**Learning Contentment**

*Philippians 4:10-13*

**Introduction**

1. Paul clarified his thoughts regarding his joy for the support from the Philippians – **Philippians 4:10-13** – not that his main focus was on his need, for he had learned contentment.
   1. **(v. 17)** – His focus was not on his need, but their fruit bearing in supplying it.
   2. **(v. 12)** – regardless of Paul’s state of affairs – needing, or not – he was able to be content.
2. God makes clear the need for contentment in the life of His children, and warns against the opposite – **Hebrews 13:5-6; Luke 12:15; 1 Timothy 6:6-8**
3. Content – *autarkēs* – “sufficient in oneself” (*autos*, “self,” *arkeo,* “to be sufficient”), “self-sufficient, adequate, needing no assistance” (VINE)
   1. Paul is not saying that all he needs is himself.
   2. Rather, it is the idea that one’s sufficiency is independent of all outward circumstances.
   3. Paul’s sufficiency came from what he had within himself – i.e. that which was completely personal and had nothing to do with outward circumstances.
   4. Paul’s contentment came from Christ – **(v. 13); Galatians 2:20** (Such was enough)
4. Contentment is not an innate quality – (**v. 11)** – Paul said he learned it.
5. How are we to be content?
6. Learning Contentment
7. Confess Your Pilgrimage
   1. Abraham and his family were content with a nomadic lifestyle – **Hebrews 11:9**
   2. The Hebrew writer explained how they were able to live this way, even though they never even received the promises of God – **Hebrews 11:13-16**
      1. **(v. 13a)** – Embraced promises afar off – NOTED THE TRUE VALUABLES
      2. **(v. 13b)** – Confessed being strangers and pilgrims – ACCEPTED THE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR VALUE SYSTEM.
         1. If what was truly substantive/valuable to them was not in this realm, then they were not made for this realm.
         2. “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.” (C.S. Lewis
         3. **(v. 14)** – seek a homeland.
      3. **(vv. 15-16)** – Could have returned from where they came but didn’t – SELF-SUFFICIENT (CONTENT) IN REGARD TO PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
         1. The confident prospect of heaven they had within themselves by faith **(Hebrews 11:6**) was enough.
         2. (**v. 15)** – would have shown discontentment.
   3. Jesus said life is not about material possessions – **Luke 12:15**
      1. This can only be fully realized by one who has accepted the physical world only as a temporary dwelling.
      2. If it is viewed permanently, then one’s life will consist in the material matters.
      3. Truly, this life is not about ANY physical matters.
   4. When we realize what Abraham and family did, then we will be able to find contentment in this life.
   5. Our citizenship is in heaven, so we should be contented with the treasures we have there – **Philippians 3:20-21** (shortly before words on contentment); **Matthew 6:19-21**
8. Prioritize Spiritual Growth
   1. If life does not consist in the abundance of material possessions, then of what does it consist? – **Luke 12:15, 21** – being rich toward God.
      1. **Matthew 6:20** – heavenly treasure.
      2. Speaking to wealthy Christians – **1 Timothy 6:17-19** (after warning of the evil of loving money)
   2. The way one seeks the Promised Land like Abraham is the one growing spiritually – **2 Peter 1:8-9** – not shortsighted.
   3. Jesus’ pattern for contentment (not worrying) involved seeking after the spiritual – **Matthew 6:31-33** (NOTE: even in regard to what Jesus recognizes are necessities – **v. 32** – knows you NEED them)
9. Know the Difference Between Wants and Needs
   1. It is not that the person who has confessed their pilgrimage and prioritized spiritual growth will somehow break the mold of having physical necessities.
   2. **Matthew 6:32** – ***“YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THAT YOU NEED ALL THESE THINGS”***
   3. However, if we are not accepting of our being pilgrims, and prioritizing spiritual growth, we may have difficulty distinguishing between WANTS and NEEDS – WHICH WILL JEOPARDIZE CONTENTMENT.
   4. **1 Timothy 6:6-10** – when we conflate the EXTRA with the NECESSITIES we create a recipe for misery.
      1. **(vv. 6-8)** – should be content with necessities (NOTE: “godliness” – those who are mindful of God and the spiritual, like Abraham)
      2. **(vv. 9-10)** – the desire for more makes being faithful extremely difficult.
         1. ***“pierced themselves through with many sorrows”***
         2. Such a confusion between WANTS and NECESSITIES makes contentment IMPOSSIBLE.
         3. Greek philosopher Epicurus asked about the secret to happiness – “Add not to a man's possessions but take away from his desires.”
         4. SUCH AN APPETITE WILL ALWAYS GROW BEYOND WHAT IT POSSESSES AND WILL BE INSATIABLE.
   5. **Matthew 19:20-22** – part of the rich young ruler’s problem was the inability to see that he didn’t NEED all his possessions.
   6. Part of this includes the putting away of envy. We need to have the proper estimation of those who have the luxuries we do not:
      1. **James 1:9-11** – when it comes down to it, they don’t have any more than you do, and if they aren’t right spiritually, they have less.
      2. **Psalm 72:1-3** – envy will lead to a spiritual downfall.
10. Know that Perception is not Reality
    1. If we aren’t careful, we will begin to interpret our circumstances through the lens of the world, and contentment will become all the more difficult.
    2. We need to realize that the perception of others, and our own initial perception is not always accurate.
    3. We need the ability to pause, step back from our circumstances, and evaluate things from a biblical perspective to see them as they actually are.
    4. Example: Speaking of the apostolic ministry – **2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 8-10** – Paul noted some paradoxes which point to the fact that perception is not reality.
       1. **(v. 8)** – especially the perception of the apostles by their opposition – was not true.
       2. **(vv. 9-10)** – looking at the way they lived, and the hardships they had to endure, it was important that the apostles realized the spiritual realities they possessed.
       3. Sometimes we spend so much time thinking about what seem to lack that we don’t realize what we actually have.
    5. Contentment can also be a challenge in our relationships, or lack thereof, with other people (i.e. not just in material possessions):
       1. We may struggle not being a part of the majority. (**cf. Matthew 7:13-14**)
       2. We may struggle sticking out and being different. (**cf. 1 Peter 3:4**)
       3. We should realize that there are unseen spiritual matters which outweigh the seen physical matters – **2 Corinthians 5:7**
       4. CONTENTMENT WILL COME IN SUCH CIRCUMSTNACES WHEN WE KNOW THAT GOD IS WITH US, AND WE ARE ACCEPTED BY HIM – **2 Timothy 4:16-17; 2 Kings 6:16-17** (Elisha to servant when surrounded by Syrian army)
11. Praise God in Every Circumstance
    1. Contentment is by definition sufficiency which is independent of outward circumstances.
       1. Such sufficiency, then, is of necessity spiritual – the spiritual blessings can’t be taken from you by outward forces – **Romans 8:38-39**
       2. In part, contentment will come from the ability to praise and thank God in every circumstances even the negative – trials and tribulations.
       3. The spiritual blessings aren’t taken away in those circumstances – EVEN MORE SO, THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS CAN BE MULTIPLIED IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.
    2. Like Job – **Job 1:20-22**
       1. **(v. 21)** – “blessed” – LXX – eulogeō – lit., "to speak well of" (eu, "well," logos, "a word") (VINE)
       2. Eulogy (from same root) – at funeral, speak well of the person who has passed.
       3. Job is speaking highly of God even when He has allowed things to be “taken away.”
       4. NOTE: JOB MAY NOT HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE GREATER PURPOSE OF THESE EVENTS AT THE TIME, BUT HE CONTINUALLY TRUSTED IN GOD’S CHARACTER.
    3. We learn from Paul that even in adversity God is at work to mold us for heaven – **2 Corinthians 12:9** (concerning thorn in flesh)
    4. We need to be content in our struggles knowing that the spiritual blessings from God are worth it – **Hebrews 12:11-13**
       1. David worshipped after the death of his child – **2 Samuel 12:19-20**
    5. God’s name is blessed, and to be blessed in the good times and the bad, BECAUSE GOD’S GOODNESS IS NOT LIMITED TO THE PERFECTLY FAVORABLE ARENA – **Romans 8:28** (for the Christian, even suffering can be used by God for good to those who trust in Him)
    6. Therefore, our thanksgiving to Him should not be limited to the favorable circumstances – **1 Thessalonians 5:18** – rather, always and in everything.
12. Rely on the Strength of Christ
    1. **Philippians 4:13** – the “all things” of Paul’s statement concerned the context of contentment.
    2. His contentment was made possible from the strength received from Christ (**cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9**).
    3. The “self-sufficiency” which contentment speaks of is not sufficiency of self, but sufficiency from Christ within self – **Galatians 2:20**
    4. Paul sought above all else fellowship with Christ – **Philippians 3:7-11**
       1. Christ living in Paul was the fellowship he longed for.
       2. **Philippians 4:4** – this is what He rejoiced in.
       3. Allowed contentment in prison, seeing the will of Christ advanced – **Philippians 1:12-18**
    5. For Paul, to live was Christ – **Philippians 1:21** – which is how he lived a content life, BECAUSE THE WILL OF CHRIST IS PREVAILING. (**cf. 2 Timothy 2:8-10**)
    6. When we commit ourselves to Christ, we can be content knowing that He can preserve us for the reward in the end – **2 Timothy 1:12**

**Conclusion**

1. We are called to be content as people of God.
2. This is something we must work on. It is a virtue that is learned.