

Contentment

***“Let your
conversation be
without
covetousness; and
be content with
such things as ye
have.”
—Hebrews 13:5***

TO BE CONTENT WITHIN

the meaning of the apostle's words in our theme text does not imply a listless, do-not-care attitude toward life and its responsibilities. Rather, it implies a peace of mind based upon faith's convictions that God will supply all the needs of his fully consecrated people. The apostle continues the thought, saying, “For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”—vss. 5,6

The Greek word here translated “content” literally means to “ward off,” or “to avail.” The thought evidently is that the Christian can be content because, through faith, he knows that nothing which is done against him can prosper because the Lord is his helper. Not only is this a blessed assurance of help in the face of attacks from enemies of the New Creature, but it is also a guarantee to cover the daily needs of the Christian, concern for which might otherwise disturb one's rest of mind and heart.

COVETOUSNESS OPPOSITE TO CONTENTMENT

To believe that the God of the universe is our Heavenly Father, and that he will take care of us, providing for all our needs if we do our part, and protecting us against all our enemies, banishes all anxiety relative to material things from the hearts of the Lord's people. Covetousness is a form of selfishness, begotten by the urge for self-preservation. Fallen man has not only found it necessary to struggle against the "thorns and thistles" of an imperfect environment, but has also developed the erroneous idea that it is necessary to exert his combativeness against his fellow man in order to make a living. Sometimes this struggle of human selfishness is carried on with swords and guns. Generally speaking, however, it is seen in the more honorable guise of competitive business in the labor, industrial, and professional markets of the world.

The Christian finds himself in this world of selfishness, but he should endeavor not to be a part of it. That is, he should seek to have his "conversation," or activity, motivated, not by selfishness, but by love. The worldly-minded would think such an attitude a very foolish one indeed. However, they do not have the assurance of a kind Heavenly Father's care. They depend upon their own ability to provide for and to protect themselves and their own. For this reason, the "everybody-for-himself" principle seems to be a very logical one for most men and women of the world. The Christian, though, is not dependent upon his own wisdom and strength. He is assured that back of him and his interests there is the power of a loving and all-wise Father, so he commits all his affairs to him.

With this blessed assurance of divine care, we can ward off the spirit of fear and discontent, and not be governed by the principle of covetousness. Why selfishly compete with our fellow men for riches which are temporary, when we enjoy the blessings of heavenly riches, represented in God's care for us now, and the promised glory, honor, and immortality of the future? Truly, the Christian can have his conversation, or way of life, "without covetousness," and be content, because the Lord is his helper.

GOD'S PEOPLE NEVER FORSAKEN

The promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," was originally made to Joshua, when, by divine appointment he took over the leadership of Israel as the successor of Moses. (Josh. 1:1-9) The apostle in quoting it, applies it to all the consecrated. God is impartial in his care for his friends, servants, and sons. This means that his promises of watchcare made to any of his people are applicable, and sure to be fulfilled, and with perhaps even more force, for us today. Likewise, we may note the wonderful manner in which God did care for his ancient people. We are thus encouraged in the thought that the same God is now caring for us, and that the same love and power is being exercised for our blessing.

The circumstances under which this promise was made to Joshua are interesting to note. Moses, the great leader of Israel, was no longer with them. The Israelites had learned to recognize Moses as their leader, and there would be room for question in Joshua's mind as to whether he would be competent and accepted in taking Moses' place. Doubtless

the Israelites leaned on Moses more than they did on the Lord. Would they now have faith in the Lord's appointment of Joshua? It must have been very encouraging to Joshua, therefore, to have such a wonderful assurance of help from the Lord as contained in the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

With such a promise from the Lord, Joshua could go about the business of leading Israel in a wholly unselfish manner. He would not need to show favoritism to any of his people in order to have the good will of the influential. He knew that, after all, God was their real leader, and that he was merely serving under him. Thus his only concern need be that of pleasing God. If he did that, he knew that God would care for all his interests, as well as the interests of all his true people.

SELFISH PRAYER NOT PLEASING

No facet of the Christian life should be influenced by selfishness, not even the prayer life of the consecrated. Our prayers should not be selfish in the sense of asking the Lord for earthly and material blessings which his wisdom sees might not be good for us as New Creatures. Our requests to the Lord should always include the thought, "Not my will, but thine be done." This principle should hold true even in respect to spiritual matters, either as they concern our own growth in grace, or have to do with the privilege of proclaiming the Truth.

We once heard of a brother who prayed earnestly that it might not rain on a certain day that he had planned to distribute circulars to advertise a public meeting. The brother's thought was that since this

was the Lord's work he would surely be willing and glad to see that the weather conditions were favorable for doing it. When the day came, sure enough it did not rain, and the brother was certain that the Lord had heard and answered his prayer.

Although it is true that the Lord might choose to overrule in such an experience in this fashion, there is another angle to a matter of this kind. The Lord is always pleased with the sincere zeal of his people to make known the glad tidings of his kingdom. It might, nevertheless, be his will that one endure the hardship of going out in inclement weather to distribute advertising material. Such an experience as described here is merely an example of the many daily experiences of every type which come into the Christian's life. The point is that our prayers should never be selfish. We believe that the Lord is pleased for us to take everything to him in prayer. However, proper prayer should never be in the spirit of demanding, but requesting and, with resignation, leaving the decision wholly with him as to just what experiences will serve our best interests and highest needs, in accordance with his will.

THANKFULNESS IMPORTANT

A goodly portion of our prayers should be those of thankfulness. Too often, perhaps, we think of prayer as a means merely of requesting things from the Lord. Our Heavenly Father is pleased for us to ask him for things, but let us commingle our requests with heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for the divine blessings which daily are lavishly bestowed upon us. There is no better aid to contentment

than the habit of thanksgiving to God for his abundant mercy, and for his grace to help in our every time of need.

PAUL'S TESTIMONY

The Apostle Paul, through his own experiences of the Lord's care and overruling, learned the great value of contentment. He emphasizes that such a condition can only come to the child of God by proper thought, conduct, and prayer. Notice his words: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." "Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. . . . for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—I Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:6-13 ■