



## Contentment and Thanksgiving

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*Pastor David Koch*

### **Introduction:**

Let's look again at the idea of contentment as it relates to Christians and thinking about Thanksgiving. We cannot hope to truly offer thanksgiving unless we are content. Webster's definition of contentment is ... **"happy enough with what one has or is; not desiring something more or different; satisfied"**. If anyone on earth should be content, it should be followers of Christ. Christians should be satisfied because our contentment is not based on things or circumstances; it is based on relationship with Christ.

Being content is not about what I have or don't have. Neither is it about where I'm at or my circumstances. Being content has everything to do with knowing to whom I belong and trusting His incredible direction and guidance in my life. **Philip. 4:11-13 - I'm not saying this because I'm in any need. I've learned to be content in whatever situation I'm in. I know how to live in poverty or prosperity. No matter what the situation, I've learned the secret of how to live when I'm full or when I'm hungry, when I have too much or when I have too little. I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.**

## I. Contentment is learned.

Contentment is not something that comes naturally or automatically. Paul said that he had to "learn to be content". Naturally, we are prone to:

- **compare** ourselves with others
- to always **desire more** than we have (remember Adam and Eve?)
- to **complain**

We cannot be content if we compare ourselves with others. There will always be people who are more talented, more educated, healthier, better looking stronger or more adaptable than we are. There will always be someone who has newer things and more of them. If we compare ourselves to others, there is no end to the discontentment we will experience.

When we compare ourselves to others, not only does it breed discontent within us but it also causes us to develop jealous feelings toward that other person. One of God's fundamental laws is not to covet which means, "to crave or desire something which belongs to someone else". We cannot be content if we are not satisfied with what we have. If we want more, we are looking at what we don't have, rather than focusing on what God has already blessed us with.

When Adam and Eve saw something they didn't have, it caused them to become dissatisfied with what they already had. God told them He had made everything for their pleasure. They could eat anything they desired except from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose to disobey God and satisfy their desire for the one thing God told them to let alone.

A great example of complaining is the example of the people of Israel, how they complained about their leader MOSES. They complained about his leadership. They complained about their journey; they complained about the food God sent them from heaven. They had not learned to be content.

Learn to be content with everything that God has given to you. That is not to say that we don't have goals, but we have to learn to be content.

## II. Contentment is not about possessions or circumstances.

Paul says that he had learned how to be content in good times as well as hard times. His contentment was not anchored to the circumstances of life. As an elderly man, Paul was imprisoned for his faith. When he should have been able to enjoy life and be comfortable, he was chained between two soldiers. He had little in jail to rejoice about but still he did not allow his circumstances to dictate his state of contentment, even in that situation. I don't know about you, but if I were jailed for my faith in Christ, I know I would have to learn how to be content in that place. Probably most of us would admit the same thing.

Someone tells of a king who was discontented. In fact, he was so anxious he couldn't sleep, rest or think. He called his wise men and asked them what he could do. One very old and very wise man said, "Find a man in your kingdom who is content, then wear his shirt for a day and a night, and you will be content." That sounded like a good idea to the king, so he ordered some of his servants to search for such a person. Days blended into weeks before his servants returned. "Well," said the king, "did you find a contented man?" "Yes, sire," his servant replied. "Where is his shirt?" asked the king. "Your majesty, he didn't have one." [hurdles, glitches p. 162]

In writing to Timothy, Paul gives more insight into this whole idea of contentment. He also wanted to warn Timothy about the temptation and trap that is set for people who long to get rich. Let's read what he writes.

**1TIM 6:6-11 – But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.**

## III. Contentment +Godliness = great gain.

Paul gives wise instruction to Timothy. He tells Timothy that we start with nothing and we end with nothing. So, contentment is not about what we accumulate in between what we start with and end with, it is about living with satisfaction one day after

another. It is quite clear that whatever we use here, we leave here. When we are born into this world, we bring nothing with us and when we leave this world, we take nothing away.

If we are pursuing God as fully devoted followers of Christ and we learn how to be content with the simplest provisions of food and clothing, that is great gain. The gain has to do with not striving for more, not being jealous of others, using our energy, talents and resources to focus on advancing God's kingdom in the lives of other people. **THAT IS GREAT GAIN!**

Paul also warns Timothy, when we focus on "stuff" and the riches of this world, all kinds of wrong things happen. We become more susceptible to temptation. We become trapped in wrong thinking about the source of our contentment. We will encounter many foolish and harmful desires. If we surrender to those desires, it will ruin and destroy our priorities, our trust in God and our ability to stay focused on eternal things. We will find ourselves quicker to compromise our principles to get what we think will make us happy. Eventually, our appetite begins to dictate our values rather than the other way around. Discontent inevitably leads us away from God.

### **Conclusion:**

Look at the hard situations that come into your path as opportunities to learn contentment. Let those unpleasant things be our instructors to teach us where the true value is in life and the work of grace that God wants to be seen in our lives.

As we enjoy Thanksgiving and anticipate the season of Advent, renew your determination to be content with what you have and rejoice in your relationship with the Lord.

**Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will in Christ Jesus concerning you.**

Paul told Timothy to flee from all this and to run after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Our lives, our homes, our businesses, our relationships and the kingdom of God would be dramatically impacted if we traded spending the time we use pursuing the valueless things of this earth for the eternal qualities about which we just read.

Let's be totally honest. It is not easy to be content in difficult times. We see people around us who seem to be doing better than we are. It is difficult to feel satisfied, confident and joyful when we experience any of these things:

- when we are falsely accused
- when the medical test results are not encouraging
- when someone gets promoted to the position that we wanted (and felt we deserved)
- when our plans are suddenly changed
- when loss comes barging into our life
- when a loved one tells you s/he is walking away
- when a financial investment falls on its face
- when others ridicule us

It's tough to feel content when life is not going the way you want it to be going, but it's not impossible.