

## Contentment in life

by Blues Bibleden - Tuesday, April 09, 2013

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### TRUE CONTENTMENT

Bible reference: Philippians 4: 11, 12

A news item read as follows...

A former hospital porter, who won £19 million on the National Lottery at the weekend, said he would give it all back if he could swap it for a long life with his wife. Stephen Smith, who suffers from a blood condition, which could kill him at any time, said he would exchange the money for good health 'in a second'. He said his aortic aneurism—a swelling in the body's main blood vessel—was a 'ticking time bomb' which could burst at any moment, with only a one-in-ten chance of survival. Mr Smith, who won Saturday's jackpot, said: "There's no shops in the cemetery, is there? I can't spend any of the money there!"

The Apostle Paul writes to the Church in Philippi:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for 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.

**So what is his secret? What brings you contentment...** and makes you discontented?

- Is it your possessions/achievements/friends/church life/status/health/ age/ circumstances/ spiritual condition/friends?

**True contentment comes, Jesus said, when you seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness before anything else.**

- The Apostle Paul, in his letter to Timothy wrote that godliness (or 'God-likeness') with contentment is great gain (I Timothy 6)
- So it's contentment AND godliness that we all need

**Doubts are natural** but when they dominate our thinking and decisions they are expressing a **lack of trust in God**

- When the going is **easy**, it is easy to be content...
- When life gets **tough**, that is **when EITHER despair OR faith comes to the fore**

### **THE WAY THAT WE RESPOND TO CIRCUMSTANCES is a key factor**

- The world tells us to fight and strive to change things in our own strength
- By contrast, the Bible tells us that *provided* we have invited God to take control, we should not struggle and strive but **share His yolk**

**Of course, if we have brought about difficult circumstances by our own foolishness, we need first to repent**

- **But the priority is for God to change ME first...**and let Him deal with the circumstances... perhaps by working through me
- This is tough because **we want to stay in control!**

**Put simply, if the circumstances don't change, then WE must!**

I remember how my daughter used to stretch to reach an object on top of a cupboard...but wasn't tall enough ...only when she has grown taller could she deal with the circumstances

In much the same way, we need to grow in our faith and trust before we can take hold of what God has in store for us...even though circumstances might stay much the same

**There is, however, a difference between being contented**—even when circumstances are difficult—and a **'shrugging the shoulders' resignation** to the situation

- The acid test is whether we say: "**God will sort things out**" or "**It's all hopeless**"

**The first statement** shows that we trust God to be the engine of change ... and we are ready to respond to His directing

**The second statement** shows that **we believe in fate**...whatever will be will be!

- **And even if we SAY we trust Him, is that belief reflected in our words and actions?**

**Why are some people more contented than others?**

- One person's contentment is another person's nightmare!
- Some people find peace in situations that would cause others to become agitated and distressed

What springs to mind when the Bible speaks of peace and contentment?

EXAMPLE OF TRUE CONTENTMENT is the painting competition based on the theme of 'Peace'. Lots of entries showing tranquil scenes...but the winner was a painting of a bird in a nest wedged in branches beneath a roaring waterfall... contented while in the midst of the turmoil

### **GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO BE CONTENT WITH ANYTHING LESS THAN HIS BEST**

**If we complain when life gets tough**, we will be at the mercy of circumstances...when God wants us to rise above them and trust Him

**If we complain when we don't get our own way**, we are like people that James describes as 'blown this way and that way'

**CIRCUMSTANCES** can be misleading...

EXAMPLE: There is a true story of man whose boat sank... he was washed up on a deserted island... managed to build a shelter... survived for weeks... even managed to start a fire... then went out to find food and shelter... but his possessions and shelter caught fire. He was so angry with God... but the smoke from the fire alerted a passing ship that would otherwise have sailed on by... and the man was saved by the very circumstances against which he railed

TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES CAN BE USED BY GOD TO SAVE US or to refine us or bring us to our senses or remind us of what really matters

- We don't enjoy them or welcome them, yet if we recognise the Master's Hand in the situation, it makes them easier to bear knowing that He is in control

As we walk with the Lord, we realise that TRUE CONTENTMENT DOES NOT COME FROM SATISFYING SELF but by living for God and others

### **BEING CONTENT IS GETTING OUR PRIORITIES SORTED**

- It's good to work hard and try to improve our lot
- It's right to want the best for our families
- It's WRONG to neglect our relationship with God in doing so
- It's WRONG to use God as a "lucky charm" to help us get what we want
- IT'S WRONG to allow circumstances to dictate the depth of our faith and trust in the One who has said: "I will never leave or forsake you"

## STRATEGIES TO HELP ME BECOME MORE CONTENTED

1. I will thank God for his promises at every turn
2. I will invite God into each situation **before** I act, so that it is placed firmly in His hands
3. I will claim the authority of Scripture in each situation or decision that I make
4. I will ask myself if my attitude/words/actions are helping to build the Kingdom of God... or giving Satan pleasure!
5. I will die to self daily
6. I will tell Satan to get lost... in Jesus' name

## AND IF I'M TEMPTED TO BE DISCONTENTED...

1. I'll remind myself of all the blessings God gives and has given to me
2. I'll remember that Satan loves to hear me moaning
3. I'll remember Jesus' warnings about lost souls and think of my loved ones, so that I'm not distracted by petty matters
4. I'll bear in mind that one day I must give an account of my life to God

Missionary and author, **Patricia St. John** has been described as an ordinary woman with an extraordinary faith. She writes...

God does not always lift people out of the situation. He himself comes into the situation...He does not pluck them out of the darkness. He becomes the light in the darkness

## Finally, note that Paul comments that he has **LEARNED** to be content in every situation...

- It's a **process**, not a once for all time decision
- It's when we can say with Job...**"Even though He slay me, I will hope (put my trust) in Him"**

We all moan and sigh sometimes...but it helps to remember:

- The Father loved us so much that He sent his only begotten Son
- The Son loved us so much that he was willing to die
- The Holy Spirit loves us so much that He promises to live within us, change our hearts and bring us peace of mind

And we have the assurance of eternal life with God forever...

**NOW IF THAT DOESN'T BRING CONTENTMENT, I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL!**