

# **Contentment!**

The ability to keep one's mind in a level state of being satisfied with oneself without being obsessed with uncanny thoughts of what other people are or have, is one of the outstanding qualities of a true Christian. It does not at all inhibit spiritual aspiration neither does it hinder godly ambition in pursuit of one's objective in life.

A person who has developed love for money and other material things is never satisfied with his possessions. Even if he has amassed wealth-having buildings here and there, and good savings accounts in the banks-he continues to be avaricious. Indeed, King Solomon said: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity," – Ecclesiastes 5 :10

## **Inferiority complex**

People who are never satisfied and who always complain about their condition in life have uneasy minds. They often underrate themselves and place more value on the achievements of others than theirs, and thus become victims of inferiority complex. They count success only in terms of material possessions and academic laurels. Consequently their dispositions expose them to the evils of greed, covetousness, envy and such like which are incompatible with the high ideals of the Christian faith.

In ancient Israel, there were shepherds or leaders who were greedy of gain. That apart, they lacked understanding and were not vigilant being lazy and drowsy. And God said: "His (Israel's) watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." Isaiah 56: 10, 11.

Today, there are some religious leaders who behave like those slothful shepherds in Israel. They are so ignorant about the truth of the Scriptures that they are incapable of instructing or imparting divine knowledge to their followers. And they give more attention to their selfish interests than spiritual duties of the church because of their love for filthy lucre.

## **Ungodly Desires**

Some youngmen run into troubles because of their ungodly desires to get rich quick or rise to the top in their professions so as to rival their contemporaries. Some of them would say: "Mr. Bribe was my classmate and we left school at the same time. Now, he is in a senior service post; he rides a car, owns a flat, a radiogram, a TV set and so on, and he is married. But look at poor me, I am still an ordinary second-class clerk, having just a bicycle and a small transistor radio. I can

no longer bear this; I must do something now to measure up no matter what the consequence may turn out to be.”

Once a trend of thought such as this just illustrated takes root in a person's heart, he is already set on the precipice to crimes. At the least opportunity open to him to grab bribes he does it with abandon. No virtue may remain in him as to prevent him from stealing even with brutal violence. Thus an erstwhile good citizen, because of discontent, is turned a pestiferous character. At a time he may not expect, while he may be congratulating himself for having become an “adept” in that game of material acquisition by hook or by crook, he may run into the drag-net of law enforcement agencies and find himself in jail-possibly for a period 20 years. That is not all, God's own vengeance would still be awaiting him except he is thoroughly repentant.

To keep company with criminals is dangerous. “Evil communication corrupt good manners”, said St. Paul (1st Corinthians 15: 33). The true worshippers of God are warned against sinners who because of greed resort to violence and indulge in other wicked acts in order to acquire wealth. Said God through King Solomon; “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse; my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of owners thereof.” – Proverbs 1:10-19.

## Inequalities

It is an act of honour for a Christian never to allow the fortune or success of another to excite a feeling of ill-will in him or lead him to grudge or bemoan his lot in life. There is a trite saying that “all fingers are not equal”. Diverse ways there are in which people are gifted or blessed. Gifts of God differs from one person to another. The blessing of one may not be the same with that of the other. Some people may be blessed with wealth but that does not mean that they have not their own problems. Some who are rich may lack faith or good health; and others who are given faith or good health may lack materially poor.

Let us take for example the case of a certain man who was known to be a very important personality in the community in which he lived. He was a man of great substance – a very wealthy man indeed. He had almost everything to enjoy and, as usual, he was always surrounded by relatives and his many friends and servants. The ordinary man could not imagine how such a man who had made the most of life could be in need of anything or would not be happy.

But there was something the thought of which always haunted the rich man and made him sad. It was that he had no child. Concerning such people King Solomon stated: “There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea he hath neither child nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is sore travail.” – Ecclesiastes 4: 8.

In contrast to the example of the rich man there are some people who live in abject poverty but they have many children. And with them the problem is how to get food and money enough to maintain and train the children. These are some of the inequalities among men which are responsible for men's discontent and unhappiness.

## Righteousness

What should be uppermost in our minds as Christians is how we can please God Almighty, our Creator, by doing righteousness. In Proverbs 16:8, it is written “Better is little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.” And King Solomon, who was the richest king in his time, further said: *“Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.”* – Proverbs 28:6.

We can draw inspiration from the high sense of spiritual responsibility that characterized the life of Saint Paul as a Christian. In whatever condition or situation he found himself he was placid and never anxious. He wrote to the Philippians and counseled that they should let their magnanimity be manifest to all; that they should have no anxiety in anything, and that in everything they should make their requests known to God in prayer with thanksgiving-Philippians 4:5, 6.

St. Paul further exhorted the Christians to do good works, and added: “Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” – Phillipians 4: 11-13.

There is also much to learn from what John the Baptist told certain tax collectors and soldiers in his days. He warned the tax collectors or publicans against fraudulent practices and the soldier against extortion by threats and violence. As it is written: Then came also unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages. (Luke 3: 12-14). Any public officer who lives up to this godly admonition of the the great prophet will certainly be protected and blessed by God and will also enjoy the confidence and goodwill of his fellow men.

## Honest labour

Wealth acquired through corruption, fraud, oppression or violence is not blessed and will in the end vanish.

As it is written: “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” (Proverbs 13:11). And God Himself said: “I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at this end shall a fool.” – Jeremiah 17:10,11.

Let everyone learn to be satisfied with what he has and to live by honest labour with faith in God Who is able to bless one with good things. St. Paul in his first epistle to Timothy made important statement which should serve as guidelines to Christians. He stated: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”- 1 Timothy. 6:6-8.

The apostle went on to say that those who would want to be rich at all costs would certainly give room for satan’s temptations, and be goaded into lustful actions and fraudulent practices which are not only inconsistent with godliness but would also eventually lead them to destruction. As it is written: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and

hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” – 1 Timothy 6:9-12.

## **Ambition**

We are not discouraging anybody from being rich or ambitious but we are saying that our aspiration should be such as tend to righteousness. St. Paul himself was spiritually ambitious so as to gain a full reward from God through Jesus Christ. He said: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”- Phillipians 3: 12-14.

Our ambition should not be to rival enviously and strive to outdo others. In our aspirations we should not be covetous but we should commit our ways to and rest in the Lord with hope. St. Paul admonished; “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”- Hebrews 13:5.

We cannot solve our problems neither can we receive any good from God by giving ourselves to grudging contemplation about our conditions in life or by envying others. The more we put aside the righteousness of God and do things in our own way, the more insurmountable our difficulties will become. We have much to gain from God by being honest as to lead a life of holiness with contentment.