

Blog



Contentment

Are you content?

“Real contentment must come from within. You and I cannot change or control the world around us, but we can change and control the world within us.” (Warren Wiersbe) Contentment is a state of happiness and satisfaction. It is a tranquility of the soul and a peace of mind and heart. Contentment is a promise to those who allow the Shepherd of their soul to lead them to green pastures, quiet waters and restoration. “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” (Isaiah 26:3)

In an age of stress when mental health issues dominate the social landscape, contentment can seem illusive. Driven by ambition and a striving to achieve, many of us find contentment beyond our grasp. In many ways our current generation has never had it so good, yet there seems to be a restlessness born of frustration and discontent. Maybe we are looking for contentment in the wrong places.

Paul the apostle lived a challenging life and lacked many things. One thing he did have, however was contentment.

“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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 4:11-12)

Perhaps there is something in the attitude of Paul that can help us in our own struggles to find contentment.

Not enough

“I know what it is to be in need.”

Despite being the great apostle of grace, Paul suffered financial, physical, emotional and reputational hardship as a direct result of God's call to follow Christ. There were times when he experienced severe set backs and found himself isolated and in dire need. Yet he claimed to be a contented man. Confronted by lack he found contentment. In seasons of lack it is possible to find contentment.

More than enough

“I know what it is to have plenty.”

While the apostle had to navigate seasons of hardship, he also enjoyed periods of financial and material blessing when he had more than enough. Sometimes churches were generous in their support of him, friends met all his needs and he experienced prosperity. He had more than enough. But plenty does not guarantee contentment. “Money can buy happiness but not contentment.” (T. Josh) Ironically, more than enough without contentment soon turns into never enough.

Enough

“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

His experiences taught Paul that contentment is not linked to external circumstances. “Contentment makes poor men rich, discontent makes rich men poor.” (Benjamin Franklin) True contentment comes from God. If we have Christ we have everything we need. He is our portion and our lot and we can be content in him. Paul discovered that, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6) Neither poverty nor prosperity need rob us of contentment. We too can learn the secret of being content in any and every circumstance.

“Next to faith this is the highest art - to be content with the calling in which God has placed you.” (Martin Luther) The promise of Scripture is, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”” (Hebrews 13:5) Circumstances may not always be ideal, but, “Contentment with the divine will is the best remedy we can apply to misfortunes.” (William Temple) Whether we have not enough or more than enough, Christ is enough. That is contentment.