

Contentment: The Prince of Virtues

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

A. Phil. 4:10-14; 1Tim. 6:6-8

1. "O people of God! I admonish you to observe contentment, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of serenity and is attired with the vesture of uprightness."
(Baha Ullah)

B. What is the greatest obstacle Americans face in devoting themselves to God?

1. We are Americans.
2. We are 4.4% of the world's population, but have 41% of the wealth
 - a. China is second and they have only 10.5% of the world's wealth and 20% of the world's population
3. 50% of all the single family houses in the world are located in the U.S.
 - a. In the U.S., housing averages two rooms per individual.
Worldwide the average is five people per room.
4. The U.S. federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, and \$8.65 per hour in Florida, while one in seven people in the world live on less than one dollar a day
5. We do not view ourselves as rich, because we live in the land of the rich

C. It's not sin to be rich, but it interferes with a relationship with God - Luke 18:25

1. In spite of all of this abundance, the average American is not content.
2. We have more than we need, but plenty has not brought us satisfaction.
3. Ecc. 1:14, 5:10
4. American Christians must break this life pattern and be different from the world - Rom. 12:2
5. One of those changes that make a Christian different is that he strives to become content - Heb. 13:5

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CONTENT?

A. Five things contentment is not:

1. Contentment is not merely external self-control. Some never complain out loud, but are discontent inside. It must be the state of one's heart.
2. Contentment is not a state of apathy. It is not hopelessness, giving up
3. Contentment is not fatalism; "whatever will be, will be."
4. Contentment is not merely an easygoing personality or a sanguine character which does not get excited easily.
5. Contentment is not insensitivity of spirit, or an unaffected, flat spirit.

B. Contentment is an attitude of heart, not just an external response to life. It is a condition that manifests the character of the inner man.

1. The contented person submits his heart to the will of God.
2. He is at peace with his circumstances, regardless of what they may be.
 - a. It is not lying to one's self about circumstances. Contentment permits one to express his concerns to others.
 - b. James 5:13-15; 2Thes. 3:1-2

- c. Contentment permits one to change circumstances that can be changed without compromising the faith - Matt. 10:23; Acts 8:1

II. CONTENTMENT REQUIRES EFFORT

- A. Genuine contentment is attainable. God would not command contentment if we were incapable of it.
 - 1. However, it must be learned - Phil. 4:11
 - 2. Learning takes time and demands focus, perseverance, and practice
 - 3. Contentment is contrary to our culture and often to our upbringing.
 - 4. Contentment demands that we acknowledge that we are discontent before we can learn the lessons of contentment.
- B. True, godly, and lasting contentment is possible only in Christ - Phil. 4:13
 - 1. Help with learning contentment comes from God.
 - a. Phil. 1:6, 2:13; 1Thes. 2:13
- C. Contentment requires us to remove ourselves from the center of our universe.
 - 1. It is not all about me. We must grow out of the childish focus on self.
 - 2. We must accept that this fallen world will never fully satisfy.
 - 3. Obsessions about possessions or circumstances will never be satisfied completely nor will they be satisfied partially for very long.
 - 4. Solomon had it all and by inspiration said that pursuit of things in this world is nothing but vanity. We have a more fulfilling purpose for being here - Ecc. 12:13; Luke 10:40-42
- D. Contentment requires that Christians must accept the fact that earthly prosperity is not a God given right - Col. 3:2

III. CONTENTMENT IS KNOWING OUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD

- A. We are nothing more than tenants on God's earth - Psalm 24:1; 1Chron. 29:14
- B. We rent everything; we own nothing - Lev. 25:23; 1Tim. 6:7; 1Cor. 6:19-20; Luke 12:15, 9:25; 1Cor. 4:2
- C. Our stay on earth is very brief before going to our eternal home.
 - 1. Psalm 39:5; James 4:14
- D. Work for what we need for the journey; do not pile up stuff for the destination.
 - 1. 1Tim. 6:8

IV. CONTENTMENT IS TRUSTING GOD'S PROMISES

- A. Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20, 6:33

Conclusion:

- A. The apostle Paul wrote about contentment to Timothy from a prison cell
- B. "Contentment is the secret of inward peace. It remembers the stark truth that we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it. Life, in fact, is a pilgrimage from one moment of nakedness to another. So we should travel light and live simply. Our enemy is not possessions, but excess. Our battle cry is not 'Nothing!' but 'Enough!' Simplicity says, 'If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.' Simplicity is the first cousin of contentment." (John Stott)