

Greetings brothers and sisters, I the name of the risen Christ! Christ is rise alleluia! He is rise indeed, alleluia!

This week, as my hair grows longer, the walls of the house seem to close in a little more each day, more regulations are being enacted, people have begun to protest the limitations, and still the corona virus rages on, I was reminded of Paul's comment in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned to be content with whatever I have. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Contentment, a state of being which seems to be under attack today. It is so easy for the circumstances we face today to turn from events to be endured to worries which zap our contentment-worries that draw our focus off of God and unto ourselves. Perhaps a working definition is needed here. Contentment is awareness of what is happening and the ability to remain at peace no matter the circumstances.

Warren Wiersbe shares these thoughts on contentment. "The word content actually means contained. It is a description of the person whose resources are within him so that he does not have to depend on substitutes without." That should describe us. The circumstances of our lives and world situations should not control us. They will impact us, but that does not mean they have control over us. Christ living within us, the power of the Holy Spirit moving in us, the love of God flowing from us these should be the dominating factors of our lives. (Our moods, feeling, actions, reactions, thoughts, words, and even our prayers)

Wiersbe goes on to say: "Contentment is not complacency nor is it a false peace based on ignorance. Contentment is not escape from the battle, but rather an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle." I like that! So, let the battle rage around us. Christ has already won the victory. Death, the grave and Satan himself could not keep Him down. He is risen! As believers, we share in His victory.

What I have found helpful in maintaining, or even finding contentment, is to first acknowledge my fears. It is important to fess up and admit to yourself what's going on in your heart and mind. You know, all the 'what ifs'. What if I go out and get this virus? Who will take care of mom? Or worse, what if I bring the virus home and mom gets sick? She's high risk. What if we never get to see our friends and loved ones again? What if the walls do close in on me? What if we do run out of toilet paper? You get the idea. The list goes on and on. Once we acknowledge our fears, we can talk to God about them and hand them over to Him.

It is at this point we need to remember. Here are four things for us to remember.

1. Remember that God is with us and will never leave us. We are not alone, even in this time of isolation. God loves us and cares for us. I Peter 5:7 says: "Cast all your anxieties upon Him, because He cares for you." Step one to contentment.
2. Remember to take all your burdens and fears to the Lord. He wants us to share with Him. Matthew 11:28-30 says: "Come onto me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." This is a wonderful invitation from Jesus to enter into His arms of contentment, peace and love. There is however one caveat, once we lay our burdens at the feet of Jesus, we are to leave them there! Do not pick them up again. Allow Him to take care of them as He has promised.
3. Remember God has provided us with His perfect peace through a living hope in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. This peace is ours for the receiving. Philippians 4:6-7 says: "The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplications, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is important to remember, contentment (peace) is not something we achieve on our own, it is a gift from God. This verse leads us to our next remember.
4. Remember that God's peace is nothing like the peace what the world offers. It doesn't make sense. He offers His peace in any and all circumstances, it is not superficial it is a deep, beyond our understanding peace, and a peace that we will find difficult to explain to others.

Regardless of someone's faith, anxiety and fear are natural tendencies. Therefore, we should not ignore the risks or avoid thinking about the situation. Contentment isn't saying: "oh everything will be fine". It doesn't mean we shouldn't take proper precautions for our safety and the welfare of others. So, wear your masks when you must be out and about. The rest of the time stay home, stay safe, and trust God.

Brothers and sisters, contentment is acknowledging that the circumstances are bad and may get worse, BUT, knowing that GOD is in control! By trusting in Jesus, we have hope in the midst of those circumstances. We have the opportunity to live unafraid because of the hope that isn't based on wearing a mask or staying at home (which are both important that we do). Our hope rests in Jesus Christ. During this time of quarantine let us take the time to draw nearer to God, to find rest, contentment and peace in His loving embrace.

To the glory of God, Amen. (Written by Elaine Swinehart)