



Pursue the Path to Far Greater Treasure (Part 2: Contentment) Philippians 4:10-13

Related to last Sunday's sermon (fleeing from the love of money) is the subject of biblical contentment. Paul wrote, *"How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength."* (Philippians 4:10-13). The opposite of contentment is discontentment, and it is defined in the KJV dictionary as an "uneasiness or inquietude of mind; dissatisfaction at any present state of things."ⁱ

Is discontentment a sin? Why?

Discontentment violates the 10th commandment relating to covetousness. Writer Jeff Robinson, citing one of the works of Puritan Pastor Thomas Boston, explains that discontentment is a mistrusting of God; it amounts to complaining against God's plan; exhibits a desire to be sovereign; covets something God has not been pleased to give us; communicates that God has made a mistake; and denies the wisdom of God and exalts my wisdom.ⁱⁱ

Discontentment deprives us of peace and joy. Our minds are restless because we are always thinking that there must be something better than our current situation or better than your present lot or what you have. Discontentment tempts us to make decisions that we have not thoughtfully and prayerfully considered.

Our hearts are prone to love money, and that is why the bible warns us to stay clear of the love of money. It is idolatry, it blurs our spiritual eyes to the temporal nature of things, and it can lead one to wander from one's faith.

In relation to money and possession, how is discontentment manifested in our lives? We likely struggle with discontent when:

- We live in debt – "charge it" i.e., buy now, pay later.
- We buy more than what we can afford.
- We buy more than what we need.

What are the keys to biblical contentment?

Paul wrote his letter to the church of Philippi during his imprisonment in Rome and, given his circumstance, one would think that he was struggling with depression and discontentment. But this was not the case. *"Rejoice in the Lord always,"* he said. *"I will say it again: Rejoice!"* (Phil 4:4)

Aside from joy, Paul writes about contentment. One of the elements of biblical contentment is that it is not dependent on circumstances. It is the same with joy.

Another element of biblical contentment is it looks to God's providence positively. Paul was arrested and imprisoned because of his faith in Jesus and his faithfulness to preach the gospel but he viewed his situation in light of God's sovereign control.

The first key to biblical contentment is worship.

Paul begins v. 10 with "How I praise the Lord". Paul was looking up to Christ, rejoicing that the Philippian church had thought about him! Hence, his heart turns to God in worship.

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The second key to contentment is to ACCEPT whatever God has given us or allowed to us.

Biblical contentment is learned, and it takes time and practice. Paul is saying that he has learned contentment through a range of circumstances. It is through different circumstances ranging from want to plenty that our hearts are tested and we learn to be content.

Biblical contentment is not determined by circumstances. We do not know what Paul's situation was like before Epaphroditus came. Paul is saying that whatever the situation, he has learned to be content. For many of us, our lives are dictated by our circumstances. Circumstances determine the state of our hearts. But not so with Paul. His heart remained steadfast, immovable, content, satisfied.

The third key to biblical contentment is the enabling power of Christ.

In v. 13 Paul shows us how he is able to face his circumstances with contentment - it is through Christ who gives him strength. We are able to face our circumstances with contentment through the enabling of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection/Application:

True contentment as described in the Bible would only be possible when we humbly acknowledge our sinfulness. It is only when we receive the grace of God by faith in sending His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ to free us from our biggest problem – our sinfulness – that we begin to know and experience real contentment in life. The only way that we can be freed from the bondage of self-centeredness and experience genuine contentment is by having Christ at the centre of our universe.

We have learned earlier that discontentment is sin. Sin weighs us down so we need to repent and then ask the Lord to empower us to look up to His providence in worship and to accept whatever circumstances that He has allowed us to face. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: *For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* (Phil. 4:13, NLT)

Review (Knowledge):

Please take a few minutes to read the summary above. What is the highlight of last Sunday's sermon for you and why?

Sharing/Discussion (Practical Wisdom):

1. How does discontentment weigh us down? Cite examples.
2. Apart from money and finances, what other areas do you struggle with discontentment? How would you apply the keys to biblical contentment?
3. How would worship by looking up to God's providence help you grow in contentment?
4. How does refusing to accept "our lot" and "our circumstances" become an obstacle to our growing in contentment?

Prayer (Take time to pray for one another.)

ⁱThe King James Bible Page, <http://av1611.com/kjbp/kjv-dictionary/discontent.html>. (Accessed February 18, 2018)

ⁱⁱJeff Robinson, "6 Reasons Discontentment is Disobedience to God", Bible Study Tools. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/founders-ministries-blog/6-reasons-discontentment-is-disobedience-to-god.html>. Accessed February 18, 2018)