

Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 13

The Secret of Contentment – Phil. 4:10-13

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Aug 25th, 2024

Intro:

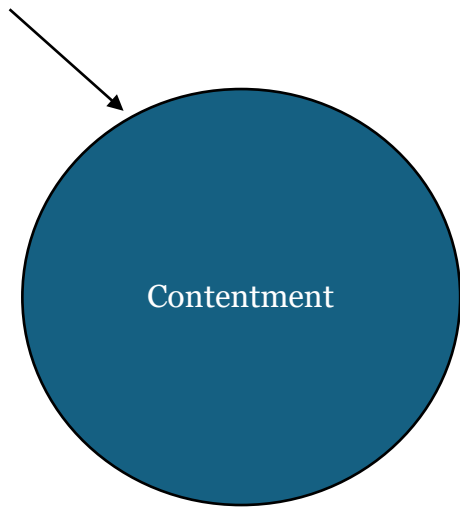
- This morning, we will focus on another iconic, often quoted, and tragically misapplied passage from the book of Philippians. Please turn in your Bible to Philippians 4 as we look at verses 10-13 (page 1013 in your pew Bible).

Phil 4:10-13 NIV

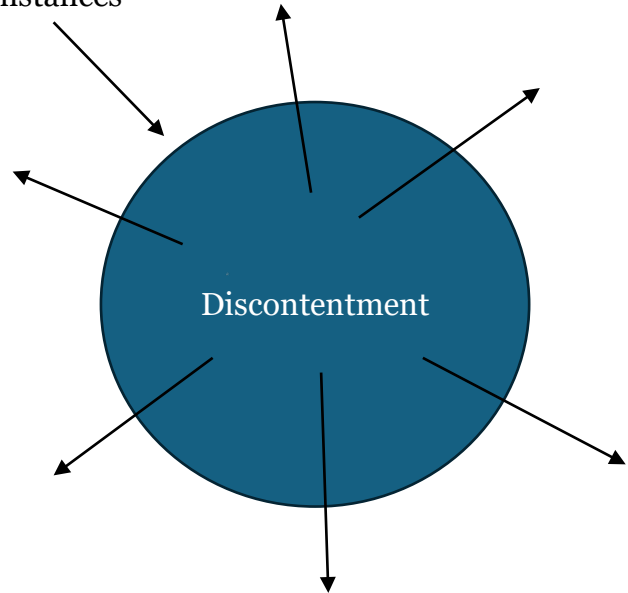
I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. 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. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

- This passage primarily deals with the issue of contentment and how it is found and maintained in all and every circumstance and situation. Paul talks about this through and in his present circumstances and relationship with the people in the church of Philippi.
- Now, here is the good news. God wants you to be content. Paul wants you to be content, you want to be content as well, and you can be, starting today (if you are not so already).
- And here is another thing: the world wants you to be content as well and will sell you exactly what you need to do so. A new pill, a new car, a new beverage, or a better house, better spouse, better clothing, or more time, more money, more freedom, etc. If we just had these things, we would surely be content.
- We are bombarded by messages like this every single day. Here is some more good news and some bad news. Contentment does not come from your circumstances; change them as you will. They will not, nor can they deliver on their promise to make you content.
- Author Gregg Easterbrook observed in his book, *The Progress Paradox*, that most Americans enjoy a higher standard of living than 99.4 percent of the 80 billion human beings who've ever lived. Yet we're not content. "Our lives are characterized by too much of a good thing." Easterbrook says, "Excess at every turn." We're surrounded by so much food that obesity has become a national crisis. We are tempted by so much entertainment and information and stuff to buy that we sleep three hours a day less than our grandparents. "More" had not made us content, but only wanting "more."
- John D. Rockefeller, at the peak of his wealth, had a net worth of about 1% of the entire US economy. He owned 90% of all the oil & gas industry of his time. Compared to today's rich guys, Rockefeller makes Bill Gates and Warren Buffett look like paupers. When asked, "How much does it take to make a man happy?" he answered, "Just one more dollar."
- So what does "contentment" mean anyway? The dictionary definition of contentment is "satisfied with what one is or has; not wanting more or anything else." The word used here in Greek means knowing you have all you need for your circumstances: to be self-sufficient, to be self-ruled or self-contained.

Circumstances



Circumstances



- What Paul is saying is that we can learn to be content regardless of how “big” or “small” our circumstances are or how hard or easy our situation is. The problem is when we try to live outside or beyond our circumstances regardless of how “big” or “small” our circumstances are or how hard or easy our situation is. If we live like this, we will be discontent no matter what.
- Our passage today gives us three things that you must learn and do to be content. The first is to rest in God’s sovereignty.

Rest in God’s sovereignty

Phil 4:10a NIV

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me.

- Paul said that he rejoiced greatly “in the Lord” because he saw the renewal of the Philippian church’s concern for him as an answer to prayer. Paul understood that his circumstances were orchestrated by the Lord. So, Paul thanks the Lord for what He has done through the concern in the hearts of the church at Philippi. He knew **“That for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:28-29 ESV).**
- You can rest knowing that His purposes will always prosper. His will, will always be accomplished, in and through and by your circumstances and situations.

Rejoice in God’s gifts

Phil 4:10b-11a NIV

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need . . .

- Notice that Paul is not rejoicing greatly in the Lord because his needs were met. Paul was not rejoicing in this. He was rejoicing because people had “concern” for him. They loved him, and

this love was expressed to him through what they gave. He was not rejoicing for the gift but for what was the true gift, which is love.

- He rejoiced in the fact that the relationship was built on love, not on what he could get. No one wants to be in a relationship where all they feel is that people want to be with them for what they can get from them. True friends they love the person because they choose to do so, regardless of what they receive or don't receive.

Rely on Christ's strength

Phil 4:11b-13 NIV

For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. 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. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

- Paul is saying in effect, "I am rejoicing greatly in the Lord because you love me and you are concerned for me. Now don't misunderstand me. I don't view you as an ATM, and I am not rejoicing over your gift but of your love. I have learned to be content when I have a lot, and I have learned to be content when I don't have a lot. And I can endure all this through Him who gives me strength." We need to understand that this is not "I can do anything I want or desire through Christ, who gives me strength." This is "I can be content in every situation because Christ's strength gives me the power to be content."
- Christ's strength does not always produce abundance – it gives you the strength to be content in both abundance and need. What strength do you need to be content in abundance? The strength to be content with what you have. The strength to be content with what you don't have. Either prosperity or poverty can harm you and steal your contentment if your contentment is based on your circumstances.
- Regardless of how much or how little you have, if you are living outside your circumstances or longing to do so, you will never be content because "enough" will never be "enough." Paul writes about it this way to the young pastor Timothy:

1 Tim 6:6-10 ESV

Godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- Godliness with contentment is great gain. It is true that you came into the world and will go out of this world without taking anything with you. So why do we work so hard and become so focused on the stuff from here that will stay here?
- Those who desire to be rich – notice that the **desire** to be rich is the problem – fall into temptation, into traps, and plunge into ruin and destruction. Through the craving to get rich, people wander away from seeking Christ and wander away from the faith. They pierce themselves with many wounds. We are do it to ourselves.
- Paul learned that by the strength of Christ, he could be content no matter what the circumstances were. The secret of Paul's independence was his dependence upon Christ. Paul

was “self-sufficient” when it came to being content because he relied upon Christ’s all-sufficiency. He had Christ-centered contentment.

- So how does this work, and what is this strength he is talking about? It is the strength of the power of the Spirit, which Christ gives to keep us content within our context.
- One of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. This is the power to control yourself to live within the bounds of your circumstances and situation. I have the power to control myself because Christ gives me that power through His Holy Spirit. You can’t achieve this on your own, but through Christ's strength, you can. How do you access this? By asking Him. Why do we need to ask? So that we will know that this strength does not originate within ourselves but within Him, so that **He gets the glory, and you get the benefit.**

Conclusion

- If you would like to be content, then do what the passage today outlines for us. Rest in the sovereignty of God. He is working everything for your good and His purpose. Rejoice in the good things that you receive from God, with the main thing being love shared between people. See where it is, and give and receive it whenever and wherever you can. Rely on the strength of Christ to give you the power to live within your circumstances and situation and not desire “more” to be satisfied.

Benediction

May you experience the divine power of God that has given you everything you need for life and godliness through your knowledge of Him who called you by his own glory and goodness. Through his very great and precious promises, may you participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Growth Group Questions

- Do you want to be content? Talk about this passage and how it has shaped your thinking.
- Verse 13 is often quoted: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." How does this verse fit into the overall message of contentment?
- Are there areas in your life where you struggle with contentment? How might Paul's teaching and example help you in those situations?
- How can you practically rely on Christ's strength in your daily life, especially when faced with challenging circumstances?
- Paul appreciated the concern and support of the Philippians. How can we, as a small group, better support and encourage one another in our individual walks with Christ?
- Spend time praying for each other, asking God to help you find contentment in all circumstances and to trust in Christ’s strength.