

THE SPIRIT OF CONTENTMENT

Hebrews 13:5-6.

"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."

"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

There is an essential difference in the meaning of "Contentment" and "satisfaction". However fine this distinction may appear it is none the less real. "Contentment" is the feeling that enables one to make the best of a situation and not to pine over that which is unavoidable in it, nor fret over the hardships which it entails. "Satisfaction" is that condition that simply accepts the situation and finds in it the desires fulfilled and derives pleasure there from. For example, Paul was not satisfied with his position, but he made the best of it and endeavoured to use it for the accomplishment of his purpose to the limit of his opportunity. When our text bids us to "be content with such things as we have," it does not mean indifference, or indolence, or unambitious stupidity, but rather such contentment as expresses itself in industrious fidelity.

We are also warned against the opposite extreme--a discontentment that expresses itself in constant complaining and fault-finding, that spends its energies in murmuring against the difficulties and hardships of a situation, without embracing the opportunity at hand to relieve or to remove them.

We live noblest when we work best, and we work best when we have learned the secret of contentment. A spirit of contentment is worthy of emulation and is full of encouragement to us all. But, we must ever remember that contentment is the child of faith.

"He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," so that with good courage each of us can say, "I will not fear." What a beautiful antiphony! The gracious message of the Father awakens the song of the children. When the terror goes out of the heart, the uncertainty goes out of the step. "He hath said". . . . "So that we may say."

I. A Gracious Message.

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." "Forsaken" describes an awful condition. It implies an utter loneliness, friendlessness, agony, helplessness, and hopelessness. All the experiences of God's children through the ages, and all that we have experienced, goes to show that God does not forsake His people. It is the unwritten and eternal law, which comes out of the very nature of the divine being, that God never forsakes those whom He has undertaken to nourish and to guard. Therefore, let us accept it as one of the most assured facts of spiritual history.

The word of the Lord has tremendous weight with a believer. And how encouraging it is to know that when His promise is once given it is never recalled.

1. This gracious message is sufficient.

God has spoken it. He has fulfilled this promise again and again to the same person, as well as to multitudes of others.

He will never cease to love His people. He will never leave them destitute of support. He will never let them plunge into the depths of despair. He is the most bountiful of all providers. He is the most powerful of all protectors.

2. This gracious message is inspiring.
It inspires God's presence and His help.
It pledges the personal fellowship of God, and He is the most excellent of all companions. He is the wisest of all leaders, and this promise guarantees the greatest good.
3. This gracious message is complete.
 - (1) It affords present satisfaction.
 - (2) It embraces all time.
"I will never leave thee."
His resources will not run out in the day of stress and strain.
His power will never fail us.
 - (3) It covers all space.
No matter where we may be, He will be with us.
 - (4) It covers all circumstances.
He will not desert us. He will not leave us behind. He will not drop us when we grow old and we are worn out. God will not forsake His children.
 - (5) It includes all experiences.
God may permit us to be afflicted or to be grieved, but He will never leave us without comfort and help.
He will not fail us in the sudden emergency. The rope will not snap at the unexpected tension. His resources will be sufficient. Neither will He fail us in prolonged monotony. Perhaps the test of monotony is more severe than the test of emergency. Perhaps the long pull tends more to exhaustion than some tremendous but momentary strain. Life which has to trudge along the dead level is in fearful peril of exhaustion. It is in these monotonies that the Lord reveals the glory of His power.
"I will not forsake thee." How easily we forsake one another! The lure of gain will make us forsake a friend, The vision of peril will drive a man to forsake his brother. But, the Lord is never repelled by our need. Instead, it is our need which draws us together.

II. A Joyful Response.

Now let us look at the believers. If they have apprehended the Father's message, if they appreciate the strength of his promise, what will be the issue in their lives?

1. They recognize God as their helper.
"The Lord is my helper."
What wonderful examples we have of The Helper in the New Testament Scriptures! The cry of an aching heart always brought succor from the Helper.

2. They refused to fear man.

"I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

In various ways man may injure us. He may injure our property, feelings, reputation, persons, or souls. If the Lord is listening and heeding, and even anticipating my cry. "I will not fear."

I will not be a child of alarms. I will not fear my yesterdays, for the Helper is my rearguard. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me." I will not fear the lurking snares of today, for "He will keep my feet." I will not fear the unknown experiences of tomorrow, for "My times are in his hands." "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."