A Dangerous Contentment

The apostle Paul wrote, “Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am” (Philippians 4:11). This is a good example for us to follow. Much of the sorrow and pain in this world could be avoided if more people would learn this lesson and be content with what they have.

It would seem, however, that some people want to take the idea of contentment and apply it in an area that Paul did not address in this passage to the Philippians. What we mean is that some have decided to be content with the spiritual condition of their lives with no thought of improving them; no thought of growing “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). This dangerous kind of contentment can be expressed with the words “good enough.” “Attending one worship service a week is ‘good enough.’” “As long as I am as good as the next guy, that’s ‘good enough.’” “As long as the good I do in life outweighs the bad, that’s ‘good enough.’” Friend, if that is your attitude toward your spirituality, I have some sad (and I hope sobering) news. Nothing about you (or me) is “good enough” when it comes to our approach and attitude to God’s will and our spirituality.

By stating that none of us is “good enough,” we mean that none of us is able to stand on our own spiritual worth before God and feel justified; to feel that we belong there. The prophet Isaiah gives us some insight into what it must be like to find ourselves in the presence of God. In Isaiah 6:1-4, the prophet describes a vision he had in which he finds himself in the very throne room of God Almighty. His response was not the awestruck feeling of someone who sees the Grand Canyon for the first time. He was scared to death! His statement was, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). In that instant, Isaiah understood that he did not belong in the presence of the Lord because of his own unworthiness. He understood very clearly that he was not “good enough.” It is precisely because none of us is “good enough” that we are so dependent upon the grace of God.

The apostle Paul also wrote that the work of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers is to equip the saints “for the work of ministry to the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11, 12). And that work continues “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the maturity which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). When we attain to that level of unity and to that level of maturity that Christ has, we can stop worrying about the need to grow in our spirituality. Until then, it seems that the admonitions (commands) of Scripture to continue to grow and fight the good fight and not be content with an inferior level of spirituality are words well heeded.

Donnie Bates, Conifer, CO