

MESSAGE TITLE: The Secret to Contentment

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:10-13

KEY TRUTH

Paul shares that he has discovered the secret to being content regardless of whether his circumstances are abundant or lacking. This type of contentment is only possible through the gospel work of Jesus in us.

GETTING STARTED

Think about the last Thank You note you received. How did it make you feel to receive it? We all appreciate receiving thank you notes for presents we gave or for something we did for another person. Thank you notes acknowledge another person's gift of time and attention. Paul's letter to the Philippians is a Thank You note in which he expresses his gratitude for their financial support. In Philippians 4:10-13, Paul expresses his heart felt appreciation for how the Philippian church had remembered him. He also expresses a deep truth about being content in all circumstances: Jesus alone gives us the strength to resist jealousy and to embrace contentment. This passage encourages believers to experience Spirit-led thanksgiving overflowing from a satisfied heart.

OBSERVATION

The Philippian church sent gifts to Paul by way of one of their members, Epaphroditus. How did Paul show his appreciation for their gifts?

What did Paul say kept the church at Philippi from helping him earlier than now?

The word 'learned' here implies that Paul had been taught a lesson that resulted in greater knowledge or experience. In which situations had Paul learned to be content? Was his contentment based on his circumstances?

Paul reported experiencing varying degrees of financial wellbeing, from having nothing to having more than enough. What does he say is the secret of his contentment?

How does Paul's view of contentment compare with the modern world's view of contentment?

APPLICATION

Paul took time to thank the Philippian church for the gifts they sent to him. Who has gifted you recently with their time, talent or treasure? Take some time today to write them a hand-written thank you note to show appreciation.

The word content (autarkes) means 'self-sufficient'. The Stoics used this word to convey a sense of self-reliance and fortitude. Paul referred to contentment in terms of confidence in the sufficiency of Christ, not himself or his circumstances. If possible,

share with others in your group a time in your life when Jesus taught you to be content in less than ideal circumstances. What happened? How did you learn contentment?

A major principle of accurate Bible interpretation is summed up in the phrase 'context is king'. Read Philippians 4:13. What's the context of this verse? Read the previous 3 verses. What does verse 13 mean in its proper context? How might people take this verse out of context to express a belief or idea that does not reflect what Paul meant? How can this one verse transform the way you think about your less than ideal circumstances?

Read the Toddler's Rules of Ownership below:

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it is mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours.
11. If it's broken, but you are having fun playing with the pieces, it's mine again.
12. If there is ANY doubt, it's mine.

As humorous or frustrating as these rules are, consider how quickly toddlers lose their sense of contentment when they see another child playing with a toy they want. How about adults? How often or quickly do you lose peaceful contentment when you see someone else enjoying the latest 'toy' that you don't have? Only Jesus can satisfy our souls with divine contentment that lasts!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, please teach me the secret of contentment! It's so easy to compare what I have to those who have more and end up feeling cheated. It's so easy to utter the words, "It's not fair!" when life rubs me the wrong way. So please help me draw on your strength, as Paul did, to depend on your provision in your timing. Teach my soul to confidently say, "It is well with my soul" in all circumstances.

SHARE POINT

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARY NOTES

4:10-11 Paul is grateful for the Philippians' support, but he wants them to know that even in difficult circumstances, he has learned the secret of being content.

4:12-13 The secret of living amid life's difficulties is simple: trusting God in such a way that one can say, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. This does not mean that God will bless whatever a person does; it must be read within the context of the letter, with its emphasis on obedience to God and service to others.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Holman Christian Standard Study Bible