

Can Contentment Truly Be Found? Part 2

Philippians 4:10-18

Introduction:

1. There are some people who are like a thermometer, but there are others who are like a thermostat.
 - A thermometer is always going up and down depending on the temperature around it. It doesn't change things, but allows things to change it. Some people are like this. They are always a "victim" of their circumstances.
 - A thermostat regulates the surroundings and changes them when they need to be changed (A/C in house). Which one best describes you?
2. The apostle Paul was a thermostat. Instead of going up and down, as situations changed, he remained steady and his inner attitude was one of contentment. vs. 11
3. Today, we live in a very discontent society. By the world's standards, most people in America are affluent and wealthy, yet with all our materialistic prosperity, people don't seem happy and content.
 - There always seems to be an insatiable desire for more.
 - The ever elusive contentment - people just can't seem to find it.
4. When a person has learned the secret of contentment and there is an inner peace inside of them, they have a treasure that is priceless.
5. Let's read verse 11 again and notice a couple of insightful truths:
 - *"For I have learned"* - contentment isn't something that comes natural. We must learn to be content. Contentment will not find you, you must find it. You don't stumble on it accidentally. It goes against our fleshly nature and must be learned.
 - *"In whatsoever state I am"* - contentment has nothing to do with our circumstances. Paul is in prison while writing this. Sometimes we mistakenly think, "If this would just happen or that, I would be content and happy." But it doesn't give a lasting contentment. Circumstances may give a mountain top along the way, but nothing lasting.
6. Wouldn't it be incredible if contentment could become a way of life? Where contentment is the "norm" instead of the exception. I've got great news - it can be! This text will explain to us how we can live life in a state of contentment.

First, we must learn to rejoice in the Giver, instead of the gift. vs. 10

1. Paul is thanking the church for a love gift that they had sent him, but notice that Paul rejoices in the Lord, not their gift.
2. He receives this gift and the first thing he does is rejoice in the Lord. Look at verse 4. Paul practiced what he preached.
3. When you receive a gift or blessing, what is your first reaction?
 - Do you get excited over the gift?
 - Or, do you immediately rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to him?
4. Our reaction to blessings is so important because it creates in us a mindset that will determine whether we are content or discontent. Let me explain:
 - If we rejoice in the gift, this means we get an emotional high from that gift or blessing. This high can become addictive and can create an unquenchable thirst

for more, and more. We develop an addiction to blessings, and when there isn't visible evidence of them, we become discontent.

- But if we rejoice in the Giver, then we view every blessing as a gift of God's grace that we don't deserve. If this is our attitude, then we aren't always looking for more. We just stand amazed at the blessings God does give and aren't always looking for more.
5. If we are to learn to be content, like Paul, we must learn to rejoice in the Lord (the Giver), not the gift.

Second, we must look to Christ for strength in every situation. vs. 12-13

1. Notice verse 12. Paul realized that life has its ups and downs. We have experienced this.
 - A person can be prosperous one day and penniless the next.
 - A person can be healthy one day and in the hospital the next.
 - A person can have a great job one day and be unemployed the next.
 - A person can be happy and not have a care in the world, and the next day be grief-stricken over the death of a loved one (my dad).
2. Paul didn't expect to be basking in blessings constantly. He realized that life has its share of hard times. But he also realized that whether it was good times of prosperity or bad times of adversity, he knew where his strength came from. It came through Jesus Christ who lived within him. vs. 13; cf. **Colossians 1:27; Galatians 2:20**
3. Paul understood that as long as Christ's power was flowing in and through him, there was no situation that he couldn't be victorious over. This brought an inner peace and contentment.
4. Let's apply this principle to our lives. We have to accept the fact that there will be times of blessing, but also be times of heartache and adversity. It is easy to get false expectations of the Christian life.
 - Pray this little prayer and you have constant blessings.
 - Exercise enough faith, and you will have wealth and prosperity.
 - You can speak into existence whatever it is you desire.
5. These are all false notions that come through wrongly dividing God's Word, but God did promise His sustaining power in every situation (times of abasing and abounding, times of fullness and hunger, times of blessing and suffering).
6. Do you know this power? Does Christ live within you? If not, you can know the reality of His resurrection power today.

Third, we must learn to use our current resources for God's glory. vs. 14-17

1. In verses 14-16, Paul commends this church for the gracious way that they had given to Paul's ministry time and time again.
2. But, Paul didn't desire a gift with the motive being his comfort and his wants.
3. Notice verse 17. Paul's desire was to take the material resources that God blessed him with, and use them for God's glory by bringing forth fruit (seeing souls saved and lives changed).
4. And Paul said that the souls that he won to Christ were going to abound to the Philippians' account. What account? Their heavenly account! **1 Timothy 6:18-19**

5. Let me insure that we all understand this principle:
 - The Philippian believers took of their material resources and gave to Paul's ministry.
 - This enabled Paul to go and tell others about Jesus Christ and the good news of His grace.
 - Paul was able to lead others to Jesus Christ at Thessalonica.
 - The spiritual fruit that Paul reaped in Thessalonica abounded to the Philippian's account in heaven. The spiritual fruit was the return on their investments.
6. What is the lesson to learn from this text? When you use your resources for God's glory, there is not only an impact on this **earth**, there is an eternal impact that we will see and enjoy one day in **heaven**.
7. When we use our resources to give to God's work on this earth, it guards our hearts against covetousness. Covetousness is what leads to discontent. **1 Timothy 6:9-10**
8. As we give each week to the Lord, it is a constant reminder that it's not all about us; it is about God and what God is doing in light of eternity. This guards my heart from discontent.

Fourth, we must focus on what we have, not what we don't have. vs. 18

1. In verse 18, notice Paul's attitude:
 - *"But I have all, and abound"* - I have more than enough
 - *"I am full"* - I am filled up and satisfied.
 - *"...an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable"* - Their generosity was like a sweet fragrance.
2. Paul was completely overwhelmed by the love gift from the Philippians. But let me remind you of something, lest you forget - Paul was in prison!
 - At the time he writes this, he had been falsely accused, wrongly imprisoned, and lost all of his earthly, material possessions. He is sitting in prison in that condition and says, *"I have all and abound, I am full."*
3. Paul is choosing to focus on the fact that he had all his friends back in Philippi that loved him, he had Epaphroditus to minister to him, and he had the wonderful love gift that they had just sent. Paul looks around and says, "You know what? I'm blessed!"
4. Paul chose to focus on what he had rather than what he didn't have and that is why Paul could say in verse 11, *"...I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*
5. Paul had learned to focus on the positive rather than the negative because rest assured, there will always be both.
6. Did you know that it is **wrong** to constantly be focusing on the negative and fixing your attention on what you **don't** have? What does verse 4 say? *"Rejoice in the Lord **alway**..."* **1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20**
7. Many believers have developed very negative, cynical thinking patterns through the years, and now it has become a sinful habit. Just like Paul said that we can **learn** to be content, we can also **learn** to be unthankful and critical.

Fifth, we must rest in God's promise to meet our need. vs. 19

1. Verse 19 is one of the most well known and beloved promises in God's Word, but we must remember the context of this great verse.
2. The Philippian church had given sacrificially to Paul, but then Paul turns around and inspired by God's Spirit says, "*But my God shall supply all your need...*"
3. This is not a blanket promise that God is going to give the believer anything he wants or desires. God did not promise to meet our **greed**, but rather our **need**.
4. God knows our hearts; therefore he knows our greatest needs.
 - We may need a good dose of humility more than we need that promotion at work.
 - We may need to learn to use greater discernment in our decision-making more than we need God to simply bail us out of a jam.
5. But if our heart is right, no matter the situation, we can have a heart of total peace and contentment because we have a God that knows our need and has promised to meet that need.

In Conclusion:

1. Can contentment truly be found? According to God's Word, yes!
2. Have you found yourself in a state of discontent? If you are a believer and Christ lives within you, there is no reason to be. According to **Romans 8:37**, we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.
3. If you are an unhappy, discontent person, there are choices and decisions that you must make if you are to overcome your discontent. Nobody can make those decisions for you.
4. Take this message home with you. Read the passage, meditate on it, and ponder the principles contained in this message until they become part of your inner being.
5. Can contentment truly be found? Yes, but not in a bigger house, fancier car, nicer clothes, more money, or a better job. It is found in a Person, Jesus Christ, and found in His Word. It is only through Jesus Christ and His Word that you will find the answers.