

## Content On Battlefield Earth

By Nathan Warner

Are you content with your life? I think if we all looked deep inside and considered our lives honestly, we would answer “no.” Maybe the grass seems greener on your neighbor’s lawn, or maybe you feel restless with your spiritual maturity. Whether you believe in the sovereignty of God and the direction of the Holy Spirit or not, you are where God has stationed you in life for the time-being. You are where He intends you to be. Yet, we are unsatisfied. Maybe our difficulties outweigh our pleasures. Maybe we long for companionship and yet are alone. Maybe instead of blessings, we feel our faith has brought us suffering. Why is this?

It’s all about perspective, so let’s establish some context. Why are we here? What are we doing here? It is clear from Scripture that we are refugees on this planet. Men and women of faith have “*confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth*” (Hebrews 11:13b NASB); therefore, “*conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth*” (1 Peter 1:17b). Throughout Scripture, there’s a sense of accountability, because we will be judged for how we conducted ourselves during our visit here.

Secondly, seeing as we are exiles, we aren’t on holiday or on tour. Being an exile puts us at odds with the god of this world, because we do not acknowledge him as our king. We are strangers to him. Yet, we are not without a King, like earthly refugees often are. We have a King, even Jesus Christ, and our allegiance is to Him. **Thus, we are at war with the god of this world.** It is a very real war – one we face every day, inside and out. All the principles of war apply even though it is not a carnal war, fought over lands and assets with swords and nuclear weapons, “*for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

One thing to establish from the beginning, however, is that this war isn’t about us. The battle is for God’s glory and for His purposes, many of which we do not know. It is not advanced by us winning souls for Christ. We are to preach the Gospel and make disciples of all nations, because He commanded us to do so, not because this will achieve victory. We cannot and we will not win this war for God. Christ alone will conquer, whether He finds faith on the earth or not. So, we should be wary of entering crusades and missions that put the emphasis on our prowess or our abilities or that offer us spoils from the conflict. We are not pillaging mercenaries, paid to deliver a result at any cost – we are soldiers of the King of Righteousness with great accountability, called to serve in our station or at our post as He requires, whether it calls for action or not. We serve a sovereign God. That means that none of our missions on the battlefield are for our benefit, although the inevitable outcome is greatly to our benefit, for we will see our conquering King claim all for Himself, and we will share in the government that is His in righteousness and justice.

So, what was the point of this context? To remind us that life in a time of war is not pleasant. It costs us. It costs us blood, sweat, and tears in the trenches. It can cause us boredom, frustration, and vexation if we’re posted in the rear, guarding the mess hall, or if we’re too “young” to fight on the front lines. It can cause us fear, apprehension, and distress if we are creatures of comfort thrust into the visceral horrors of battle. The bottom line if we are not content is to remember that we do not assign ourselves roles in this contest; God does, and none are menial or undeserved. He needs us to be where He has put us.

This doesn't mean we will be "stuck" doing "mess duty" all our lives, nor will we always be in the mud and distress of the trenches. The Holy Spirit may direct us to other tasks and give us other missions. We need to be content with where we are posted but eager to do more or less, if the Spirit commands us thus. The Parable of the Talents offers context here. The Master assigned duties to His servants, and if they discharge those duties well, they were given greater responsibilities. One thing to clarify, we do not know what God considers "greater" – we like to think missionaries and preachers are doing "greater" work than those who do service or don't seem like they're doing much at all, but only God knows what is truly a "greater" responsibility.

Contentment is very important in the ranks, and there are two dangerous spiritual extremes I feel we should address. The first condition is certainly the more addressed. These are Believers who like being where they are at spiritually and are afraid of any challenge or change. They are often referred to as "Pew Warmers" – they come to church and do the minimum that they feel is required of them as a Believer, and they don't want to hear anything that might make them feel uncomfortable. They close themselves off to any challenge to grow or mature. When we are here, we are content with not seeking spiritual growth – we are comfortable with where we are at in our walk with the Lord and do not desire anything deeper, even to the point of oppressing the Holy Spirit.

This condition is like a soldier who is never where he's supposed to be, because he's always trying to get out of duty and tries every way he can to "not hear" his commander's call – maybe he really likes his desk job, or maybe he enjoys guarding the ammo dump. When a command goes forward, he won't carry it out, because he's intent on balking, falling behind, or retreating to safety. This type of Believer is always trying to get by with as little effort as possible – always dancing dangerously on the line of court-martial. And that's the problem – they're not serving God willingly - they're just trying to get by doing the least they can possibly do. This is a form of insubordination. Many of the mega-churches and some "Christian" teachers today seek to accommodate this condition by endeavoring to make their congregations as comfortable as possible. After all, challenge and growth can be painful! And pain causes large, tithing congregations of nominal Christians to scatter.

If you find yourself in this situation, chances are you know in your heart you've been ignoring the Holy Spirit and you need to seek the Lord. For Jesus Himself said, "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied*" (Matthew 5:6). Ask Him to renew your hunger and your thirst for Him. Ask Him to convict you, challenge you, and grow you.

The second condition is on the opposite side of the spectrum. Over here, we find we are never content with where we are in our walk with the Lord. We are always seeking a new challenge or a new solution to growth. We're always pushing to change where we are. Many teachers today teach that we should never be content with where we are in our spiritual walk with the Lord, that we must always be going from victory to victory, and that trials and difficulties are signs that God is not with you – that you have backslidden or fallen away. This is unbiblical as trials and tribulations are a necessary and expected part of being a Believer.

If we believe this teaching, trials and difficulties can cause us to be resentful, fearful, and uneasy when we find ourselves in the "desert." We need to understand that sometimes a "desert" is a necessary part of our walk – sometimes it causes us to grow the most – think of Paul in the desert for 3 years, unlearning everything he had learned, or John the Baptist with nothing to be said for him because he was "in the wilderness" until the appointed time. What a waste of time, right? Paul could have been out preaching the Gospel all that time and growing followers and

congregations! But he was led to the desert for a reason, and he went in obedience. He grew deeply out there in the trials and the solitude so that when he came back, he was prepared to deal with the challenges God gave him, leading him to say, “*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be **content** in whatever circumstances I am*” (Philippians 4:11).

The problem with this extreme – this discontentment with where we are in our relationship with God – is that oftentimes spiritual growth comes in times of difficulty and drought when WE feel we are not growing—when we feel like we are stagnant. This feeling of stagnation or languishing may come to our lives in the form of trials, personal difficulties, temptations, spiritual attacks, loss of friendships, isolation, betrayals, dwindling congregations, small returns on invested energy, slow results, and much more. The sense of stagnation can cause us to become worried about our spiritual condition, and we may push ourselves to do things that the Holy Spirit is not directing us to do.

Perhaps this is why some ministries fall into false teaching and apostasy after many years of teaching sound doctrine. They are not content with what the Lord has given them. They’re not satisfied in the place Jesus has commanded that they be, and they begin to strive on their own, falling into snares and deceptions, envying, enmity, jealousy, strife, and dissensions (which are all works of the flesh – Galatians 5:20-21). This condition is best illustrated by a soldier who does not wait for his commander’s order – instead, he’s always jumping the gun and putting himself in harm’s way. He is never where he’s supposed to be, because he’s always doing what HE thinks is best. He is unmanageable and untrustworthy because in times of anxiety he will not only act on his own, but he will also lead others who are following him into harm’s way. This too is a form of insubordination.

If you find yourself in this position, you must understand that acting outside of the Holy Spirit’s direction is as bad as not acting at all. Restrain your fleshly urges and learn to wait upon the Lord’s direction. See periods of frustration and difficulty as the trials and tests that they are, which can help you grow in maturity.

So what should we look like? Where should the Believer be in regard to contentment? We must be content with where God has placed us but with an eager ear and a keen eye to what the Spirit commands when the command comes. In this situation we are following His lead obediently without passively resisting and without pushing and pulling. This is like a soldier who is eager, yet obedient. He will stay where he has been assigned until a new command is given, but he waits eagerly for that command – content where he has been stationed but also willing to be reassigned. “*Therefore I am well **content** with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10). Amen.