
Learning the Secret of Contentment



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Scripture Passage Phil 4:10-20
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We have been going through Philippians and today we are in the final part of chapter 4.

SO, "Are you content?"

Maybe it's not really a word that young people use much, but being content, means to be happy and satisfied. Are you happy and satisfied? You might say "with what?" Paul's answer to that would be, "with whatever!" Paul says in v12, "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." So my question again is, "Are you content with your life right now?"

Actually not many people can honestly answer yes to that. **We live in a world where we are not encouraged to be content with what we have!** We are bombarded with advertisements on TV, internet, magazines etc, to buy or experience more and more things to supposedly improve our life-style, make us happier, healthier, more comfortable and give us greater satisfaction. You are being told you cannot be content without these things! **Paul said he learned the secret of being content with OR without.**

So what was his secret? Actually he doesn't say specifically, but we have some

clues in our passage today that will help us.

1. Kindness of fellow believers. V 10, 14-18

The Christians in Philippi had sent gifts to Paul in prison (v 18) Were they books? Food? Money? Clothes? Letters? Whatever the gifts were Paul was very grateful. He was grateful they remembered him (v10).

As fellow believers, we have great power to encourage each other on the journey of life. They say it's not the gift that counts, but the thought – that's true. Paul is saying, it wasn't the gifts that blessed him so much as the knowledge that they had remembered him, showing that they cared about him. Although he was in prison, he was not forgotten. I know one Church where a group of young wives got together and spent the morning writing letters to the Christians that are in prisons around the world, for their faith. They got the names of 5 prisoners from Voice of the Martyrs. The prisoners always say they are **SO** encouraged to know that people think of them and pray for them. It helps them be content even in very difficult circumstances.

In our Church, every month we have a new prayer list and several names of the members are listed and then they are prayed for at all the prayer meetings during the month.

What a blessing that is! Because we understand that no sincere prayer is ever disregarded by God.

We need each other and as we care for and show love to each other, we encourage each other to be content no matter what our circumstances may be. The kindness of fellow believers encouraged Paul to be content.

Paul gratefully accepted the help of the believers. Sometimes we like to give help, but we are not that good at accepting help! A contented heart can accept help as well as give it! **Paul was content to give and to receive. He neither coveted nor complained – what a great example!**

2. Dependency upon God.

Fellow believers may disappoint us or forget us – there were other times in Paul's letters that he shared that no-one stood by him – all his friends deserted him. In these times he learned that he could depend on God. God would never fail or disappoint him.

Paul knew that when people failed, God would supply some other way (v 19). But there were times of hunger, when it seemed as if God did not supply. Paul totally accepted that God had the right to be God. He is and remains completely sovereign. "God is God and He can decide what is best for me. In it all He will see me through." thought Paul. And so it was in those lean times that Paul learned to be content with little.

We cannot learn to be content if we do not accept God's sovereignty, His right to make the decisions of what is best for us. We will always be fighting and feel dissatisfied if we have an attitude that God owes me because I deserve to be treated better. An attitude of thanks breeds contentment.

In our 40 years as missionaries I can totally testify that God always supplied – it is amazing because it was the one thing I feared in becoming a missionary – not "earning" my own money and so having to rely on others to be faithful in giving to God for our support. It seemed an impossible thing to trust God for! But God always supplied. Very often it was because other Christians were generous and faithful, that we had enough. Just as in v 14 Paul said, "It was kind of you to share my trouble"

Paul acknowledged & depended upon an unfailing God to keep him contented no matter what!

3. Christ Himself was the secret of Paul's contentment.

Paul was content in Christ. You could say he was content with Christ. As long as He had Christ, he lacked nothing! This is the secret! We too will be content, (happy and satisfied with life) if we make Christ our contentment. Paul knew too that for all the difficulties of life, Jesus would be enough. (v13) Lets read that. This is a wonderful verse. Our daughter chose it for her baptism verse and we have quoted it to her many times since then as difficult circumstances have threatened to make her forget! Jesus will give us the strength we need for whatever we have to face. He promises the strength of His Spirit in our hearts. **Like one older lady I know said, "When I face difficulties, I remind myself, "For this I have Jesus."**

The contentment that Paul speaks of is not a fatalism that says "what will be, will be". No, it was the contentment where Christ is at the centre. Just as Jesus became poor, hungry, humble and despised for our sakes, so also we His

followers, can expect those things in our lives too.

We must be careful of envy – wishing for the things of this world – when Christ wants to satisfy our hearts with Himself!

The devil will try to tempt you with the things of this world to rob you of your contentment in Christ. We must be on our guard to keep Jesus central in all our living.

We can help each other through the difficult times by sharing what we have and praying for each other. Let us encourage each other so that we can learn to be content with whatever we have or whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. We can have a contentment that goes deeper than circumstances or possessions or even health or family.

A heart that is content in Christ, glorifies God.