

7 THE COUNTENANCE OF CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:11 ...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full...

2 Corinthians 9:8 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.

The meaning of being content here is to make sufficient or to satisfy. One is content when one is sufficient and satisfied. There is no lack and no desire for more. Nothing is more enviable than a truly contented man. The simplest definition in the words of Paul is “*I have all...I am full*” (*Philippians 4:18*). When measured against this, how rarely we find ourselves truly contented and how often, restless and dissatisfied.

Have we learned like Paul to be content in whatever state we are in? Unless we find our satisfaction and sufficiency in God Himself, we can never be constant in our contentment, regardless of circumstance. This is something that has to be learned. Contentment does not come naturally to us. Rather, the default disposition is discontent. We need to learn to see His all-sufficient grace in every situation and say “It is enough, I have all; I am full.”

Discontent arises when there is a gap between expectation and reality. Our discontent is usually carnal and rarely spiritual. There is a right kind of divine discontent which springs from God and spurs us towards Him. A good self-check is to see what it does with our attitude towards others. There are three things a carnal discontent does to others:

- Criticises – gives negative opinions
- Complains – gives negative comments
- Condemns – gives negative judgments

If we are doing any or all of these, we can be sure ours is not a ‘divine discontent’. The contented are not easily vexed or disappointed. The reality check is whether there is anything else we are hankering after that is not of God.

The opposite of contentment is covetousness, which always wants more but never has enough. Godly contentment brings a sense of liberty and reality when we begin to see things from God’s perspective instead of our own. What is the countenance of contentment? How do we recognise it? To be contented is to be restfully accepting of the past, peacefully engaged with the present, and serenely hopeful for the future. It receives from God all grace at all times with all sufficiency in all things (*2 Corinthians 9:8*). He who has this has something that cannot be easily displaced or replaced.