

Contentment

Contentment. What a wonderful feeling! Inner calmness. Peace. Joy. Thankfulness. From the Greek word 'ἀδελφότης', contentment is to be satisfied with what one has. But not everyone enjoys the pleasant feeling of contentment. Sad, but true. Someone said 'discontent is a battle waged in many lives today'. I believe it! It's a problem; a common malady in our society. Christians, who should be the most thankful, contented people on earth, battle discontentment. The Christmas season, which should be a joyous celebration of the coming of our Saviour, is often muddled by discontent. I'm amazed how advertizing grabs the carnal appetite for the latest 'stuff' when it's colourful, enticing ads are pushed in our faces: the latest toys, electronic gadgets, clothes, sports equipment, vacations, etc. It often produces discontent with what we have—stuff that's still good or works. And here's the scary part: many go into credit card debt buying stuff they can't afford, or could easily live without. What happened to contentment? Here's God's take on it: "Keep your lives free from the love of money [*what it can buy*] and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." [Hebrews 13:5 NIV] Did you know contentment is a choice?

The apostle Paul, who seemingly had struggled with discontent said: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." [Philippians 4:12 NIV] Did you know Paul was in a Roman prison when these lines were penned? How could he say this in such a place? What was his secret to being contentment? He learned, and chose, to be content because he was confident of God's love, grace and provision. He knew God's presence was with him, so he trusted Him to supply his needs as He saw fit; he knew God knew what he needed—when he needed it. Contentment gave him an inner calmness and peace in an unpleasant situation. It kept him sane and rejoicing in God in spite of the discomforts. Barnes says: "He had been in circumstances fitted to produce a different state of feeling. In his life of trials he had acquired invaluable lessons....he had found...there was grace enough....to enable him to bear trials with resignation."

Now think about King Solomon: he found out he could have it all, and got it all, but, it didn't bring about contentment, satisfaction, or happiness. He said: "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my reward from all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labour in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind." [Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 NKJ] All his grasping for stuff left Solomon feeling unfulfilled, unsatisfied, empty. Money could not buy what his heart really craved. So if you live only for pleasure or more stuff as Solomon did, you too will feel unfulfilled, unsatisfied, empty. Only God can satisfy your hearts desires. [Psalm 103:5]

Elisabeth Elliot said: "Contentment requires humility, which requires a willingness to receive what He gives, to relinquish what He takes, to suffer what He sends, to do what He says and to be what He requires." Paul said: "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." [1 Timothy 6:6-8 NKJ] Godliness is trusting God, knowing He's in control of what is going in your life. It's been said: "We could say then that contentment is knowing that God orchestrates all things for our good and for His glory according to His holy purposes. It is being completely sufficed and satisfied with who God is and with what God does." When this gets through to us we can relax and be content. Contentment lets you be at peace with yourself. And, it's contagious; other people will want it too.

George Shaw