

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand . . . For I have learned in whatever state I am in therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:5,11-13

WHILE WE ARE WAITING

by Craig Marlatt

April 28th, 1999 marked the end of my first quarter century as a Christian. Although twenty-five years is not really a long time to many who have known the Lord for a longer period, still I think that I have had some unique experiences during that time.

One of the things that I have discovered is that God does not always do things the way that his people think He should. If I could put all of the “Prophecies” and “Words from the Lord” that I have heard (or perhaps even said myself) that never came true, into a pile, the mound would probably resemble Mt. Rushmore.

That’s not a slam against God’s people, but I do think we have a tendency to put God on the spot, and expect Him to back us up just so we won’t suffer any shame. I don’t know how many times I have been to a meeting where the minister would call somebody forward and proclaim healing and words of knowledge about someone, who, upon follow-up research, never received the things they were told were surely coming their way. Sometimes it even seems as though it doesn’t matter to the person as long as they hear someone say, “God told me to tell you . . .”, and they get to feel a few goose bumps. It makes you wonder what it’s all about if you really consider the integrity of God.

Then there are the various groups that appear on the scene every few years who claim to have worked out the Divine Timetable of the Second Coming of Christ. They usually hold up somewhere for a few days or weeks waiting, and when it doesn’t happen like they said, everyone disperses and goes back to their old lives to try and pick up the pieces and figure out what went wrong. I often wonder how many of them turn from walking with the Lord because of their disappointment or despair? Sometimes they’ve even sold or given all of their possessions away and they have to go back and start from scratch trying to build a new life for themselves and their families. That makes it twice as bad.

Through it all I’ve learned one thing: God is not radical! He’s not in a hurry! He’s in total control. If the Apostle Paul had known that nineteen hundred years after his martyrdom this old sinful world would still be ticking on, and the Church would still be waiting for the Savior’s return, I wonder if he would have hesitated before writing, “. . . *the Lord is at hand*”, on the end of Philippians 4:5.

No, I’m more convinced everyday that “*It is not for [us] to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power*” (Acts 1:7). I’ve quit saying, “If the Lord doesn’t come in the next two or three years it will really shock me.” I’m still expecting and awaiting his appearing, but doing so with the patience of one who knows that He will not leave me behind. I’m listening for the voice of my Master, not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, but in the still small voice calling me home to be with Him after the day is done.

