

Date: February 28, 2021

Pastor Steven Hardy

Series: “How’s Your Attitude?”

Title: An Attitude of Contentment

Text: Philippians 4:10-14

Outline:

What it takes to feel content varies from person to person. Scientists have a term for it: “Subjective Well-Being” (SWB). Ed Diener, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology who has studied and written extensively on the subject of well-being, and notes, “To some degree people adapt to conditions so that over time our circumstances may not influence our happiness as much as one might predict they would.” In fact as Paul indicates here, there is a “secret” to be learned about SWB, or experiencing contentment.

I. Contentedness is **INDEPENDENT** of circumstances, 4:10-11.

A. Unusual happiness from **RECEIVING**, 4:10-11, 14, 17.

B. The experience of personal, “independent” **SUFFICIENCY**, 4:11.

II. Contentedness is a **LEARNED** attitude, 4:11-12.

A. Being content is not **NATURAL** and forces work against it.

B. Contentedness is learned through **TESTING**.

III. Contentedness is **DEPENDENT** on Christ, 4:13.

A. A popular verse correctly **APPLIED**, 4:13.

B. The secret is your relationship to **JESUS CHRIST**.

C. Christ **ENABLES** our experience of contentedness, “whatever”.

In our “flesh” we often seek contentment in comfortable circumstances and accumulated goods. Many of the “whatevers” of life tend to disrupt contentment. We need to cultivate our trust in the provision and care of our God so that we learn to be content, and thus are able to remain faithful and honoring to Christ through it all.



Observe an advertisement on TV or elsewhere together as a family (maybe more than one), and discuss how the content of the ad (message, imagery, etc.) tries to convince you that you need or deserve something. What is it they want you to buy? What reason or reasoning to they use to try to persuade you? Is there an effort to build a sense of discontent with what you have? Instead of that, focus on what you have and give thanks for God’s provision and care, in times of plenty and times of want. Read together Psalm 73 and discuss what brought the writer to a place of contentment.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT, STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Paul rejoices in the concern of the Philippian believers demonstrated by the recent gift received through Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18). But his rejoicing is not because he had needs that were met—though surely he would have had needs that this gift, whatever it entailed, did help provide for.

- What is it that makes Paul happy?
- This is related to the question of what he desires most—how is this reflected in his prayer found in Philippians 1:9-11?
- What does this indicate about the possibility of contentment irrespective of personal circumstances?
- So...what makes you happy?

2. Paul says he learned to be content in “whatever situation” he was in. Review the narrative of Paul’s various experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29, then the specific event at Philippi recorded in Acts 16:16-34.

- How many unfair and unjust actions against Paul can you list from the Acts 16 passage?
- Describe the spiritual condition of Paul in the midst of these circumstances, based on Acts 16:25.
- Would you say he was content in this “whatever”, and if so, what in this situation led to contentment?
- It is important to consider Acts 16:35-40. Does being content mean you don’t seek fair treatment when it is possible to do so?
- How does being content in “whatever” enable you to advocate for yourself in a right spirit (for instance, with respect rather than anger)?

3. In the context of Philippians 4, what does Paul mean when he says in v. 13 he can do “all things” through the one who strengthens him? What is the appropriate application of the principle behind the statement?

4. Review the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). Discuss how a lack of contentment might lead to breaking particular commandments. How important is it to rest content “in him who strengthens” the believer who is trusting in him?

NEXT WEEK: – “An Attitude of Generosity,” Philippians 4:14-20

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