

Thankfulness and Contentment

Donna and I were watching an old movie together one rainy Fall day when an advertisement came on for a major department store. At the end of the commercial, I noted that they would open at 8 PM on Thanksgiving Day. I asked Donna when they would close if they opened that late. She said they probably wouldn't close- that they would likely be open all night heading into the following day's shopping frenzy. Then it hit us: Isn't it amazing that we spend a few hours being "thankful" for what we have, then we can't wait to finish up our "Thanksgiving" so we can rush out, compete (and sometimes fight, from what I understand), and run ourselves crazy in a feeding frenzy of shopping to get more stuff? Does this seem at least somewhat ironic, if not downright hypocritical, to anyone else? (For the record, we tend to dislike and avoid big crowds {except at church services!}... especially the feeding-frenzy ones on "Big Sale" days.)

True thankfulness is linked in the Scriptures to contentment. There are a couple of N.T. passages that emphasize the importance of **contentment**- being satisfied (and happy) with what God has given us, see Philippians 4:11-13 and 1Timothy 6:6-8. It is **not** coincidental that both of these passages are preceded in their contexts by verses that emphasize the importance of **thanksgiving**- obviously, being appreciative to God in prayer. Please note Philippians 4:6, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God,*" and also, 1Timothy 2:1, "*First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men...*". The point is that unless we are **first thankful** for what we have, we will never enjoy the true blessing of **contentment**. And, if we don't, we may continue "going through the motions" of being thankful, but will never reach contentment, which is really at least part of the point.

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not suggesting that looking forward to and going shopping after "Turkey Day" festivities is wrong, I'm just wanting us to stop and think for a moment or two about a couple of significant questions. "Are we really 'thankful' for the blessings God gives us?" And, "Have we learned the lessons of 'contentment' that deepen our thankfulness into true appreciation and trust?"

If you're not sure whether or not you are truly thankful for and content with God's blessings, consider 1Timothy 6:8 **personally**, "*And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*" What if "food" meant simply *something to eat*, instead of "turkey with all the trimmings" and every kind of side dish and dessert imaginable? And, what if "covering" meant *clothes on your back and/or a roof over your head*, instead of a new "thanksgiving outfit" and a \$250,000+ home furnished to the hilt? Would you still be "content" then? Could you be "thankful" then? Are these fair questions? Perhaps not, but they are questions we probably all would do well to soberly consider.

Think one step further with me. Matthew 6:33 says that if we "*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,*" that all these things (food, drink, covering) "*will be added to you.*" Do we really believe that? Do we really trust God enough to do what He said- to have Him and spiritual matters truly as the first and primary focus of our lives? Or, do we instead spend most of our time, energy, efforts, and concern on providing these essentials for ourselves? Even to the point that we push aside spiritual matters because we're "too busy" with the material pursuits? Such surely isn't trust, faith, contentment, or thankfulness.

God has surely blessed most of us far beyond our *needs* even to our *wants*, if not our *luxuries*. Let's be content with whatever He has given us to the point of being truly thankful by putting Him first in our lives. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)