

Pastor's Corner

The Secret of Contentment!

July 1, 2009

Dear Friend,

Last week we talked about contentment, and how so often it seems that contentment or satisfaction seems like the ideal we always want but never attain. We talked about rating our lives on the satisfaction scale of one to ten. Now, it's easy to rationalize our satisfaction (or lack of it) by saying that if one area of our life was better, then we'd be satisfied in all the other areas. For example, there's our living condition, or our marriage, or our health, or our spiritual life, or our car, or our stuff. And the list goes on and on.

But there's a basic principle that applies to all areas of our lives, and Paul is the one that encourages this principle. In one of his letters to a small church, he tells them that "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." (Philippians 4:11) Paul makes it clear that contentment is not based on what is around us, or the content, but contentment is a choice! It's not something that came naturally for Paul, just as it doesn't come naturally for us. But he tells us that he has learned to be content. It's something in his mind. It's a decision he has made. And when we look at what was going on in his life when he wrote this, we see that it was very far from being comfortable or satisfying. You see, when Paul wrote this, he was under constant guard from a Roman soldier, and a prisoner in Rome. He had been arrested and held as a prisoner for two years even before getting to Rome. There were some veiled blessings, since when he arrived at Rome he was allowed to be in a house that he had to pay for himself, but under guard until his trial. It would not be considered the most contentment enhancing situation, but Paul says he's learned to be content wherever he is! He goes on to say, "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." (verse 12). Paul says it's not the outside circumstances that bring satisfaction, but it's a choice! And he says there's a secret to it. He says that he's found the secret to being content, and he tells us in verse 13: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." Or, as another translation puts it: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."



Do you want to be content? You can! It's a choice you make today. It will take some time to learn it, as Paul did, but it's worth it. The first step to contentment is to ask God to make you content, and claim that secret that Paul shared with us. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The next step is to choose to be content. As soon as you start feeling discontent rising up, remind yourself that you have chosen to be content, and you will not pursue something or someone simply to satisfy yourself. True, sometimes we need to replace something or get something else, but ask yourself first, "Do I want to buy this because I'm not satisfied with what I have, or because what I have needs to be replaced?" Look at things objectively. Is your car meeting your needs? Then don't replace it. Is your couch meeting your needs, even though it's not the right color? Again, don't replace it. Be content! And the final step to contentment is to thank God for what you have. When you are grateful for what God has given you, the gratitude will help you to become content. Instead of looking at stuff as "old" or "ratty" or "I'm so tired of this piece of junk!" you'll see things as what they truly are: God's gifts to you!

Next week we'll continue our discussion about being content. But in the meantime, choose to be content. And start being thankful for what you have.

We're praying for you!

Mark