

## **“I Have Learned To Be Content” (Phil 4.10-20)**

### I. Introduction. (Phil 1.3-7)

#### A. Paul's long-standing relationship with Philippi...

1. His establishment of the church there. (cf. Ac 16)
2. From that time forward, their fellowship in the Gospel. (v 5)
3. A fellowship which continued “until now” (v 5), even in the midst of Paul's imprisonment. (cf. v 7; 2.25; 4.10-18)

#### B. Paul had received their gift with joy... (4.10)

1. Not a selfish joy, rather “in the Lord.” (v 10a; cf. v 11a, v 17a)
2. Paul rejoiced and was grateful, but not for any carnal or selfish reasons (v 14-18), rather because...
  - a) In their kindness, they had “done well...” (v 14)
  - b) More any other congregation, they had been consistent in their fellowship with him. (v 15-16)
  - c) Their gift was to their spiritual credit. (v 17b)
  - d) Yes, Paul was “amply supplied;” but more than that, God had been glorified. (v 18)

#### C. Paul commended them, but not to solicit additional help. (v 11a)

1. His earlier need had been “amply supplied.” (v 18)
2. But there was more to Paul's statement in verse 11. The real reason...

#### D. “For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” (v 11b)

1. Understanding what Paul said of himself...
  - a) Learned, i.e. by experience and through circumstances.
  - b) Contentment, i.e. a quieted and settled disposition independent of every desire or wish being satisfied.
  - c) Not a natural (innate or learned) human disposition!
2. The irony of Paul situation...

- a) He had been accused falsely and treated unjustly...
- b) Even as he wrote this letter, he was wrongly imprisoned; yet he was content?
- c) What had Paul learned about being content?
- d) Paul had learned that...

II. Real contentment doesn't depend upon...

A. External circumstances. (v 11b,12a)

- 1. To be brought low. (cf. 2.8)
  - a) Paul certainly experienced such. (cf. 2Cor 11.23-28)
  - b) Yet in him there is no doubt, fear, vindictiveness, bitterness, anger, etc.
- 2. To abound.
  - a) At times he enjoyed such. (cf. Ac 16.14-40; 17.11, 22; 19.1-10; etc.)
  - b) Yet in him there is no arrogance, self-righteousness, boasting, etc.
- 3. *ill.* — a father's favorite food: "anything we haven't got."
- 4. But circumstances should never dictate our disposition...
  - a) There are times when we are "brought low" — sickness, heartache, adversity, persecution, etc.
  - b) There are times when we "abound" — health, joy, success, etc.
  - c) Real contentment transcends such external circumstances.

B. Material resources. (v 12b)

- 1. To be filled and have abundance. (v 18a)
- 2. To go hungry and suffer need. (cf. 1Cor 4.11-13)
- 3. "Having" is not the answer for us either.
- 4. It has been said that "The secret to gratefulness is making the most of what you have; the secret to contentment is making the least of what you lack."
- 5. This is exactly what Paul taught... (1Tim 6.6-11; cf. v 17, "the uncertainty of riches")

6. David Tant: “Some years ago while teaching in Jamaica, I met Sandra Green and her six children. She had five, and had taken in a 12-year-old girl whose mother had died, and her father didn’t want her. She brought them to our Bible classes, and I asked if my wife and I could visit her. We went to her home and I was shocked to see her extreme poverty. They lived in a one room shack that was constructed of scraps—tin, wood, printing press plates, etc. She had no utilities, and the furniture was two beds. Sandra invited us in, and then I saw a poster she had made and put on the wall. ‘Thank You Lord. My needs are met and healing is mine. Hallelujah. Thank You Jesus.’ [corrected per picture]”
7. Instead we’re often trying to get rich quick, appear wealthier than we are, anxious about what we don’t have, and envious of those who have what we want...
8. But real contentment transcends material resources or the lack thereof.

C. Other people.

1. Paul was certainly glad to have others’ help... (cf. v 10a)
2. But others were not always there for him. (v 10b; cf. Ac 13.13; 2Tim 4.10,16)
3. Neither can we depend upon others. (cf. Paul's experiences and our own)
4. Real contentment transcends our relationships with other people.

D. Despite all of this, Paul said, “I have learned to be content...”

E. Upon what, or upon Whom, does real contentment depend?

III. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (v 13)

A. Paul could “do all things...”

1. Face and deal with every circumstance... (cf. v 11b,12)
2. However advantageous or adversarial, it did not matter.

B. By the strengthening of the Lord. (cf. “the secret,” v 12)

1. Paul’s aforementioned focus. (1.21; 3.8,14; cf. 2Tim 1.12)
2. Here in 4.13 he reaffirms that trust, but not in himself.
  - a) Trusting the Lord’s provisions...

(1) Materially. (v 18; cf. Mt 6.19-34; 2Cor 9.8)

(2) Spiritually. (Eph 1.3ff; 3.20)

b) Trusting the Lord's peace...

(1) From walking with Him. (4.4-9)

(2) From Him walking with us. (Heb 13.5-6)

c) Trusting the Lord's power...

(1) To lead us in success/victory. (2Cor 2.14)

(2) To overcome our weaknesses. (2Cor 12.7-10; 2Tim 4.17)

3. And this One in Whom Paul put his trust is worthy of our trust too...

IV. "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (v 19)

A. Paul's God had proven His abilities and willingness to supply provisions, peace, and power.

B. That same God is able and willing to supply us.

1. He has an infinite storehouse of "glorious riches" from which to share...

2. And He will share in proportion to that abundance.

C. All these blessings available and accessible "in Christ Jesus."

D. And when we consider the enormity of this assurance, we will respond like Paul... (v 20)

V. Conclusion.

A. Real contentment transcends...

B. Real contentment yields a quiet and settled confidence, despite sometimes unsettling circumstances.

C. It was that contentment which Paul learned through experience and which he enjoyed in Christ.

D. It is that contentment which we can learn through the apostle Paul and which we too can enjoy in Christ.

E. But we must be found in Him... (Gal 3.26-27)