

#33 “The Secret to Contentment”

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Contentment is a tough thing to learn, but our God is able to teach us. Even Paul spoke of having to learn to be content, as if it was a struggle for him. He says in Philippians 4:11-13,

“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

Paul had spent much time in desperate need, and at this time, he informed the Philippians that he had an abundance, thanks to faithful giving on the part of the church. Though he was grateful for their gifts, he did not put his ultimate confidence in material possessions, provisions, or even people. There will be times in life when we may have little, and there may be times when we have more than we need. Contentment, like joy, peace, and other gracious provisions of God, is not dependent upon circumstances. When things go well, we must remember that what God gives, He can also take away. Thus, we are to bless the name of the Lord for being God and the source of blessing, not exchanging our confidence in God for material possessions or even God’s good gifts themselves (Job 1:21). When things go poorly, we must remember that God is still faithful and on the throne. Thus, whether in times of abundance or in times of lack, our confidence, hope, and trust must be anchored in Christ.

Paul’s secret to contentment was that he found his hope, his confidence, and his sufficiency in Christ alone Who would give him strength to do His will (v. 13). The process of learning to be content is a process of coming to believe that, ultimately, God is in control, and we are not. *Contentment rests in the sufficiency of Christ and His Word.* Unless we understand our dependence upon God, believe it, embrace it, and rejoice in it, contentment will elude us. Contentment finds its strength, confidence, and hope in the sufficiency of Christ, in the promises of God, in the unchanging character of God, and in the complete adequacy of the Word of God. When we have all of these things, what more do we need? What can the world provide us that would make us exchange what we have and put our confidence in something else? In Christ we have all of the sufficiency and strength that we need to do His will.

Contentment rests in the good and sovereign purposes of God. If we have a view of God as all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign, good, and perfectly and impartially loving, then there is no reason not to be content in what He ordains, allows, orchestrates, and provides. As Joseph said to his brothers who had done him great evil, “As for you, you

meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). Because of God’s promises, character, and Word, we can always have confidence that all that we experience is meant to work some ultimate good in us and perhaps for many others as well. Indeed, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). No experience, whether good or bad, is purposeless. We are called for God’s purposes, and we can trust that God will use all events to work good for those who love God. Christ’s cross, the most unfair and brutal thing ever endured on this earth, worked for the greatest good of all time in providing salvation to those who believe. God had a purpose in this, and He has a purpose in our lives also. Knowing this, wherever we are, we can be content as we acknowledge Him and put our trust in Him (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Finally, *contentment rests in God’s boundless love*. Paul says in Ephesians 3:17-19, “[That you] being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” Whether we are in a prison cell or in a palace, we can be content if we know, believe, and trust in God’s love. Whether we are in a loving family or a family mired in sin, we can be content knowing that God loves us. Whether we are the most gifted person in the world or partially or totally disabled, we can be content if we rest in the love of God. God’s love is to fill us up such that our cup overflows (Psalm 23:5). His love is always available and abundant, and therein we can find contentment.

If we find ourselves panicking or doubting when we have needs, perhaps even using sinful measures to try to meet them, we need to learn contentment. If we find ourselves becoming self-sufficient and prideful when we have more than we need, we need to learn contentment. If we have just what we need, we need to acknowledge God’s provision and thank Him. No matter our situation, contentment is worth learning, so may God in His great grace teach it to us.