

## “The Epistle of Joy (Part 14 – Philippians 4:10-13)”

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:10-13, “*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: <sup>12</sup> I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”

To *be content* means that *what you have is enough; you’re satisfied*. It’s an attitude that says: *what I have is enough; I don’t need more in order to be happy*. God’s children can be content with what we have when we view what we have as being allotted to us by God Himself. Biblical contentment springs from a complete readiness to accept whatever God gives. Thanks should be given for everything – for the basics and for the extras. We should be able to accept both abundance and want as part of life realizing that God gives us the power to face whatever is allotted to us.

Let’s give consideration to four **enemies of contentment**:

- 1) ***Unrealistic expectations***. When we expect people and circumstances to be perfect, or when we expect instant gratification – we’re setting ourselves up for disappointment and discontentment.
- 2) ***Unfair comparisons***. It’s extremely dangerous and unwise to compare ourselves to others. Either it will result in pride when we think we’re better than others, or it can easily lead to discouragement if we allow ourselves to think we are so much lesser than others.
- 3) ***Unnoticed blessings***. We are so blessed, and yet, so many are deeply unsatisfied. It’s a problem when we fail to consider our blessings, and take things for granted, and fail to be thankful. We should be grateful and content with what we have. We should give thanks and accept whatever God gives without thinking we always need more.
- 4) ***Uncontrolled ambition***. When you want something bad enough, and you don’t care what you have to do to get it – it’s going to lead to some very poor decision-making.

While we should never be content with *who* we are, in the sense that we need to continually strive to become more and more like Jesus Christ; we should be content with *what* we have. When we are content with what we have we are free to care for others.

Let’s also give consideration to three **secrets of contentment**. These should be well-known and obvious, but perhaps Paul refers to them as *secrets* because they’re too often overlooked and ignored:

- 1) ***Have an attitude of gratitude***. When you are grateful for everything God has given to you, you’ll find contentment.
- 2) ***Seek to please Jesus and quit worrying about pleasing other people***. Jesus taught us that *when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness the basics of life will be added to us*.

- 3) ***Love other people and show your concern for them.*** When we shift the attention off ourselves and onto others and Kingdom work – we will find true joy and contentment.

Philippians 4:13 is one of the greatest verses in the Bible: “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” This is applicable to all situations. But when you read it in context, it’s not just a positive motivator to reach for the stars. When you read Philippians 4:13 in light of all that Paul has been saying you realize: *I can do the really tough and difficult things in life (like being content and satisfied) in all circumstances, whether abounding or abased, with what I have and with what I don’t have, through Christ who strengthens me.*

## **Discussion Guide/Action Steps**

1. Are you a contented/satisfied person?
2. How can you avoid giving place to the *enemies of contentment*?
3. Do you desire to employ the *secrets of contentment*?
4. Will you choose to be content with what you have and with what you don’t have?