

KINGDOM ADVANCING PRAYER

Mark: 1:35 & Matt: 11: 11-12

From the desk of Sehon Bryan

Contentment - An Apostolic Dimension

In the Greek language the word contentment is translated autarkeia. This word means "sufficiency" and is so rendered in:

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all *sufficiency* in all things, may have an abundance for every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

It is that disposition of mind in which one is, through the grace of Almighty God, independent of outward circumstances,

"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:"
Philippians 4:11

"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

So as not to be moved by envy:

"For where *envy and self-seeking* exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." James 3:16

Anxiety:

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." "Therefore *do not worry* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matthew 6:24,34

And discontent:

"Nor *complain*, as some of them also *complained*, and were destroyed by the destroyer." 1 Corinthians 10:10

Contentment is a condition of heart that must filter its way into and consume our thinking. It is actually possible for us to have much and not be content, as well as to lack and be discontented. Based on what Paul has to say in Philippians 4: 11-13, contentment is a learnt behaviour. It must be cultivated through hardships as well as in good times. We must train ourselves to be content in the all sufficiency of the Almighty God.

Contentment is not an attitude of complacency or mediocrity. It does not make us settle for less than what God has ordained for us. It by no means causes us to stop pressing towards the mark of the high call in Christ Jesus. In fact, it helps to keep us from anxiety during the process of attaining our high call in Christ Jesus. Contentment causes us to stand faithful in the midst of hard times. Paul demonstrates time and time again that hardships are a part of the walk of Faith.

It is very easy to choose a convenient gospel of claiming all the promises of the word without expecting to pay the price for the blessings of God. God values our character over any material blessing He could ever bestow upon us. In fact, He would rather we do without certain material things if He knows that it will be a snare to us. We live in a day where anxiety is always knocking at the door of our lives. It wants to impose itself upon our peace of mind and reign as king over our lives. The pace of life, the activities of the world and daily living have

numerous issues that confront us to the extent that, if we are not very careful, we can even justify to ourselves reasons why we are anxious: bills, expenses, commitments, health issues etc.

We must lay hold of contentment by force. The devil will not surrender this valuable tool in our pilgrimage without a fight. What did Jesus mean by saying that in this life we WILL have TRIBULATION (John 16:33)? Do we have a choice in what our trials ought to be? Can we hand pick our life challenges and struggles before hand? How does Jesus expect us to be of good cheer? I propose to us that being able to do all things through Christ is not only about the power to claim healing and deliverance but also the power to draw on the grace of God to endure hardships, which will come our way for a season or seasons.

Of course, we need discernment so as not to tolerate conditions that must be rebuked and resisted in our hearts and minds until breakthrough comes. Clearly the apostle Paul demonstrated this delicate balance in 1 Corinthians 4: 20 and in 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11 speaking of power (which we often interpret only as power to quickly escape or overcome trials with negligible discomfort) and yet of suffering.

“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” 1 Corinthians 4: 20 “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” 2 Corinthians 4: 7-11

There is a grace to abide in a realm called “contentment” where we don’t view hardships as a sign that God has forsaken us, but rather, a part of the tribulation caused by having to live and function in a decaying world. To be of good cheer is not a condition of the flesh but a way of seeing by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit that gives us a stability in trying times even when the natural situation and circumstances demand of us to look at our situation differently. Contentment is not a condition of the carnal mind. It is not attained simply by humanistic positive thinking but rather through active pursuit of submission and obedience to the word of God and His working in our individual lives. Like everything else, it takes practice, and many testings will come to us in this area. We must, however, keep pressing until we are content and at peace within our hearts amidst the changing times and constant new challenges that come our way.

Contentment is a quality that is essential to the life of a saint who is required to finish the work of the ministry that will herald Jesus’ second coming. It is inseparable from the peace of God - the peace that He gives which is not as the world can ever give. It allows us to gracefully endure the processes of God rather than try to do things our way. It helps us to learn and appreciate the lessons of the Holy Spirit as we go through the process rather than murmur and complain and miss the principles that will allow the Lord to release us into the next phase of our destiny and high call. Anxiety for the destination can distract us from appreciating the journey without which the destination would have little value on our arrival there. Contentment, however, causes us to capture all the small details along the way and helps to fill our hearts with wisdom and truth that will keep us free from being bound by the pressures of the world and the issues of life. Remember the words of encouragement from the apostle Paul to Timothy:

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. ***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. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (Emphasis and Italics added) 1 Timothy 6:3-10