**Paul Learns To Be Content**

**INTRODUCTION:**

 1) There are some bold statements in the Bible.

 a. **John 6:68** is one that comes to mind, particularly because of what is happening at the time.

 2) **Philippians 4:11** is another one of those bold statements to me, and is also the focus of our lesson this evening.

 a. “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”

 b. Would you listen to a man who seems to have it all figured out?

 c. Of course we would. Thankfully for us, we can learn this same attitude by following his example.

 d. **1 Corinthians 11:1**

3) Let’s notice 3 lessons from Paul’s life that will help us be content as well.

**I. PHYSICAL CIRCUMSTANCES WERE NOT A DETERMINING FACTOR. 4:11**

A. NOTICE WHO WAS *NOT* SPEAKING.

 1. The man who said he had learned contentment was not an affluent man who could weather a few rainy days because he had enough saved.

 2. Rather, this man was the one who while in prison in Philippi (**Acts 16:25**) was singing and praying to God.

 a. Paul did much more than ask Christians to follow God’s commands; he provided a visible example for them (and us) to follow.

 B. PAUL’S CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME OF WRITING:

 1. Paul was in a distress. **Philippians 4:14**

2. His distress was probably his current imprisonment. **Philippians 1:7, 16**

a. We are given more information regarding his time in prison in **Acts 28:30, 31**.

 b. Admittedly, his arrangement doesn’t seem too terrible, but a prison is still a prison.

 3. **2 Corinthians 11:28** tells us he was constantly concerned for all the churches. This concern would not cease with him in prison. Notice some of his worries while in prison:

 a. **Philippians 3:1, 2** reminds us that there were false teachers trying to overthrow the faith of some.

 b. In his writings to the Colossian brethren, he spends a good amount of ink warning them of the “Colossian heresy”, and preaching to them the fullness of Jesus Christ.

 c. Not only did Paul have to worry about external forces disrupting the growth of the congregations, but he also had people from inside of the congregations not being able to get along. **Philippians 4:2, 3**

4. Clearly Paul did not enjoy the most comfortable of circumstances, yet his contentment was not affected because it was not tied or dependent on his circumstances.

 a. One of the more prominent themes in Philippians is joy/rejoicing. Don’t forget that he wrote this while in prison. Wow! That is true contentment.

 C. IS YOUR CONTENTMENT TIED TO EARTHLY CIRCUMSTANCES?

 1. Would you have an attitude like Paul’s if you had to walk in his shoes?

 a. I would like to think that I could remain cheerful, and that I wouldn’t allow it to bother me, but I wonder if I’d be more like **Matthew 19:16-22**?

 b. It is obvious that this man’s level of commitment and contentment only went so far. What about mine?

 2. When the stock market drops 354 points as it did on Thursday, are you still able to praise God for His goodness?

 a. It is likely that no one would literally curse God, but does money all of a sudden become our whole focus?

 3. When you don’t get that promotion, can you still be thankful you have a job?

 4. Are you miserable when you don’t have the newest gadget? Or car?

 5. Having a bad Monday? Can you join in with what Job says in **Job 1:21**?

**II. PAUL HAD CHRIST (WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED?). 4:12, 13**

A. POPULARITY AND CONTEXT OF PHILIPPIANS 4:13.

 1. Everyone has heard this verse.

 a. I’ve seen it on motivational posters, videos, and athlete’s eye black.

 b. It’s a good verse to know and live in its proper context.

 2. Paul isn’t saying he can hurdle mountains or that he possesses super human strength.

 3. Paul is giving evidence for how he has learned to be content.

 a. Through Christ and His power. Christ is crucial to contentment.

 4. Paul: I am content to be poor because I am rich (spiritually), and I have all I need.

 B. PAUL WAS WEALTHY IN CHRIST.

 1. **Philippians 3:7, 8**

a. After coming to know Christ, Paul was more than willing to “sacrifice” everything to gain Christ.

 2. **Philippians 1:21, 23**

a. Paul considered being with Christ a gain.

 3. **Ephesians 1:3**

a. Can you name something that Paul did not already possess?

 4. **2 Corinthians 12:8-10**

a. Paul was content with his sufferings because it meant being brought in a closer-knit relationship with Christ!

 C. ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH CHRIST?

 1. Is Christ our most valuable possession despite how much or how little we have?

 2. Moving away from the financial realm: If everyone forsakes you, save Christ, would you still be content?

 a. **2 Timothy 4:16, 17**. If many faithful brethren go after popular false teaching, and you are left in the minority, would you still be willing to cling to Christ and uphold His truth? **Hebrews 13:5, 6**

**III. PAUL HAD AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.**

A. CONSIDER THE POWER OF THIS MINDSET.

 1. Since Paul understood the brevity of this life, and the utter importance of the next, he could be content while: Because he understood he was a pilgrim, he could:

 a. Pressing on through temporary suffering. Paul could suffer **2 Corinthians 11:23-28** because of his perspective in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18**.

 b. Not being overly concerned with money. **1 Timothy 6:6-10** shows Paul viewing money through eternal lenses.

 B. LET’S LIVE OUUR LIVES WITH A VIEW TOWARDS ETERNITY.

 1. **Luke 12:15**

a. If we can recognize that our lives do not hinge on the quantity nor quality of our possessions, we will look more towards those things that do matter.

 b. Be content with what you have. Count your blessings. Be grateful.

 2. **Matthew 16:26**

a. Is your inability to live contently jeopardizing your soul?

 b. What are you exchanging for your soul?

**CONCLUSION:**

1) Contentment is a tremendous quality which Paul possessed, and we can too, if we follow his example. It is a learning process.

 2) Let’s realize that our physical circumstances should not dictate our contentment, but that having Christ and enjoying a heavenly perspective should.

 3) Just as we began in Philippians, let’s end there too. **Philippians 3:12-14**

a. We want to be content physically, yet never spiritually.

 4) Are you pressing towards the goal?

 a. If you have slowed down, we urge you to pick up the pace.

 b. If you haven’t begun the race, can we help you this evening?