

Liberty Commentary August 4, 2008

A recent Pew Research Center survey indicates that fifty percent of adults today think that children will grow up to be worse off than people are now. Only thirty four percent thought that children would grow up to be better off.

We live in a society that is constantly striving to find contentment. Contentment can be defined as happiness with ones condition and situation in life. The fact be known, many people are not happy with their condition and situation in life and believe that the best days are behind them instead of ahead of them.

We seem to always want to dwell on the mountaintop where life is carefree and trouble free. We come to expect that mountain top experiences should be the norm and not the exception and when our expectations are to live life on the mountaintop, but reality is life in the valley, we become frustrated with life and take on a pessimistic view of the future.

The Apostle Paul had learned to live the contented life and tells us in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content". The fact be known, Paul was sitting in a Roman prison when he penned those words. Paul was a man that knew the power and presence of God upon his life. Paul had been instrumental in starting perhaps as many as one hundred churches throughout the Roman Empire. One could surmise that the normal person would have expected better treatment for his accomplishments, not a prison cell. The reason Paul was content even in his imprisonment was because he had his expectations in line with reality. Paul knew that his life would have to be lived in the valley, not on the mountaintop.

In Mark chapter nine Jesus took three of His disciples and "leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves". The disciples

enjoyed a mountain top experience with the Savior himself. The Bible says Jesus was transfigured and his clothing and countenance was changed into a heavenly image. The disciples saw the Saviors glory as it was revealed to them on the mountaintop, but the practical application of what the disciples saw on the mountain would have to be lived out in their own daily lives down in the valley below. Peter thought it would be a wonderful thing to remain on the mountain top with the Savior, but Jesus knew that they could not live their lives continually on the mountain top so he took them down from the mountain back to the valley where they would have to live out their faith in the every day ebb and flow of life.

Life was never meant to be lived on the mountaintop. There are times when we feel like everything is going our way when we have a good job, money in the bank, good health, and good family and friends, but that will not last, we must come down from the mountain to the everyday drudgery of life where there are problems, challenges, failures, and disappointments. In fact, there will be more challenging and difficult days than there will be days of tranquility. We live in a sin cursed world and in sin cursed bodies that have a propensity to find trouble quite naturally.

It is rather easy to be a Christian when we are up on the mountaintop. It is rather easy to walk by faith and trust God when everything is going our way, but the true test of our faith comes in the valley. Will we still walk by faith and trust God when our personal possessions and homes are destroyed by floods and tornadoes? Will we still trust God and walk by faith and believe Gods Word when we get the bad medical report or when we are laid off from our job?

Even though life is to be lived out in the valley we can still enjoy the peace of God in the midst of the trials of life. Paul had learned that the key to living the contented Christian life was to fully trust

God with his life no matter what state he found himself in. Paul had enjoyed the mountaintop experience when for 2 ½ years he was trained by God himself out in the Arabian Desert. Just he and God enjoying the mountaintop experience, but God never intended for Paul to stay on the mountaintop. God commissioned Paul to take the Gospel of Christ to the Roman Empire that would result in Paul experiencing untold persecution and problems. Paul endured beatings, imprisonment, stoning, abandonment, and eventually he was beheaded for his faith in Christ.

Paul was content because he had learned that his contentment does not depend upon his circumstances, but rather it depends upon his obedience to appropriate what he had learned from God on the mountaintop to the every day challenges of life in the valley.

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