

The Secret of Being Content

1. *It is not found in us;*
2. *It is found in Christ.*

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

One day, a financial planner sat down with a man to talk about his retirement plan. The financial planner looked all through the new client's paperwork. Finally, he said: *I've been reviewing all of your paperwork, and if I were you, I would be worried.* "Why do you say that?" the man replied.

"Well, on the one hand you have no debt, so that's good. On the other hand, you have no savings, no investments, no equity, because you move around all the time. You don't have an IRA or 401K. You are getting older. Doesn't any of this concern you? Aren't you worried?"

The client replied: *"Nope. I've learned the secret of being content."* The Client's name was the Apostle Paul. From a human standpoint, Paul should not have been content. He's even writing these words from prison, without a whole lot of hope of getting out of prison. There were times that God had really blessed him. There were other times he was in great need. Yet, Paul says: **"I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances."** What was his secret? How can we have the same contentment in our lives? Let us look at the words of our text under the theme: **"The Secret of Being Content."** *It is not found in us; 2. It is found in Christ.*

Contentment is a very illusive thing today. We think of contentment as something that is found just beyond our grasp. Therefore, contentment tends to be viewed in the context of possessions and power, or perhaps, prestige. If only I had.... I would be content. Except the problem is that the bar of contentment keeps moving. Once, we achieve something to make us content, there is always something else just beyond our reach. The first computer that I owned didn't even have a hard drive in it. Then I got one with a hard drive. Then I went from a monitor that had only gold letters on the screen to a color monitor. Then more memory. More space. Faster speed. Now the phone in my pocket is faster than any of them. How about our cars. At one time, I was just happy to have a car that got me from point A to point B. Now I like all the little conveniences found in my cars. It isn't wrong to enjoy all those blessings that God gives us. But if our trust is solely in the "things" of this life, that goal of being content will always keep moving further away from us – because there is always something better.

Where do we find "contentment?" The Greek word for "contentment" was a favorite word of Greek philosophers. It was a word that meant *"self-sufficiency."* They believed that each person's possessions and lot in life were determined by fate. People were to be *self-sufficient* and accept what they had been given. There really was no other choice. That's not the *contentment* that Paul is talking about. *Contentment* is not *self-sufficiency* but *God-sufficiency*. Contentment knows that God owns everything and then trusts that God will give us what we need to live. Therefore, what is the **secret** of being content in any and every situation? It all comes down to two things --- where is our focus and where is our trust? If it is on us – we will not be content. If it is on God – we will.

This took a while for the Apostle Paul to learn. **"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation."** Paul had to *learn by experience*. It took time. Even though God had miraculously changed Paul's heart to trust in Jesus, he still struggled with sin. He still wrestled with Satan and his sinful nature. Yet, over and over again he saw how God was going to take care of him in his life. He couldn't do it; but God could. **"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."**

As people tend to get older, you often see a shift happen in them. The things that they have accumulated in life don't mean as much any more. All that stuff that we have accumulated in our basements, attics, garages and sheds can't be taken with us when we die. The only thing that matters is the faith we have in Jesus. Where are we going to spend eternity? If it becomes dependent upon ourselves in getting there, we can't be sure. But if we depend on Christ, we can. That confidence in Christ bring contentment to our lives.

That doesn't mean that all our possessions are bad. It doesn't mean that we can't enjoy them. But those things alone are not going to bring contentment to our lives. Real contentment is found only in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul echoes that thought in the words: **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."** Paul's strength comes from God. Therefore, the secret to being content can only come from Christ. Christian Stewardship is not a money thing, it is a heart thing. It is about our hearts trusting Christ.

Pretend for a moment that there was once a wealthy man who possessed a wonderful and unique collection of art. This collection was worth millions of dollars. The man had only one son, whom he loved dearly. His intent was always to leave this collection for his son. But his son went off to war and was killed in action. Since he now had no other living heir to give his collection of art to, he stipulated in his Will that his art was to be auctioned off upon his death, but with the requirement that the portrait of his son be sold first. Eventually the man died. People came from all around the world to be able to buy his art collection. The man's lawyer told the crowd the Will of the man had stated that a portrait of his son needed to be auctioned first before any of the other pieces of art.

No one wanted the portrait of the man's son. They all wanted the *"good stuff."* Finally, a former servant in the house, who had loved and cared for the man's son, made an offer on the portrait of the son. It was the only bid. *"Going, going, gone."* As everyone was preparing to begin the real auction, the lawyer stood up and said that the auction was done. He told the crowd: *"The auction is now closed. According to the terms of the Will, whoever purchased the portrait of my son is to receive the rest of the collection as well."* The point of this story is simple: *"If you have the Son, you have it all."* If you have the Son of God, **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."** May the Lord help us to do all things through Christ. Amen.