Learning Content

The Apostle Paul states, " Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11). How in the world could he make such a statement, especially when one considers some of the "states" Paul found himself in. "In stripes, prisons, beatings, stonings, shipwrecked, many journeys, perils of robbers, hated and chased by his own countrymen, weary, sleepless, hungry, naked and cold, besides the other things..." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). How is Paul able to write such a positive statement to the Christians in Philippi? Obviously, Paul was submissive to God's will above his own. But it may be worth considering that Paul learned how to be content through the strength provided him by Christ as he continues by saying, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Seemingly, Paul suggests to Timothy that the ability to be content is a learned trait. He tells Timothy, "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). The Hebrew writer furthers with, "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have..." (Hebrews 13:5). Maybe the point Paul is teaching Timothy, and you and I, is that regardless of what life bestows upon us, good or bad, we need to fulfill God's purpose for us while here upon this earth and in such find contentment. Paul told the Christians at Corinth, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Paul's words to Corinth compliment what he writes to Timothy and to the Christians at Philippi.

Paul later writes to Timothy about the perilous times that will come in the last days. The last days have been in place for some 2,000 years, yet we can clearly see Paul's words in our society today. He warns Timothy, and us, "That men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Timothy 3:2-5). Paul mentions so many "states" in which one may find themselves as he basically defines our present day society. Most importantly, he instructs us that by feeding any of these "states" one would make oneself devoid of being content. As Christians, we have neither reason nor right to be discontent.

Christians enjoy the greatest gift and blessing ever provided man, the forgiveness of sins! (Acts 2:38 & 22:16, Colossians 2:13, 1 John 1:9) Christians have every reason to be content. Let us each purpose to learn from Paul's admonition and be content.