

10 Days Devotional: Financial Contentment - The Hidden Secret of God's Economy

"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." – Philippians 4:12

Are we content with our "lot" and "plot" in life (meaning our circumstances and possessions)? Or are we coveting - even working toward - "more" or "better" as Western culture defines such things (materially, reputationally, numerically, influentially)?

*"...But envy is rottenness to the bones" - Proverbs 14:30
"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition..." - Philippians 2:3*

We know God loves us, desires to bless us, and will always take care of us.

*"may you prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers" 3 John 2
"... a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey" Exodus 3:8
"Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold." - Genesis 13:2
"...never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread" - Psalm 37:25*

Yet, with certainty, we also know we must suffer difficulties and lack in this life:

*"... I was beaten with rods...stoned...shipwrecked...hungered...cold and naked" - 1 Cor 11
"In this world you'll have trouble - take heart, I have overcome the world" - John 16:33
"Whoever desires Me, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me" - Matthew 16:24*

How do we reconcile this? Many Christians think a Godly life is mostly one way (prospering) or the other (willing to suffer). Could it be both? Jesus says so:

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. - Luke 10:29-30

A key to us here is: "deny yourself". Contentment requires this. When "we get our back up" and complain to God:

- I thought you would bless me (according to the way of my vain imagination)?
- Why does he have more than me? Don't we serve the same God?
- You call this financial trial prospering?!

"Peter: Lord, what about him? Jesus: What's that to you? - John 21:21

Are not these just complaints of the self rising up in indignation? Yet, contentment is humility. There truly is a difference between wants and needs. Wants can get tangled up in our expectations, entitlements, emotions and the flesh. Provision from God doesn't always come as we expect or even demand. We might complain: "my needs are not being

met!" when we can't pay bills using money from our bank account. But who's to say that God can't take care of that another way, such as debt forgiveness or even an unexpected miracle without money? Is that money (or lack there of) an idol to us? Not everything in life revolves around money.

"Those with no money, buy and eat. Yes, without money and without price" - Isaiah 55:1
"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word from God's mouth" - Matthew 4:4

Contentment is also a matter of faith and maturity. When soldiers go to war, do they expect to take it easy? No, they face difficulty. But, are there times of R&R? Yes!

"Everything has a season; a time for every purpose under heaven" - Ecclesiastes 3:1

Contentment is denying "my rights" and is being fine with (even full of joy) how and what God provides. If he wants to bless us materially like Abraham or Solomon, that's great! But if we lust after such things outside of God's will and timing, what value is it? Do we want to end up like Saul? Solomon? No. Did God love Abraham more than Paul? Not that we're aware. God knows best. What if he's taking us through a wilderness to refine us? Yes Lord! May we be content in his goodness! He is a good Father!

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight - Hebrews 4:13
Weary not in well doing, for in due season we shall reap a harvest - Galatians 6:9

Remember the workers in the vineyard who got paid the same wage no matter when they started (Matt 20)? Or, the older brother of the "Prodigal Son" (Luke 15) being disgruntled with his brother's party? Or, Lazarus and the rich man who in hell was told by Abraham that he already received his good things in this lifetime and (Luke 16)? The common thread: Don't compare yourself with anyone else. Its a trap and a temptation. It will only "rot your bones" and create bitterness towards God and others. So, what can we handle? What will corrupt us? Only God knows.

"God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability" - 1 Corinthians 10:13

You know, in the end it is all for God's glory. Isn't He worth whatever we must endure?

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for loving me and providing for my family. You know the number of my days and you know what is best. Lead me in Your ways, not in my own vanity.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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