down, and not deal publicly with religious error

III. Some Bible Examples of those who were not Defeatists.

- A. Joshua and Caleb, Num. 13:30; 14:4-9.
 1. Of the twelve men who spied out the land, only Joshua and Caleb lived to enter the land, Num. 14:30.
 2. Note Caleb’s attitude 45 years later, Joshua 14:7,10-13.
 - a. At age 85 he was still asking for the toughest job! He received it, and was successful!
- B. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3; Romans 4:18-21.
 1. Think about God’s promise to Abraham, that he would “*become the father of many nations,*” Rom. 4:18.
 2. He was 75 years old at the time the promise was initially given, Gen. 12:4.
 3. And Sarah, his wife, had been barren! Gen. 11:30.
- C. The Apostles.
 1. Initially, after the Lord’s death, they were dejected, Matt. 26:56.
 2. But after the resurrected Lord appeared unto them, Luke 24:36-41, they experienced “*great joy,*” Luke 24:52, and from that time on they were ready to put their lives on the line in an attempt to preach His saving gospel. All of them, save John, died a martyr’s death, but nothing short of death itself could stop them from telling others about Jesus Christ and His saving gospel!
- E. Paul, the apostle called out of “*due time,*” I Cor. 15:8.
 1. He was God’s chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles, Acts 26:17-18.
 2. The second half of Acts, chapter 13-28 largely recounts the abundant labors of this peerless apostle.
 3. He suffered all kinds of abuse, 2 Cor. 11:24-28, but nothing short of death could prevent him from preaching the word. I Cor. 9:16.
 4. And his life was a glorious success! 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

IV. What About Us?

- A. I fear that many of us may have developed a Defeatist Attitude.
 1. This is momentarily a period of uncertainty. Already we have lost some valued members. The fear is that We will lose more members.
 2. Some wonder if Seffner has become “a dying congregation.”
 3. Some are disheartened.
 4. We look to the community and conclude “no one is interested.” We are allowing ourselves to become discouraged, and to become discouraged is to lose courage!
 - a. We get ready to act in a positive way; then become discouraged. Sometimes it doesn’t take much to discourage us. Ill. P.S. “I’ll see you next Sunday night if it isn’t raining.”
- B. If We Compared ourselves to the 12 spies, which group would best represent us?
 1. Would it be Joshua and Caleb who said “*if the Lord delight in us, He will bring us into the land,*” Num. 14:8?
 2. Or would it be with the ten who said “*we were as grasshoppers in our own sight,*” Num. 13:33.
- C. Who among us now has the greatest influence?
 1. Those who say “we are a dying congregation,” or:
 2. Those who really believe our best days are ahead of us if we will simply buckle down, put on our battle Armor and go to work for the Lord?
- D. It may well be that some of us need to change our way of thinking.
 1. William James: “the greatest discovery of my generation is that humans can alter their lives by altering their attitude of mind.”
 2. Prov. 23:7.
 3. Illus. C.R. Nichol, “you look as you own the world.” “I don’t, but my Father does!”
- E. Some Attitude-changing Scriptures to reflect upon:
 1. John 4:35; Rom. 8:28,31; I Cor. 15:58; Phil. 1:6; Phil. 4:13; I John 4:4; Rom 8:37.

Conclusion:

1. “Gospel” means “good news!” The good news is that you, notwithstanding the past, can be saved!
- Bobby Witherington, March 22, 2015