

The Paradox of Contentment

Introduction

Philippians 4:11-13

1. Definition of terms:
 - A. **PARADOX:** "A statement that seems contradictory, or absurd, but may be true in fact". (Webster)
 - B. **CONTENTMENT:** "Happy enough with what one has or is; satisfied" "The state of not being disturbed by desire, even though not every wish is gratified" (Webster)
2. Contentment is a great virtue and a great vice!
 - A. Thus it seems we have a paradox or a seeming contradiction.
3. We are living in a world of worry and frustration.
 - A. Hospitals have many with emotional and mental disturbances. Most have not learned to be "CONTENT".
4. We are also living in a world of apathy, indifference and unconcern.
 - A. One can hear things like "So What", "Who Cares?" These need to learn and possess a wholesome sense of discontent.
5. The problem?
 - A. We are often times content when we ought to be discontent and vice versa.

The Realm of Contentment

1. Definitions of contentment explained.

A. It is not "Total satisfaction" "The state of having one's desires fully appeased." This would be the man that has absolutely everything!

1) Actually, total satisfaction is beyond everyone's reach. Satisfaction, at best, is relative.

a) A rich man may not have good health

b) A beautiful woman may not have common sense

1. The one that has both may not be happy in their family life, etc.

2. It is not a suppression of desire for better things.

EXAMPLE: Paul, a Roman prisoner, desired to stay by himself in his own dwelling. This was much better than a dungeon. (Acts 28:16)

3. It is not stoicism.

A. STOICISM: "The principle or practice of showing indifference to pleasure or pain."

1) Christianity is not stoic.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

B. These verses show that one is to rejoice and weep with others - not to be indifferent about it.

4. **What contentment really is - is the submission to the change of circumstances of life **without anxiety**, believing that there is a heavenly father who knows our needs and **WILL** supply them!**
 - A. **Therefore, a contented person will be flexible to the issues of life because of their understanding of GOD.**
5. **The scriptures emphasize contentment.**
 - A. **We are to be content with wages.**

Luke 3:14 Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and **be content with your wages.**"

- B. **We are to be content with our material things.**
1 Timothy 6:6-8

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; **be content with such things as you have.** For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

- 1) **Verse 6 says it all! We must learn to trust in God - that He will provide for us.**

6. **We are to be content in times of adversity.**

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me; **nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy,** and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

7. The Necessity of learning contentment.

A. We are not born being content; We don't get it from another; We cannot buy it; IT MUST BE LEARNED:

1. Where did the apostle Paul learn contentment?

B. In the school of CHRIST:

1. Through the pattern of Christ.

Luke 9:58 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

2. Through the precepts of Christ.

Matthew 6:25-34

Luke 12:15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for **one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.**"

3. Through the promises of Christ.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven **give good things to those who ask Him!**

Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age." Amen.

- 8. Paul applied these truths regarding contentment even when he went through adversity.**
- A. He suffered for Christ.**
2 Corinthians 11:23-26
 - B. Then later as he writes to the Philippians, he is an aged minister, unjustly confined!**
 - 1) Paul was at peace.**
Philippians 4:7-9
 - 2) He continued to possess joy and happiness.**
Philippians 1:12-13,18; 4:4
 - C. The book of Philippians is filled with words such as joy, rejoice, thanksgiving, content, peace.**
 - 1) Are you content when things turn upside down in your life - knowing that you are safe with Jesus? Are you really happy?**
 - 2) Why not let that happiness show in your life? Happiness and contentment in Christ will draw others to you!**

The Realm of Discontentment

1. For the Christian contentment **can be** a vice and not a virtue.
 - A. We sin when we become contented in our own shortcomings.
 - B. To be content with our lot in life is to be desired. But to be content with oneself in life is to be abhorred - We must strive to do better!
Philippians 3:12-14
 - C. In looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's word, we ought to be disturbed. We should be moved to improve!
 - 1) The chorus of the song "Higher Ground" states "Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith on heaven's tableland, A higher plane than I have found, Lord plant my feet on HIGHER GROUND."
2. It is a sin to be contented with the sufferings of others.
 - A. The hungry, naked, homeless, and others are all around us. As we see them we must be disturbed, and moved to assist them when we can.
James 1:27; 2:15-17
 - B. Jesus was not content to see men suffering.
 - 1) He helped the blind, lepers, etc.

3. **It is a sin to be contented with the ignorance of others and not try to show them or teach them the truth.**
- A. **As you see people on the street, at a game, at a movie, what do you think?**
- 1) **Everyone of them must meet Christ at the judgment.**
 - 2) **We should be disturbed - moved - to teach them of Jesus and the gospel.**
- B. **As Paul thought of the world, lost in sin, he was moved to be a soul-winner.**
Romans 1:14-16

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is **that they may be saved.**

4. **For the local congregation there is no place for contentment.**
- A. **For number of members. We should not be content with 20 when we could have 100.**
- B. **With attendance. We should not be content with a single empty seat.**
- C. **With knowledge of God's Word. We must strive to gain more.**
- D. **With interest in one another. We must grow in love, concern and closeness.**
- E. **With our giving. We should never be content with giving but rather strive to be able to give more.**
- **As a congregation we must be disturbed - moved - to greater evangelization, attendance, study, fellowship, and liberality.**

Conclusion

1. We need to pray **"Lord, help us be content with the material and unimportant things, and help us be discontent with the spiritual and really important things"**.
2. The paradox is this:
 - A. Maintaining our equilibrium, yet turning the world upside down.
 - B. Being unconcerned, yet concerned.
 - C. Being immovable, yet moved to do greater things for Christ!

