



Sunday Scripture

*"For I have learned in whatever situation,
I am to be content."
Philippians 4:11*

"Principles of Contentment" Philippians 4:10-13

December 9, 2018

Flower show story- over 30 years ago!

Why do we think so much of the negative?

Pain in the neck, one negative person, one hurt feeling, etc. **CRAZY!!!!!!**

Learning contentment is linked to doing one thing—forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Forgetting is not living in denial.

Forgetting is not absolving responsibility to be obedient to God.

Remember versus forget

III. Back up camera

Nehemiah chapter 6 principle: **KEEP MOVING FORWARD!**

Numbers 11:15

Deuteronomy 5:15- thou wast a servant

8:2- the way God led you

Psalm 77:11- wonders of old

Psalm 143:5- days of old

Hebrews 13:7

Revelation 2:5

Lot's wife Luke 17:32

HISTORY

Alexander- 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 4:14

Forgetting- "no longer caring for" "given over to oblivion" "neglecting"

Ill.- bird in hair

The church used to.....

I did this for that person and

That person failed me

I tried that and it didn't turn out well

Matthew 16:5; Mark 8:14- forgotten to take bread

The danger of not forgetting the past

Looking back-

- DISCOURAGEMENT
- HOPELESSNESS

- CYNICISM
- GIVING UP (QUITTING)

Reaching forth- "to stretch out or towards" "to stretch forward to"

Press- "to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing; pursue"-
persecute

Romans 14:19- the things which make for peace and things which edify

1 Corinthians 14:1- love

1 Thessalonians 5:15- that which is good

1 Timothy 6:11- righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience

2 Timothy 2:22- righteousness, faith, charity, peace

Hebrews 12:14- peace and holiness

1 Peter 3:11- peace

Luke 9:62: No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

This word came to me with an entirely new force a few days ago. I think I had always read it as if it referred to a turning back from the appointed path, and it is often read so. But our Lord says nothing of *turning* back. He says *looking* back. I believe there is an eternal truth contained in His choice of that verb. If the plow, even while his feet are still following the plow, looks anywhere but straight forward, his furrow goes crooked.

The devil, as we know, has read the Psalms. We may be fairly sure he has read the Gospels. Whether he has or not, he certainly knows the peril that lies in the backward look. So he is continually trying to persuade us to look back. He delights to engage our thoughts with ourselves, our sins, our worthlessness, our failures, for when we are so engaged, we are looking back, and our furrow goes crooked at once. This is

a backward pull which greatly hinders straight plowing, and Paul was thinking of it when he wrote about "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Phil. 3:13.

Or perhaps we cannot have something we want, and do not quite understand why we cannot have it. This word meets us there. It says, Do not let your thoughts linger about the thing which you want to have. (This is a matter of the will.) Fix your desires on the track ahead. Look on. Go on.

In the context, the looking back refers to that pull of the human, which in itself is a beautiful thing, but which, *when it interferes with our vocation*, is a deadly thing. As long as there is the inward reserve, the *But* of an affection or desire which crosses the call of our Lord, we cannot possibly plow a straight furrow. "O God, my heart is fixed,"¹ wrote the Psalmist. May God give us the heart that is fixed, and keep us with our eyes on the track, not looking to the right or the left or backward, but plowing a straight furrow.

Steadfastness

Carmichael quote

When you look back you stop going forward in a straight course and when you look back you miss seeing the obstacles in your path.

"those things"

I have learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state I am (Amp)

Matthew Henry says that "We have here an account of Paul's learning, not that which he got at the feet of Gamaliel, but that which he got at the feet of Christ."

Be (eimi) means to exist and in the present context describes Paul's existing in a state of contentment. The verb is in the **present tense** which speaks of his experience as a continuous one and the **indicative mood** signifies that this was a real event, not a figment of his imagination. Contentment is not a hypothetical postulate available to just a few but is the practical potential available to every person in Christ. Paul was totally independent of man because he was totally dependent upon Christ. He knew that the chief end of man is not to have his needs met, but to glorify God and enjoy Him forever and because of that, he was satisfied with whatever God graciously granted him.

Autarkes therefore describes the man who needs nothing externally to be satisfied in life for all he needs is within. the believer who has Christ dwelling within.

Contentment does not depend on what we have; it depends on who we are. It is a spiritual attainment, not something that results from purchasing power. As someone has said, **"Contentment is a state of heart rather than a statement of account."**

Clarke adds that what Paul is saying is that

"I am so satisfied with the wise providence and goodness of God, that I know whatever He determines is the best; and therefore I am perfectly contented that He should govern the world in that way which seems best to His godly wisdom. How true is the proverb, A contented mind- (he that is of a merry heart has a continual feast! What do we get by murmuring and complaining?"

A man from Pennsylvania wrote, "One of my father's old cows gives good milk, but she sure can be dumb! She has a whole field in which to feed, yet no grass seems quite as tasty as those patches outside her own pasture. I often see her stretching her head through the fence, while right behind her is everything she needs—excellent grazing land, beautiful shade trees, a cool, refreshing stream of water, and even a big chunk of salt. What more could she want?"

Many people are like that old cow. They think the "grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." They are constantly grasping, coveting, and seeking to obtain what doesn't belong to them.

If you are a Christian, the greatest blessings in life are already yours. Heaven is your home, and God is your Father. He has promised never to leave you (Heb. 13:5), and He will supply your every need (Phil. 4:19). How green the grass is on your side of the fence! —R. W. De Haan (Our Daily Bread)

Psalm 73:25-26-

Whom have I in heaven but thee?

and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

➤ **CONTENTED PEOPLE ARE NOT CONTENTIOUS PEOPLE**

○ **LOVE- 1 Corinthians 13**

- **CONTENTED PEOPLE ARE NOT DISCONTENTED PEOPLE**
- **CONTENTED PEOPLE ARE POSITIVE PEOPLE**
- **CONTENTED PEOPLE ARE JOYFUL PEOPLE**
- **CONTENTED PEOPLE ARE CONTAGIOUS**

Content- 2 Corinthians 9:8; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5

Learned Philippians 4:9, 2 Timothy 3:14

Learned- to learn by use and practice- to be in the habit of.

Contentment has great health benefits.

So, how does a person learn contentment

1. **He understands the sovereignty of God- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10**
2. **He forgets those things which are behind**
3. **He reaches forth unto those things which are before**
4. **He presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God**

5. He practices contentment by making daily choices

6. He does it in the power of Jesus Christ- **get the context of this verse**

7. He loves people and wants their best

8. He keeps the right perspective- **I am full**

1. Contentment comes from focusing on the Lord as the Sovereign One to whom I must submit.

2. Contentment comes from focusing on the Lord as the Savior whom I must serve.

3. Contentment comes from focusing on the Lord as the Sufficient One whom I must trust.

A Christian asked another how he was getting along. Dolefully his friend replied, "Oh, fairly well, under the circumstances."

"I am sorry," exclaimed the other, "that you are under the circumstances. The LORD would have us living above all circumstances, where He Himself can satisfy our hearts and meet our every need for time and eternity."

Learned the secret (one word in Greek) ([3453](#)) ([mueo](#) = root word for **mustes** meaning "one initiated" which in turn is the source of "mystery" or [musterion](#)) means to be initiated. It was used by the pagan religions with reference to their "inner secrets." Paul is saying in essence "I have been initiated, I possess the secret".

The second principle of godly character is, The power or enablement for a godly life comes from the risen Christ. Paul said in relation to his ministry, "our competence comes from God" ([2Corinthians 3:5](#)), and "I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" ([Colossians 1:29](#)).

PERSPECTIVE

POSSIBILITIES

An airline pilot was flying over the Tennessee mountains and pointed out a lake to his copilot. "See that little lake?" he said. "When I was a kid I used to sit in a rowboat down there, fishing. Every time a plane would fly overhead, I'd look up and wish I was flying it. Now I look down and wish I was in a rowboat, fishing."

A NEW PERSPECTIVE - A Jewish man in Hungary went to his rabbi and complained, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answered, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man was incredulous, but the rabbi insisted, "Do as I say and come back in a week." A week later the man returned looking more distraught than before. "We can't stand it," he told the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi said, "Go home and let the goat out, and come back in a week." A week later the man returned, radiant, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat- only the nine of us."

Our thinking: It's impossible

God's promise: All things are possible ([Luke 18:27](#))

"I'm too tired"

I will give you rest ([Matthew 11:28, 29, 30](#))

"Nobody really loves me"

I love you ([Jn 3:16; 13:34](#))

"I can't go on"

My grace is sufficient ([2Co 12:9; Ps 91:15](#))

"I can't figure things out"

I will direct your steps ([Pr 3:5,6](#))

"I can't do it"

You can do all things ([Php 4:13](#))

"I'm not able"

I am able ([2Corinthians 9:8](#))

“It’s not worth it”

It will be worth it ([Ro 8:28](#))

“I can’t forgive myself”

I forgive you ([1Jn 1:9](#); [Ro 8:1](#))

“I can’t manage”

I will supply all your needs ([Php 4:19](#))

“I’m afraid”

I have not given you a spirit of fear ([2Ti 1:7](#))

“I’m always worried and frustrated”

Cast all your cares on Me ([1Pe 5:7](#))

“I don’t have enough faith”

I’ve given everyone a measure of faith ([Ro 12:3](#))

“I’m not smart enough”

I give you wisdom ([1Co 1:30](#))

“I feel all alone”

I will never leave you or forsake you ([He13:5](#))

Author unknown

Can I be contented without feeling contented?

“Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God--
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever,
For, though all things shall pass away,
HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!”

Contentment

by William Cowper

Fierce passions discompose the mind,
As tempests vex the sea;
But calm content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to Thee.

In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

Since at His feet my soul has sate,
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on Him my care.

"Art thou a sinner, soul?" He said,
"Then how canst thou complain!
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

"If thou of murmuring wouldst be cured,
Compare thy griefs with mine;
Think what my love for thee endured,
And thou wilt not repine.

"'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

"In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day;
At death thou [still] shalt find me nigh,
To wipe thy tears away."

Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,

Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learnt to be content.

One minute take-away