

“To Be Content, Even If...”

Philippians 4:11-13

Introduction

When Paul wrote those words to the Philippian church, he was in prison...again. Philippians is one of Paul's four prison epistles. Prisons were nasty places in Paul's day and he knew he could potentially die. The death he contemplated would not be pleasant. That's why he wrote, "...it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." (Philippians 1:20). How could Paul sit in prison, knowing he might be killed, and say, "in whatever situation I am...content"? What was his recipe?

We shouldn't, however, think of Paul as an indestructible superman. There were times when the tremendous hardships he confronted were more than he could bear. After suffering one rather malicious incident of persecution, Paul admitted he and his companions "despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8), and yet his letters are full of joy and peace and hope.

Contentment is not...

Anxious

Philippians 4:6-7 – Anxiety is the fear of what "might be" rather than focusing on what is real or true. What if this happens or what if that happens? Matthew 6:33-34

Second Guessing

Past triumphs, failures and losses can entrap us, not allowing us to be content or to even enjoy the present let alone the future. Isaiah 43:18-19. None of us do all things perfectly, but are we obeying and are we being faithful to what God has called us to do? Luke 9:62.

Bitter

The writer of Hebrews says see to it that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble. Where does that root of bitterness spring up from? From within us. 1 Corinthians 2:11. Proverbs 14:10. Paul is very clear about bitterness. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you."

Resigned

No such thing as Eeyore contentment. Do not give up. Galatians 6:8-9. I was standing on the promises but things didn't turn out the way I expected.

Complacent

Complacent is defined as "showing smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements." Not only did Paul say he had to learn to be content but he was still striving. There is nothing in contentment just like any of our other growth in sanctification that says we are done or we've gone far enough.

Fake

We are to speak the truth with our neighbor, it says in Ephesians 4:25, for we are members of one another. How can we support and care for each other if we do not know the struggles our friends are going through? Fake isolates.

Situational

Contentment is not situational. You cannot be content in most things except this one this over here. All things includes big things and small things the relatively easy things and all the really hard things.

Contentment is...

Believing

Contentment is determined by what we believe. So we say we believe in the sovereignty of God. Paul sure did.

Hebrews 12:2 Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

Do you believe that God is working all things for our good and his glory?

Focusing

Paul had a singular focus. Christ and the gospel. Everything is to be seen and done in light of Christ. For him both life and death mean Christ. Philippians 3:12-14. Philippians 3:7-8.

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 - First importance, Christ died for our sins. Where is our focus?

Abiding

Jesus defined "abiding in Christ" when He likened Himself to a grapevine and believers to its branches John 15:4. That picture illustrates the vital union existing between Christians and Jesus Christ.

When crying out to God are you abiding first?

What characterizes contentment

What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Romans 15:13

Joy

James 1:2-3 - Count it all joy! Paul experienced joy in Philippians while in prison and more than that he encourages the Philippians to rejoice with him. Philippians 2:17-18. Paul is not just putting on a happy face.

Peace

Philippians 4:7. When you have the peace that can only come from God people cannot get their minds around that. The way to that peace is believing God is sufficient. Romans 8:28 – Brings peace.

Hope

Hope in a just God who will vindicate the righteous. But it is a living hope, a confident hope, a bold hope. Romans 5:2-5. Habbakuk.

Learning Contentment

Practically how does this look on a daily basis.

Stop

Stop grumbling and complaining. Stop sulking or stomping around the house. Stop the critical tongue toward others. Stop the lusting, coveting, putting anything in place of God.

Refocus

What are you looking at. Are your eyes on Christ. Are you focused on his glory? Philippians 4:8.

Although our culture has multiplied the ways we can be tempted to be discontent, the question of how we can refocus has not changed, is still related to the Word of God. Psalm 119:9-16.

- 1) Pray
- 2) Read the word.
- 3) Write out Scripture.
- 4) Sing a Psalm.
- 5) Call or text a brother or sister.

Press On

Philippians 3:12-14. Run the race with endurance. Your legs will get tired. Others will be running faster. Press on. Hebrews 12:12-13.

Conclusion

Daniel Chapter 3

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not guaranteed deliverance. Just before Nebuchadnezzar delivered them to the fire, they said "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it . . . **But even if he does not**, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods ..."

Even if the worst happens, God's grace is sufficient. Those three young men faced the fire without fear because they knew that whatever the outcome, it would ultimately be for their good and for God's glory. They were satisfied knowing that "even if" the worst happened, God would take care of them.

Those two simple words take the fear out of life. Replacing the "what if" of anxiety with "even if" of confidence is one of the most liberating exchanges we can ever make. We trade our irrational fears of an uncertain future for the loving assurance of an unchanging God. We see that even if the worst happens, God will carry us. He is still good. He will never leave us. And he will be glorified.

That is contentment.

Romans 8:28-39