

April 10, 2016

## ***Finding Peace in a Troubled World***

***"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."***  
Philippians 3:10-11

***"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."***  
Philippians 4:4-7

***"Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about these things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice and the God of peace will be with you."***  
Philippians 4:8-9

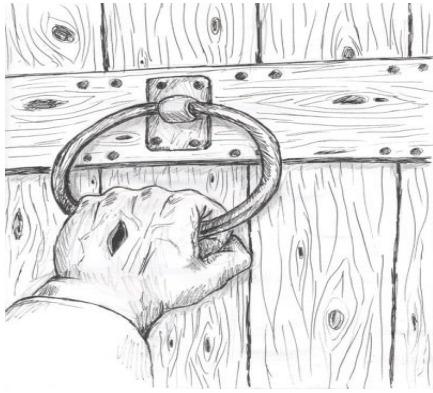
***"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."***  
Philippians 4:12-13

Are you intimate with God? Do you visit with him often? Do you absolutely trust him? In our study of Paul's letter to the believers in Ephesus I said that ultimately it is all about the relationships. The same thing could be said of this letter as well. In fact the same thing could be said about every letter that the Apostle penned. It is all about the relationships; particularly our relationship with our Father in Heaven.

Nothing that the Apostle writes in this letter is possible without a very intimate and personal relationship with our Father. There are lots of things that we can do to relieve our fears, there are lots of things we can do to improve our prayer lives, and there are lots of things that we can do to refocus our perceptions. None of these will bring us contentment, or peace or joy without our own personal relationship with our Father in Heaven and through his Son Jesus Christ.

A close personal relationship with God is not something that anyone can give you or me. If you and I are ever going to have a close, life changing relationship with God it will be up to us to find it. Jesus told his followers, ***"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."*** (Matthew 7:7) In his Revelation he said, ***"I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*** (Revelation 3:20)

Our Lord wants us to understand that he is anxious and waiting to enter into a close, personal relationship with us. As our Father has from the very beginning, he is presently waiting for us to choose him. And, like most everything of value in life, the more of ourselves we pour into our relationship with God, the more he changes our lives for the better. I am afraid that most of us are not much changed by our relationship with our Father. We are happy, as we said a few weeks ago, to exist as caterpillars, when God has quite literally died to make us butterflies.



In troubled times like these, we live lives that are little different from those around us. They are filled with fear and so are we. They are overwhelmed with anxiety and so are we. They experience little peace and little joy in life and neither do we. God has called us to so much more. He longs to give us peace, to fill our lives with joy and to teach us to find contentment because we completely trust him. We do not have these things because we do not look for them. We do not ask, we do not seek, and we do not knock. Our individual doors remain closed to the one who knocks. As is always true, the choice to live in peace and joy and contentment is ours alone. M