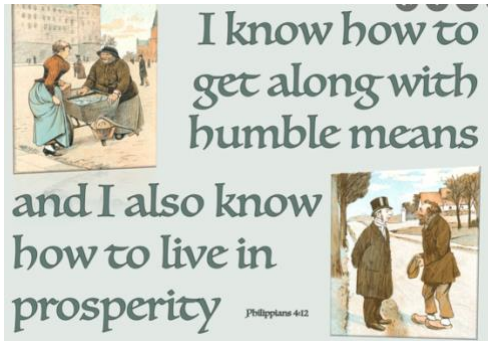


Ecclesiastes 5:11 "Where goods are increased, they are increased who eat them"



Philippian Generosity

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² 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. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Tonight we're going to talk about the beauty of realizing contentment. We'll also see that some of the greatest keys to realizing contentment include: 1) valuing our faith community, 2) Being satisfied with God's provision, and 3) Being steadfast in our confidence in the power and sovereignty of a God in our lives.

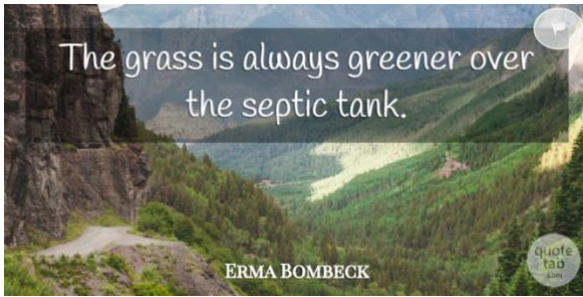
Many people think they want something they don't have. They think that getting that will make them happier. When I was a young man I heard the expression, "You're rich when you don't have what you want, but when you want what you have." That means that there is great delight in wanting no more than what you have. I think of it as saying, you're really rich when you desire, enjoy, and appreciate what you already have.

Wanting the greener grass on the other side of the fence is as old as human beings themselves. As I reflected on this passage, I remembered the time in the Bible when Abraham and his nephew Lot were having trouble finding enough good pasturage to feed their flocks. Abraham finally gave Lot the first choice on which grazing lands he wanted. The text in Genesis 13 tells us that he picked the lush green fertile fields,

¹⁰ And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. ¹¹ Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. (Genesis 13:10-11).

Lot wanted the land that looked good. The text tells us that it was well-watered. That's the piece that he wanted. Lot chose the best for himself. It's an interesting study

because God pretty much turned it into a wasteland with fiery brimstone, not soon after he chose what looked the best to him. Erma Bombeck who was a funny lady who wrote funny things used to say, “The grass is always greener over the septic tank.” That green lush grass might not be so nice when you get down to the bottom of it.



As we learned on Sunday, if you’re going to have a joyful life; you’re going to have to have a joyful thought life. The Bible tells us over and over that what we’ll think, we will do. Remember Jesus said, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

We need to be careful about what we’re thinking about. As we studied on Sunday, we should focus on that which is noble and righteous. We read that we’re to “meditate” or focus our mind on those positive things we looked at in Philippians 4:8. Solomon tells us, *“For as he [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7)*. That’s all about where we’re fixing our minds. There is a battle for our minds. Part of peace is contentment, and Paul is going to tell us **that contentment comes only through realizing that we can only handle want or plenty in a correct way, when we do it “through Christ”**.

A Feb 2022 Gallup poll shows discontentment In the US is on the rise. People have an itch they can’t seem to scratch. Only 69% of people are happy with their overall quality of life. You can see that it is trending down from 2020 until now.

	2020	2021	2022
	%	%	%
Aspects of U.S. life			
The overall quality of life	84	67	69
The opportunity for a person to get ahead by working hard	72	58	60
The influence of organized religion	59	48	48
The size and power of the federal government	38	31	32
The way income and wealth are distributed in the U.S.	43	36	30
Our system of government and how well it works	43	27	30
The size and influence of major corporations	41	26	26
The moral and ethical climate	32	18	20

The poll found that Americans were more dissatisfied in almost every category in 2022 than they were in 2020.

1

¹ <https://nypost.com/2022/02/02/most-americans-are-unhappy-with-economy-government-as-mood-poll-shows-glum-us/>

It seems like we're always looking for something that we don't have, thinking that it will make us happy. As I alluded to a few weeks ago, America is one of the countries with the greatest dissatisfaction. What do we feel we need more of? What is it that is missing in our hearts that keeps us yearning for more?

Paul had learned to be content in whatever circumstance that he found himself. As we read his words, it's amazing to remember that Paul was probably from a fairly affluent background. He had to have been wealthy to have studied under Rabbi Gamaliel. Paul had all the credentials that made him a Jew to be envied. But in these verses, we see this educated well-born, well-bred Jewish scholar learning to lean on nothing but his faith in Jesus. He had learned to not trust in his finances, his education, his pedigree, and his status. He had found the secret of being content. And in his contentment, he knew the peace that surpassed all worldly understanding.

Here are a few principles that might help your satisfaction level:

Be connected with God's people.

Be content with God's provision.

Be confident in God's power.

BE CONNECTED IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

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.

Ten years had passed and the little church was again supporting him. We don't know exactly what happened but they had lost touch with one another, and now they were back in contact. The church had sent a person named Epaphroditus who had come and ministered to Paul while he was in prison. He was a great encouragement to Paul. That brought the church joy and brought Paul joy.

It makes you joyful and brings joy to others.

There is no greater joy than helping others in a fellowship of believers. It fosters a feeling of family and caring. Just last week, many of you helped Stephanie keep the boys in Aaron's absence. You can be very down, but if you connect up with the family of God you will: 1) Be filled with joy, and 2) You'll be encouraged and they'll be encouraged. **Q: Are you plugged into the church or do you just float in and out? Who brings you joy? Whom do you call when you're in trouble?** This is going to sound a little weird, but if you want to be encouraged by your community of faith, then start

encouraging your community of faith. Be involved in the lives of those in this group. Start meeting people in this community that you don't know. Go out of your way to get to know them.

The problem in the modern church in America is that many believers are not belongers. They miss the joy of consistent fellowship. They come through and hear teaching, but they don't ever take the time to get to know the people sitting around them. Start by encouraging someone around you. Be a believer, not a drifter. I am not so concerned about our growth in numbers as I am about our growth in the Lord. Encouraging others will help you to grow in the Lord.

It brings you contentment when you encourage others.

Note also that Paul doesn't badger them about giving. When I was younger there was a well-known evangelist that locked himself up in a tower and said, "If I don't raise 8 million dollars in three months, God is going to kill me". He was blackmailing his supporters into giving more money. Paul never engaged in this kind of foolishness and neither do I. He just simply said, you cared for me in the past and here you are again supporting me in great measure.

BE CONTENT WITH GOD'S PROVISION

Contentment is not a matter of necessity. We think we NEED way more than we need. We don't know how to tell what a need is. Wants are not needs. God knows what you and I need.

The word "content" is **αὐτάρκης**, **English rendering = autárkēs** (meaning "sufficiency within") occurs only in Phil 4:11 where it refers to *positive* self-sufficiency (*inward adequacy*) – i.e. that comes through the indwelling power of Christ. You are content when Christ is your sufficiency. In Him, you are "self-sufficient". That is contentment.²

Paul is trying to say that he was content with whatever God chose to provide for him; nothing more and nothing less. Contentment doesn't come from what we have **but from realizing from whom we receive what we need**. Paul is telling us that life has its ups and downs. Paul is telling us that he has learned to live on both "sides of the track". Paul understood where it all came from whether it was want or need. Paul had gone from the top to the bottom, and he was okay with it. He had lost EVERYTHING for the cause of Christ. We need to stay close to the Lord to not fall under the illusion and delusion that more "stuff" will make us happier people. It is walking with Him and

² <https://biblehub.com/greek/842.htm>

realizing His sufficiency that brings contentment. It puts an end to restlessness. Contentment is all about perspective. When we can begin to view our circumstances and our condition through God's eyes, we can have great comfort and joy. Any suffering is temporary. We have an eternal weight of glory awaiting us.

BE CONFIDENT IN GOD'S POWER TO GET YOU THROUGH IT

Life is hard. The Bible tells us that it is hard. We were meant to live forever but not here on this earth. Our deepest inner joy can not depend on whether we are in want or need. It cannot depend on whether we are rich or poor. It can not depend on whether we are healthy or we are frail. Paul is shouting to us through the centuries telling us, **HOLD ON TO JESUS AND ONTO HIM ALONE. HE IS YOUR SUFFICIENCY.**

He is telling us, that he has let go and let God have it all. **"I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT. I CAN DO ALL THINGS (I CAN GET THROUGH ANYTHING) THROUGH JESUS WHO GIVES ME THE STRENGTH TO GET THROUGH IT ALL AND TO DO SO VICTORIOUSLY."**

What a friend we have in Jesus!

Let us pray.