

## **“CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST”**

Philippians 4:10-23

### **INTRO:**

- Wrapping up our series...today “Contentment in Christ”
- I think that the pandemic has exposed us a little in regards to what we are comfortable with - our level of contentment. Think about that for a minute....what has bothered you the most? The loss of freedom, the burden of restrictions....or is it a discontentment of not having what we usually have - a level of normalcy. Our priorities have been exposed if we are honest....too early for deep thoughts??? Not being able to go out eat, workout at a gym, travel (“nobody is going to stop me from doing those things” attitude)???
- As we venture out into our text today....let me ask you this 1 question to think about; **what is the requirement for your contentment? Would you be content if you were never able to “go out to eat, workout at a gym or travel”...ever again?**

### **MAIN: (stand)**

“**10** I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. **11 I don’t say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12 I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. 14** Still, you did well by partnering with me in my hardship.

**15** And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. **18** But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. **19** And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The Philippians had sent a gift (money) to Paul while he was in prison. Paul is rejoicing in their generosity. This wasn't the first time; "**15** And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times."

Paul says here that; "I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. **19** And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Paul gives the example of how to receive a gift well. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly..." "I am fully supplied..." Thanks - I'm good!

**BUT the truth is...he was good either way!**

**"I don't say this ("I rejoice greatly...") out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12 I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Still, you did well by partnering with me in my hardship." (does he show a good example???)**

He didn't need the gift but thanks anyway! Paul is not belittling their gift or their sacrifice - he is teaching what is of utmost importance in the context that they are living in. He's "good" whether they sent him money or not - **"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12 I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot."**

**"In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me."** ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me")

**Learned** to be content; intellectually and experientially? I don't think that Paul is saying that this learning process happened over time - like contentment in any circumstance took a while for him to "get". Remember where Paul lived; wealth, notoriety, fame, power. **Acts 9:7-30**

He learned right away the most important lesson in being content in any circumstance - what he calls the "secret of being content" in ALL situations, as Paul mentions, is knowing that **he "is able to do all things through Christ" who gives him strength.**

"All things" refers to what? I can't do "all things" (ART!) - I'm not supposed to! Neither can you. This does not take away from the fact that Jesus can and still does perform miracles. But this verse, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me" - pertains to what Paul just said....being content in any circumstance.

**Paul is saying...the secret of living in life's difficulties is simple: trusting God in such a way that one can confidently say, I can do all things through him who will give me the strength I need....in any circumstance.**

Life will have difficult seasons...and those seasons are hard but in and amongst those difficult circumstances what also is difficult is being content.

RIGHT? Losing a job, not finding a job is difficult. Being content when you lose a job...is difficult as well. RIGHT?

Notice the context of what I'm saying....we often struggle to be "content" when we have nothing. Going without, being hungry, when we have little, in those circumstances or seasons of life (or maybe that is life) finding contentment is a struggle in and of itself, isn't it???

**The poverty line in Ontario for 2021, for a family of 5 = \$56,000. Middle class is anywhere from \$56,000-\$120,000. Upper class then is anything above that mark.**

Take these numbers for what they are, educated averages....but very telling. So if you are making \$50,000 a year in Ontario (as a family)...you are barely getting by. Living paycheck to paycheck. Paul says that he has learned to be content in that circumstance. If I have that little "I'm content - I'm good".

BUT Paul is the same way when he has a lot - he's good. The greater challenge may be to live in contentment when we have an abundance.

**Where is our flesh most comfortable???**

I remember a long time ago having a conversation with a woman in a church we were at. She had been a single mom who had nothing - said that her and her daughter lived in a tiny 1 bedroom apartment. They lived on Kraft Mac & Cheese. When we had this conversation she now had a great job working with the Niagara Region Public Health. She got remarried to a great guy who had a great job making good money. And so I asked her if she remembered what it felt like to live with "nothing". She said "not exactly...but I know I never want to go back there."

**Paul learned to be "rich" and not get comfortable and sell out to wealth.**

He's eaten at Lydia's summer home in Philippi. He has had her chef make the

greatest steak ever and then the next day cast out demons and get beaten and put in jail and have nothing.

**And he's learned to be rich and not get comfortable and sell out to wealth and he learned to be poor and not despair.** HOW? "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". Christ is always first! To be all that I'm called to be. "I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus." Money won't change that. The lack of money won't change that.

This causes me to wonder...**How much do circumstances matter to our contentment?** How much do they play a role in our joy or misery? To live is Christ...to die is gain. Contentment is reflective of what you desire.

"7 Two things I ask of you; don't deny them to me before I die: 8 (first) Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. (second) Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need. 9 Otherwise, I might have too much and deny you, saying, "Who is the Lord?" or I might have nothing and steal, profaning the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:7-9) **Agur is ASKING to live paycheck to paycheck.**

"17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though the flocks disappear from the pen and there are no herds in the stalls, 18 yet I will celebrate in the Lord; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation! 19 The Lord my Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like those of a deer and enables me to walk on mountain heights!" (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

The source and power of Paul's contentment was far different than any other source. That is because Christians rely not on themselves but on Christ in order to face life's greatest joys and deepest sorrows.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” is an expression and a proclamation that Christ is enough. No matter what happens to us, we are in Christ, and that is enough. If we are wealthy and prospering, we are in Christ. If we are poor and suffering, we are still in Christ. Ultimately, both economic statuses are of little consequence. **What matters most is that we are in Jesus, for He alone can strengthen us to resist the temptations that uniquely attend wealth as well as those that uniquely attend poverty.**

John MacArthur writes, “Because believers are in Christ (Gal. 2:20), he infuses them with His strength to sustain them” (The MacArthur Bible Commentary, p. 1726). Our peace in times of joy and struggle is not based on our ability to calmly face life, or to learn breathing techniques, or some other coping mechanism - **but on the fact that we belong to Christ, that He never lets us go, and that He is faithful to give us the grace to live for Him no matter our circumstances.**

Here’s what I would say about “our requirement for contentment”; it can’t be in the “materials things” of this world - they are but things of future garage sales and garbage dumps. **Our pursuit then is not to be content...but rather to live out of a discontentment. Don’t pursue contentment but be driven by discontentment.**

“And I pray this: that your love will **keep on growing** in knowledge and every kind of discernment...” (1:9) Don’t be content in loving enough....but grow in loving others. LOVE MORE! Husbands/wives/parents/friends/neighbours.

“Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly.” Don’t be content in just talking about Jesus...speak the word FEARLESSLY!

Don't be content to look to your own interests BUT "but rather to the interests of others."

Don't be content to coast through life....but press on, reach further, make every effort, strive "to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings"

"to live is Christ and to die is gain" - Don't be content to just live....but live for Christ; that he would be highly honoured by your life. We should be driven by a holy discontentment; to love more, trust more, to give more!

Do not be content to leave any conviction unresolved...If you are convicted at what was revealed in answering the question "what is my requirement for contentment?" Repent of our desire for worldly things.

Or being convicted that I'm not living for Christ...Or being convicted that I don't know Him at all?! Do not be content to leave that unresolved.

But rather, **7 "Ask**, and it will be given to you. **Seek**, and you will find. **Knock**, and the door will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

### **CONCLUSION:**

Christian....you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Whatever circumstance comes your way whether high or low, having everything or nothing, more or little - Christ will give you the strength to be all that he has called you to be and all he has called you to do. Whether you are

quite comfortable in life OR you are looking despair in the eye - Christ will give you the strength to keep going with peace and joy....because you are His!

Let's pray.

**“20** Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. **21** Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you greetings. **22** All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”