

Enough is Enough: Practicing Gratitude, Contentment, and Thanksgiving

Text: Philippians 4:10–20

It is that time of year when we are reminded to be thankful. (1 week till Thanksgiving) We get to spend some time pondering and refocusing our minds, hearts and emotions on what really matters.

Thanksgiving: a celebration of divine goodness; the act of giving thanks; a prayer of expressing gratitude.

Would it be safe to say that it is hard if not impossible to be thankful without gratitude?

Gratitude: the state of being grateful.

(What are you thankful for?)

Is it possible to have an attitude of thankfulness if we are struggling with contentment? Or grasping at different things seeking contentment in them.

Contentment: in a state of peaceful satisfaction. The state of being mentally or emotionally satisfied with things as they are”; satisfied. (What satisfies you? Brings you satisfaction)

Paul wrote the letter we’re looking at today, Philippians, from a Roman prison, yet in it he describes himself as being content. In **Philippians 3:4–7**, he lays out the fact that he came from a very Torah-observant family from the tribe of Benjamin and that he had gained a reputation for his zeal in persecuting the church. Paul had Roman citizenship (**Acts 22:25**). Citizenship in the Roman Empire was highly prized. Paul was well educated from the quality of the Greek he wrote and that he studied under the famous Gamaliel in Jerusalem (**Acts 22:3**). Paul was a tradesman, working as a tentmaker (**Acts 18:3**).

By the time he encounters Jesus on the Damascus Road, you could say he was living the dream. And yet, after meeting Jesus, this is what he said about his life:

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

None of the status and accomplishments in Paul’s life brought the satisfaction he later found in knowing Jesus. Enough was never enough for Paul. But when he met Christ, he considered everything else **“rubbish”** and felt there was nothing better than knowing Jesus.

Paul had lost everything, but in the process of losing, it turns out that he has, in fact, gained everything. As he puts it, **“For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”** So, there was the loss of everything his identity had been based upon—and then those things turned out to be nothing more than trash.

In the moment of what he would have previously considered tremendous loss, there is instead great gain. Paul learned that we will not be content in this life until we realize that Jesus is better than anything else we are spending our time pursuing. Enough will never be enough.

Paul had discovered that contentment comes from a trust in our spiritual realities rather than a focus on our physical circumstances.

❖ **What/where are you putting your trust? (God or man?)**

- The more we sow to the flesh the more the flesh will desire. The flesh's appetite can NEVER be satisfied, it can NEVER be quenched. It just wants more, and it will not be content.
- In **Matthew 6:25-34**, Jesus instructs that we shouldn't worry about things, God will provide. But we are to be busy seeking God's kingdom first.

❖ **What you feed the most will win.**

- The more an individual chases after, becomes consumed with the love of money, things, and trying to satisfy one self's selfish desires, the more the birth pangs will grow in frequency and intensity.

❖ **Priorities will determine the results.**

- Godliness with Contentment. What is Godliness? Godliness is "doing what is pleasing" to God.
- **Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10.**
- So often we invest our time in things we hope will turn around and give us the love we are seeking, but that love can only be found in God.

Who is in control when it comes to your life? Is it your career, your relationships, your possessions? Do you possess them, or do they possess you? How much time is spent on your spiritual growth? Compared to other things in life.

I. Contentment can only be found in God.

- Contentment: in a state of peaceful satisfaction. The state of being mentally or emotionally satisfied with things as they are"; satisfied.

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. 18 For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. Philippians 3:17-19 NLT

- **Read Philippians 4:10-13.**
- **"... I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content..." (v.11)**
- In **verse 12**, Paul states that he knows how to live with almost nothing and with everything. He goes on to say that he learned (other translations say, "**learned the secret of living in every situation**").
- Paul had discovered that **contentment is something that must be learned** – it is not something that comes naturally or automatically.
- The problem that most of us have is that we **keep looking for contentment in the wrong places.** (looking for love in all the wrong places)

- Culture and society lead us to think contentment will come if we secure the next better thing. If we get into the right crowd, have the most likes or shares, if we are trending, if we are in the right place, the right position, just the right thing, once we secure the right amount of money, once our relationships are squared away.
- Paul had learned something far different from that – he had learned to be content regardless of who he was with, what positions he held, or what possessions he had.
- Paul reported that there were times in his life and the ministry when he had more than enough, and that there were other times when he was in need and went hungry.
- But regardless of his circumstances, good or bad, he had learned that he could do all things through Christ who gave him strength – that was his secret to contentment.
- Paul had discovered that there was not a single situation he was called to face where Jesus was not with him and where Jesus was not enough. (Look at your neighbor and say, Jesus is enough!)
- And if Jesus was with him always, then the Lord gave him the strength he needed.
- Paul wrote about the **“peace of God, which surpasses ALL understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7)** because he had experienced it.
- Paul had sat in a Philippian jail cell, battered and bleeding, and yet he discovered the strength to sing praises to God even in that situation.
- People of faith can sing through tears, pain and struggle, because they walk with the One who gives them the strength to do everything that needs to be done.
- Brethren, (those of the same womb) the devil is murderer, thief and a liar, he wants to destroy you. The devil wants us to believe two lies, and these lies are sidetracking us.
 1. He wants us to believe that THINGS, PEOPLE and EXPERIENCES will make you happy.
 2. He wants us to believe that all we need is found within OURSELVES.
- Paul had discovered that he was **not self-sufficient, but that he could be Christ-sufficient.**
- Paul learned that no matter what might be ahead, Jesus Christ was sufficient to carry him through it. The powers that be can take everything away from a person, but they cannot take away a person’s faith in the unfailing power of God.
- Listen, we will never find God’s joy and peace in things or ourselves. When we try, we just continue to feed the machine, self.

II. Contentment can only be experienced by trusting (fully) God’s promise.

- **Read Philippians 4:14-20.**
- God will meet all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.
- It is important that we understand that God doesn’t promise to meet our “greed’s,” and there is a big difference between our “greed’s” which are our “wants”, and our “needs.”
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us not to worry about food and clothes, because God knows that we need them. **(Mt. 6:28-32)**
- Then Jesus concluded, **“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt. 6:33)**

- Side bar: could our discontent, lack of joy, peace, and attitude be **connected to whether we are seeking FIRST HIS KINGDOM?**
- How God will meet our needs is varied, but however God does it, whether through our work, or from the gifts of others, it ultimately comes through and from God.
- Someone has said, “God gives every bird its food, but He doesn’t throw the food in the nest.”
- When the Lord gave him much, Paul was content, and when the Lord gave him little, Paul was content as well.
- Paul’s attitude could be summed up in this quote: **“I am always content with what happens; for I know what God chooses is better than what I choose.”**
- I’m wondering if any of us share that attitude? It is not an easy one, but it is the right one.
- Can we receive the Lord’s provision, whatever it is, and be content with the Lord and His provision?
- That is the secret to contentment – trusting that the Lord will give what I need and being satisfied with what He gives.

But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 ESV

- We enter life with nothing, and we exit life with nothing!
- If our simple needs are met – food, clothing, shelter - then we must be content.
- The greatest gain is not getting everything a person could imagine. **No, the greatest gain is godliness (a spiritual relationship with God, doing what is pleasing to God) and contentment (being thankful and satisfied with who I am and what I have).**

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me? Hebrews 13:5-6 ESV

Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have. Mankind tends to run to everything but God to try and bring contentment in their lives

Application

Let me briefly share a few practical suggestions for becoming a more contented/grateful and thankful person.

1. Avoid comparison.

- Comparing yourself to others always leads to discontent. There will always be people that make more money than you, who have greater opportunities than you have, who have fewer problems. So what? That has no bearing at all on your own personal godliness (doing what is pleasing to God in your life).

2. Love people the way they are and not as you would like them to be.

- We must love people as they are because trying to change them will only make everyone miserable. The only way any of us is going to change and grow is if we are loved, accepted and appreciated, even in our imperfect state, because we will not be reaching a perfect state in this world.

3. Accept and adjust to change.

- There are many things that we can't change, and we must learn to accept them. Wishing that something was different and refusing to be at peace with the way things are only makes us discontented.
- Life is full of ups and downs- Emotionally, physically, mentally, and financially. There's nothing certain in life except change. **Change is certain.**
- Paul says that one of the secrets of learning to be content in life is the ability to adjust to all kinds of circumstances and change. Paul says you need to learn to adjust to it. **Your contentment, thanksgiving and gratitude in life will be largely dependent upon your ability to adapt, adjust, and be flexible. Change is going to happen whether you like it or not.**
- The key to adjusting is a sense of humor. The people who are the most emotionally balanced and stable in life are those who have developed a keen sense of humor- The ability to laugh at themselves, their own problems and the difficulties.

4. Trust God to meet your needs.

- This is the secret of satisfaction in life. The real reason that people are unhappy, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled is because Jesus Christ is not the center of their lives. They are looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. They run from this to that- Looking for something that is going to satisfy them.
- From relationship to relationship, from job to job, from hobby to sports to recreation- Fads, therapy, books, seminars- Looking for the key. But God has laid it out very clearly.
- Trust in Him!

Conclusion

Contentment comes from trusting in the spiritual resources of God, rather than focusing on the physical circumstances of life.

Regardless of the physical circumstances we face, we have the power of God and the promises of God, and they give us great contentment, joy and peace.

As we focus more on the spiritual and less on our desire for physical, then we will be more content with what we have, and we will have more to share and to give, which will lead to even more contentment, satisfaction and joy for the journey.

If you don't have Jesus as the Lord of your life, there can be no real contentment. Until you surrender to Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are at odds with God. But you don't have to be.