

It Is Written

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The Devil's Most Useful Tool

By Kyle Campbell

It was once announced that the Devil was going out of business and would offer all his tools for sale to whoever would pay his price. On the night of the sale, they were all attractively displayed. Malice, hatred, lust, envy, and all the other implements of evil were spread out, each marked with its price. Apart from the rest lay a harmless looking wedge-shaped tool, extremely worn and higher in price than any of the others.

Someone asked the Devil what it was. "That is discouragement," he replied. "Why do you have it priced so high?" "Because," the Devil said, "It's the most useful tool I own. With it, I can pry open and get inside a man's conscience when I couldn't get near him with any of the others. Once inside, I can use him in whatever way suits me best. It's so worn because I use it with nearly everyone. Very few people know that it belongs to me."

The Devil's price for discouragement was so high that it was never sold. He still owns it and uses it to this day. But here's three people who teach us three ways of dealing with the struggles of discouragement.

First, from Moses we learn that we should tell God our feelings in prayer (Numbers 11:11-15). Moses poured out his feelings to God. God's answer to Moses' prayer was to give him 70 elders to assist him in managing the affairs of the camp. Moses was a great leader and a spiritual giant, but even he could do only so much.

Second, from Job we learn that when everything seems to be going wrong, we can remember that God never loses control, that God has reasons for what He allows, and that God can change circumstances when the right time comes (Job 1:12; 2:6; 42:10-17).

Third, from Elijah we learn that we often make despondency worse by dwelling on the negative and imagining that events in our lives are worse than they are. His repeated complaint to God seems to be all he was thinking about (1 Kings 19:10, 14). He forgot that life can seem worse than it really is. He said, "I only am left." This dejected attitude has been called "The Elijah Complex." He also forgot that good can be happening that he didn't know about (1 Kings 19:18; cp. Psalm 18:21; Isaiah 38:3).

Satan does incredible damage to the hearts of Christians with discouragement. But the Bible is "true to life" and is as relevant to our modern problems as it was for people who lived long ago. This is one way God helps us through the Scriptures: by not only picturing the triumphant moments in lives of great men and women, but also how people of faith endure dark times of despondency.

The help God reserves for those going through discouraging times is for those who have turned to Him, not for those who have turned their backs against Him. Although becoming a Christian doesn't mean you won't have problems - it does mean God's there to help you through life (Psalm 46:1), and save you when your life is finished (2 Timothy 1:12). At this moment, if your life is on the upswing, then show compassion and help the Christians close to you who struggle (Romans 12:15; 1 Peter 3:8).

Learn Contentment in Christ Jesus

By Max Dawson

"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13)."

Note that Paul said that he had learned to be content - no matter what his external state was. His well-being did not depend on anything external! His sense of contentment came from something within him - his relationship with Jesus. That relationship provided a source of strength to him that was greater than his surroundings. Greater than his possessions. Greater than how people were treating him at the time.

After 55 years of preaching, I still find it remarkable how many people seem to have a sense of well-being only when everything around them is going well! The Apostle Paul was able to have a sense of well-being when most things around him were going poorly. Do we need to be reminded again that he wrote this while imprisoned? If you or I were to be put in prison because of the gospel, would we be able to say what Paul said?

We tend to attach our contentment and sense of well-being to having a full belly and lots of toys to entertain us. Witness the past holidays. We feasted, exchanged gifts, and enjoyed all the best things money could buy. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with those things, we cannot allow ourselves to think those things will ever produce contentment.

There is no amount of getting more that can ever satisfy the lust for more. Material things - do not, cannot, and never will - satisfy the deepest longings and needs of our hearts. It is because of that impossibility that many people experience "post-Christmas letdown."

I recall the words of an old song by Peggy Lee. One line of it is about when she was twelve years old and her daddy took her to the circus. The line goes, "And as I sat there watching, I had the feeling that something was missing. I don't know what, but when it was over, I said to myself, 'Is that all there is to the circus?'" One of the thoughts of the song is that everything in life tends to let us down and that there is no real satisfaction anywhere.

The only place you will ever find true and lasting satisfaction, contentment, and a sense of well-being is in Christ. Everything else will leave you with the thought that "something is missing." We ought not to live our lives with something missing!

Contentment comes not in things, possessions, money, or experiences. The things that matter and endure are things I cannot hold in my hand. Contentment comes through Jesus and the relationships that I share in him. That's what Paul learned. May we do the same.

Has the Lord Given Enough Evidence?

By Terry Wane Benton

The heavens declaring His glory (Psalm 8; 19; Rom.1:20) leaving us "without excuse," along with our eyes, brains, hearing, being "wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:13-14), the seasons, rain, and food give testimony (Acts 14:17), and the prophetic word being made more sure in amazing predictions and fulfillment (2 Peter 1:16-22), and then God manifesting Himself in the flesh (John 1:1-14), proving Himself with many eyewitnesses and miracles (John 20:30-31) and rising from death to prove His power over death (Acts 17:30-31; Romans 1:4), seems more than enough proof.

The history unveiled in the Old Testament with prophecies of the Messiah, and prophesies of the rise and fall of nations and cities, should be enough for any reasonable soul to know that God is real.

The problem is not with the strength of the evidence. It is with the lazy and obstinate human heart that does not want to seek, grope for, and find God (Acts 17:21-31), lest He get in the way of our selfish desires.

The proof of God is so abundant that "the fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God!'" (Psalm 14:1). They are corrupt and simply want to justify their self-centered life of darkness. They don't want to come to light lest their deeds be exposed (John 3:18-21). It is a dark soul that prefers to ignore the evidence in preference to a theory that we could have gotten here by accident.