

THE JOY OF CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:10-13

INTRODUCTION

Will be kicking off our home groups over the next few weeks. Providentially, through our expositional teaching, we find ourselves in a text that is perfect for the kicking off of this ministry. Phil 4:10-20 😊

Two men by whom I am most blessed, John MacArthur and James Montgomery Boice, believe the following axiomatic truth → The more you have, the less you are **content**. If true, we live in one of the most **discontented** countries ... at one of the most **discontented** times... ever in the history of the world.

We see complaints abound in the workforce, in the neighborhood, on the golf course, and at the shopping mall. In fact, all of the media, both main stream media and alternate media, are sustained by **discontentment**.

- We buy things and watch things to fill the void.
- We opine based on **discontentment**.

Citizens of countries are **discontent** and so they leave the country. Marriages are destroyed and divorce rates skyrocket because of **discontentment** within marriages.

As we get closer to home, how about the church? Have you heard the phrase, “**The East Valley Shuffle**”? Now, I’m not talking about the church once known as East Valley Bible Church. I’m talking about the seemingly continuous drift of evangelicals here in the East Valley from church to church.

What feeds this? You guessed it. **Discontentment**.

Beloved, simply stated, we live in a culture diseased with **discontentment**.

Well ... this is the sobering news. The good news is God gives us something different, and that is **contentment**.

And beloved, I will say to you, **contentment** is a grossly undervalued grace. We don't understand the blessing and the gift of the grace of contentment.

Please turn to Phil 4 – Remember ...

v. 4 – God commands us to, “Rejoice in the Lord always!”

v. 6 – God commands us to, “Be anxious for nothing!”

v. 7 – God promises us the gift of, “the peace of God.”

v. 9 – God promises us the presence of, “the God of peace.”

→ **READ Phil 4:10-13**

Proposition: 4 Observations of God's Gift of Contentment:

It is:

- I. Joyfully Proclaimed**
- II. Humbly Learned**
- III. Providentially Instructed**
- IV. Divinely Empowered**

So That: You and I will be content. You and I will be satisfied in God.

The **1st Observation** of God's Gift of **Contentment** ...

I. Joyfully Proclaimed 4:10

Point – Paul is expressing his joy and thankfulness for the gifts the Philippians sent to him through Epaphroditus (**2:25**).

When we think of the churches in the Bible, we know that they are remembered for different things:

Rome – for its faith (Rom 1:8)

Corinth – for its immaturity, division, and compromise

Ephesus – for its hard work (Rev 2:2-3)

Thessalonica – for its maturity and concern over Christ's Second Coming

Laodicea – for its apostasy

The church in **Philippi** is remembered certainly for its joy but also because the church remembered the apostle Paul.

Proof – “¹⁰**But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity.**”

“**But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly**” - the verb is passive - Paul was made joyful

“**in the Lord**” – 9 times in Phil (fourth time in 4:1-10)

What made Paul glad?

“**that now at last you have revived your concern for me**”

Paul founded the Philippian church in the early part of his 2nd Missionary Journey, A.D. 50-62. He is now writing this letter during his first Roman imprisonment, around 62-63.

Why no opportunity in those 10 years?? Was this some complacency on the part of the Philippians? Was there some lack of concern or other self-indulgent lack of concern?

Epaphroditus in **2:30** was – “risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me”

Is there a problem with the Philippian church?

No! → This is not a personal unwillingness to help.

This is a providential inability to help.

That is what Paul meant. They didn’t have satellite phones, texting, Facebook, Snapchat, and WeChat. → It was a much “larger” world then. Communications were not as they are now.

The answer is in our text → “**indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity**”

To understand Paul's heart towards the church and Philippi (and Berea and Thessalonica):

Turn to: 2 Cor 8:1-5

Two Gems in v. 10 that I want us to consider ...

- 1) “**concern ... concerned**” – Greek word φρονέω – means to think

Began in **1:7** – “For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart”

It is true that many Christians are driven by, what we would call, their feelings, absent from their mind.

As one man said, “*Facts don't care about your feelings.*”

The biblical language here, however, brings thinking and feeling inseparably together.

A pagan may have thoughts without feelings.

A believer who is in sin may have feelings without thinking.

But the mature man or woman of Christ

→ **thinks with their heart and feels with their mind** 😊

Illustration – Tomorrow will be my 29th anniversary of when the Lord blessed me with my wife Margie. My most liked FB photo of the two of us includes this quote, “*I will forever have my beloved in my heart. And my beloved will forever have my heart.*” That is the case with Paul and the Philippian church. In the ten year gap, they lacked opportunity, but they didn't lack love or concern, thinking or feeling for the apostle Paul.

Second Gem in v. 10 I want us to consider ...

- 2) “**revived**” – of plants, meaning to blossom again picture of a blossoming flower, after a period of dormancy, like a seed planted, you wait ... and then it blossoms.

Illustration – How do you know a tree is alive in the spring? [Forget for a moment we are in Phoenix where the normal Winter/Spring/Summer/Fall cycle takes place 😊]

→ You know the tree is alive by its blossoming.

Application – In due season, the Philippian church blossomed with the love for the apostle Paul that was always there.

The 2nd **Observation** of God's Gift of **Contentment** ...

II. Humbly Learned 4:11

Point – contentment is not a magical zap from God.

Most of the process of sanctification is just that....a process.
It is learned.

Proof – “¹¹**Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.**”

“**Not that I speak from want**” – only other appearance is in **Mark 12:44** when Christ described the widow – “for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.” (two small copper coins)

“**for I myself have learned to be content**”

- literally the same root word that is translated as “disciple”
→ Paul was disciplined by Christ into **contentment**
This was not something that happened overnight. This was something he had “**learned**” over time. It was a process.

“**content**” – only appearance of this Greek word in the New Testament. It appears once in the Old Testament in **Prov 30:8** – “Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion”

The Greek word ἀντάρκης that we see here as ‘content’ literally means “self-satisfied”. It is a Hellenistic word describing being self-sufficient against external pressures

Historical background: The Stoics – the highest state of achievement of the Stoic was to achieve a self-satisfied, I don't care attitude. For example, you lose your possessions – “I don't care.” You lose your health – “I don't care.” You lose a

loved one – “I don’t care.” An attitude of Indifference, of not caring.

Hold on! Now wait a minute, everything we read in Scripture goes against the modern love affair with self ... be satisfied with yourself. Esteem yourself. Love yourself. Forgive yourself. Find yourself. Listen to yourself. Exalt yourself. → The siren call of psychology and of culture and the mainstream gatekeepers of the western world for decades.

Is this what Paul is saying?

Is Paul contradicting himself and the rest of Scripture here??

→ **No!!!** Of course not

Beloved, this means → Not just that you can be a person at peace; at peace with the world; at peace with God, no matter what situation may arise. This means you must be, in obedience to God, a person at peace. Not because of what you do but because of what God did.

Illustration – Paul is the living and powerful example of obedience to the command of God in v. 6, “Be anxious for nothing!”

Application – Lloyd-Jones – *“If you can improve your circumstance in fair and legitimate ways, by all means do so; but if you cannot, and if you have to remain in a difficult position, do not be mastered by it, do not let it get you down, do not let it control you, do not let it determine your misery or your joy. ‘You,’ says the apostle, ‘must come into the state in which, whatever your conditions, you are not controlled by them.’*

That is what Paul affirms of himself. ‘Whatever my condition or circumstances,’ he says, ‘I am in control. I am master of the situation, I am not mastered by the situation. I am free. I am at liberty. I do not depend for my happiness upon what is happening to me. My life, my happiness, my joy and my experience are independent of the things that are going on

around me and even on the things that may be happening to me”

Heb 13:5 – “Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,’”

The **3rd Observation** of God’s Gift of **Contentment** ...

III. Providentially Instructed 4:12

Point – We can use the phrase ‘school of hard knocks’. First appearance of this phrase is 1902 - there is wisdom, some growth that can come from trial and difficulty. Paul is the poster boy for the ‘school of hard knocks’.

Proof – “^{12a}**I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity**”

“I know how to get along with humble means” –

Remember the situation I mentioned before – (2:25-26)
Epaphroditus was sent to Rome to minister to **Paul’s** needs. As a prisoner of Rome, **Paul** is required to provide his own food, clothing, blankets, etc.

Epaphroditus is distressed because the Philippians are distressed out of concern for him in his illness.

Paul feels bad because Epaphroditus feels bad because the Philippians feel bad. Everybody feels bad.

Paul sends Epaphroditus back to the church in Philippi out of concern for: **Epaphroditus**, the **Philippians**, and **himself**.

Paul says I know how to get along with humble means.
“^{12b}**in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret**” – paj 2X → context means along with getting along with humble means, he knows how to live in prosperity.

“^{12c}of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need”

→ and he gives us six different examples; ways of saying this

I have “**learned the secret**” – one word in the original Greek – μύεω – religious term for instruction in sacred mystery religions.

Paul co-opts this pagan word in a Christian way to indicate that he has been taught, instructed, into God’s secret of contentment.

MacArthur and Begg both named their sermon on this passage of Scripture “The Secret of Contentment”. Does this mean one of them used it first and the other got it from the first? No. Because it comes from the text.

Expositors will have the same framework, some of the same illustrations (the ones that come directly from the meaning of the original words) because it comes from the text.

The difference between mining the text of the Word of God for the sermon vs. sucking the sermon out of one’s thumb 😊

I chose – “**The Joy of Contentment**”

Application – Beloved, you can face anything and everything that the providence of God might bring - with victory!

The 4th **Observation** of God’s Gift of **Contentment** ...

IV. Divinely Empowered 4:13

Point – You are given strength for your daily needs because of Him, and by Him, who works with power within you.

Point – You have a reservoir of spiritual power that moves into action when You come to the end of your own resources.

Proof –

“¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Point – just in case we were left confused with the Hellenistic self-sufficiency language ... what Paul is saying here...this is
→ Christ-sufficiency! 😊

“¹³I can do” – literally - “is strong, able to do much!”

Isa 40:31 – “Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary”

Eph 3:14- 21— Paul’s prayer

“all things” is defined by context!!!

paj is always defined by context ... and with all due respect to **Evander Holyfield, Steph Curry**, and the multiple other **athletes** who share this verse ... the context of Phil 4:13 is
→ contentment in the provision of God

Paul could not do everything he wanted. He couldn’t release himself from prison. He couldn’t strike the chains off his wrists and ankles. Paul couldn’t even remove a little thorn from his own flesh when God had inserted it. He couldn’t say “Peace be still” in the midst of the great Mediterranean storm off the island of Malta and save the boat from shipwreck. He couldn’t make Euodia and Syntyche fall in love with one another again. He couldn’t strike dumb the mouths of the Galatian heretics who were tearing the congregation in pieces. He couldn’t cure Timothy’s stomach ailment. He couldn’t make the Roman trial end with a not guilty verdict.

But, everything that God assigns to him, Paul can respond to in a way that honors the Lord. → However God is pleased to advance the gospel, whether by the long life of John and the short life of Stephen, let God’s will be done.

To help us understand this better when we look at v. 13 by looking at the word translated as **“strengthens”**:

Jgs 6:34 – “the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon”

Acts 9:22 – “But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Rom 4:20 – “with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God”

1 Tim 1:12 – “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service”

2 Tim 2:1 – “You ... be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Tim 4:17 – “the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear”

These passages color and inform the wonderful promise of this hallmark verse in the letter to the Philippians.

Geoff Thomas – *“I can love God with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself – not perfectly but with the earnest endeavor of a new man in Christ. I can forgive those who sin against me. I can turn the other cheek. I can bear all things, endure all things, believe all things and hope all things. I can love my wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. I can obey my parents. I can esteem other Christians better people than I am. I can shoulder the burdens of the weak. I can pray without ceasing. I can become mighty in the Scriptures. I can be filled with the Spirit. I can present my body a living sacrifice to God. I can give a reason for the hope that is in me to anyone who asks me. I can run the race to the end, and finish the course. I can put on all the armor of God. I can die daily to sin and live to Jesus Christ. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Everything God asks of me in the Bible I can do.”*

Illustration – The story is told of a group of pirates who boarded a cruise liner one night and took over much of the ship, entering many cabins, the ballrooms and the dining

rooms, but failing to capture the captain on the bridge or take over the engine room. In other words, the control of the ship is totally secure from the marauders. The pirates are causing a great deal of trouble on the ship as the crew fights with them, but the captain is still in control. The ship is on course. He is steering the ship to port hour after hour.

Application – In the same way, this is a picture of your Christian life. Christ is in control of your life but evil is present with us fighting against Christ. This is the relationship which every Christian enjoys with the Lamb of God. We are through Christ safe and strong. Hidden in him, enabled by him. He is our refuge and he is our power.

Remember → Noah wasn't safe because he was in the ark, he was in the ark because he was safe.

Application – Spiritually speaking, you can climb any mountain, you can bear any load, you can endure any pain, you can overcome any temptation, and you bear any pressure through him who gives you strength. Wherever God places you, in need or in plenty, well fed or hungry, in prison or in liberty you can do all things through him who gives you strength.

CONCLUSION

Jeremiah Burroughs, the early 17th century Puritan in London, wrote a book entitled *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* - from which this quote comes: "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."