

Revival in Contentment

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INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be contented? When “content” is used as a noun, it refers to “contentment,” i.e. “(1) *the quality or state of being contented*; or, (2) *something that contents*.” When is used as an adjective, “contented” refers to a “*feeling or manifesting satisfaction with one’s possessions, status, or situation*.” When is used as a transitive verb, “content” means “(1) *to appease the desires of*; (2) *to limit (oneself) in requirements, desires, or actions*” [Webster].

This concept is communicated in the New Testament by a particular Greek word family. While detailed information is provided below, the basic idea is simple: Disciples can experience contentment because the Father has provided us with the blessings that we need, both in the physical and spiritual realms.

- The verb *arkeō*, meaning “*to assist*” or “*to suffice*,” occurs 8x in the NT (Matt. 25:9; Luke 3:14; John 6:7; 14:8; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5; 3 John 10). BDAG say it means “(1) in the active voice, *be enough, sufficient, adequate*; and (2) in the passive voice, (2) *be satisfied/content with something*.”
- The adjective *arketos*, descriptive of that which is “*sufficient*,” occurs 3x in the NT (Matt. 6:34; 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:3) [Thomas #713]. BDAG define it as “*enough, sufficient, adequate*.”
- The adjective *autarkēs*, a compound of *autos* [self] and *arkeō* [to assist, suffice], referring to one who is “*self-sufficient, sufficient*,” occurs once (Phil. 4:11) [Thomas #842]. BDAG say it is used of persons who are “*content, self-sufficient*.”
- Finally, the noun *autarkeia*, derived from *autarkēs*, referring to “*self-satisfaction*, i.e. *self-sufficiency*,” occurs 2x in the NT (2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6) [Thomas #841]. BDAG say this word, which carries the general meaning of “*self-sufficiency in the sense of ‘independence,’ then generally, ‘sufficiency,’*” has the specific meaning of “(1) *external, state of having what is adequate, sufficiency, a competence*; (2) *internal, state of being content with one’s circumstances, contentment, self-sufficiency*.”

MATERIAL BLESSINGS

Disciples should be content with the material blessings that we receive from the Father. John the Baptist emphasized this theme, generally in answering the questions of the crowds and the

tax collectors, and specifically, in responding to the soldiers (Luke 3:10-14, esp. vs. 14). Paul affirmed that godliness must be coupled with contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19). He personally sought to live according to this principle (Phil. 4:10-20, esp. vs. 11).

In Sacred Scripture, fulfillment of individual responsibility coupled with divine provision results in a life that is all sufficient (2 Cor. 9:6-11, esp. vs. 8). At the end of His discourse on worry, Jesus affirmed “Each day has ***enough** trouble of its own” (Matt. 6:25-34, esp. vs. 34). Accordingly, the writer of Hebrews stressed the need for contentment coupled with trust (Heb. 13:5-6).

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Disciples should be content with the spiritual blessings that come from the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We find satisfaction in sharing a relationship with God (John 14:8-14). We find satisfaction through the grace of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10). We are satisfied by being like our Master. In His discussion on discipleship, Jesus said, “It is ***enough** for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master” (Matt. 10:21-31, esp. vs. 25).

NEGATIVE USAGE

It occurs in the negative form in Matthew’s account of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, emphasizing the need for personal preparation (Matt. 25:1-13, esp. vs. 9). It occurs in the negative form in John’s account of the feeding of the 5,000, emphasizing the magnitude of the Lord’s miracle (John 6:1-14, esp. vs. 7). It occurs in the negative form in John’s discussion of Diotrephes, emphasizing the malice of such evil man (3 John 9-12, esp. vs. 10). Warning against worldliness, Peter said, “For the time already past is ***sufficient** for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles...” (1 Pet. 4:1-6, esp. vs. 3).

CONCLUSION

Let us be content with God’s material blessings, enjoying His bounty, and trusting in Him to provide for our needs. Let us take advantage of God’s spiritual blessings which are found in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:13-14, 26-29; Eph. 1:3-6).