

SERENITY PRAYER

The following prayer is posted in my office, and you may have heard or seen it before, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." Unfortunately, the author of this request is unknown so that proper acknowledgement cannot be given.

This prayer, however, deserves more than just being placed on an office wall or being stuffed in the back of a Bible. I believe there to be some good advice in this prayer that can help us develop a Positive Spiritual Attitude (PSA). Let's take a look at each of the three requests.

First of all, the petitioner asks that he be granted serenity to accept the things he cannot change. Webster defines the word, 'serenity' as, "being calm, peaceful, or tranquil." We must realize as we go through life that there will be many things happen to us and around us that we cannot change. These might range from the simple (there are 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week; the sun rises in the east sets in the west) to things a little more personal (the fact we are all growing old, will eventually die, and that we shall always reap what we sow).

Because there are many things in life that we don't like such as sickness, human pain suffering, and natural calamity, we often attempt to correct some of the misfortunes of life. The key to happiness is knowing what we can change and what we can't. Just imagine how many hours of worry, grief, and heartache could be saved by not trying to change the things that are static, and saving our time and energy for the circumstances over which we have some control. If we view life from a negative perspective, let us make sure that we are not trying to move the "rock of Gibraltar" or trying to stop the wind from blowing.

Secondly, the prayer under consideration asks God for courage in changing those things that are subject to change. Many people complain and harbor ill-will because of things they would like to see changed, but at the same time do nothing themselves to affect that change. I heard a preacher once say, "He who complains, volunteers!" A Christian should never be satisfied with the status quo or anything less. The faithful Christian needs to realize that he "can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." (Phil. 1:21; NASB). When a situation is seen that needs changing, and can be changed--change it! Developing our PSA means we develop the courage, love, and desire to make life better by affecting change in the things around us. Complaining about a particular situation and doing nothing to correct it, is just as dangerous as saying to a person, "be warm and filled" and then not doing nothing to feed and clothe them (Jas. 2).

Finally, the third part of our anonymous prayer is for God to grant us wisdom to know when to have serenity and when to have courage. The Bible says that we may ask God for wisdom (Jas. 1:5) so this is an acceptable request. Sometimes it is very difficult to tell whether or not, we can give aid to a particular situation, but let me say that it is far better to try and fail than to never try at all. It was better for the apostles to preach the word and be rejected than to not preach it, (Mt. 10:5-23).

In a world of suffering, pain, and sin, development of a Positive Spiritual Attitude can be difficult. Jesus never promised us that the Christian life was an "easy" one; but He assured us it was the only one to be able to see the Father. To grow in your PSA means to have serenity, courage, and wisdom in the proper measure.

Until next time memorize Ephesians 5:15,16 and develop your PSA.