**Contentment: How to get it, Pt 3**

*Philippians 4:14-19*

**Context**

Are we content in life? Are we content in the Lord? Do we have a settled resolve to live fully content in all God’s promises?

Contentment has the idea of being satisfied, sufficient, having enough. It is a word that the scriptures not only identify as a virtue but also speaks of it as a command.  We are commanded to be content. However, if we honestly understand Who is making the command of us and what He is capable of and what He has provided for us, we can rest comfortably in His person and work on our behalf. Therefore, the command ought not to be hard, but it is.

Paul tells us in this portion of scripture that he has learned the secret to being content. He also says that godliness and contentment are a means of great gain.

**1 Timothy 6:6***—But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*

In his thankfulness to the Philippian believers for their generous gift, he says he is overjoyed with their generosity and at the same time, he’s learned to be content regardless of his circumstances—which were very, very difficult at the time the gift was given.

**How do we genuinely live contently?**

1. **Understand God’s providence**

**Philippians 4:10***—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.*

1. **Point:** Paul was confident in God’s providence waiting patiently until His sovereign hand would bring it about
2. **Content with little**

**Philippians 4:11***—Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*

1. **Application:** We could rightly say we live in a culture that is discontented. It is constantly striving for more. And the more we have the more discontented we seem to be.
2. **Live independent of circumstances**

**Philippians 4:11-12***—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.*

1. A faithfulness in God’s promises vs. being a victim of circumstances
2. **Strengthened by Christ**

**Philippians 4:13***—I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

1. **The point**: when he was at the end of himself, he was given the strength of Christ
2. **Application**: do we really understand the power of Christ that indwells believers? And are we resolved to believe that it is far more than sufficient to give us sustaining strength through any trial or tribulation?

God’s power will bring contentment to those who have no strength on their own, but it will not come if we are not living holy lives. There are no quick fixes or shortcuts circumventing His will.

1. **Meets the needs of others**

**Philippians 4:14-19***—Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.* ***15****You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;****16****for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.****17****Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.****18****But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.****19****And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

1. If the focus is solely on self, contentment will not come
   1. Why? Because they are only concerned with their circumstances under their conditions
   2. Conversely, selflessness finds contentment in putting others ahead of self

**Philippians 1:9***—And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment*

**1 Corinthians 13:-5***—...does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered*

***Philippians 2:3-5****—Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;****4****do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.****5****Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*

1. *Nevertheless*—Paul transitions so as to clarify the kindness of the gift
   1. There could have been some misunderstanding
   2. They were poor, but they sent a very generous gift

**2 Corinthians 8:1-2**—*Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,****2****that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.*

* 1. Epaphroditus, after a short stay with Paul, would return with this letter to the Philippian church (4:8)
  2. He didn’t want the thoughts of him “learned the secret of being content in whatever circumstances I am” to come across as ungrateful. He didn’t want to suggest that he neither needed nor appreciated their sacrificial giving
  3. Rather, they had done well

1. Done well (kā́los)—beautiful; good, excellent in its nature and characteristics
   1. They shared with him in his affliction
   2. He explains that by act done well by going back 10 years prior

***15****You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;*

* 1. Giving and receiving are accounting terms (debits and credits); Paul stewarded the gifts well
  2. During his missionary journey to Thessalonica, they sent gifts

***16****for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.*

* 1. *The generosity of these gifts, along with Paul’s tent making work sustained him so as to minister freely to the Thessalonica community as well as Corinth*

***1 Thessalonians 2:9****—**For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.*

**2 Thessalonians 3:8***—nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you*

**Acts 18:5***—**But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.*

**2 Corinthians 11:8***—I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you*

1. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account

***17****Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.*

**Matthew 6:19-20**—*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.*

**1 Timothy 6:17-19***—**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.****18****Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,****19****storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.*

* 1. Thinking of others naturally is focused on their good
  2. Paul’s joy was in the blessing (spiritual benefit) they received from their generosity
  3. Giving generously increases spiritual blessings

**Proverbs 11:24-25***—There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.* ***25****The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.*

**Proverbs 19:17***—One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, And He will repay him for his good deed.*

**Proverbs 28:27**—He who gives to the poor will never want,  
*But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.*

**2 Corinthians 9:6**—Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will *also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*

**Acts 20:35**—In everything I showed you that by working hard *in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

1. I have received everything in full

***18****But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

* 1. 3 verbs used—increasingly emphatic
  2. Payment was *received in full*
  3. *Abundance (perisseu)—*meaning abounding in a surplus of material things; overflowing
  4. *amply supplied (plro)—*filled up completely; to have an excess; more than enough
  5. He is overwhelmed with their generosity
  6. Again, accounting terms to “receive them”

1. *Fragrant aroma* is language used in the OT for sacrificial offerings

**Genesis 8:20-21***—Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.****21****The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.*

**Exodus 29:18***—You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the Lord: it is a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord.*

**Leviticus 1:9***—Its entrails, however, and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer up in smoke all of it on the altar for a burnt offering, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord.*

1. Acceptable Sacrifice

**Leviticus 19:5**—‘*Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the Lord, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted.*

**Isaiah 56:7**—*Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”*

1. Well-pleasing to God

**Psalm 51:19**—*Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

1. **Point:** Paul viewed this gift as a sacrificial act of worship to God. These are now the New Covenant gifts believers are to make to replace the animal sacrifices. These are the spiritual sacrifices God requires.

**Romans 12:1**—*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

**Hebrews 13:15-16**—*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.****16****And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

**1 Peter 2:5**—*you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

1. In addition, God would supply their physical needs
   1. They gave generously
   2. God would amply supply their needs
   3. God will not be in anyone’s debt

**Proverbs 3:9-10**—*Honor the Lord from your wealth And from the first of all your produce;* ***10****So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.*

* 1. It is not possible to “out give God”

1. God gives *“according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”*
   1. God will bless according to His riches
   2. Begs the question: how rich is God?
   3. BTW, He gives ACCORDING to His riches; not OUT of His riches
   4. His giving would be relative to the immensity of His eternal wealth, that is, as generously as is consistent with His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.[[1]](#footnote-1)
   5. Christ is the source of all God’s riches

**Colossians 2:2-3***—that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,****3****in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

**Colossians 1:19***—For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,*

**Colossians 2:9***—For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,*

**Ephesians 1:3***—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

**Ephesians 1:22-23***—And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,****23****which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

**1 Corinthians 1:4-5***—I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,****5****that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge*

**2 Peter 1:3**—*seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

**Principles of Stewardship**

1. **Give from the heart**

***10A****But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me;*

1. **Give as God gives you opportunity**

***10B****…indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.*

1. **Give to those who serve God**

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

1. **Giving is to be consistent**

***15****You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the [*[j](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=phil+4&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-29458j)*]first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;****16****for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.*

**1 Corinthians 16:2***—**On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.*

1. **Give generous**

***18****But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

* 1. Liberally given
  2. In the OT
     1. 2 Tithes (20%) each year
     2. Another on the 3rd year (about 23% annually)
     3. Temple tax, plus the corners of the field, all the fell off the carts when they were harvesting
     4. Over 25% funded their national government (Theocracy)
     5. Then willingly out of their hearts sacrificially of the first-fruits
  3. In the NT
     1. 10% is a starting point
     2. More as God has made possible

1. **Giving is a sacred act of Spiritual worship**

**18***But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

**2 Samuel 24:24a**—*However, the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing.”*

1. **Knowing that whatever you give will be repaid by God**

***19****And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

* 1. You will not “deplete your resources”
  2. Treasure in heaven

**Matthew 6:19-21**—*“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.*

* 1. *According to* (in measure) of the glorious riches

**Conclusion**

If we are to live contented lives, we must have a confidence in God’s sovereign providence, satisfaction with little, independence from circumstances, strength from divine power and concerns for others rather than ourselves. And that concern will show up in how we give.

May God help us keep in the forefront of our minds the ongoing need to be content in all things.

1. Ibid, p308 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)