

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

Bible Reading/s

Phil 4:10-13

Topic: Contentment

Issue: How can I be Content?

Argument/Central Truth: Lasting and meaningful Contentment will only be found with Jesus

- Being content is not about quantity!
- Contentment is not achieved, it is experienced!
- Lasting and meaningful contentment is only found in Jesus!

Purpose

I want this sermon to be overtly evangelistic and consider the topic of Contentment. And I want the listener to walk away knowing that if you don't have Jesus, you will not be as content as you want to be.

Prayer

*Dear God,
I want to know what it is to be truly content.
And I can see that you give true contentment in Jesus.
Forgive me for ignoring you and leaving you behind.
I am sorry.
Please have me back and help me to live in you. Amen*

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

Outline

^{11b} I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

¹² 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. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil 4:11-13)

How can I be Content?

1.

2.

3.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

CHECK TIME

Talk

How can I be content?

- How can I be content?
- Have you ever asked yourself - How can I be content? I have.
- I am hoping I am not that abnormal and that there may be others out there that have spent some time thinking about what it means to be content?
- For me, I have wondered if contentment is...
 - The caffeine shot at the start of the day.
 - The win at work when things actually go to plan?
 - The satisfaction of finishing that essay or assignment or degree that has taken so much time and energy?
 - The excitement of paying the last repayment and actually paying off that debt?
 - To be respected by those that I respect?
 - To step off the airplane at that exotic location to enjoy that holiday that I have always dreamt of?
 - The day my children move out of home!
 - Retirement?

- Contentment is such a movable feast – and it is so hard to measure.
- I want to be content – yet being content involves so many intersecting circles of my life – relationships, material possessions, time, energy and emotions.
- And I have often wondered if there will ever be a day when all those intersecting circles will align, and I will be able to declare to the world that ‘I am content!’

- I live in a world where the pursuit of contentment seems to govern a lot of the decisions we make - the money we spend - and the time we allocate.

- Today I want to look at what the Bible says is *the secret to contentment*.
- In fact, I want to focus on the verses that are printed on your outline from the letter to the Philippians.

- The guy who wrote this letter, his name was Paul, says that he has ‘learned to be content’ and I want to invite you to consider that with me for just a few minutes.
- Perhaps you can weigh up what it says, and compare it with what your idea of contentment looks like.
- I am going to make just three points and then I try and draw it all together.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

1. Being content is not about quantity!

State

- First, being content is not about *quantity* – it is not measured by the amount that you have.

Explain

- Paul says, (v11b) *‘I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty’.*
- This guy has worked out something that I would like to work out.
- I know what it means to be in need - of more time, of more energy, of more money, of more relaxation!
- Yet I have not yet worked out what it means to have plenty of those things that I think will make me content!

- Paul here says, don’t measure contentment in quantities.
- Whatever the circumstances in life (because we all know the circumstances will frequently change) - whatever the circumstances, be content.

- The mistake that we often make is that we measure contentment using the wrong method – it is not found in what we have, but in how we think.

Illustrate

- Imagine your life as a set of scales – you know the idea. What you put on one side of the scale needs to be balanced by what you put on the other side of the scale.
- When they balance out you know you have it right.
- When we think about contentment, it is like we put on one side of the scale ‘contentment’ and then on the other side of the scale all the things that we think will make us content
 - the mortgage,
 - the nice car,
 - the show tickets,
 - the fine dining voucher (or the fast food voucher)
 - the luxury holiday,
 - the high paying job
- and we throw it all in – and look at the scale and it is total out of balance.

- Paul here is saying that is because we are thinking about contentment all wrong – it is not about the quantity.
- Because if it was, then to balance the scale you would have to remove some of those things that we want to do - just to right the scales.
- For him, he has found contentment regardless of the things he has – whether he is in need or whether he has plenty – he has learned to be content.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- And if his circumstances change then he will learn to be content in that situation as well.

Example

- A few years ago, I was in India.
- India a place of extreme poverty, sickness, disease and in some places oppression – in short they have much greater material needs than we have.
 - And yet while there, despite the obvious needs of the people,
 - I saw smiles from adults and children that just glowed.
 - I heard laughter in ways that I rarely hear when walking down the street here in Adelaide.
 - And I saw communities that worked together to help one another despite the poverty that they were all in.
- A plane trip later and I found myself in London. One of the wealthiest and healthiest countries in the first world.
 - As I caught the crowded subway and looked around at all the people – no one spoke to anyone but instead busied themselves with reading things that no one looked interested in.
 - I say that because although they had books and newspapers open, they were all staring over the shoulder of the person next to them – as if the person next to them was reading something more interesting.
 - The guy sitting below where I was standing took the cake – he had fallen asleep with a questionnaire in his hand – the first question said ‘What do you need to take control of your life?’ – and the only thing that he had written before he dozed off was ‘Get more money’!

Apply

- Paul’s encouragement is to be content now – his secret is not based in the things that he has or can’t have, but in his attitude despite his circumstances.
- Being content is not about quantity – but it will be about attitude.

2. Contentment is not achieved, it is experienced!

State

- Second, Contentment is not achieved, it is experienced.

Explain

- You can see in the next line that Paul wrote (v12b) *‘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’*
- Those who come to this church every Sunday will know that for the last seven weeks or so, we have been working through the whole letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians.
- He wrote, because he couldn’t visit – he was locked up in prison.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- Paul's life was well documented – he lived through some pretty devastating lows.
- He wrote to another church in the city of Corinth – and told them of his hunger and thirst, the rags that he was wearing, the brutal treatment he experienced, his homelessness and said he felt like the 'scum of the earth, the refuse of the world' (1 Cor 4:11-13).
- A few years later he wrote again and described his troubles, hardships, distresses, beatings, imprisonments, hard work, sleepless nights and hunger (2 Cor 6:4-5)
- And then later again he describes his life when he writes [PPT]:

^{23b} I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have 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. ²⁷ I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. (2 Cor 11:23-27)

- Paul does not have the picture perfect life that anyone would be envious of.
- So, to write and say that he was 'content in *any* and *every* situation' makes me sit up and take note.
- What is it that he has worked out?
- If I was writing to you from jail, or having experienced just a tenth of what he did – I can tell you I would not be writing to tell you how content I was!

- Paul had worked something out that would be helpful for me to learn because I often look at the circumstances of my life and think that it could be so much better.
- Contentment is not achieved, it is experienced.

Example

- Before I was ten,
 - my ambition was to own a Billy cart,
 - then my ambition was to own the bicycle,
 - then came the racer,
 - then came that old beaten up first car,
 - then came the slightly less beaten up car,
 - then came the new car,
 - then came the second car– do you think for one moment that with each new vehicle my level of contentment increased. I can tell you my bank balance certainly increased!
- My contentment level? - Not at all.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- In fact, I think the most content I can remember of all my vehicles came as I recklessly flew down the hill outside my grandparent's house on the billy cart with the wheel that kept coming off!!

Illustrate

- One of the facebook posts that I saw this week read:
 - Money can buy a house, but not a home.
 - Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
 - Money can buy a clock, but not time.
 - Money can buy a book, but not knowledge.
 - Money can buy food, but not an appetite.
 - Money can buy you friends, but not love.
 - Money means everything in this world and nothing in the next!

Apply

- There is so little that we control,
so little that we can ultimately determine,
so little that lasts
– and yet we spend so much time and energy and money in pursuit of that next best thing.
- And then when we get it, we reset our ambitions and refocus on the next goal we set for life
- Yet what we risk in doing that,
By focusing on what we experience in the *here and the now* - then we often ignore that which will be experienced in the *then and evermore*.
- Friends, being content is not about quantity and contentment is not achieved, it is experienced.
- So how is that Paul can be content?
- He doesn't measure it and he doesn't try and achieved it.

Lasting and Meaningful contentment is only found in Jesus!

State

- Third, Paul experiences it in Jesus.
- Lasting and meaningful contentment, for Paul, is only found in Jesus.

Explain

- Look at final part of the passage printed on your outline.
- Paul says (v13) '*I can do all this through him who gives me the strength.*'
- Paul connects his contentment to his faith.
- The 'him' in this verse is Jesus.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- Paul is saying that whatever comes his way, Jesus has the strength to help him meet it.
 - If life serves him lemons – then Paul is a man ‘in Christ’.
 - If life serves him lemonade – then Paul is a man ‘in Christ’.
 - In any and every situation, in all circumstances, Paul is a man ‘in Christ’.
- The idea of being ‘in Christ’ is one of the ways that the Bible talks about being a believer.
- It is like saying, ‘you belong’ or ‘you are included’ or ‘you are welcome’.
- And one of the wonderful things about being ‘in Christ’ is that
 - what is his, is yours
 - and what he gives, you share in
 - and what he does, you benefit from.
- What Paul has described in the letter to the Philippians is many of the great things that Jesus has done for him to ensure his needs are ultimately met.
- Before meeting Jesus, what Paul valued most was that which came from and remained in the world.
- And when his life came to an end – he would die with nothing of eternal value.
- But when he met Jesus – things changed.
- In this letter, Paul recognises that *Jesus left everything to become human* – and he did that so that *all humans could be given everything*.
- Let me show you, to do this – I want you to grab the Bible in the pews and turn to page 1672. I will do the same thing – let me grab a Bible.
- We are looking at Chapter 2, verse 6-11 [*left hand page, bottom of right column*].
- This passage helps us to understand how Paul knows what it means to be content.
- He is speaking about Jesus [PPT]...see verse 6...

[Jesus] *Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own
advantage;*

⁷ *rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself*

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

*by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:6-11)*

- Paul recognises that Jesus left everything – he was *in very nature God*, and yet he humbled himself to be *very unlike God* – to take on the nature of humanity.
- That is a complicated way of saying *God became human*.
- But one of the problems with becoming human was that he was then faced with a very human problem – we don't live forever,
- And the reason why we don't live forever is because we have turned our back on the one who does – that is God.
- In our pursuit to find contentment in the things we can measure and the things that we can achieve, we think we have become self-sufficient.
- That what we gain we do so because we are just so good, or able, or successful, or smart – yet as good as those things are, we never seem to fully achieve them - and then we die.
- Yet Jesus, had it all, gave it up, and then died – a death on a cross.
- If that was us, that would be the end of it all.

Illustrate

- I love Egyptian mythology.
- You know the history of the Pharaohs and what they thought of the afterlife.
- During each Pharaoh reign, they would build an enormous tomb in the shape of a pyramid – and then when they died all of their most valuable treasures would be placed in the tomb alongside them so that the Pharaoh could transit into the next life with all his wealth.
- And we all know how that worked out.
- Many years later, the tomb is discovered full of the treasures and a very well preserved, but still dead body – evidence that something went wrong with the transfer from earth to heaven!

Explain

- Yet the opposite was true for Jesus.
- He started with the riches of heaven – and left them to live as a common person – and lived with none of those treasures – only to die a brutal death on a cross.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- But God was not done – you can see verse 9 – God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the honour that was due to him – so much so that all would give him that honour.
- As every knee both in heaven and on earth and under the earth (which is a way of saying everywhere) – every person will see him, and every person would acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

PAUSE

- That is what Paul is doing, he is acknowledging Jesus as Lord.
- He has seen what Jesus did to save those who otherwise would die with only their worldly riches.
- Turn over the page in your Bibles to Philippians Chapter 4 – to our passage. It is towards the end of this letter.

- And Paul says – verse 10 ‘I rejoice greatly *in the Lord*’.
- He can only do that because he knows the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord.
- Paul has learned to be content whatever the circumstances because he knows he is *in the Lord*.
- Paul has learned the secret of contentment in any and every situation because whatever he does he does *in the Lord*.
- And Paul wrote this letter so that others like those who read it (us included) might also know the contentment that he does.

Apply

- Where is it that all our needs are met and we have riches beyond all measure?
- Look at verse 19 and look at how Paul closes his letter - ‘My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus’.

- If you think that you will only be content once all your needs have been met – then Paul says that happens ‘*through Christ*’.
- And if you think that you will only be content once you are rich, then even the riches of Pharaoh won’t compare to the glorious riches of *Christ Jesus*.
- And if you think that you will only be content in this world, then Paul is saying that you have not looked far enough ahead – because *in Christ* you have eternity.

Bridge

- How can you be content?
 - Being content is not about *quantity* – it is not measured by the amount that you have.
 - Contentment is *not achieved*, it is experienced!
 - And lasting and meaningful contentment is *only found in Jesus*.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- There is a story told about a bishop of the early church – or perhaps an elder who, when asked what ‘contentment was’ he remarked [PPT]:

“[Contentment] consists in nothing more than making the right use of my eyes.

In whatever state I am, I first of look up to heaven and remember that my principal business here is to get there [through Christ].

Then I look down upon the earth, and call to mind how small a place I shall occupy in it when I die and am buried.

I then look around in the world and observe what multitudes there are who are in many respects more unhappy than myself.”

- The secret to contentment comes in *the attitude we have towards Christ*.
 - If we trust that God will meet all our needs *in Christ* then we have nothing to worry about – whether our circumstance are good or bad.
 - If we turn our back on God, we will not see how he meets our needs *in Christ* and so we will look to the world to answer that question and in the end we will still be looking when we die.

Conclusion

- Friends, I would like to ask you to consider your attitude towards Jesus.
- The motivation to do that comes in part from what so naturally swells up inside us – that desire to be content.
- And like that bishop or elder - to recognise that contentment will remain a myth or a fruitless exercise unless there is hope beyond death and that is only found in Jesus.

Closing Prayer

- If you would like to change your attitude towards Jesus, if you would like to renew your attitude towards Jesus, then I would like to invite you to pray to God and ask for his help.
- I am going to pray the prayer that is on the screen [PPT]
- I will read it first, so you know what I am going to pray.

Dear God,

I want to know what it is to be truly content.

And I can see that you give true contentment in Jesus.

Forgive me for ignoring you and leaving you behind.

I am sorry.

Please have me back and help me to live in you. Amen

- It is just simply a way of starting fresh again with Jesus.

Talk – Phil 4:10-13 – The Secret of being Content!

- And so, if you would like to pray this prayer with me, then silently, in your own mind, repeat the prayer after me.

Dear God,

I want to know what it is to be truly content.

And I can see that you give true contentment in Jesus.

Forgive me for ignoring you and leaving you behind.

I am sorry.

Please have me back and help me to live in you. Amen

- Friends, what I hope may have just changed for you – is *a renewed heart*.
- And what I hope will change about the way that you think – is *a renewed mind*.
- And what I hope will change about how you feel – is *that you will find contentment* – no matter what the circumstance (good or bad) – in Jesus.