



The Secret of Contentment

Philippians 4:10-14 | Mark Foreman | Nov 17, 2024

> Key Terms In This Passage (10-14)

- Rejoiced
 - Last occurrence of *rejoice* in this letter.
 - *Joy* or *rejoice* is used 16 times in various forms in twelve verses in Philippians. This is half of all of Paul's usage throughout his letters. He flows from simply mentioning his joy, to encouraging us in joining him, to exhorting us to be joyful.
 - Meaning of rejoicing for Paul. This is not mere happiness which is based on happenstance. It's a deeper spiritual emotion connected to God's love & his plan.
 - He's been inviting the readers to join him in rejoicing in the Lord. Remember he's in prison and they're not. Such irony.
 - What we find joy in will influence our contentment.
- Concern (2x) – Their faithfulness in taking care of Paul.
 - Paul is sending Timothy (Phil 2:20) because he shares Paul's heart and will show "genuine concern" to the Philippians.
 - Philippians had often cared for Paul (Acts 16:15; Phil 4:15; 2Cor 11:9)
 - Everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus, but Timothy proved himself (2:21-22)
 - Phil 2:3-4 *Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*
 - Our concern and interest in others will influence contentment.
- Content (*autarkes* – *autos+arkeo*)
 - Stoics and cynics (philosophers of the time) used this exact term: *self (autos)-sufficient, satisfied, content (arkeo)* but it was achieved through being pridefully independent. Dependent on no one. Needing nothing.
 - Paul uses this popular term and gives it a deeper meaning.
- Series of contrasts or merisms to amplify the terms *whatever the circumstances (11)* and *in any and every situation (12): In need or to have plenty; Well-fed or hungry; In plenty or in want.*
 - Circumstances don't rule contentment, it is the reverse.
- Now I draw your attention to two terms: *I have learned (2x)* once in v11 and once in v12, but the second is implied with secret.
 - *I have learned: manthano* (Aor. *emathon*). Paul is clearly stating that he as a disciple of Jesus *learned* contentment. He decisively learned this lesson (aorist tense).
 - *Secret* – *Mueo* (perf/pass/ind. *memuema*) to have been initiated or have learned the secret. The noun is *mysterion*.
 - Contentment must be learned

> The Secret of Contentment (11-12)

- What is contentment?
 - Serenity? Satisfaction? Delight? Happiness? Bliss? Comfort?
 - How do we get there? Doing nothing? Have everything? Don't want anything? Abandon everything? You're above everything in bliss?
 - Philosophies: Stoics? Ascetics? Hedonists? Mystics?
 - Wanting is related.

- What do we do with our wanting?
- The Secret (13)
 - *To be able or to be strong (ischuo: used 28x by Paul in NT).*
 - Contentment is a place of power.
 - *This is better than all things.* The context is the high tides and low tides of life. So Paul is able to live content in the extremes of his life.
 - This is not a beating of the self-chest in self-grandeur, or shouting with bravado that he is invincible.
 - *Through him* –pointing to the One who empowers Paul for various circumstances.
 - His self-sufficiency comes from the One who is all-sufficient.
 - The secret to contentment is not an object, achievement or an attitude or philosophy but trust in a Person.
 - *Through him who is giving me strength.* Paul takes his life and temperature from Jesus not from outward circumstances.
 - Jesus is continually empowering Paul to live above the circumstances.
- Ultimate self-sufficiency is found through Christ’s-sufficiency.
 - “God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.” (p.50, *Mere Christianity*)
 - Contentment is not a thing but trust in a Person.
 - Like a child discovering her mother is the source of fulfillment not the toy.
 - Simple creaturely trust in our loving and all-knowing Maker, Provider & Savior.
 - Contentment is the opposite of the temptation of the garden – to be self-sufficient. We were made by him, for him and in His image. Only God is truly self-sufficient.
 - It’s the same door as salvation! – Trust in Jesus. But it takes us deeper into relationship.
 - It is not a shift to passivity but a shift of wanting: hunger and thirst for Him.
 - Independent self-sufficiency (contentment) happens through dependency on Christ.
- This is found everywhere in Scripture.
 - 1Tim. 6:6 But godliness with contentment (*autarkeias*) is great gain.
 - Phil. 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
 - 2Cor. 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.
 - Heb. 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content (*arkoumenoi*) with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’
 - Psa. 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
 - Mat 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.
- All this makes sense from all the teachings of Philippians.
 - Rejoicing in Jesus and his will not merely happiness in circumstances (16x in Phil; also Hab. 3:17).
 - Pressing on toward (wanting, hungering for Jesus) (Phil 3:13-14).
 - Trading my anxieties for transcending peace through prayer and thanksgiving (Phil 4:6-7).
 - Giving myself away in love for others as Jesus gave himself away for us (Phil 2).
 - To live is Christ and to die is gain (Phil 1:21). (Checkmate joy on life).
 - I can do all this through Him who gives me strength (Phil 4:13).
- This is not Pie-in-the-sky but Practical
 - Financial.
 - Relationships
 - Achievements
 - Internal anxiety

- All the wantings that want to control us
 - Because we are content with Christ!
 - He knows and loves and provides.
 - He is intimately involved in my life.
- The Secret to Contentment is a simple but deeper trust in a loving and faithful God

> **Taking It Home**

- What do you find yourself continually wanting? Be honest with yourself?
- Are you content?
- Do you see Jesus as your ultimate solution and provider or simply a means to forgiveness and heaven?
- Switch your mental and heart track to wanting God and all these things will be added unto you.
- Find a place to get alone and do business with God.