

## Contentment



## Phil 4:10-13

### CONTENTMENT

What a strange subject to talk about after communion you may well think. Contentment. What does it conjure up in our minds. I did a quick picture search on Google for pictures entitled "Contentment" and here's what I got.

DOG – yes here we have the dog, feeling content after his supper and having a snooze.

CAT – here's mummy cat with kittens – in fact most pictures of contentment had pictures of happy fluffy animals.

RETIRED COUPLE - another picture of contentment was the happy retired couple – happy in their life together in sunny Felixstowe as they enjoy the seaside!

SEA – what about Christian content. Here is someone content as they pray in this seaside scene.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN – or maybe on a different slant, here we have the poor but happy person, content with their simple life.

### CONTENT=SATISFIED

Contentment is about satisfaction. In the pursuit of happiness, most people desire to live a life in which they are content with what they have, where they live, the quality of their relationships

### WHAT MAKES US CONTENT?

Let's make this a bit more personal What makes us content with our lives? What satisfies us about our lives right now? What aspects of our lives are we not content about.

We live in a society where contentment is measured in terms of the possessions we have, therefore our lives are influenced by what we have – particularly in relation to what others have. But is that a healthy way to look at contentment?

HEARST Randolph Hearst was an iconic figure in US politics as well as in business as a newspaper magnate. He became rich on it – very rich. He *invested a fortune collecting art treasures from around the world. One day Mr. Hearst read the description of a valuable art item which he sent his agent abroad to find. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasure. To the surprise of Hearst, the priceless masterpiece was stored in none other than the warehouse of William Randolph Hearst. The multi-millionaire had been searching all over the world for a treasure he already possessed. Had he read the catalogue of his treasures, he would have saved himself a lot of time and money.*

He had so much that he was not content, but in his quest to be content, he never knew that he already possessed what he wanted.

PAUL – Let's look at the words of another influential world-changer – Paul. Like Hearst, Paul was a world-changer and he was very blessed of God – here's a list of some: LIST - - *Jewish Rabbi Christian teacher and leader - pioneer missionary - miracles performed - blessed with visions.* He could have been proud and content with all that. But there was another aspect of Paul's life – a life of danger. Paul had a lot of pressure and dangerous situations to deal with. BAD LIST: - beaten, stoned – prisoner – executed. He had much in life to be discontent about – indeed he spent the last few years of life chained up between Roman guards awaiting a hearing before Caesar.

There are nothing worse in life than knock-backs. We all suffer them as Christians. Those times when we don't know what God is doing. And we start asking questions. And we grumble at God and tell Him about how displeased we are with life. Why? Because we are uncomfortable, we are out of our comfort zones,

we are not where we want to be. In fact we can spend much of our lives being discontent – financially, socially, personally, spiritually. Want more, we strive for more, think we deserve better. And grumble at God at the same time.

Let's see what Paul said as he was a prisoner, not able to go and do what he had hitherto done.

SLIDES

*I have learnt this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little.*

Wow! Wherever I am. In whatever state I am in. I am content. I know in this room that there are some who would quite happily agree with those words, but I know there are many who are discontent with life, money, houses, families, jobs and whatever that just can't echo those words at all because they are just not in that place.

Yet I believe that God wants to put in each of us the notion that in whatever situation of life we find ourselves in, to realise that it is possible to find contentment. What made the difference for Paul?

Paul was imprisoned. He couldn't do what he pleased. He did not have the contact with them or others which he liked. It's not nice being banged up – particularly as he didn't deserve to be there. He could have been miserable, he could have been fearful. But he saw God in it – and he was content in it. He was content with what he had, where he was even though it was stressful – because in seeing God in the situation enabled him to rely on God.

And it made a difference to his world. He saw his weakness as an opportunity. He used it to write. He used it to train people who visited him (he was probably under house arrest) and most of all to witness to Caesar's household. He saw God in it and used it creatively.

And that has been the experience of others down the centuries too. Take John Bunyan for example. BUNYAN His faith brought him nothing but trouble yet he penned these words:

He that is down needs fear no fall  
He that is low, no pride  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,  
Little be it or much  
And, Lord contentment still I crave  
Because Thou savest much.

Why could these men write words so bold in situations so difficult. Here's why.

How did he do that? SLIDE

*13 I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.* And we arrive at the purpose of this reflection this morning.

We often find ourselves in tough situations. Painful situations. Impossible situations. What do we do? Do we run, do we hide, do we curse God and die as Job's wife suggested? Or do we look for where God is in that situation – and look for His strength and His power to deal with it. Sometimes that is not asking for what we want – like *get me out of here!* But it's being like Paul, looking for that which was unexpected, creative, remarkable in the situation and turn a problem into an opportunity. Where's God? HE'S ONLY A PRAYER AWAY!

It seems a strange thing, but one of the things I have learnt most from problems I have faced and from helping others with theirs, is that difficult times in our lives are not there because God has walked away and hidden His face from us, but that it is those problems which will make us grow as Christians. How? By discovering that our trust can be in Christ alone and we must continue that trust wherever and whenever, despite things looking sometimes as though they are getting worse than getting better. Some of the closest people to God that I have ever met, have been those who have suffered most. Why? Because they found strength in their circumstances to make a difference in the lives of others as they trusted Jesus. But they didn't necessarily find immediate relief from them.

That's the perversity of it. God's ways aren't ours. All He wants us to do is trust Him; and what does He do? He leads us through storms! Why? Because what's awful to us is nothing to God and He wants us to walk in His grace, His strength – and when we understand that we walk in His power. It seems perverse but it works – because God's ways are not our ways and He defies our human logic every time.

What perspective does God want us to have this morning: to remember that by grace He has blessed us – not for just now, or for life but for eternity. In any journey we get tough times – but the destination makes it worth it. EPH 1 SLIDES.

Let me close with some words from Lancelot Andrews. Never heard of him? He was the guy in charge of translating the Authorised Version. He understood this need to get God's perspective when he wrote this

*Two things I have required of Thee, O Lord*

*Deny Thou me not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty or riches, feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny Thee and say, who is the Lord?*

*Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

*Let me learn to be abound; let me learn to suffer need, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Prayer

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Scripture Quotes TEV*