

CONTENTMENT IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

“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. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians Ch.4v12b-13)

I have a book which I bought many years ago and written in the 17th century by a Puritan preacher called Jeremiah Burroughs. The title of the book is “THE RARE JEWEL OF CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT” which implies that even Christian believers don’t necessarily find it easy to be content in all circumstances.

It is true that it is easier to be content in some circumstances more than others and yet when the Apostle Paul penned the above words in his letter to the church at Philippi he, just like us at the moment, was in lockdown because he was in prison. Views differ on the exact location of his imprisonment but in many ways the location doesn’t matter as we come to appreciate what his attitude was towards his lockdown because he comes across as a man of unshakeable contentment.

We might ask ourselves whether Paul’s contentment had come to him easily because in the New Testament we get a picture of some of the difficult situations he found himself in throughout his life and ministry. Life for Paul was far from easy and it appears that his contentment wasn’t some kind of special gift granted to him but something which he tells us in the words above that he “learned” circumstance by circumstance. In other words his contentment was won through what he learned in the various situations of his life.

Recently I read something in relation to all of this which spoke to me in terms of our lockdown situation which is that “Paul was contented because God was trustworthy and to be glorified even when (by worldly standards) he seemed not to be! The Apostle had learned to be content because he had learned to trust.”

We too in the midst of our present lockdown can learn to trust a God who is faithful and we can learn also that we “can do all things through him who strengthens us.” We do not face this time or indeed any other time alone because we have Christ’s daily strength for daily needs until the “new normal” eventually materialises. We like Paul can trust that Christ is in the midst of our each day pouring his strength and power into us.