

**THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT**  
**Peace Regardless Of The Circumstances**  
**Philippians 4:10-19**

Just as you can't *rejoice* and *worry* at the *same time*...you can't have *joy* without *contentment*.

*Contentment* is an *elusive virtue*...especially in our culture today. And people are seeking it where it can't be found...in *money, possessions, power, prestige, relationships, or jobs*. They continually *seek freedom* from the *complications and difficulties of life*. In reality, *contentment* only comes from *being rightly related* to God and *trusting His sovereign, loving, and purposed providence*.

*True contentment* is an *inward, quiet, gracious spirit*, which *freely submits to*, and *delights in*, *God's wisdom and sovereignty...in every situation and circumstance*...realizing that *nothing* catches God by *surprise*.

The Bible has much to say about *contentment*. It not only identifies *contentment* as a *virtue*...but also prescribes it as a *command*.

Before concluding this letter to the *Philippian congregation*, **Paul** wanted to express his *deep gratitude* to them. He had a *special relationship* with them having *founded the church* at **Philippi**...and at one point in his ministry, they were the only church that had *supported him financially* (**vs. 15-16**). Now they had again sent him a *gift*, and this passage is **Paul's thank you note** to them for it.

**I. A CONTENTED PERSON IS SATISFIED REGARDLESS: (vs. 10-12)**

**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 (vs. 10)...**

*Ten years* had passed since **Paul** had founded the church in **Philippi**. The *Philippians* had *generously supported* him when he left to minister in the *Macedonian cities* of **Thessalonica** and **Berea** (**Acts 17:1-13**)...and when **Paul** moved south into **Achaia**, the *Philippians* continued their support as he ministered in **Athens** and **Corinth** (**Acts 17:14-18:18**). As the years passed, they had consistently been **concerned** about **Paul**, but **lacked** any **opportunity** to *provide support* for him. The *reason* for that *lack* isn't given...but perhaps it was due to their *crushing poverty* (**II Corinthians 8:1-2**). Or maybe they just *hadn't been aware* of any *need* that he may have had.

Nevertheless, **Epaphroditus** had recently arrived in **Rome** bringing with him a *generous gift* from the *Philippians*...and for this, **Paul rejoiced in the Lord greatly**. His *joy over-flowed* that **now at last** they had been able to **revive** their **concern** for him.

**Revive**...a **verb** that is a *horticultural term* describing a *plant flowering again* after *having laid dormant* for a *period of time*.

**Indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity**...**Paul** is giving them *grace* here...and his *gracious attitude* reflects his *patient confidence* in God's *sovereign providence*. He was certain that God in *due time* would *arrange* his *circumstances to meet his needs*.

**Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am (vs. 11)...**

**Paul** wanted to make sure that the *Philippians* didn't *misunderstand his statement* in **verse 10**. He wanted them to know that *he didn't mean to imply* that he spoke **from want** when he *thanked* them. He didn't want them to think that he had an *expectant spirit*. In fact, he had **learned to be content in whatever circumstances** he found himself

in. **Paul** had **learned** to be *satisfied* and *at peace* in the midst of *any situation*.

In our culture today...*discontentment prevails...regardless* of one's *socio-economic situation*. As a matter of fact, those who are *wealthy* are often the most *miserable* and *discontented*. I.e. **Go Fund Me accounts**. Today, there is a blur between the distinction of *needs* and *wants*.

**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 (vs. 12)...**

**Paul** expands on what he alluded to in the previous verse.

**I know how...I also know how...**reveals that he had **learned** by *experience* and *spiritual maturity* to live above *his circumstances* and not to let them affect his *contentment*. That is an *important lesson* for all believers to *learn*. It's the *difficult* and *trying circumstances* in life that most frequently *steal our contentment*. It's also these *trying circumstances* that *refine* us and *mature* us.

**Paul's** statement, **I know how to get along with humble means...going hungry...suffering need...**indicates that he had had his share of *poverty*. He knew what it was like to get by with *meager material things*.

He also knew **how to live in prosperity...of being filled...of having abundance**.

All *six* of these terms...both describing *poverty*, as well as describing **abundance**...refer to the *material, earthly needs* of this life...not to *spiritual needs*.

In the midst of everything...whether having *needs* and or having *plenty*...**Paul** kept his *focus on heaven*.

***“For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison”***

~II Corinthians 4:17

***“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”***

~Colossians 3:1-2

## II. A CONTENTED PERSON IS STRENGTHENED BY GOD'S POWER: (vs. 13)

No matter how difficult his *struggles* may have been, **Paul** had the *spiritual strength* to *support* and *undergird* him. His *sufficiency* came through the *sufficiency* of Christ.

***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”***

~Galatians 2:20

**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me (vs. 13)...**

When **Paul** wrote **I can do all things**...he was referring to the *physical*...not *spiritual things*.

**I can do**...Gk. *ischuo*, means *to be strong...to have power...to have resources...to prevail*.

**Paul** is emphasizing the fact that he is able to *persevere*... he *keeps on going*. He's not going to let his *physical circumstances stop* him or get him *down*. Obviously, he isn't saying that he could *physically overcome* every aspect of life. I.e. He *couldn't survive without food, water, sleep*, etc. But what he is saying is that when he *reached the limit* of *his resources* and *strength*, even to the point of *death*, he was infused with the *strength of Christ*. He

could *overcome* the most dire *physical difficulties* because of the *inner strength* God had given him.

*“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! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 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. 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.”*

~II Corinthians 12:7-10

God’s *power* that *indwells* believers...it’s *far more sufficient* than to just *strengthen* and *sustain* us *in* and *through* any *trial*. It brings us *contentment*. *Contentment* belongs to those who *confidently trust* in that *power* rather than in their *own strength* and *resources*.

It’s important to note that only those who *live obediently* to God *can count on* His *power* to *sustain* them. Those whose *continued sin* has led them into the *pit of despair* *cannot expect* God to bring them *contentment* from their circumstances. In fact, He may even *add to* their *difficulties* to *chasten* them and bring them to *repentance*.

### III. A CONTENTED PERSON IS COMFORTED BY GOD’S PROVIDENCE: (vs. 14-18)

Paul’s *contentment* has always been *expressed* and *shown* in his *concern for others*. Those who *live only for themselves* will *never be content* because *contentment* for them can only come when their *circumstances* are *exactly* as *they want them to be*...and that *will never happen*. Only

those who *unselfishly* put *others above themselves* will find *contentment*.

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

~Philippians 2:3-4

What if Jesus had only looked out for *His own interests*? He *never* would have *left heaven* to *sacrifice* Himself for *sinful, fallen* people.

Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction (vs. 14)...

Paul reassured the *Philippians* that they had *done well to share with him in his affliction*.

*Done well*...Gk. *kalos*, means *to do something noble* or *to do something with character*. They had done a *noble act* when they *sacrificially shared* with him to *meet* his need.

Paul then takes the *Philippians* back *ten years* to when he *first preached the gospel in Philippi*.

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; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs (vs. 15-16)...

These verses use *business terminology*. *Giving and receiving* can mean *credit* and *debit*. Evidently Paul was a *careful steward* of his *resources* and *kept an account* of his *receipts* and *expenditures* and was *accountable* back to the church at *Philippi* for the *gifts* that they had *shared* with him.

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

Their gift brought Paul joy...not because of its *personal material benefit* to him...but because of its *spiritual benefit* to them.

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”*

~Matthew 6:19-20

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 (vs. 18)...

*Three statements* in this verse *summarize Paul’s joy and gratitude*.

I have received everything in full...typically used in a commercial sense *to denote payment in full*.

And have an abundance...means *to overflow...to have an excess...to have more than enough*.

I am amply supplied...speaks of *being filled up completely*.

Taken all together, these *three phrases* show that Paul was *overwhelmed* by the *Philippians’ generosity*.

A fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God...Paul puts a *great emphasis* on the fact that the *Philippians gifts* were *a sacrificial act of worship to God*. This is a beautiful picture of a *New Testament...New Covenant...sacrificial act of worship* instead of the *animal sacrifices* of the *Old Covenant*.

*“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. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”*

~Hebrews 13:15-16

Paul’s joy that the *Philippians* would make such an *acceptable sacrifice* to God *far surpassed* his joy at *receiving* their gift.

#### IV. A CONTENTED PERSON IS CONFIDENT IN GOD’S PROVISION: (vs. 19)

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

According to His riches...*not out of them*. When we give a *tithe...10%...we give according to* our *income* (our riches). When we just give an amount...we give *out* of our income. God’s giving to the believers in **Philippi** 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**. The New Testament repeatedly presents Christ Jesus as the *source* of all of God’s *riches*.

*“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 1:3

To sum up the *Philippians* and their *willingness to give*...

*“Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given towards the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the*

*favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”*

~II Corinthians 8:1-5

## LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- God works in two primary ways...through **MIRACLES** and His **DIVINE PROVIDENCE**.

A miracle is *God's direct, sovereign intervention into the natural world*. It's an event so contrary to the normal course of events that there is *no scientific or natural explanation* for it other than the *power of God*.

God's **providence** is *not miraculous* in the sense that it *interrupts the natural order*. Rather, it allows for all the *contingencies, events, words, acts, decisions, and elements of normal life*. God just *supernaturally weaves them all together to fit His purpose* exactly.

*“The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”*

~Proverbs 16:9

*“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”*

~Acts 4:27-28

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

~Romans 8:28

- A confident trust in God's **PROVIDENCE** is foundational to contentment. An *understanding...and acceptance* of God's *sovereign, providential control of*

*events* is critical to *contentment*. *Nothing* catches God by *surprise!*

- The chief end of man isn't to have our needs met...but to **GLORIFY GOD** and **ENJOY Him** forever. We need to be *satisfied* with *whatever* God graciously grants us.

Keep in mind. God's more concerned with your *holiness* than your *happiness*...your *obedience* that your *sacrifice*...your *worship* than your *service*.