

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

In dealing with men in bondage to life dominating sin I find that there is a seemingly insatiable longing in the soul that causes us to incessantly search for more. The peculiar nature of this quest is that we are never sure of just what it is that we are searching for. Listen to how the Psalmist describes it:

"They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them." (Psalms 107:4-5 NKJV)

Like the woman at the well in Jesus time who had had five husbands and was working on her sixth, the addict repeatedly goes to the same well seeking soul satisfaction, believing that somehow this time will be different. It really doesn't matter what the exact nature of the idol is whether it is vodka, heroin, sexual conquest, the thrill of the casino, ice cream, an unhealthy dependent relationship, money, success, popularity, fame, a career or any other idol the heart tries to attach itself to, the result is always the same. It is painful unfulfillment at an exorbitant cost. The answer to this question is the answer or solution for addiction:

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. (Psalms 107:6-9 NKJV)

The Apostle Paul knew the futility of seeking fulfillment in the things that the world had to offer when he wrote his letter to his young protégé Timothy:

"Now 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 clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." (1 Timothy 6:6-11 NKJV)

Jim Freed

From Adam Clarke's Commentary

But godliness with contentment is great gain - The word godliness, ευσεβεια, here, and in several other places of this epistle, signifies the true religion, Christianity; and the word contentment, αυταρκεια, signifies a competency, a sufficiency; that measure or portion of secular things which is necessary for the support of life, while the great work of regeneration is carrying on in the soul. Not what this or the other person may deem a competency, but what is necessary for the mere purposes of life in reference to another world; food, raiment, and lodging. See 1Ti_6:7. So, if a man have the life of God in his soul, and just a sufficiency of food and raiment to preserve and not burden life, he has what God calls great gain, an abundant portion.

It requires but little of this world's goods to satisfy a man who feels himself to be a citizen of another country, and knows that this is not his rest.

From Faithlife Study Bible

The word autarkeias refers to satisfaction with one's circumstances. Stoic philosophers valued contentment because it indicated self-sufficiency. The apostle Paul, however, values contentment because it indicates Christ's sufficiency (see Phil 4:11, 13 below).

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11-13 NKJV)

So life dominating sin loosens its grip on the person who learns the sufficiency of Christ for both provision and strength. When the joy of knowing God personally takes its rightful place on the throne of our heart everything that once held our affections captive loses its attraction.

"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8 NKJV)