

Spiritual Contentment

The apostle Paul was not one to worry about social status or financial stability. To the Philippians he wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content" (Phi. 4:11). Modern society has most certainly not learned what Paul had. Most people are constantly striving not only to "keep up with the Joneses," but to surpass the Joneses in their "standard of living"—materially, that is. It seems that virtually no one is physically content. However, spiritual contentment can be found everywhere one looks. There are a number of different ways this contentment is seen.

"I believe I'm fine, so don't waste your time."

Very few people today believe that they are lost. Recent polls taken reveal that while most people in the United States believe in heaven, they do not believe in hell. The designation "lost soul" no longer refers to one condemned to hell, but to one simply going through a period of uncertainty. Even religiously active people generally believe that there are "many roads to heaven," although the Bible conclusively teaches that there is only one (Mat. 7:13-14; John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

With such a state of affairs, it is difficult to express to a person the importance of securing the welfare of his soul. Even though a person may be lost, others have told him that he is certain to go to heaven. Such a person will generally want to remain comfortable, rather than be urged to make drastic changes in his life.

"I'm outwardly whole, but devoid of soul."

Some have obeyed the Gospel in years past and continue to attend worship services regularly. However, this is the full extent of their spiritual activity. They have no prayer life outside of the worship assembly; they have no time spent in Bible reading or study other than the prescribed times the church meets for this purpose; and they do not put into practice biblical principles of living. Their motivation is not to please God; but to show respect to godly parents, to maintain friendships, or such like.

"I've done sufficient, to do more is not efficient."

There are some who feel that they have done their duty in times past. They may have previously been very involved in the work of the church, but now feel that it is the responsibility of younger Christians to accomplish. Some even quit attending services altogether, arrogantly determining that they have "done enough" for a lifetime of service to the Lord. This is practical "once saved, always saved" doctrine. The apostle Paul said:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phi. 3:13-14).

There is probably not a Christian living today whose devotion to the Lord could be compared to Paul, yet he had not yet "attain[ed] unto the resurrection of the dead," nor unto perfection (3:11-12). Yet, he continued to strive that he might attain these things.

**"No matter whether all else seems to fall apart,
I do the will of God from the heart."**

There is a sense of spiritual contentment that can be genuinely achieved.

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi. 4:6-7).

One who does not focus on the physical things, which can never satisfy, but on the spiritual, can find contentment in both (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1).

When one is committed to fulfilling the will of God, he no longer has any need for worry:

For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).

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Mediocre "Christianity"

In this modern period of time, the average person places emphasis upon convenience, comfort, and that which brings pleasure. The term "creature comfort" is frequently expressed. Waiting for the right time causes many to hesitate in making a needed decision. Satan delights when a person procrastinates in making a needed commitment.

When the apostle Paul was taken as a prisoner to Caesarea, he had several opportunities to speak unto the governor Felix. The Scripture reveals that on one such occasion Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:24-25).

It was probably at that moment he was most affected by the Gospel. There is not any indication that Felix ever obeyed the Gospel. We learn in the very next verse that he hoped to obtain money from Paul and so met with him on several occasions. For his eternal welfare Felix should have obeyed the Gospel of Christ when he was convicted of his sins that caused him to tremble.

There are religious people today that never darken the doors of a church building except on special holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Some only attend on the Sunday that the date for Easter comes in order to parade their new wardrobe. These man-made religious holidays mean more to them than the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). The Lord's Day is the first day of the week when Christians are to partake of the communion and to lay by in store (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). Even during the first century, there were some brethren who were indifferent to assembling with the saints. They were so neglectful that they were in danger of losing their soul (Heb. 10:24-27). The Christian life requires 100% of our participation. Jesus said: "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:24-26).

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OUR AFFLICTION

Paul, writing to the Corinthian brethren, made the point that affliction, or suffering, is something we all share: “**our** affliction” (II Cor. 4:16–17). It is so easy when suffering to feel and falsely conclude that it is “just me.” When Jezebel had ordered that all the prophets of the Lord be slain (I Kgs. 18:4, 13), Elijah concluded that he alone was in trouble, fleeing for his life (v. 22; 19:14). But God said, “Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him (v. 18). There is comfort and encouragement in knowing that others suffer faithfully the same afflictions that we do (Acts 14:22; II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 5:9), for if they with God’s help can overcome, so can we.

Our Affliction Is Light

Paul’s saying “light” means suffering is not heavy. I know that you are asking what type of suffering is “light”? Understand, Paul is somewhat of an expert on the subject of suffering (II Cor. 4:8–12; 11:23–28), and he not only calls his suffering “light,” but ours also. The late Thomas B. Warren, faithful Gospel preacher, writer, debater, and defender of the Truth, once made a few inspiring observations under this point. He said suffering is light compared to what Jesus endured, suffering is light compared to what we really deserve, and suffering is light compared to the glories of Heaven. So true—suffering really is light if we give it spiritual thought. Never forget that suffering has the potential of driving us in the direction of our Lord (II Cor. 12:7–10). That benefit alone minimizes our affliction as a “light” thing.

Our Affliction Is Just for a Moment

All suffering seems like an eternity, as if it just drags on forever and ever. But all suffering is just for a moment, or a very short time. Job said, —Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble (Job 14:1). Even though life is full of affliction, it is just for a little while. “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam. 4:14). As a result, if we live for 250 years and suffer every single day, our suffering would have only been for a short time, because life on earth is only for a short time. What is an earthly lifetime in the realm of eternity? Just a “moment.” So what is the length of our suffering during our lifetime to gain eternity? Just a ‘moment.’

Our Affliction Works for Us an Eternal Weight of Glory

It is so hard to see the bright side of suffering, and I doubt if anyone could do so without the Word of God. But through God’s Word we see the importance, necessity, and benefits of suffering. Our Lord suffered faithfully (Heb. 5:8; I Pet. 2:21), and it’s important for us to also learn how. Suffering through things faithfully makes us stronger, molding our character in the likeness of our Savior (I Pet. 2:20–21; 4:16). “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa. 119:71). Suffering is the reason many wayward brethren are restored. Was not suffering the fundamental reason the prodigal son came to himself, and eventually went back home (Lk. 15:11–24)? Suffering also reminds us that this world is not our home and intensifies our longing for Heaven (II Cor. 4:18–5:1; Heb. 13:14). Our affliction really is beneficial to us all.

Author unknown

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron’s sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

It was good to see Lanny Niver out Sunday. He is still limited in what he can do and awaits further surgery on his back.

Helen Culpepper is still in ICU. Let us continue to keep her and Les in our prayers as they continue treatments.

Pan Gossett has not been well and unable to be out.

Ken Chumbley is in Spring, Texas this week, where he is to speak on the Lectureship. He is scheduled to return on Thursday.

“Curse Ye Meroz”

“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of Jehovah. Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ” (Jud. 5:23). The children of Israel had forsaken God and had been chastened for their backsliding. Jabin, king of Canaan, had sent forth his army under Sisera to do battle against Israel. In penitence Israel cried unto God and He gave them victory under Barak in the day of battle. But the inhabitants of Meroz took no part in the conflict. They could have helped Israel with telling effect. In assigning a reason for the curse of the inhabitants of Meroz the Bible says: “Because they came not to the help of Jehovah, To the help of Jehovah against the mighty” (5:23). How did they fail to help God? By failing to help the people of God. It is possible for us to “come not to the help of Jehovah” now. James writes, “To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jam. 4:17). Whenever we are able and minister not unto the needs of the weakest congregation or the humblest disciple we fail to minister to Him. “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me” (Mat. 25:40). We can be indifferent and inactive only at the peril of our own souls. Let it be remembered that the inhabitants of Meroz were cursed for doing nothing.

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