

# Contentment

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 18 August 2024

Preacher: Robin Silson

[ 0 : 00 ] This morning, and you'll notice it came up in the passage when we were reading it, by the way it would be great if you just want to keep a thumb open in that page 118 once we're going through in the passage. But this morning you'll notice the word that came up a few times that we'll be thinking about is the issue of contentment.

The issue of contentment. In many ways it's actually connected to something that we looked at last week when we talked about peace. Peace and contentment, you hear those two words go together, they go hand in hand don't they?

Just like we all want peace, which we spoke about, we all want to be content. We all want to be content. And yet, the world talks a lot about peace.

But what we realise with the world is that the world doesn't actually want you to be content. You see, the world knows that making people feel discontent is actually how it keeps going round. Because it's actually the way that people make a lot of money. It's by constantly making you feel discontent. Let me explain. You look at how advertising works. Years ago when advertising the big way started, products were sold because of what they did.

[ 1 : 17 ] Because of how good a product was, what it did, that was what I sold. They plastered it on a billboard and you bought it because it told you this, you need this. And it was pretty straightforward.

Now adverts don't tell you what they do. They tell you what they do but also they try to sell you the lifestyle that you'll get if you buy the product. This is what you'll be like and what people will think of you if you drive this new car.

As if you see the advert of a BMW driving down the mountains of Austria. This is the kind of holidays you'll have if you buy this car. This is what you'll be like if you buy your weekly shop at X supermarket.

This is what you'll be like if you wear the trainers. You might just be a little bit like the certain famous person that advertises them. This is the kind of mum you'll be if you shop at John Lewis.

You can subtly be just like the family that uses Oxo gravy or buys their Christmas meal from M&S.;

[ 2 : 21 ] Social media is at it as well. We see what we, the thing with social media it was created to keep people in touch but now what it is is we see what other people post about their lives and feel discontent because everyone seems to be doing the stuff that we would really like to do.

And nobody presents the problems and the circumstances and the issues that they're having with their lives and we all feel the same. We're discontent and the world knows it and uses it to make money.

What it really causes us to think is that the answer to getting rid of the discontent is that what we really need is to change some circumstance in our lives.

And I just want to say that one of the things that I hope that you go away from this morning is that contentment that is based on a change to your circumstances that you will think will make you happier is like building your life on quicksand.

If you think it's about a change in your life on quicksand. If you think it's about a change in circumstances. You see true contentment, true contentment is this. Contentment is having a satisfied mind in any situation.

[ 3 : 45 ] That is what contentment is, having a satisfied mind in any situation. It cannot be connected to your circumstances. From a spiritual vantage point, this is what it is in biblically.

It is consciously enjoying the fact that God is good, even when your circumstances are wrong.

There is a classic book written like 300 or 400 years ago by a guy who wrote a whole book all about contentment.

And there is a, he said it better than I ever could so I am just going to read what he wrote. He said Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every situation.

You see, we believe the lie that contentment comes through a change in circumstances. And what we're going to, that's what we're going to see through Paul is that it doesn't, it doesn't come through circumstances.

This is, as I mentioned before we started, this is the last section that we're looking at Paul's letter to the Philippian church. One of Paul's main names in writing to the church in Philippi is that they live in a manner worthy of the gospel.

[ 5 : 06 ] It comes in chapter 1 verse 27. That they live in a manner worthy of the gospel with the mindset of Christ. That humble mindset of Christ that would go from heaven to earth to death on a cross in obedience.

That humble mindset includes what we realise, includes being content in knowing God as his father in all, in Christ. That Paul would be content in all his circumstances.

That Paul would be content in all his circumstances. That God in Christ gave Paul and Jesus and that we would have that satisfied mind in any circumstance, in any situation.

I'm going to be thinking about it in three points. We're going to be thinking about godly desire, godly contentment and godly provision. Godly desire, godly contentment and godly provision. So the first one, godly desire.

Desiring to receive something from God is different to being content without, discontent without it. I'll say that again. Desiring to receive something, to have something given from God is different to being discontent if you don't have it.

[ 6 : 17 ] We see godly desire in Paul. And we see that actually the desires that he has are met. Paul desires because his desires align with God's desires.

Paul desires that the church grows in maturity. He wants to thank them for the fruit that he's seen in his gospel ministry partnership with them. Just look with me, verse 10.

What does he say? He says, Verse 17, he talks again.

Kind of connected to desires. Not that I desire your gifts. What I desire is that more is accredited to your account. I receive full payment and have more than enough.

I'm amply supplied now that I've received from Epaphroditus the gifts you send. You see, what Paul desires and what builds him up is that despite the bad name he had in the area, from fanatical Jews across the area who are pulling him down, despite the fact he is in prison and was imprisoned for a while, despite the fact that they didn't know, the church didn't know what lay in store for them because of their association with them, they're willing to put their money where their man fits, showing outwardly that they're with him.

[ 7 : 47 ] They're with him because they support him financially with the little they have. Paul's desire is godly because it's not for himself.

His desire is for them. The reason, you know, the real reason he rejoices is because their gift demonstrates that they're a church that was the mission of Jesus.

Their gift of money to him demonstrates that they love to see the good news spreading. They love hearing about people coming to faith in his ministry.

That's why they support him. They're a church that loves Jesus and love his name being proclaimed. Presumably not only where Paul is, but in Philippi where their local church is as well. Godly desire aligns with what God desires. God not only desires is the root cause of growth in the church.

[ 8 : 47 ] Godly desires must therefore have, as it's said, growth in the church. Because growth in the church means that Jesus is being lifted high. Children grow in different ways, don't they?

Even in our own family we have joy when Caris takes her first word or is able to sit up. But we still have equal joy when Heidi learns to read.

They grow at different rates but the joy is still there. They're both growing. They're growing at different stages. Growth in the church, growth in godliness looks very different for each of us.

We're all at different stages. Looks very different growth for us with a church plant as to a church that was planted 175 years ago. It's good for us to look, as Paul does in the church, he looks for growth in the church.

It's good for us to look for it in one another. To look for it in the kids and rejoice in each of us when we see it. Because what it means is if we're growing in maturity, it means that the gospel is having the impact that it shows.

[10:02] It means that, and if, if, God has used one of us to bring about that growth in each of us, it means that what we're doing hasn't been in vain.

A few of you, over the week we had Derek Lament, he came and visited and preached here. He was the minister of the church that we planted out.

I was away on holiday but I just rung him to see how he enjoyed it whilst he was here. He was so encouraged when he came. Because he didn't know what kind of church we'd become.

He'd heard me tell him. But he'd not seen it for himself. He was integral to the start of this church. So he was encouraged to see how we were getting on. And as I heard from him, his job, it encouraged me.

Because I could have joy that he was encouraged. Joy in what God is doing in each of us, in what he's doing, in what he was doing at St. Columbus, what he's doing now. You see, joy has a ripple effect.

[11:04] It's like throwing a stone in a puddle and you see the ripples spread. The ripples get bigger and you can share in your joy about what God is doing and encourage everyone else when you openly share it.

We're talking about contentment, but we quickly move to joy, don't we? Because joy and contentment are related. It's joy in the right things.

The desire and the joy in what God takes joy in. The desires that God has for us and for his church. So, Godly desire. What about Godly contentment? So, Paul has the right Godly desires. What about Godly contentment?

If contentment was dependent on circumstances, which I talked about earlier, then surely Paul would be the most discontent man you would find. His circumstances were not good.

[12:06] His life was hard. Verse 12. He reminds us. I know what it is to be in need. And I know what it is to have plenty. Further on, he writes, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want, he's experienced the highs and the lows of life.

He's ebbed and flowed through times of ease and difficulty. He suffered in poverty when materially he had nothing. There's lots of ways that he's known that. You think about Paul's life.

He had a checkered sinful history of skeletons in the closet. Perhaps each of us will have those, but perhaps we might not earn them as quickly as Paul does.

You see, he's quite happy to talk about them and it doesn't get him down. Rather, he sees the skeletons in his closet as a reminder of God's powerful grace and forgiveness.

Perhaps. He wrote this letter from prison where many, many would have thought that his career, if that's what you want to call it, as a missionary church planter and preacher, was on hold as a young way in unjust execution.

[13:17] He faced rejection from outside the church. We've mentioned fanatical Jews that used to be his buddies, threatening right, left and centre. And inside the church, we even read in this reading that not one church shared with him, except this one.

Not one church. Not one church. All the rest have kind of said, we don't want anything to do with him. He's just causing us trouble. We have his personal testimony in 2 Corinthians 11.

Listen to this with me. He says, I've worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the 40 lashes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was pelleted with stones. Three times I was shipwrecked. I spent the night and the day in the open sea. I've been constantly on the move. I've been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea and in danger from false believers.

I've labelled and told and have gone often without sleep. I've known hunger and thirst and I've gone often without food. I've been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face the daily pressure of my concern for all the churches.

[14:34] Who is weak? And I do not feel weak. He says danger quite a lot of times, doesn't he? His life was hard. Paul had more reasons than most to be discontent.

Despite all the circumstances of Paul's life, and there are a lot. We read he learned contentment. He learned contentment.

Paul's life, Paul's life is proof that your contentment is independent of your circumstances. Because Paul had the worst of circumstances, but a great contentment.

He's independent. We will all, through our lives, be faced with difficulty. With circumstances that are hard. Financial difficulty.

Our sinful past might haunt us. We've got those skeletons in the closet. Our career is put on hold and we feel like we're being held back. Maybe there's rejection of us because of what we believe.

[ 15 : 35 ] And even at times rejection from people within the church who believe different things. And yet verse 13 is as true for us as it is for Paul.

It's the fridge magnet verse. Verse 13. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. We must let Paul be convinced that the Lord himself is standing at your side to impart strength.

On your own, on your own. It's hard to acknowledge this, but it's good to acknowledge it. On your own, you are too weak to find the strength to get through a situation that is that difficult.

It is the Lord Jesus himself who provides the strength you need to get through that and be content in him. I read this story, a story of a dad who asked his young son to lift a really heavy object, a weight far beyond the little boy's capacity.

The object would budge and he said, try again son. The boy tried again with no success. Son, you're not using all your strength. The boy tried again, but still the object wouldn't move.

[ 16 : 50 ] Son, you're still not using all your strength. Oh, dad, dad, I'm trying, grunted the boy as he strained at the immovable object. I'm using all my strength. No, you're not son, replied the dad.

You haven't asked me to help. We find our strength to endure difficulty from the living God.

From Christ. The message from the world will tell you different. Grin and bear it, you're the master of your own faith, the captain of your soul. Be tough.

Our culture tells us to be self-sufficient. God tells us to be completely dependent. Amen. The question we're left with is, how do I become like this?

Does it zap us? Do we wake up one morning all of a sudden and we're strong and content? The answer, what we read is, sounds like I think it's quite surprising.

[ 17 : 55 ] What we read is that it is something we learn. Paul learned contentment. It comes twice, verse 11, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. Verse 12, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.

It is not something that zaps you, but it is the process of Christian growth means it is possible for you and me. The words that are used for learn in that in 11 and 12 are actually two different words for learn.

The first word for learn is a learning through experience. What that means is that Paul only learned how to be content by being in situations that naturally would bring his contentment.

For example, how do you think Paul learned to be content in need? Well, it's like learning how to, imagine, I think I was thinking back to my kids again, how you learn to ride a bike.

You can watch somebody, you can watch lots of videos about how to learn to ride a bike. You can watch hours and you can see how the whole thing works.

[ 19 : 13 ] But in order to ride a bike, you have to sit on a bike and you have to try it out for yourself. It's through experience, not through watching that you learn how to ride a bike.

It's through experience that Paul learned contentment. Paul learned how to be content in need by being in need. There is another way, he learned contentment in hunger by being hungry.

And in prison, by being in prison, to be content in those situations. This is hard stuff for each of us. And the question that I'm going to ask is a hard one to consider today. What do we believe would make us content today?

What would we need to happen for us to be content in our lives at the moment? Maybe we are. But the hard truth is that, this is the hard truth.

[ 20 : 17 ] If our answers to the question, what do we believe would make us content? If our answers involve some change of circumstance, some improved relationship perhaps, getting something.

And this is the thing to realise. That that very thing that we think is now functioning as the source of contentment in your life. We think that if we have it, we'll be happy and if we don't, we'll be sad.

If that is true, we're like a yoyo on a string. And the very thing has you in its grasp. And it can raise you up and down as well. And it is functioning as your mind.

If your contentment based is perhaps on a spouse or finding or a friend treating you better.

If it's finding some financial blessing or physical healing. If it's being accepted by your neighbours, getting a promotion. If it's spending more time with family.

[ 21 : 20 ] Then it's not Christ based contentment. And it's a life being built on quicksand. You see, God never meant for you to find joy or contentment in anything other than Christ.

And this is hard. It's hard for me to. Because we all have those things. The way that you might learn contentment in Christ might just be that the thing that you want is withheld to prevent you from putting your contentment in that thing instead of Jesus.

Consider the picture of contentment that we have in Paul. Imagine an old, weather-beaten and hungry apostle sitting in a dungeon.

Yet he's singing praises and thanking God for his saving grace. You take away Paul's bottle or his favourite toy and he still finds joy in Christ. You pick him up or set him down where he doesn't want you to and instead of a temper tantrum he prays for you and blesses you.

The apostle has learned contentment despite severe hardships. Contentment does not depend on the circumstances. That doesn't mean we welcome hardship.

[ 22 : 40 ] We still don't want it. We still pray when it's here for it to go away. But we can trust God in every situation and fight for contentment with him alone.

Paul learned contentment and it's not beyond any of his. It's hard no doubt about that but Christ is by your side. He is the one who strengthens us so you can learn it.

So it can be learned. Let's turn to our third one. God may promise you.

Paul wants for nothing better that the church would know this type of contentment for themselves.

He wants to reassure them that they will always have what they need. God will always provide what we need.

Look with me about what he says about their gift. He says about the gift that they've given to him.

He says they are a fragrant offering. An acceptable sacrifice pleasing to God.

[ 23 : 38 ] Paul uses Old Testament sacrificial imagery to highlight their generosity. It was accepted by God. Not as an, when we use sacrificial imagery it's accepted.

It's not as an appeasing sacrifice for their sin. That the appeasing sacrifice is the once for all sacrifice of the Son of God at the cross.

That appeases the wrath of God. But it was pleasing to God. As they offered back what God had given to them. What it shows is that they were actually content with their finances.

They weren't controlled by their finances as an idol. Because they were willing to give it away. It is verse 19, sorry.

Which reassures us that we will never be lacking. Verse 19. My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

[ 24 : 35 ] The keys are the keys. The keys to contentment. It comes right there. God will meet all the needs of that church. All our needs.

Whatever that might be. His grace is unlimited. The storehouses of his grace. Of his unending kindness. It has no end to us.

However, we do need to pause. When we read that, what we mean to understand is, He'll meet your needs, but that doesn't mean he'll meet all your wants.

Paul didn't want any of the difficulties in his life. He pleaded for relief. At times we read about his thought in the flesh. But he knew in the midst of it all that God provided what he needed.

And Paul is applying that experience of learning contentment to the future of the church. The living God met all of Paul's needs. And he will do, he's saying, he will do the same for you brothers and sisters in Christ in Philippi.

[ 25 : 40 ] I know he will because of your support for me in the gospel. Because your support for me in the gospel shows that you are actually his children and you belong to him. And you belong to him.

And in the same way I want us to be reassured this morning, that he'll do the same for us.

Individually and collectively.

He will meet our needs. Not our wants, but meet our needs. He'll meet our needs not from what he can muster. Not from the little that he has left.

It's not like he's scraping around for some spare change down the back of the sofa and giving what he can. But he's meeting our needs according to the riches of his glory.

He's meeting our needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ. Because we belong to him.

He's the only one who knows your true needs. Which means trust and contentment can come from knowing Christ.

[ 26 : 43 ] Because he always has your best interests at heart. He's always there for you. If there is something you need, God will never withhold it from you. It's astounding.

If you need it, it will never be withheld. Because all your needs will be met in Christ. Those riches are endless, a bottom reservoir, a bottomless reservoir of grace.

It is overflowing to give you what you need. As a church, you might think, we might think, you know, we look around, we might think, what do we need?

We might think we need musicians. We might think we need more money on our own building. We might think we need more people. But the living God says to us today that we have, as a church, exactly what we need today.

In our own lives, we have exactly what we need. And he'll never withhold anything from you if you need it.

[ 27 : 47 ] God's grace for you, this unending, bottomless grace, was bought for you by his Son. And it's God's Father that if he did not withhold, it's Romans 8, if he did not withhold his Son from you, how will he not graciously give you all your grace?

How will he not? He's probably having sin for you. He'll give you everything you need. We've thought about godly desires, we've thought about godly contentment, and we've thought about godly provision.

There's some hard stuff here. There's some hard stuff to think about. But I want us to go away knowing those things that we can have a deep and a rich content in Christ.

It doesn't depend on your circumstances. And when you have difficulty going through in life, we know that we can turn to a god who gives us all we need, whose grace is unlimited.

Because God our Father did not withhold his Son from us. He graciously gives us all things, and we can go deep and a rich content in Christ.

[ 29 : 01 ] That's great. Amen. Almighty God, we come to you knowing that each of us have difficulty at times in life.

And there are things, circumstances, situations where we don't feel content. We feel discontent. We feel like there are things that we love to change. We feel like if we get certain things, then we'd be happier or more content with things.

We thank you for the example that we have in Paul, in Christ, who learned contentment. Even Christ learned obedience. Learned contentment in any and every situation.

And the secret of it, the secret of it is that it's Christ who strengthens us. And so I pray that, I thank you that everything that we face is not, that you use for our good.

And I pray just for anybody here this morning who's going through something, that where contentment feels like it's at a distance.

[ 30 : 15 ] I pray that you'd help us. I pray that you'd comfort us. I pray that you, out of your great riches, will supply everything that we need.

And that you give us thankful hearts for them. And so bless us. And we pray that indeed you would strengthen us to be able to do all that you have in store for us.

We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen.