

Learning to be Content

Philippians 4:10-12

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul returns to the purpose of the letter. This letter is to thank them for the support they have sent at the hands of Epaphroditus. The church at Philippi had often supported Paul in the early part of his ministry. But for some reason, probably because they had lost track of him, they had not recently given him anything.

But the general gist of the letter is that once they found out that Paul was in prison in Rome they sent a collection for him right away.

Now Paul wants to thank them properly. But he doesn't want to sound like he wanted them to send more.

Paul wanted them to know that he had endured many things during his ministry. But Paul was not a complainer. He had endured tremendous want and need in his life. But he never saw it that way.

He always saw all that he had as God's provision. He knew that God was supplying all that he needed, not all that he desired.

- I. A Old Testament example of discontent.
 - A. The children of Israel had been enslaved for hundreds of years.
 - 1. They had first went down to Egypt because of a famine in the days of Joseph, Israel's second youngest son.
 - 2. They had been given the best of the land.
 - 3. They had flourished and multiplied greatly.
 - 4. So much so that the Egyptians became afraid of them.
 - B. Another Pharaoh arose who did not knew not Joseph.
 - 1. The Egyptians began to afflict the Israelites and put them to work in the great building projects of Egypt.
 - 2. They further afflicted them through infanticide, or really late term abortion.
 - C. But God sends a deliverer, Moses.
 - 1. He leads them out of slavery after God works some tremendous miracles that literally destroyed Egypt financially and religiously.
 - 2. But the Israelites started complaining as soon as they were away from

Egypt.

3. They forgot that God had saved them and especially their children from slavery and death.
 4. When God provided manna every day, just for the picking up, they complained about the food.
 5. All they could think about was their gardens in Egypt with their melons, leeks and other things.
- D. After a little over a year in the wilderness they rebelled completely against Moses and God.
1. They elected someone to take them back to Egypt.
 2. They could not conquer the land because it would be too hard.
 3. So God led them in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation was dead and He could work with a new generation.
 4. They became a people who could not remember the blessings of God for their present situation.
 5. Their present situation was not bad, it just wasn't ideal.

II. Now a New Testament example

- A. The apostle Paul was rich and well respected.
1. He was educated in the best school by the best person.
 2. He had become a very important person among his people.
 3. Wealth and fame were on the way.
 4. The only problem was that Paul was lost and on his way to an eternal hell.
 5. The only problem was that Paul was a slave to his sinful nature.
- B. But one day God intervened in Paul's life and set him free.
1. When it tells of scales falling from Paul's eyes, it was very true.
 2. Paul's eyes were open for the first time.
 3. He could see what a sinner he was and how much he needed a Savior.
- C. God calls Paul to a life of suffering.
1. Ac 9:16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."
 2. And suffer he did.

3. 2 Cor 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness — 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

D. Yet Paul says here that in all of that he was content.

1. How had the apostle learned such a lesson? Simply in this way: he was confident that he was in the will of God. He knew that wherever he was, or in whatever circumstances he found himself, he was there by divine appointment. If he was hungry, it was because God wanted him to be hungry. If he was full, it was because his Lord had so planned it. Busily and faithfully engaged in the service of his King, he could say, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” *MacDonald, W. (1995). Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (Php 4:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

III. Being content does not mean having enough.

- A. For then the rich would be content.
- B. Yet they are the least content in our society.

IV. Being content means understanding who God is and how He is the one who supplies all that we have.

- A. Php 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
- B. 1Ti 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

V. Being content means we understand what is important in this life, and being thankful.

Philippians 1:3–5 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

“It is a blessed secret when the believer learns how to carry a high head with an empty stomach, an upright look with an empty pocket, a happy heart with an unpaid salary, joy in God when men are faithless” (Selected). *MacDonald, W. (1995). Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (Php 4:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.*

The danger is that with poverty one becomes discouraged with God and with wealth one becomes self-sufficient apart from God. *Utley, R. J. (1997). Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison (Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians) (Vol. Volume 8, p. 204). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.*