

### **Attitude #9 - Perseverance**

***Jesus said: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven***

***Matthew 5:11-12***

**I stand firm in my faith that Jesus is in control of all things.**

Perseverance is the determined continuation with or for something. It is a steady and continued action or belief, usually over a long period and especially despite difficulties or setbacks; insistence, firmness, resolve and determination.

Most people quit before they quit. In other words, they go through the motions for a period of time before they just finally check out all together. In many cases they are already dabbling in certain things that they know are wrong but they have managed, to some extent, to hold it together. Then there are those that find other people as their excuse to quit trying. They did not get the help that they felt they were entitled to; they did not get the response they thought they were entitled to; they did not get the sympathy they thought they were entitled to so they went and did what they wanted to do all along and now they believe they have someone else beside themselves to blame for it. The truth of the matter is that I have no excuse at all to make a poor decision in my life when I humble myself and take personal responsibility for my own actions.

**Philippians 4:11 - Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**

The life of the Apostle Paul was anything but a cakewalk. At this time Paul is writing to the church in Philippi from a prison in Rome. Obviously not under the best of circumstances, however, Paul was given some individual privileges during his incarceration. He makes a statement that few Christians make with pure honesty. Many of us have gone through life with the mindset that there will always be something else that we need. Perhaps it is to do something that we have not done or have something that we have not had; like there will always be something that I have yet to experience and if we are not careful we can become and stay discontented. When we read this verse it is as if Paul is saying, "my circumstances will never dictate my contentment, they have the ability to add to my contentment but they will never dictate whether or not I am content....I am content anyway". What this tells us is that if this was Paul's experience, it can be our experience as well. With that said we hope to learn what Paul means in this verse and then apply what we learn.

**1. Paul's Duty - Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**

It's interesting what Paul did NOT say....he did not say, "I have heard"....but "I have learned". Paul was a practitioner! Paul didn't say that his relationship with the Lord made him "feel" content instantaneously. Paul described it as something that he learned and we know that learning is a process. Learning is acquired knowledge and becoming content in the Christian life will come as we live out the knowledge that we acquire.

Sadly, many of us have heard much but learned little.

**James 1:22 - But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.**

**Two things that keep us from learning:**

- **Making light of what we hear.**

There is a mindset that if we are not careful we can find ourselves in.....the mindset of apathy. When we are apathetic we are void of feeling, passionless and indifferent, unconcerned, coldness.....Jesus called it lukewarmness. One way that we can avoid making light of what we hear with regard to the word of God is to realize that it's by God's grace that He gives us the opportunity to be exposed to His truth to begin with.

- **Forgetting what we hear.**

**James 1:23,24 - For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway *forgetteth* (neglect, overlook or fail to notice) what manner of man he was.**

Most of the time the things that we forget concerning spiritual matters are the things that pertain to us personally....our faults and our instructions...these go hand in hand. If we will not accept our faults we will always keep our ears closed to the instruction that will enable us to overcome them.

What does learning involve?

- **It involves difficulty....but difficult does not mean impossible.**

Spiritual things that are learned involve believing and doing and both of these things are against our nature because it involves self-denial and self-examination.

Much of what we learn we learn by experiences and the bible teaches us how we can learn about life correctly. In many of our "life lessons" God is trying to teach us about life and we will learn the best when we apply the bible to what we are experiencing during those lessons. When we do we are less likely to give up and more likely to give in to God's will.

**2. Paul's Condition - Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**

Paul's lessons were difficult lessons and there will be times when our lessons are difficult as well.

I will let the word of God speak for itself concerning Paul's experiences.

**2 Corinthians 11:23-30 - Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.**

**2 Corinthians 4:8-10 - We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**

Paul made it clear that regardless of his conditions, he was going to condition himself to be content. So many times in life we measure our contentment in regard to our present situations and I would admit that is a difficult temptation to avoid. I believe that we would avoid further worry and fear if we would allow God to carry us through our dark and difficult days instead of

being overwhelmed by them. When we allow God to carry us through we will be less likely to add to them by responding to them the wrong way.

**3. Paul's Reward. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.**

Content - sufficient for one's self, independent of external circumstances.

Paul was content with the little that he had and he was able to get to the place where he was satisfied. He depended upon God to provide for him from day to day and that satisfied him. In other words, his satisfaction was not upon what he received all the time but on God who he knew would supply all of his needs. What he learned was a great lesson and a lesson for all of us to learn as well considering the trials of life; he learned to bring himself to make the best of every condition of life. He learned how to suffer want and not to be overcome by the temptation of it. But never think that the temptations of want are any harder than the temptations of fullness and prosperity.

**Philippians 4:6,7 - Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

Verse 13 tells us how he is able to come to such a place.....

**Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

This verse speaks in the present tense as if Paul is saying, "Through Christ, who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by His constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in everything; I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power."

**When we do this, we will never give up!!**