

How's Your 'Tude

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (Phil 2:5)

Congress has used a scanning detection system at its office entrances in Washington for many years. Occasionally, there are bugs in the system that need fixing. At times, these machines detect all metal items, from pocketknives to keys, from belt buckles to coins. If you set the system off and you get electronically frisked. The routine can get old quickly.

This procedure framed one of the classic shouting matches of my memory. A stubborn sergeant of the Capitol Police, full of himself and of his mandate to secure all Congressional buildings, squared off with a woman I have dubbed "the Queen of everything" concerning his invasion of her privacy. The two ended up screaming at each other, each claiming that the other had "an attitude". Both were right. On display were the mindsets endemic to the stuff of which we are made. One represented a stifling, overbearing need for control; the other, a pretentious, defiant spirit that was above it all.

The verse cited above informs us that we are to be people "with an attitude" of a quite different sort and one not in accord with our natural disposition. The term translated "attitude" in this verse belongs to a word group used ten times in the book of Philippians. The verb is typically translated as "to think" and the noun as "mind". But the word group has richer connotations than merely reflecting or the organ that does the reflecting. It denotes a probing mental process full of sympathetic interest and concern. Our thinking is to envelop the heart as well as the mind. It is to embrace the totality of who we are, with the goal of bringing our actions into conformity with our reflections.

The attitude or mindset that is to be ours is that of the Lord Jesus, who did not grasp at control or the benefits of position. His lack of pretension, when fully comprehended, will bring *the* gasp of the ages from all creation. He laid it all aside, yielding the independent exercise of His attributes of deity and all evidence of the insignia of His majesty. He died in a brutal manner as a common criminal, taunted by the creatures. He took his final breaths outside the gate that should have opened for his regal procession, marked by his Father's condemnation.

I thank God for the many instances of self-denying service that I have witnessed at the church my wife and I attend. The people's gentle spirits and lack of pretension have refreshed our souls. But more than that, their attitudes have pointed us again to the mind of Christ that needs increasingly to be our point of view. We have a redemptive picture gallery giving us a fresh glimpse of the attitude of Christ with skin on.