

THE BATTLE FOR CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST

Friday, May 15th 2020

Philippians 4:10-14

"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles."

Contentment is something we have given a lot of thought to over the course of our fourteen years of marriage. It's something that I (Sam here) still struggle with. I do not find it easy to be truly content. And I don't mean just to enjoy a special moment or a lovely, sunny Spring Sunday afternoon; I mean to be **really** content in the core of my being. I suspect that I'm not alone with this struggle. And so together, we've made it our goal and our family's goal to aim for genuine contentment.

Some things in our modern world breed discontent: comparison, competition, and even an over-abundance of choice; an inter-connected world means that there is always somebody, somewhere who is further, better, and more successful than you are. You can spend hours reading customer reviews for hundreds of (name your product) on Amazon, and even after ordering, the question nags at you if you chose the right one.

But as Paul shows us here, **contentment is a spiritual battle** more than a psychological one; and it is a battle that is winnable! True contentment can be attained, as Paul writes in verse 11, "for I have learned to be content in any and every situation." But it's a process, not an instant change.

Paul helps us by giving a practical example to understand what contentment is and therefore how he learned it. In verse 12, he says that he knows what it is to be in need, and he knows what it is to have plenty. Paul doesn't just mean that he's experienced need and plenty, and therefore 'knows' them; what he means is that he '*knows how*' to live in the right manner both in need and in plenty. "All sorts of people experience need", says Augustine, "but to know *how* to suffer need is a mark of greatness." That's what contentment is; knowing how to live or respond to any circumstance in the right manner. **Contentment is therefore a mindset based on spiritual realities which we then apply to all of life.**

What spiritual realities could Paul have in mind? Philippians 3:8 springs immediately to mind: "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." The more the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord sinks deeply into our minds and souls, and the more all of life revolves around all of Christ, the more we'll be able to be content in all things. As Paul says, I can do this; I can be content in all things through Him, Christ, who gives me strength.

Prayer: *Jesus, we ask not for superficial happiness separate from You, but we say with Paul: We want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, as we read in Philippians 3:10. Awake in us a desire to know and love You so that we may be truly content in all things. Amen.*

-Samuel & Judith Garrard-

