

The final half of Philippians 4 (4:10-23), ends in thanksgiving to the Philippian church, and undergirding the Apostle Paul's heart of thanks, is a genuine grace-empowered expression of contentment. The Bible has much to say about contentment.

*All of the underlining in the passages below are my emphasis.*

Consider the words of John the Baptist to soldiers seeking how to live a repentant life.

*Luke 3:14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."*

Similarly, Paul encouraged Timothy:

*1 Timothy 6:8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*

The writer of Hebrews echoed a similar thought:

*Hebrews 13:5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

*2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

And writing to Timothy Paul knew that:

*1 Timothy 6:6 ...godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*

Because godly contentment is both a biblical virtue and a command it is important that we make progress in this grace-empowered attitude.

While it is understandable for the world to grow weary from chasing after a circumstantially-based mirage of satisfaction and contentment, the church should know better. Paul exhorts believers to not only learn to be content but to rejoice as a norm. Yes, life will sometimes crash into us and while there will be times in our life when it is appropriate to mourn, the normal countenance of a Spirit-filled believer ought to reveal a genuine heart of joy as well as grace-empowered contentment.

While God given joy and contentment eludes the world, Christians can sometimes be just as susceptible to the world's deceptions. Many believers are trying to live with one foot in God's kingdom, and the other foot pursuing all that the world has to offer. Life's difficulties, stresses, and pressures can seem overwhelming.

Without an equal and greater measure of God's grace, our trials will inevitably wear us down and diminish our contentment. How can believers buoy above seemingly drowning life circumstances? We can begin by avoiding some of the common traps.

When believers try to find contentment in riches, possessions, power, influence, education, human achievement, or human relationships, contentment will sadly evaporate like a mirage. This is not really a bad thing though. The good news is that God does not want us to be fulfilled or satisfied with anything second rate, or with anything less than Himself! To grow in grace-fueled contentment we not only need to avoid the common traps, which rob us of the joy of our salvation, but we also need and go directly to the One, Who alone, can satisfy our soul.

Today we will consider 4 God-given qualities that accompany genuinely content believers.

## 1. CONTENT BELIEVERS EMBRACE A HIGH VIEW OF GOD (PHIL 4:10)

*Philippians 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.*

The Apostle Paul trusted in God's timing to accomplish His work. Ten years had passed since the Philippians first helped Paul. They generously helped him in the past, but according to Phil. 4:10 "lacked opportunity," until now. The word "**revived**" from the above phrase in Phil. 4:10 "you have **revived** your concern for me;" is a horticultural phrase. It describes a plant that had resumed flowering again. Paul "rejoiced in the lord greatly," not merely because of the Philippians gift to him at a time when Paul most needed it (due to his imprisonment and the lack of provisions provided by the prison system back then). Rather, Paul rejoiced because of what God was doing in the hearts of the Philippians. God revived the Philippians concern for Paul, which manifested the grace of God in their generosity, and would result in the Philippians being rewarded by God!

**Paul had an intimate and high view of God.** He understood that God is not only greater than his trials, but is working out His purposes in the midst of them. Because of Paul's intimate relationship with Christ, he knew that God was accomplishing great things in wonderful ways. Because of this insight, even in the midst of genuinely miserable circumstances, Paul genuinely "rejoiced in the Lord greatly".

*What do we need to embrace about God to grow in contentment?*

1. **We need to remember that God is Holy.** Unlike you and me, God NEVER sins.

**2. We need to remember that God is completely sovereign.** He did not consult anyone before creating the heavens and the earth.

*Psalm 115:3 declares “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”*

**3. We need to remember that God cares for His church.** Not only is God all powerful and knows all things (even potentialities), and is wise beyond measure; He also cares for His church. For these reasons and many more God is fully trustworthy, even when we do not have all the facts, or know exactly what God is accomplishing, we always have good reasons to remain faithful to Him (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13, 31).

## **2. CONTENT BELIEVERS LIVE ABOVE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES (PHIL 4:11-12)**

*Philippians 4:11-12 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.*

The Apostle Paul learned to be content in whatever circumstance he was in. Rather than separating Paul from God trials seemed to draw Paul closer to God. He was perhaps the most qualified person to minister the gospel, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet, nearly all his opportunities were stripped away from him. He was made to suffer. By God's grace, Paul learned to be content with very little means. At times Paul learned contentment while suffering in abject poverty. He suffered hunger, and near death on many occasions. He was not always suffering in poverty or imprisoned, at times he was able to work and experienced abundance. However in all these circumstances Paul remained close to Christ who cared for Paul and restored his body and soul making his heart content. Like the Psalmist Paul loved his Lord and lacked no good thing (Cf. Psalm 23). Paul was not confused between his needs and his wants. When difficult times came, he was able to be satisfied with little. Therefore Paul was able to live above his circumstances, not allowing his want list to become his need list and steal away his joy and contentment.

**Are you allowing the Lord to satisfy you? Do you allow competing desires for first place to find a refuge in your heart? Or are you, like Paul, arresting competing desires, and making them obedient to Christ, and allowing Christ to reign and remain as number one?**

## **3. CONTENT BELIEVERS ARE EMPOWERED BY GOD'S GRACE (PHIL 4:13)**

*Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

No matter the difficulty of the trial, like Christ, Paul had an invisible strength that demonstrated the glory of God in his life. When you struggle with adequacy and contentment over real physical problems, like Paul did, similarly try to respond in the same godly way. Seek the all adequate and fully sufficient Lord who is able to make you adequate and sufficient for every trial, and every necessary good deed.

*2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup> Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, <sup>6</sup> who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

The simplest way to put it is apart from grace we fail, but with God's grace we can do all things, including being fully content in Christ. I can never be happier than when I am in fellowship with Christ.

## **4. CONTENT BELIEVERS ARE GOD-CENTERED; ENABLING THEM TO ALSO BE OTHER CENTERED (PHIL 4:14-19)**

*Philippians 4:14-19 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. <sup>15</sup> You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; <sup>16</sup> for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. <sup>18</sup> But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

The final deception to avoid, is living for self, it is similar to chasing better circumstances in order to find contentment. Sadly undiscerning believers too often take the worlds bait. In stark contrast to both approaches are the Lord's words, "it is better to give than to receive." Dying to self, and living for Christ, frees us to live content lives.

Thank you for studying Philippians with us. Until we meet again we pray for your growth in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



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