

Being Content

Norbert Bohnert—November 4, 2023

Brethren, the world and life as we have known it has become totally disrupted and more uncertain over the past two or three years, and continues in that path day after day.

It's as if everything that we've been accustomed to and used to has been shaken and begins to unravel before our very eyes. The lingering effect of the pandemic will not disappear. The psychological impacts of that pandemic have created a situation that will be with us for a very long time to come. There is swirling around us with the sense of unease, unsurety and bewilderment.

So what does that do to mankind? Well, it sets an environment that fosters worry, care, concern, and certainly and utmost: **worry!** It's a stage that sets forth anxiety and fear, with taking over habitation for so many people. It also has an effect on many of us, Church of God brethren.

That fear is taking over habitation for many individuals in this society today. It changed many things in society today. Brethren, we too are affected to one degree or the other. We see society has come under duress more than ever before. Substance abuse and overdoses have increased by over 30%. The pandemic and the effects from that have upset people's lives in very many different degrees.

Some have become lonely and lost, being restricted and totally ruining their lives by resorting to substance abuse and other means of contending with the many issues at hand.

In His Word, God tells each and every one of us not to worry. He says to us not to be anxious, but in reality, brethren, this can be easier said than done. We still are human, and with that human carnal nature, our emotions can overtake us and affect our physical lives, but more importantly, **our spiritual lives!**

Today I want to concentrate on one particular Scripture, and then we'll expand a bit beyond that. The Scripture I will be referencing shows us the way forward in this kind of scenario that has become so prevalent before us. It points to strategic strategies that we can apply in our own lives, strengths that God has provided for us, that we are able to embrace and practice and perfect within our own lives.

Words that Paul instructed us under God's inspiration, we will spend a fair bit of time in Philippians.

Philippians 4:11: "I am not saying *this* in respect to being destitute; **for I have learned that in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.**"

We'll take up a couple of key words here: The first one says ***Paul has learned***; he has learned something from what he has experienced in his life. ***He's learned to be content*** in whatever state he is in. That's the action part of what he has learned in his life experiences. *The art of contentment!*

You may ask why do I use the term *art*? The word *art* can carry many meanings, but one important part of art means a skill to be learned and to be developed. It's a skill that we are to apply within our lives, in which we are to become proficient.

The word *contentment* has to do with not being overwhelmed by what we are experiencing in our lives. It has to do with putting up a protective wall, a barrier between us and sin, the sins that bring difficulties and troubles into our lives. With God's help, we can put up this barrier, a wall to protect us from that.

It's even a sample prayer that Christ gives to us all. It talks about that God would ***not lead us into temptation***, that He will protect us and provide a way for us to be protected from sins and from the evil one.

It also has to do with being satisfied where God has placed each and every one of us within His Body. It has to do with the example that we are to set for one another.

We have this aspect of the contentment of not being overwhelmed by the experiences within our own lives. It's being satisfied with what we are and where God has placed us in the Body. Let's remember, and be mindful of the example that God wants each one of us to set daily in our lives.

Contentment, in this sense, does not mean a life without difficulties, without challenges, or even major trials. But it does mean that we have a Godly perspective to understand the purpose and the intent of the trials, challenges and difficulties that we will face.

So, in the above Scripture, Paul tells us that he has learned how to be skillful and how to be content and not be overwhelmed by what he has experienced in his life. Paul knew of what he spoke. He personally experienced much adversity in his life, many hardships and trials that were not of his own choosing, but came upon him for God's purpose.

So, Paul's words carry a lot of weight, and we should take them all very seriously. We can trust in his words, and:

- because of his background
- because of his experience
- because of the maturity that he had gained by living in accordance with God's ways

we can be confident in what he has to say!

He has much credibility that we can lean on, and we can take strength by what he instructs us through his writings.

As we go further in Philippians, we find the Source of the strength upon which Paul relied.

Verse 13: "I can do all things through Christ, **Who empowers me.**"

That was the source of Paul's strength, his insight, his ability to go through and endure the trials that he encountered in his life. ***He could do all things through Christ, who strengthened him!***

This verse applies equally to each one of us. In other places, Christ said He will never leave us, He will never forsake us. That He and the Father will reside with us, guide us and be with us along the entire course of our lives.

We can know that God is always present with us. Over time, Paul came to understand that the hardships that he had personally experienced were part of God's overall plan, and they provided a means for God to enable the Gospel message to be preached.

The experiences that Paul had gone through provided open doors for him to proclaim the Gospel. The same could be true for each one of us; the same could be true. The experiences that we went through provided an open door and means through which God can proclaim His Truth to those who are around us.

This is a key in God's purpose in understanding God's purpose in the trials that we do encounter. It's a strategy that we can use to be aware of God and how God is using us for his overall purpose.

We can see from the Scriptures how God worked with Paul for achieving the purpose, His purpose. As we—each one of us—experience hardships and events, we are experiencing them in real time. We do not have the luxury, yet, of hindsight to see where these trials and challenges will take us.

But like Paul, we need to exercise faith to be steadfast, to move forward, to be confident, knowing that God is continually working with us and through

us by the experiences that we are having. We do need to move forward in faith and total trust in God.

God is working with each and every one of us so we do need to have that faith to carry forth our particular role in fulfilling God's purpose and plan. We can take refuge in this fact, knowing that God does have a greater purpose and an overall plan. And we are part of that plan that He is going to carry forward.

We are to be His Lights. We are to be His ambassadors in this world today. The examples that we all set will one day be revealed. As we know, God is the Source of all blessings. He provides the strength that we need to move forward.

Just as with Paul, ***our example does count!*** It means something, and God uses it to further His purpose and His Plan. Our example can build confidence and strength in one another, certainly with the Body of which we are part of. We are working toward and becoming as part of the Body of Christ.

We have places in Scripture where Christ told Peter that He had prayed for him that he would be strengthened, and he would be able to encourage the brethren. We won't go to that particular Scripture, but let us go to a similar Scripture in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:23. **"Let us hold fast with our delivery to the hope that we profess, for he who promised is faithful."**

We are instructed here to admonished to hold fast to the calling that we receive, to the beliefs that we are living in, our lives, and that God has placed within us.

Verse 24: "And let us be concerned about one another, and *be* stirring up *one another* unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, even as some *are* accustomed to do; but rather, encouraging *one another*, and all *the* more as you see the day drawing near" (vs 24-24).

This strengthening, this encouraging one another is always an important thing to do, brethren. But as we near these end-times and see the difficulties around us, it becomes even more incumbent for us to encourage and strengthen one another.

We are told to hold fast without wavering. We know that God is faithful. He will carry forth His purpose and His Plan.

So, brethren, I encourage everyone to stir up one another. Let the Holy Spirit stir us up and exhort one another.

The word *contentment* can also mean *to be satisfied*. It's not self-sufficiency in that sense, but rather it's a sufficiency in Jesus Christ our Lord. It's knowing and allowing the Father to carry forth:

- His purpose
- His Plan
- His will

within our lives!

The contentment that we have—this satisfaction, this place of stability in our lives that Paul encourages us to be content in—comes from the fact that we know the dilemmas that we encounter in our lives goes to serve God's overall purpose. Our contentment expresses the trust, a reliance on God.

It expresses confidence in God as being able to carry forth what He is going to do. *Brethren*:

- we are a tool
- we are a vessel
- we are a servant
- we are a living sacrifice in his hands to carry forth this purpose

As an aside here, I'd just like to mention, just this coming past week, our dead is sermon on God's purpose.

Does God have a purpose? I recommend that you listen to that message to further expound on what this content is today. {*God is a God of Purpose*}

We know that we are this tool, this vessel, this servant, and that we have part in God's purpose and its fulfillment. This is the contentment that we are talking about. It's not a contentment that does not have:

- difficulties
- hardships
- major trials in life

But it's a matter of placing them in the right perspective so that we know that what we have experienced and continue to experience serves God's overall purpose.

God has a purpose and meaning to our lives. He provides the hope that we need to continue to move forward.

- we understand the purpose of the life that we have
- we understand our calling
- we understand the direction in which we are to be going
- we understand the end result of what God is doing with all mankind
- we understand whom He has called at this

particular time to be His witnesses

This knowledge that we have should provide service within our own lives. It enables us to confront the stresses, the trials, the difficulties that we all face. By having this strength of God in us, guiding us, having this confidence, having this contentment, ***it enables us to not compromise Godly values!***

It also enables us to maintain a quality of life and not to worry and fret and don't place our trust in God. We must continue to seek God's guidance, His strength, His insight, and certainly His wisdom.

In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, we read of individuals of faith. They faced hardships. They faced uncertainties. They lived a life of faith that honored God. They placed their trust and their confidence in Him. They were federally focused on the goal ahead. They are examples to us, brethren, just as we are to be examples to others around and about us and to those that follow.

Another strategy that we can employ in our lives is to live up to the core value of our beliefs. We are to keep our eyes fixed on the goal ahead, the goal of holding fast to our calling and to what we have learned. We are to live a life that honors Christ's sacrifice and the love of our Father for us.

We are to build on this; to maintain and to strengthen these core beliefs that we hold onto dearly and very closely. Let us return to where we began in the book of Philippians.

Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything; but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, **let your requests be made known to God in everything.**"

We are to be thankful for the experiences through which we grow, because that is how growth occurs in our lives. Be thankful for everything

What does it say in the latter part of verse six? "...**let your requests be made known to God in everything;** and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (vs 6-7).

Peace of mind, brethren, this aspect of contentment is an aspect of satisfaction. It's an aspect of joy, the relationship that we have with God the Father and Jesus Christ and how He is working with each one of us.

Verse 8: "Finally, brethren, whatever *things* are true, whatever *things* are honorable, whatever *things* are just, whatever *things* are pure, whatever *things* are lovely, whatever *things* are of good report; if *there be* any virtue and if *there be* any praise, think on these things."

The emphasis here, brethren, is to focus on those core values that we hold close to our hearts, those things that are true that we have proven.

In these types of thoughts that we are instructed here to think about, thoughts that ward off depression, worry and anxiety, we are to meditate on these principles of God that gives us hope, a way forward, and establish a balance within our lives. *Truths that are uplifting and positive!*

Verse 9: “Whatever things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, you do also; and the God of peace shall be with you.”

The God of peace shall be with us. We are instructed here by Paul to follow him as he set the example for us of how to deal with hardships and difficulties to maintain the course and to be as we read now:

Verse 11: “I am not saying *this* in respect to being destitute; for I have learned *that* in whatever *circumstances* I am, **to be content**.”

Back to where I started. This is the example, brethren, that we are to follow. We, too, can be content in whatever state we find ourselves in now and in the future yet to come.

We realize that God is in charge. We know He doesn't change:

- His standards remain the same
- His purpose remains the same
- His plan remains the same
- His purpose will stand
- His purpose will come to fruition

That Plan is what the Holy Days represent, coming upon us every year to expound and reveal the Plan of God and remind us of the awesome future ahead. That is what it's all about, brethren! It's God's Plan that will hold fast and be fulfilled.

Christ is going to return in which we can definitely be confident. Our task at this time and into the future is to remain faithful to God in His way and to overcome, brethren.

With that, ***let us be at peace and be content in filling the role that God has permitted us to be part of.***

Brethren, let us fulfill our part and be secure, confident, and content in what God has called us and chosen us to be part of!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Philippians 4:11, 13
- 2) Hebrews 10:23-25
- 3) Philippians 4:6-9, 11

Scriptures referenced, not quoted: Hebrews 11

Also referenced: Message: *God is a God of Purpose*

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