

March 15, 2020

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:10-13

Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is a study in joy and peace. The Apostle commands us, ***"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"*** And the Apostle promises us, ***"...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*** No matter how troubled our world becomes, as believers we should be joyful and it should be possible to live in perfect peace.

The ultimate secret of living in joy and at peace is Paul's conclusion to this letter. He closes out his letter to his dear friends in Philippi thanking them for their renewed support. Over the years this congregation of believers has supported Paul's work, but as he has been in prison for several years, they have not been able to continue that. As the Apostle is living in Rome under house arrest at the time of this letter, the believers in Philippi have been able to renew their support.

In thanking these compassionate believers the Apostle is able to identify for us, the final secret to our capacity to live in joy and at peace. He writes, ***"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation."*** Most of us would have to admit, I think, that our joy and our peace are most often upset by our discontent with something that is occurring in our lives. We aren't getting along with someone because they don't treat us the way we want them to. We are unhappy with our existence because we are too poor, or too in debt, or too fat, or too old, or too... We live lives filled with discontent.

The truth is, we let the struggles that we face each day steal our joy and rob us of our transcendent peace. The Apostle tells us that he has learned the secret of being content no matter what struggles he might be facing. And that secret is to surrender control over those struggles to Jesus.

With Jesus' strength, Paul tells us, he can manage anything. I am convinced that most of us approach our daily struggles backwards. Some issue arises that challenges our joy or threatens our transcendent peace and we do everything we can to overcome those challenges by our own strength. We fight, and bargain, and plan, and struggle all on our own, and finally, when we are exhausted, joyless, and totally overwhelmed by anxiety we turn to Jesus.

Paul tells us that he has learned the secret to being content in every situation is by learning to lean on Jesus at all times. Think about those issues, those challenges, those concerns that are stealing your joy and your peace. Are you looking to Jesus to help you deal with those things, or are you turning to Jesus only after you have exhausted all other avenues? Jesus told us quite clearly, ***"...do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*** (Matthew 6:34) So, when I face the challenges of this life I need to share them with Jesus from the get go. And as I face those challenges I need to understand that

I only have to survive and thrive in the 'now'. You and I would, I am convinced, find it much easier to live joyful and peace-filled lives if we would learn to live in the moment.

Ask yourself, what do I need to do about _____ right now, in this moment? Have I shared this issue with Jesus? Do I believe he has got this issue controlled? The secret of being content is to lean on Jesus in the moment. If I am leaning on Jesus in this moment, if I have done what I can with my issue in this moment, then I can be content in this moment. Through the strength of Jesus in this moment I can rejoice! Through the strength of Jesus, in this moment, I can be at peace! In this moment...

