



*Philippians was written by the apostle Paul during his imprisonment in Rome. In spite of the hardships he is experiencing, Paul speaks to our souls about the core blessing of contentment in Christ. **Read Philippians Ch. 4: 10-13.***

1. We Live in the Age of Discontent.

- We are bombarded with advertisements for food, clothes, perfume, toys On buses, billboards, television, in newspapers; and we even find adverts tailored for us personally on our phones. All to:
- **Foster discontent**, to create in us the feeling that our lives are lacking and all we need is the next job/ home/ piece of technology/ holiday/ government/ relationship to satisfy us. It is very alluring and is made worse by social media: we're trying to keep up with the whole world in the palm of our hand.
- Everyone is sure they'd be happier with more money, in fact statistics prove otherwise.
- We live in a culture of discontent. From prison Paul tells us there is another way of living.

2. How to find Contentment. Verses 11-12

- Paul is really grateful to the Philippians for the gift they have sent him (v.10) but explains that in spite of his imprisonment, he **has learned how to be content, whatever the circumstances**
- Greek for contentment is *autarkes* and this is the only time it is used in the Bible. It does **not mean**:
 - An aloof detachment from needs or desires (e.g. Stoicism). Paul was a passionate person.
 - Self-sufficient. Nor does it mean complacent – there is such a thing as Holy discontent.
 - It does not mean that we shouldn't work hard, take opportunities and strive for excellence.
- Contentment **does** mean that there is an inner peace that comes from our wholeness in God. There are two core Christian beliefs which underpin contentment:
 - **God is sufficient: In Christ I am complete. I have all I need, I am fully satisfied.**
 - i. In **Matt. 5:48** the word 'perfect' is better translated, 'Be complete' (*teleos*): 'Be whole'.
 - ii. In **Col. 1:28** Paul proclaims the purpose of Christian ministry: to present to God people who are whole in Christ (*teleos*). This is the mission of the whole church and its leaders.
 - iii. True Contentment can only be found in God: The All-sufficient One offers His wholeness to us.
 - iv. Looking for wholeness elsewhere is always some kind of idolatry, even in the best of human relationships. A single person is not half a person. Contentment **is** our secure identity in Christ
 - **God is Sovereign:**
Paul's trust in God's sovereignty meant he could be peaceful about his changing circumstances.

3. How do we grow in Contentment? Also verses 11-12

- Contentment doesn't magically appear in us when we become Christians, or are baptised. Paul tells us twice that it is something he has learned (*manthano*) in the way an apprentice learns – on the job through plenty of practice, so that contentment becomes a habit – a 'default position'.
- As he matured in the Christian life, he learnt to consider how to share his riches when he had plenty and to trust in God's provision for him when he had very little.
- With maturity comes a better understanding of our personal weak spots and the realisation that all we have is a gift from God to use generously and wisely. **Hebrews 13:5 and Matthew 6:21.**
- The fruit of contentment is in **verse 13**: we can do everything through Christ who gives us strength. Present continuous tense – God continually infuses us with His strength. Filling us with His Holy Spirit and overriding the voices that would tell us we haven't enough. **Proverbs 15 verse 15b:**

'Contentment is a feast without end'.

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1. **Do we think we'd be happier with a bit more money? When does money make us happy?**
 2. **Can we honestly sing to Jesus, 'You are my everything....?' Is Christ really enough for us to be satisfied?**
 3. **Can we identify our personal 'weak spots'? Could we try to fast from spending for a week/month/year?**
 4. **Could we engage with the Spiritual discipline of praying daily for our basic needs to be met?**
 5. **When we pray '..... Give us today our daily bread' do we really mean it?**
 6. **Do we make time for a regular infilling of God's Holy Spirit?**