

The Secret of Contentment

The story is told of a farmer who had lived on the same farm all his life. It was a good farm, but with the passing years, the farmer began to tire of it. He longed for a change—for something “better.” Every day he found a new reason for criticizing some feature of the old place. Finally, he decided to sell, and listed the farm with a real estate broker who promptly prepared a sales advertisement. As one might expect, it emphasized all the farm’s advantages: ideal location, modern equipment, healthy stock, acres of fertile ground, etc. Before placing the ad in the newspaper, the realtor called the farmer and read the copy to him for his approval. When he had finished, the farmer cried out, “Hold everything! I’ve changed my mind. I am not going to sell. I’ve been looking for a place like that all my life.”

Philippians 4: 10 – 20

1) Contentment is something we learn

- PR 30:15 – 16 “The leech has two daughters. ‘Give! Give!’ they cry. “There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, ‘Enough!’ the grave,” the barren womb, land, which is never satisfied with water, and fire, which never says, ‘Enough!’”
- We are born with a nature that is never satisfied with what it has.
 - The Israelites cried out to God to deliver them from oppression in Egypt
 - God sent Moses and delivered them
 - After crossing the dead sea they complained that they didn’t have water in the Desert of Shur and God gave them water to drink
 - Then they complained that they didn’t have food to eat and God gave them manna
 - They then complained that they didn’t have meat to eat and God sent quail
- How often are we like the Israelites never being satisfied or content with what we have? We always want something more.
- But it isn’t just in what we have that we need to find contentment in but also our circumstances
 - Paul did not grow up a poor man. He was a Roman citizen from a distinguished city and studied under a prominent Rabbi.
 - But now, as he served the Lord, his circumstances changed and he often found himself in need.
 - 2 Corinthians 11: 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.
 - But now we see him telling the Philippian church that he is content whether he is well fed or hungry, living in plenty or want.
- What we realise is that being content is an attitude
 - We won’t always be able to change our circumstances in life but we can change the way we think about them, respond to them and live in them.
 - If we are going to constantly complain and be disgruntled in our circumstances we will never live a life of contentment.
- We need to acknowledge that we are weak in the regard of being content in all circumstances but we ought also to acknowledge, with Paul, that we can do everything through Him who gives us strength.
 - God teaches us and enables us to be content in all circumstances
 - 1 Timothy 6: 6 – 9 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction
- We learn to be content in the following ways:

- By looking at our circumstances and asking ourselves whether we have the power to change them or not. If we don't then we need to learn to adapt our attitude towards them so as to adjust our thinking and life to live with what we can't change.
- We ought to be careful that, in our endeavor to be content, that we don't give in to fatalism – accept everything as our lot in life without looking to whether there are the possibilities to change it. A godly discontentment is also healthy as it moves us to change what needs to change e.g. William Wilberforce strove to abolish slavery.
- We need to ask ourselves whether we are in the right place i.e. work, career, ministry, etc. What needs to be done to change that? Is the discontentment God wanting us to move on?
- Learn to appreciate what you have and not what you don't have.
- Learn to live with what we have that we aren't happy with but would be wrong to change. If you are discontented with your husband or wife then you need to change your thinking not your spouse to learn to be content with them.

2) Contentment frees us to have right relationships

- Paul made a statement that no church in Macedonia shared with him in the matter of giving and receiving except the church in Philippi when the church at Philippi were still new in the Gospel.
 - We need to take note here that Paul isn't angry, bitter and resentful towards the other churches when he makes this statement.
 - Rather he was commending the church at Philippi for their willingness to give and giving them credit for their generosity.
- It is easy to feel that others owe you something.
 - When we have a lack in our lives and are discontent because of it we can easily look at others with money and become resentful and feel that they owe us something.
- We must not allow the discontentment in our hearts be transferred on to others.
 - Doing this causes a strain in relationships as we are putting expectations on others that we should not be putting on them. The unspoken "I am struggling and you have plenty so I expect you to give me something".
 - Some have all their needs met but still aren't satisfied and often walk over people to get more. This happens a lot in the business world.
- By being content we are saying that we are satisfied with what we have and have no expectations of anyone except to have a good personal relationship with them.

3) Trusting God to meet your needs leads to contentment

- Paul was absolutely confident in God's provision and found his contentment in trusting God to do that.
- Faith leads to a rest – a satisfaction – in God knowing that He is always faithful to provide for us
 - Matthew 6: 25 – 34
- To the Philippians Paul writes that God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (4: 19)
 - The word that he uses to meet or supply means, according to Strong, to *make replete*, that is, (literally) to *cram* (a net), *level* up (a hollow)
 - Then we see that he will meet all our needs – not some of them
 - He has the means to meet all our needs because he will meet them according to His glorious riches – and He owns everything.
 - His riches are in Christ Jesus. His only requirement is that we have a relationship with Jesus
- We ought to rest contented in Christ with such an awesome promise