

True Satisfaction

“The Secret of Contentment”

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

(Illustration)

“The trouble with him is that he’s a thermometer and not a thermostat!” This statement by one of his deacons aroused the pastor’s curiosity. They were discussing possible board members, and Jim’s name had come up. “Pastor, it’s like this,” the deacon explained. “A thermometer doesn’t change anything around it- it just registers the temperature. It’s always going up and down. But a thermostat regulates the surroundings and changes them when they need to be changed. Jim is a thermometer- he lacks the power to change things. Instead they change him!”

- **The Apostle Paul was a thermostat**

- Instead of having spiritual ups and downs as the situation changed, he went right on, steadily doing his work serving God.
- Paul was not a victim of circumstances but rather a victor over circumstances.
 - “I can do all things...” (Phil. 4:13)
 - “But I have all...” (Phil. 4:18)
- Paul did not have to be pampered to be content; he found his contentment in the spiritual resources provided by Christ.

- **Contentment is not complacency, nor is it a false peace based on ignorance.**

- The complacent Christian is unconcerned with others, while the contented Christian wants to share his blessings.
- Contentment is not escape from the battle, but rather an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle.
- Contentment is realizing that God has given me everything today that I need to be happy.

Thoughts on Contentment

1. Contentment is something that must be learned.

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

- Learned here means that Paul had to learn by experience.
- Paul's contentment was not something that he had the moment he got saved.
- Paul had to go through many trials in life to get to the place where he learned to be content.
- Contentment for us is also something that must be learned.

(ILLUSTRATION)

“If we would find content[ment], let us go to homes where women are crippled with rheumatism, or dying of cancer, where comforts are few, where long hours of loneliness are not broken by the intrusion of friendly faces, where the pittance of public charity hardly suffices for necessary need, to say nothing of comfort, it is there that contentment reveals itself like a shy flower. How often in the homes of the wealthy one has missed it, to find it in the homes of the poor! How often it is wanting where health is buoyant, to be discovered where disease is wearing out the strength! So it was with the Apostle, who was in the saddest part of his career. Bound to the Roman soldier, enclosed in some narrow apartment, in touch with only a few friends who made an effort to discover him, away from the happy scenes of earlier years, and anticipating Nero's bar, he breaks out into these glorious expressions of equanimity. He had learned how to be abased in the valley of the shadow, he wore the flower heartsease in his buttonhole.”—F. B. Meyer

2. Contentment is a state of mind, not a level of material possessions.

Luke 12:15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

- If we are not careful as Christians we will buy into the world's philosophy that happiness is found in the amount of possessions we have.

(ILLUSTRATION)

Russell Conwell told of an ancient Persian, Ali Hafed, who owned a very large farm that had orchards, grain fields, and gardens. Ali was a wealthy and content man. One day Ali entertained a guest who told him all about diamonds and how wealthy he would be if he owned a diamond mine. Ali Hafed went to bed that night a poor man—poor because he was discontented.

Craving a mine of diamonds, he sold his farm to search for the rare stones. He traveled the world over, finally becoming so poor, broken, and defeated that he committed suicide.

One day, the man who purchased Ali Hafed's farm led his camel into the garden to drink. As his camel put its nose into the brook, the man saw a flash of light from the sands of the stream. He pulled out a stone that reflected all the hues of the rainbow. The man had discovered the mine of Golconda, the most magnificent diamond mine in all history.

Had Ali Hafed remained at home and dug in his own garden, he would have had acres of diamonds instead of experiencing death in a strange land. The more we *want* from a human perspective, the less we have.

3. Spending time with God and attending church faithfully will help us to keep a right prospective on contentment.

Psalms 73:2-5 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

- Asaph got his eyes on the wrong things and began to lose perspective.
- We too lose perspective when we are focused on the wrong things.

(ILLUSTRATION)

In her column, *Ask Marilyn*, Marilyn vos Savant gave an interesting perspective on contentment. One reader wrote in about a unique experiment she had conducted after being dissatisfied that her neighbor's yard looked better than her own. She did what few have done and walked next door to look back at her own grass. When she stood in her neighbor's yard, the grass in her own yard now looked greener than theirs so she asked, "Why does this occur?"

Marilyn replied, “The grass looks greener on the other side of the fence because you’re not close enough to see the dirt.” Most of the time, things look better for others simply because we can’t see their dirt.

Psalms 73:17-18 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

- When we keep our focus on the right things we will have a different perspective on possessions and contentment.

4. Our true contentment should be found in the person and presence of Christ.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- We can be happy today knowing that we are exactly where and have exactly what God intends for us to have.

The story is told about a pilot who always looked down intently on a certain valley in the Appalachians when the plane passed overhead. One day his co-pilot asked, “What’s so interesting about that spot?” The pilot replied, “See that stream? Well, when I was a kid I used to sit down there on a log and fish. Every time an airplane flew over, I would look up and wish I were flying... Now I look down and wish I were fishing.”

It is always tempting to think that others have it better than we do, and that if we just had “a little more” everything would be fine. But contentment cannot be achieved by increasing possessions. Nothing will ever be enough.