

Contentment, Gratitude, and Satisfaction **Philippians 4:10-13**

We live in a society that believes the selfish lie that no one, especially me, should suffer from unfulfilled needs or wants. Suffering in our society is all about unfulfilled needs and wants—unfulfilled desires.

Right behind this is the exaggerated understanding of “rights” - *getting what I deserve*. Our society is not concerned with individual responsibilities towards others, but getting what is deserved, for it is my right.

These beliefs have also crept into the church. If your needs and wants are fulfilled, and your right to live with neither responsibility nor commitment is yours, then, you believe, that contentment is yours. Let's put it this way: fulfilled needs + fulfilled wants + fulfilled desires + no responsibility + no commitment = contentment. It's justme.

The health and wealth folks will offer you immediate freedom from pain, debt, and from the effects of sin, because, they argue, it is your right as a child of God. You deserve it.

If this is what contentment is all about, then why are so many people in society and in the church dissatisfied? Is this why calendars are full, and people are in deep debt. Is this why people are so critical? Is this why people are always whining and complaining.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-3, Paul lays down a sample of sins that flourish in the hearts of people, and one of those sins is being ungrateful. Ungratefulness is a form of discontentedness.

Discontentment is about being ungrateful.

Discontentedness and ingratitude go hand in hand. These are signs of unbelief. They are signs which say, “I don't trust you, God.”

Psalms 106 – The Israelites did not remember what God did, because they were not grateful. They were not remembering and not being grateful because they did not know (a relationship with) God. Not remembering (being grateful) plays a critical role in rebelling. Discontented people rebel. Whining and complaining, being critical, is all about “me”. It's self-worship, for all the focus is on you and not God.

Romans 1:18-32 also show this pattern. Low thoughts of God lead to no thoughts of God, and then to lofty thoughts of oneself and dissatisfaction with one's condition—that is a dissatisfaction with being made in the image of God. The more elevated the position an individual assigns to themselves, the more they feel they have need and want coming to them. The more they feel entitled. The more entitled one feels, the more whining, grumbling, complaining, and being critical one does. The entitled person is never satisfied—they are never content.

Contentment is about being grateful

So, how do we get on the road to contentment?

Colossians 2:6-7 - Paul commands you to walk (Your journey with Christ in this life; your relationship with Him) in Christ in the same manner that you received Christ. You and I

came to Christ in complete dependence on Him for strength, faith, eternal life, and sustaining grace. Now you and I live in Christ in complete dependence on Him for all things.

Your Christian walk with Christ is an extension of your gratitude to God. Your gratitude is based on who He is. You must be grateful for who He is, for everything which He does flows from his character.

If you love God only for what He does for you, then you only love yourself, for you see God only in terms of those things He does to improve the quality of your existence. This is not a relationship.

Gratitude strengthens your relationship with God and gives you confidence that you are His and that He is on your side. This is what Paul means by “learned” in verse 12. He learned to be content. How? By developing His relationship with God, which in turn gave Him the confidence to trust Him which turned him into a grateful person.

Gratitude gives you an assurance of your salvation. “If I am not grateful, then do I have salvation?” If your focus is always on you, then who is your God?

Unless you have an intimate relationship with God in Jesus Christ - that is knowing Him and His ways - gratitude will be far from your heart. When you know God, your heart will overflow with gratitude. Your obedience will also grow because your heart is already open in worshipful gratitude to the Father. Your life and words will proclaim the glory of God.

Contentment comes when your heart is emptied of the the vain “needs” and “rights” the American culture offers you, and then being filled with gratitude for what you have. And what you have is Christ in you. There is nothing else to possess but Christ in you. Only a constant, developing relationship with Christ brings contentment. If you do not understand that everything, including every breath you take and your salvation is a gift from God, then you are lost in yourself and in the constant pursuit of contentment which will never be yours.

Contentment comes not from having every need, want, and desire filled, but instead, contentment comes only if you realize that you deserve nothing at all.

There are no “rights” in the Kingdom of God. Contentment will not come from having your standard of living raised or the quality of your life raised.

Contentment comes only from having the desires of your hearts sanctified (purified) by knowing Christ who lives in you. Psalm 73:25

Anything that God gives you will be more than you deserve. Everything you have is a gift from God.

I don't know if you are struggling with being content, being satisfied, and/or being grateful, but you can be all of these because Christ lives in you. You can do all things because Christ gives you the strength.