

The Traits of Contentment Philippians 4:10-14

All Stand and Read Scripture

Philippians 4:10-14 (NASB)

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.

¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my affliction.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

In chapter 4 we have been looking at **The Practical Application of Knowing Christ**.

You will notice that verse 7 and the end of verse 9 are both talking about the ability of having the “**Peace of God**” in our lives.

Philippians 4:7 (NASB)

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:9b (NASB)

and the God of peace will be with you.

Last week we learned that the Peace of God is not a worldly peace, but a spiritual peace. We know from the scriptures that worldly peace will never exist on earth.

We find **peace with God** when we are saved and reconciled back to God by accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior and living our lives for Him.

Peace of God is an inner peace or contentment that we have by knowing Christ. It involves accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior. Too many times we emphasize Christ as our savior and forget the part about making Him our Lord.

If we are to have the **peace of God**, we must allow Christ to be your Lord, trust His Word, and obey His commandments.

We cannot have **peace of God** until we first have **peace with God**.
We cannot have the **peace of God** until we **trust and obey and do His will!**

Here is how Paul said it in verse 9.

Philippians 4:9 (NASB)

⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul was telling the Philippians here that he was rejoicing in the Lord for their support and faithfulness. He indicated that there was a time when, for some reason, maybe financial or lack of need, that the opportunity was not available for them to be expressed.

But he had one more thing that he wanted to exhort them with and that was **contentment**.

I have entitled my message **The Traits of Contentment**.

BODY:

I. Contentment is Freedom from Want.

Philippians 4:11a (NASB)

¹¹Not that I speak from want,

Paul makes it clear that he is not writing this letter because of want. He tells them that he is writing them to tell them of something they need which is the **LACK OF WANT**.

I want to talk to you this morning about contentment. We are a people by and large who are not content. We are not! Our lack of contentment expresses itself in very, very negative ways.

I think a lot of it has to do with the hyper-materialistic culture that we live in. I think the source of our discontent is the culture that we find ourselves in. Now, this is not to blame the culture. We know what God expects from us and we still sin.

The last generation in the US that had to “live without” was what generation? It was the generation that lived through and depression and then had to sacrifice for the war effort. It was the generation of the 1930’s and 1940’s. They learned to live in difficult times. The people of the great depression had to learn to live without much money. Jobs were very difficult to get. During the war, they had to give up a lot of things for the war effort. From 1939 to 1945

they rationed gas, they made collections of rubber and steel that went into aircraft and military equipment that defended this country.

The difficult times made them appreciate things. It made them proud of their accomplishments from their sacrifices. They grew up and brought forth the current generation which does not have to live in their conditions.

Like I mentioned earlier, we have become a hyper-materialistic culture. Everything that we need is available NOW. No matter how obscure the item, even if we are not sure exactly what we are searching for, we can search for it on the internet. Then we can read reviews and determine which product is recommended and then price shop among hundreds of companies to get the best price. By the time we have done all of this, it generally is way more than we originally were looking for and much better than we really need, but it is available and priced less than any other that we found like it, so we **MUST HAVE IT!**

When I was a kid and wanted something. What did I do? I worked for it and saved up money for it. I worked on the farm helping dad and mom and when we finished doing dad's hay, we picked up hay for others to earn the money.

What happens now? Mom, I want a red Spiderman bike. OK, son, we will buy you the bike. Is this not how it happens? Kids don't have to work for things anymore.

We have lost sight of real need. The depression generation didn't even consider getting a bike. One small handmade present for Christmas was truly precious.

The red Spiderman bike is torn up and discarded in a couple of years for a new mountain bike. Everything is disposable.

I am afraid that we do not make the connection on how this all has a ripple effect on our lives.

Why do 2 out of every 3 marriages end in divorce in just a few years? It is because marriage itself is a disposable commodity.

Why is abortion at an all time high? It is because babies are considered expendable. They may be an inconvenience to ones career or lifestyle.

Have you noticed how kids today expect to have everything immediately that took you 10 to 30 years to acquire? They want to move out of the house and have immediately what you had or they are not content. It is because we are living in a society that is rampant of immediate wants.

Remember, as a kid, when the TV quit working? Yeah, the one with two channels! What did you do? You called the TV repairman and he would either come to your house or you would take it to his shop and he would repair it.

Now, we pray that our TV will quit working. I only have a 46". If this puppy breaks, I am going to get a 60" flat screen with 3D and ultra HD.

The purpose behind all of this is that the world is full of people who lack **contentment**.

So what is the real problem here? It is a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the inability of material things to satisfy. We have bought it hook, line, and sinker. We have bought into the thought that **things** can satisfy.

This is precisely why we are warned many times in the scriptures not to fall for this lie. Possessions will not make you content!

Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your treasure? Is it in your things?

Jesus also said

Matthew 16:26 (NASB)

²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

Paul wrote Timothy warning him of the dangers of money and materialism.

1 Timothy 6:6-19 (NASB)

⁶ But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by **contentment**. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. It has been said, you will never see a U-Haul on the back of a hearse. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the **love of money (not money)** is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Paul goes on to say in verse 17

¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

Also consider,

Hebrews 13:5 (NASB)

⁵ *Make sure that your character is 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,"*

Contentment comes from a lack of want. We must be able to distinguish between want and true need. God wants us to be content with what He provides for us. He has promised to never leave us or forsake us. That should be enough for us. Our riches come from the fact that we KNOW that He will never leave us or forsake us.

I can hear Christ beseeching us "Am I not enough for you?" When we are not content with all of the good things that God has provided for us, it is an insult to Him!

Let me make this disclaimer. It is NOT a sin to be rich. The sin associated with riches is one's looking for contentment in those riches. When we have riches we are told to give generously.

Secondly,

II. Contentment is a Learned Trait Independent of Circumstances.

Philippians 4:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

We have talked in the last few weeks about how circumstances in our life should not affect our joy.

How did Paul learn contentment? It was through experience. Paul faced many adversities in his life.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (NASB)

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶ I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷ I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Paul had seen adversity. Paul also talked about his “thorn in the flesh”.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁷ Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul had contentment in his life despite his circumstances because he knew God was in control. Whatever circumstance he faced, he knew that it could not affect his salvation. He had full confidence in God to take care of his every need. Even if his circumstances resulted in physical death, he was content.

Philippians 1:21 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

What happens if we were to have everything that we own taken away from us when we are a child of God? These circumstances would drive him to find contentment in Christ alone. He is the only One that offers that contentment. There are no worldly possessions that can give us that contentment.

This brings us to our third trait.

III. Contentment is Based Upon Knowing Christ.

Philippians 4:13 (NASB)

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

What is the “all things” here? In context it is having contentment despite our circumstances and lack of possessions.

Through Christ, we can see the folly of storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

By knowing Christ, we understand the real purpose of life. That is a life of servitude to Christ.

How do people in this world get along without this trust and hope and faith in Christ? **They can’t!** If you put all of faith, and all of your trust in possessions,

and all of your ability to accumulate wealth, and it is all taken away from you, what do you have left if you are not a believer? **NOTHING but Hopelessness!**

But, if you are a believer, what still stands there? Your ROCK of salvation...Jesus Christ!

Where is your contentment?

- Is it your job?
- The money you receive from that job?
- Pleasant circumstances?
- Possessions?

Or is your contentment in Christ?

As Paul said, **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

Here is the key, right? If you want to be content in all things, stop relying on your own strength and rely on the strength of Christ!

That is another fault that we have, isn't it? We always want to do things on our own. We are all self made men! How often have you heard that? **"I am what I am, son, because I am a self made man!"**

You have what you have, because God has been gracious to you!

Paul mentions God's strength many times in his writings.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

CONCLUSION:

If you want to find contentment, stop trying to find contentment in what you can provide for yourself.

From a human standpoint, I am not able to offer a magic solution to solve your problems or cure what ails you. But I do know someone who can...and that is CHRIST! He is the one I will point you to time and time and time again.

- Whatever you are going through,
- Whatever adversity you are facing,
- Whatever lack of contentment you may have in your life,

I will consistently point you to your source of contentment.

Does that sound too simplistic? Yeah, it does. But, sometimes the simplicity of God escapes us, doesn't it?

Sometimes we want to make things so convoluted, so difficult. That is because in our minds, we want to fix things ourselves.

In this life of materialism, it is very hard to keep up with the Jones. It is hard to try to catch up with people who have more than us. Just know that materialism is not the key to contentment!

Only Christ can provide that contentment that we so need.

- Seek Freedom from Want.
- Seek to be Independent of Circumstances.
- Seek to Know Christ.

This is the formula for true contentment!

If you have never turned your life over to Christ, today could be your day of salvation. Christ wants you to start living your life for Him and passionately pursue knowing Him. Christ died for all of your sins. Sin separates us from a perfect and Holy God and prevents us from knowing Christ. Christ has promised to take away your sins.

If you have not turned your life over to Christ, I want to give you that opportunity this morning.

If you are need of prayer, or want to become recognized as a member of Greenwood Christian church, please come forward this morning as we sing the invitation hymn.

He is Lord.

He is Lord. He is Lord.
He has risen from the grave and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord.