

Philippians
February 22, 2009
Phil. 4:10-20

I. Necessities for Contentment

In this world, what is necessary for us to be content? Will more money than we can spend do it? Will being ruler of the world accomplish it?

In fact, most people will want more regardless of what they have, even in areas where they have an overabundance. So, what is necessary for contentment? Joy will be stymied by the lack of contentment faster than practically any other thought.

II. Strength through Contentment

Phil 4:10-13

10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

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Verse 10 The Philippians live far from Rome and did not have the ability to help Paul until they sent Epaphroditus to him, apparently with monetary gifts. We should not relate the joy felt by Paul simply to having received a gift. Instead, his joy is much more related to the fact that the Philippians want to help in his work in the Lord. Some find that verses 10-12 are a rather “thankless thanks,” but we should remember that Paul has probably thanked them in the past for similar help. By the end of the chapter, we are clear that Paul is thankful for the gift; we (and the Philippians) are also taught some important lessons.

Verse 11 Paul seems to want to make sure that the Philippians do not mistake what he has to communicate now. “Content” has the sense of being self-sufficient, especially by Stoics. Although he is independent of others, he is

dependent on Christ. Some suggestions for being content:

- ❖ Remember that everything belongs to God
- ❖ Be thankful for what we have, not coveting what others have.
- ❖ Pray for grace to let go of the desire for what we do not have
- ❖ Trust in God to meet our needs

Verse 12 “Learned the secret” was an expression used in pagan mystery religions to describe initiations of new member. Basically, new members would learn some of the secrets of the cult. In this case, Paul is telling us what it means to be a Christian. The word translated as “secret” is from the root word for mystery in Greek.

Verse 13 Paul’s strength is an outcome of his contentment in the Lord. Through God’s strength, Paul is strong enough to do anything. In similar words but similarly Paul wrote:

2 Cor 12:9-10

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
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III. Fragrant Offering, an Acceptable Sacrifice

Phil 4:14-18

14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

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Verse 14 While Paul wants to emphasize the need for contentment in the Lord, as he is always the teacher, he also does not want the Philippians to think that their gift was not appreciated.

Verse 17 Basically, Paul is saying that he is not writing this to get even more gifts from them. Instead, he is pointing out the good that they have done. “What” translates “fruit that” in Greek. Basically, Paul is looking for and was grateful for the fruit that was in their lives, as in:

Heb 6:9

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

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Verse 17 Apparently in terms of support, the Philippians (or Macedonians, which included the Philippians as Philippi would have been the chief city of Macedonia) were stand outs. Paul notes this in letters to other churches while also not being so cordial, as in:

2 Cor 11:7-8

8 I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so.

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Verse 18 Paul had done the Philippians a service; they had returned the favor. My guess is that Paul felt indebted to the Philippians, and the Philippians continued to feel indebted to Paul. Does this seem odd?

IV. Your Needs

Phil 4:19-20

19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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One of the most consoling, encouraging verses in the Bible. It is important that we remember the source of all our needs being meant, as is also indicated in:

2 Cor 8:1-4

8:1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

NIV

It is even more to the credit of the Philippians that they provided for Paul from what they had, even though they had little.

V. What can you do to develop an attitude of contentment in all circumstances?