



CrossRoads Notes:

Title: Learning Contentment

Theme: Secrets to Doing in Christ

Series: Full Measure of Thanksgiving

Philippians 4:12-13, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

Introduction: *The Book of Ecclesiastes was written by a king whose name is associated with the word "peace."* Solomon was famous for his wisdom. He ruled in a city which attracted the wealth of surrounding nations and during his oversight the people of God saw the construction of the temple. (Whose Who in the Bible)

Please understand that the whole of Scripture is not against the desire to acquire good things, The problem is what the Bible calls "coveting" which is the uncontrolled desire to acquire what your neighbor has. Today this sin is often referred to as "materialism."

Proposition: *I would propose to you that advertisers have spent billions knowing mankind's bondage to covetousness.*

Interrogative Sentence: *Just what are four Biblical truths that will enable you to enjoy the contentment the Apostle Paul knew?*

Transitional Sentence: *The first step to learning contentment is grasping the ability to do everything in Christ's name.* This always begins by agreeing with God on the major problems that arise through coveting. 2 Timothy 3:2 says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy..." Holy Spirit illuminated Christians make a point to grasp the problems which arise from a coveting heart.

Covetousness has always been a very serious menace to mankind. It was one of the first sins that broke out after Israel had entered the Promise Land. (Achan, Joshua 7) It is found in the early Christian Church as well. (Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5) Thus there are many warnings against this life controlling sin. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) This sin is so powerful and abundant in the heart of mankind, it is addressed in the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:17, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

"Covet" (*hamad*) means to take pleasure in, to desire passionately. This sin causes people to desire that which is destructive. (The Complete Word Study of the Old Testament) "Covetous" (*philarguros*) meaning people will want more and more, bigger and bigger, better and better and they will seldom be satisfied with what they have. (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament)

Jesus said this sin comes from the spiritual heart. (Mark7:22-23) The Bible says it engrosses the heart. (Ezekiel 33:31; 2 Peter 2:14) This sin is idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5) and it is not to be seen in the lives of Christians or preachers of the Word of God. (Ephesians 5:3; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 3:3) Covetousness leads to injustice and oppression; (Proverbs 28:20) foolishness and hurtful lust; (1 Timothy 6:9) departure from the faith; (1 Timothy 6:10) intrigues people to lie; (2 Kings 5:22-25) commit murder; (Ezekiel 22:12) theft and domestic affliction. (Proverbs 15:7) Christians are to avoid those who are guilty of coveting and even pray against it, not wanting it within their own hearts. (1 Corinthians 5:11; Psalm 119:36) (New Topical Textbook)

Transitional Sentence: *Before a Christian can learn true contentment, he must first have a fear of covetousness, thus seeking Christ to cleanse and strengthen him.* The next step to learning contentment is to be grateful. Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 says, “Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him--for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.”

Today many Christians are involved in what can be referred to as huge building projects that have no value of which a modern day Solomon would cite as being only frustration. (The Expositors Bible Commentary) Although the highwayman traditionally demanded, “Your money or your life,” the teacher of this passage of Scripture says we can have money, pleasure, and life in Christ.

When mankind works in his own strength for his own satisfaction he lays up for himself earthly and spiritual misery. This is what causes lethargy in approaching our work, family, life in general and especially the work of the Lord. An un-Biblical approach to whatever mankind chooses to do sooner or later births forth an inward bitterness.

Transitional Sentence: *When gratefulness occupies the spiritual heart it opens the door to finding contentment in generosity.* 1 Timothy 6:17-18 says, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”

In 1 Timothy the Holy Spirit is giving a “command” or rather a “charge” (paragello) meaning an order that is expected to be followed. (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament; Vines Amplified Expository Dictionary; The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible) In America, for the most part, Christians have much to rejoice about, especially as they consider the condition that most people live in around the world.

It is God who enables you to have and fully enjoy a good education. It is God who has given mankind his abilities, talents, and opportunities. It has often been said, “God is

not impressed with your talent, abilities or achievements, because it is He who has given them to you. His concern is how you use them." Therefore, do not view your successes from a world view, but from God's view.

The great communitarian Matthew Henry caught the heart of having trust in God when he wrote, "The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit." (3000 Quotations from the writings of Matthew Henry)

Keeping our hearts set on God we can then obey the next command, "...do good, be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share:" Remember, this is a truth that is expected to be obeyed.

Christians who are learning contentment have chosen to follow Christ, who gave Himself for us. They want to obey God, who sacrificed His Son, thus they give honestly, realistically and sacrificially. They do not overlook the truth that literally there are people who are hurting, even dying from hunger, disease, and lack of fresh water.

Financially, we must to meet the needs of people and spiritually we must exercise our Spiritual Gifts sacrificially to edify the Body of Christ and reach lost souls for Christ if we wish to have contentment. The heart of what Paul is writing is very practical and should be put in practice without hesitation.

D.L. Moody was a very practical man. Once when a group of Christian businessmen met for prayer, Mr. Moody over heard them praying for a special need of \$1,500.00 for a church that had a heart after God. All the men had an average income, some much more than average.

D.L. Moody walked in and interrupted the prayer meeting and said, "Men, stop asking God for the money. All of you can easily write a check for this amount right now. Write the check and begin praising God." (Knights Treasury of Illustration) The secret to contentment is not hoarding our riches, but being led of the Lord to use them as He directs, immediately.

Transitional Sentence: *Contentment is found in the heart of those who are Biblically generous and found in those who set their spiritual hope on eternal things.* 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

The Apostle Paul paid the cost of preaching the gospel and teaching God's word. (2 Corinthians 1:8) He suffered physical afflictions (2 Corinthians 12:7) and persecution. (2 Corinthians 6:3-10) He knew disappointment in trusting people in ministry (Acts 15:38) and in being betrayed by those who hated his work with the Lord. (2 Timothy 4:14-15)

Therefore, he was given truths that would keep us from becoming discouraged in spite of overwhelming odds.

The first truth is that all through life because of original sin the human body fades in strength. (Matthew Henry Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary; The New Bible Commentary; The Bible Exposition Commentary) This physical body is going to be changed. No longer afflicted and subjected to weariness, we will be able to serve the Lord without disablements.

Paul gives us another truth to help us keep our hearts set on eternity and off of the present, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Paul also said the child of God can have a renewing every day.

The Holy Spirit of God supernaturally renews those who are literally "fixed" (*scope*) on the goal, the eternal promises of God which can be enjoyed here and fully enjoyed when we get to heaven. "Fixed" (*scope*) means to keep your attention on a set goal until its completion. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible) It means to contemplate and to give attention to how you are going to stay steadfast. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament) It means you should be concerned about and keep thinking about your eternal reward in such a way that it breeds anticipation and excitement expressed in a life of surety. (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament; Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains; The Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament; Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains)

Charles Spurgeon said, "There are no crown bearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers on earth. You have a cross, shoulder it manfully. It is Christ's Cross and it is an honor to have it."

Doing service unto the Lord in a worldview or with unrealistic expectations leads to discontentment. Fixing our spiritual hearts on the eternal goal set before us, enables us to enjoy contentment.

In Closing: *The whole of Scripture lays down truths and principles to learning contentment as the Apostle Paul did.* It begins with having a reverent fear of a covetous heart, being grateful, becoming generous in practical ways, exercising spiritual gifts and fixing your spiritual heart on eternal things.