

Philippians 4:10-23

Introduction: Contentment. It's not easy to be content when things are going badly. It's also not easy to be content when things are going well, because the constant desire for more kicks in and covetousness begins to rule the day. What's worse is that our society is structured in such a way as to promote all that is the exact opposite of this principle. If we listen to all the advertising or read all the columns we should never be satisfied with the way we look, the way we feel, the job we have, the house we live in or how much money we make. But this isn't how the Bible thinks.

- I. Every Christian needs to learn the secret of Christian contentment. 4:10-13
- II. Every Christian needs to practice godly generosity. 4:14-23

- I. Every Christian needs to learn the secret of Christian contentment. 4:10-13

4:10 Take note of Paul's joy once again. He is rejoicing, not simply in receiving the gifts that the Philippians sent to him, but over all that comes behind the gifts – all that the gifts showed Paul about the heart of the Philippians church.

4:12 **Godly Adaptability:**

Matt 7:24-27 NKJV ²⁴*“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*
²⁶*“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Learned = In v.11 the word *learned* simply means “learned.” In this verse there is a different shade of meaning which is “To initiate into the mysteries, introduce to things not known before, to learn a secret.”

God took Paul through a variety of experiences – and a variety of trials – in order to initiate him into that select group of people that know what it is to be content.

4:13 This verse should be memorized and underlined or marked in every Christian's Bible.

Before we go too far thinking about it, let's consider another verse.

John 15:5 NKJV *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*

- Apart from Jesus we really can't accomplish anything. How we need to continually remind ourselves of that.
- In order for this to make any sense to us at all we have to start by getting our priorities straight. We need to be first and foremost committed to God's will. This is not a self-serving verse or a self-serving principle.

Contentment in material things:

Notice also that in context, v.13 points to contentment

in material things.

We need to first set godly goals, submitting to God's will regardless of our personal desires, and then be ready to endure whatever it takes to accomplish whatever God puts before us.

In Paul's case he was called to preach the gospel, multiply disciples and plant churches in a pagan world. He did that faithfully to the very end of his life regardless of whether or not things were "going well" in his ministry.

Not a "Follow Your Dreams" Theology: This is where godly strength makes all the difference. God will empower us to do all that He calls us to do - not just to do whatever we please in some "power of positive thinking" or "follow your dreams" kind of way. That can lead to stupidly self-centered goals. Nor should we think that God's will has to be something awful; it will often seem like the very thing we were made to do. A great example of this is found in George Foreman, the boxer and expert on grilled food. He's a great example of godly strength.

Godly Strength: George Foreman

George Foreman first won the World Heavyweight Championship boxing title in 1973 at age 23. He was at the top of his game and in his prime when he defeated Joe Frazier that fateful day in Jamaica. A year later he lost his title to Muhammad Ali in their infamous bout in Kinshasa, Zaire, known as the "Rumble in the Jungle."

Foreman retired a few years later and became the pastor of a small church in Houston, Texas. He used part of his boxing money to establish a youth center in Houston down the street from his church. The church did its best to cover the rest of the expenses, but it wasn't long before financial resources dried up. They struggled to keep the center alive. In 1987 Foreman surprised everyone by announcing his plans to save the youth center from bankruptcy. "I'm going to be heavyweight champion again," he said.

Late-night comedians began to make jokes, but Foreman set himself on a strict regimen of training. He had to start at the bottom, fighting little-known boxers and working his way back up the ranks. The older Foreman never lost his ability to land an explosive punch and bring his opponent down, so his climb in the rankings was quicker than anyone expected. Before long, Foreman again became a serious contender for the title. After seven years of work, in 1994, he finally got his chance. Now at age 45 and clearly losing the fight, Foreman shocked the world by knocking out Michael Moorer, age 26, in the 10th round to regain the World Heavyweight Championship title. He was the oldest man in history to do so. He used the money he made to save the youth center. From the beginning, Foreman attributed this feat to his faith in God and his belief that the Holy Spirit would supply him with the strength he needed. As for the jokes, Foreman got to be the host SNL.

When God sets a task on your heart – and it's crucial that it be His task not our own – you have to truly believe that he can help you carry it out. His power is sufficient for all our needs in any given situation. (adapted from *Embracing Eternity: Living Each Day with a Heart toward Heaven*)

II. Every Christian needs to practice godly generosity. 4:14-23

4:14 Share = koinonia = fellowship

Distress = *thlipsis* = crushing pressure, also tribulation; same word translated elsewhere as “tribulation” as when Jesus speaks of “Great Tribulation.”

4:15 There is never an overabundance of givers to missionary work.

- Giving is always about so much more than the money.
- Missionary giving connects us with missionaries in deeply personal ways and helps us to share in their work and the fruits of it.

4:17 Paul is more interested in what their giving does for them than what it does for him.

- Godly giving can actually help us to be content with our circumstances by forcing us to take our eyes off of our own needs.
- Giving helps us to achieve an eternal perspective and will reap an eternal reward.

Second Corinthians 9:6-9 NKJV *⁶But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. ⁹As it is written:*

*“He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.” (Psalm 112:9)*

4:19 **Trusting God for our provision:** Context is all important in this verse as with 4:13. Paul is speaking to a church that was partnering with him in ministry. This was a missions-minded church – a church made up of missions-minded believers. If a church is preaching a health and wealth gospel, material success, or simply some kind of feel-good message, this verse doesn’t really apply.

Again, the key is in having the right priorities. If we desire to see God’s will done, then we can trust Him to give us the resources we need to accomplish it. And if His ideas of provision differ somewhat from our own, we need to go back to the earlier contentment passage and continue trusting Him in the midst of our time of need. Some lessons are harder than others to learn.

Matt 6:33 NKJV *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Godly Generosity: Certainly, self-serving preachers have used passages like this one to manipulate people into giving to their ministries. God is not blessed by that at all. But before we err in the other direction, let’s be sure to remember that He is not blessed by stingy Christians either. Every Christian needs to practice godly generosity.

Missions giving, as practiced by the Philippians is a good way to apply this principle.

Conclusions:

Contentment is a serious indicator of our overall relationship to God. Are you content in any circumstances you face? Paul knew how to be content whether he had plenty or was in need. The secret was drawing upon Christ's power for strength. Do you have great needs, or are you discontented because you don't have what you want? Learn to rely on God's promises and Christ's power to help you be content. If you always want more, ask God to remove that desire and teach you contentment in every circumstance. He will supply all your needs, but in a way that he knows is best for you.

Contentment grows out of having God's perspective on life. Paul was content because he could see life from God's point of view. He focused on what he was supposed to do, not the things he felt he should have. Paul had his priorities straight and was grateful for everything God had given him. He had detached himself from nonessentials so that he could concentrate on the eternal. Often the desire for more or better possessions is really a longing to fill an empty place in a person's life. To what are you drawn when you feel empty inside? How can you find true contentment? The answer lies in your perspective, your priorities, and your source of power.

Contentment is something that has to be learned. Some things are harder to learn than others and some things can only be learned by experience. If, like Paul, we are to be initiated into the secrets of contentment the hard truth is that we may have to learn this through the experience of some trials. Our faith will be tested and only a serious trust in a powerful God will enable us to persevere.

Pr 30:7-9 NKJV⁷ Two things I request of You

(Deprive me not before I die):

⁸ *Remove falsehood and lies far from me;*

Give me neither poverty nor riches—

Feed me with the food allotted to me;

⁹ *Lest I be full and deny You,*

And say, "Who is the Lord?"

Or lest I be poor and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

Practicing Godly Generosity: Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that money brings happiness. Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction. Poor people get caught in an endless trap of wishing they had more. How can you keep away from the love of money? Godly generosity is good way to start.

- Be intentional about your giving.
- Choose ministries to give to and give faithfully regardless of the amount you can afford.
- Try to set aside a little bit to be flexible with, so that you can share with others in their times of urgent need.
- None of us will ever be able to meet every need out there, but we will each learn so much by being willing to empty our pockets now and then in order to do whatever good we can.