

The Secret of Contentment **Philippians 4:10-20**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-19-2012

Introduction – Contentment is not incompatible with a hunger for more of God’s kingdom

Thomas Watson is a Puritan writer that I love. If you have never read his book, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, I recommend that you pick it up some in the next few years. It’s a wonderful read. In one of his books he wrote this: “Discontent keeps a man from enjoying what he doth possess.” It’s a very interesting observation, and I think most of us have witnessed the truth of it. You’ve probably seen a three-year-old child quite happy with the toy that she is playing with, *until* she catches sight of a different toy that another child has. Suddenly she is discontent, and she simply *must* have that other child’s toy. And a fight ensues. And when a parent intervenes and tells the girl that she needs to play with her own toy, she cries, fusses, and acts as if she will be utterly miserable until she can have the new toy. Discontent keeps a person from enjoying what he or she already possesses. Jesus said that He came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). But we can never enjoy life to its fullest until the first catechism is true of us, and our chief end in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And so this morning I want to talk about the elusive secret of contentment. But I also want to show how it is not at all incompatible with God’s call to never stop longing for more holiness, and to never stop advancing His kingdom, and to never stop hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If you are longing for something (which God calls us to do) it seems to imply a certain *discontentment* with at least what *we* are and what this *world* is. We pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We are not content with the way things are on planet earth. God has placed within us a holy discontentment with anything that is contrary to God, God’s will, or God’s goals in history. So which is it: contentment or lack of contentment?

I. Paul’s contentment did not come naturally

But the presence of both of these things highlights a central distinction between counterfeit contentment and Biblical contentment. Counterfeit

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contentment has no yearnings or longings for God. Let me read William Barclay's summary of the Stoic philosophy of contentment that had such a negative influence on some of the monastics, and I think you will see how sharp a contrast there is between the two. He said,

The Stoics... proposed to eliminate all desire... They [also] proposed to eliminate all emotion until people had reached a stage when they did not care [that's a key phrase in understanding the Stoic concept of contentment – “they did not care”] what happened either to themselves or to anyone else. Epictetus says: “Begin with a cup or a household utensil; if it breaks, say: ‘I don't care.’ Go on to a horse or pet dog; if anything happens to it, say, ‘I don't care.’ Go on to yourself, and if you are hurt or injured in any way, say, ‘I don't care.’ If you go on long enough, and if you try hard enough, you will come to a stage when you can watch your nearest and dearest suffer and die and say, ‘I don't care.’” [And Barclay goes on to say,] The Stoic aim was to abolish every feeling of the human heart. (p. 99)

That's horrible. That is not contentment. That is indifference. Biblical contentment is compatible with weeping and joy, with sorrow and happiness. Paul was not talking about a passionless existence. He was *very* passionate about life. But he had contentment. The Stoic version of contentment had no initiative and no vision. It was basically a life that had the wind taken out of its sails. But the person with Biblical contentment has vision, longings, and a heightened ability to enjoy life. As I mentioned earlier, Jesus said, **“I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”** A person with Biblical contentment can go to the restaurant like Kathy and I did this past week and thoroughly enjoy new experiences, while never giving up contentment.

And that contrast is confusing to some people. So today's sermon is going to try to answer the questions, “What is contentment? How do we get Biblical contentment? How can we find joy in contentment without becoming passive or without lacking vision? And for that matter, how can we have the contentment that the Philippians had even though they were in the midst of persecution?”

And I thought I would start by describing its opposite - sinful discontentment. We see it everywhere – in the movies, in the comics, at the grocery store. You see little children who must have everything that is on the shelves. One of the recurrent winter themes in the comic strips is the Christmas wish list being sent to Santa Claus, and there is always some child who has a whole box load of computer printouts for a wish list. No matter how much we have there is always more that we want if we lack contentment. And it is easy for us adults to turn a list, a catalogue, an advertisement, or simply the sight of a toy that someone else has into a

reason for discontentment. And suddenly some of the joy of living has been removed. And like the child in the first picture in your outline, you are suddenly miserable.

I was going to say more on point I, but I think it is fairly obvious by now. This contentment does not come naturally. Verse 11 says, “**I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.**”

II. The Radical Nature Of Paul’s Contentment

Well, when you understand the kinds of poor states that Paul was in, those are amazing words. Think about Paul’s circumstances. Paul was a prisoner in Caesarea (at least on my understanding of the chronology), and yet he had learned to say, “**I have learned in *whatever* state I am, to be content.**” That’s radical. Four years earlier he told the Corinthians “**We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake.**” He lived on the edge of death all the time, and yet he had learned to say, “**I have learned in *whatever* state I am, to be content.**” One year later, in 2 Corinthians 6, he chronicled his life in this way: “**In much endurance, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings...**” Could Paul really mean that he had found contentment in even *those* circumstances? Surely this is hyperbole – please let it be hyperbole! Well, in that chapter he said that he had contentment in precisely those circumstances. How is that possible? In 2 Corinthians 11 he said,

in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: deep concern for all the churches.”

If you are excusing your discontentment with how bad your life is, think of Paul’s. And I am not bringing these things up to discourage you. This is not something you can produce in yourselves. This is a gift of God’s supernatural grace. And if God’s grace was sufficient to enable Paul to be content in his circumstances, God’s grace is sufficient for you.

III. It was something that Paul had to learn (v. 12)

And if you look at verse 12, there is a word there that shows how foreign this is to the natural realm. **“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.”** That verb “I have learned” is a fascinating verb in the Greek and is translated more literally in the NIV as “I have learned the secret.” The Greek word is *μυήθημι* from *μύθος*. And it was a technical word used by the mystery religions for being initiated into their secrets. It was learning their secrets. That’s the only definition in the dictionary. So Paul borrows that common word to indicate that he had been initiated into the secrets of contentment. Well, all by itself that word indicates that you are not going to gain that supernatural contentment without going to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not natural; it is supernatural.

IV. The Graces That Accompany Contentment

A. Joy in all Circumstances (v. 4)

To get an idea of what this grace looks like, I have listed six supernatural graces that always accompany it. The first grace is joy. The whole book is filled with comments on joy. He speaks of his joy in verse 10 even though he is in prison. In verse 4 he says that we must **“Rejoice in the Lord always.”** Every one of us can say that we rejoice (at least sometimes), but only the person who has learned contentment can rejoice in the Lord *always*. The child who has learned contentment can find joy in playing with her own toy and find joy that her sibling is playing with a better toy. The truly contented person is not ruffled by circumstances. He never says, “If only God would let me get married, I would be joyful. If only God would give me more money, I would be joyful. If only God would give me better parents, I would be joyful.” And Paul says, “No.” His joy comes from God and is not conditioned upon circumstances. 2 Corinthians 8:2 gives this remarkable phrase: **“in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy”** was manifested.

At the previous church I had an elder who would ask me from time to time, “Phil, do you still have the joy of the Lord?” He knew it was a good barometer of where my walk with God was. And if we think, “Well, I’d be joyful if it wasn’t for these afflictions,” we need to remind ourselves of 2 Corinthians 8:2 – **“in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy”** was manifested. Again, this is not to make us feel guilty. There is no *point* in feeling guilty. We can’t produce that joy. I want to raise a longing in

your heart to enter into more of God's supernatural inheritance that Jesus has purchased for you, and this is part of that inheritance. Biblical contentment is supernatural, and we must get it supernaturally from the Lord. Now, that is the *last* point. We will get to that in a bit. But the point I am making *now* is that if you lack the joy of the Lord, the likelihood is that you also need to be initiated into the secret of contentment.

B. Gentleness (v. 5)

Verse 5 speaks of gentleness. That is another grace that is always seen present with contentment. **“Let your gentleness be known to all men.”** Paul has a way of being difficult, doesn't he? If he had just said, “Let your gentleness be known” we could all say, “Hey, I pass that test.” Every one of us can be gentle at least occasionally. But Paul says, **“Let your gentleness be known to all men.”** That includes the kids when you are tempted to whale into them. That includes the spouse when she has pushed your button. Harshness flows from a spirit that is frustrated and lacks contentment. So if you don't have gentleness, the likelihood is that you need to be initiated into the secrets of Paul's contentment. I'm giving you this preparatory material so that you can examine your heart and if you come up short, so that you will long for this contentment and cry out to God for it.

C. Lack of Anxiety (v. 6)

One of the things that Paul had learned to put off was anxiety. That has been one of my besetting sins that I need to constantly guard my heart against. And Philippians 4:6-9 gives three steps that enable us to enter more and more into that supernatural peace that guards our hearts against anxiety. He calls us to pray rightly, think rightly, and act rightly. Those are simple steps that any of us can take, but we try to sneak in a few more steps that aren't Biblical at all. For example, we might think that if we could only have a salary that was \$30,000 more we would no longer have anything to be anxious about. That's another step I need before I can find peace. But Paul says, No. **“Be anxious for nothing,”** and that includes your finances. We might think that anxiety might leave us if only we could live in less tense times, or have better health, or have better neighbors, or [and you can fill in the blank of what it is that makes you anxious].” The very things that tend to make us anxious are also in some way tied to discontentment. We think, “But I wouldn't be anxious if only I had something different.” Can you see the connection?

D. Peace (v. 7)

The same is true of the peace that verse 7 calls us to have. How could Paul have peace of mind and soul when he was locked up in a jail? According to Paul you can have it when you have the reality of God's supernatural presence in your life. And when you have God's presence, you not only have contentment, you also have peace. Verse 7 says, “**and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding** [in other words, it is a peace that you cannot explain on purely psychological terms – *that* peace], **will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**” If you have the secret to gaining that supernatural peace, you automatically have the secret to gaining contentment. These are graces that are tightly knit together. They are supernatural graces that come from walking in the Spirit.

E. Patience (v. 10)

There is a similar connection with patience. Verse 10 has the phrase “**at last**,” and commentators indicate that there had been a long wait (three years to be specific – if he was writing this from Caesarea; ten years if he was writing it in Rome). He was patiently waiting between the first financial support the Philippians had given to him and this second gift that he is talking about. But Paul's contentment enabled him to wait patiently. Or another way of looking at it is that if you are discontented, you are automatically going to be impatient. You can't have one without the other.

F. Gratitude (vv. 10ff)

Why do I say that *gratitude* is tied to contentment? Contentment does not mean that Paul didn't enjoy more when it came his way. The very fact that he was contented made him appreciate the new gift without the negative emotions that might have clouded appreciation if he had been anxious or impatient or had thought that people owed him something. The contented person is the one most likely to be grateful for gifts that he knows he has not right to expect.

V. The Secret to Having Contentment

A. The key to contentment is possessing God Himself (1:21; 3:8-14; 4:13)

So what is the secret to contentment and all of these accompanying graces? The key is possessing God Himself. In chapter 1:21 Paul said, “**For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**” When you have put your trust

in Jesus, Jesus ushers you into friendship with God, and God Himself becomes your new passion, and you rejoice in what He gives because He has given it. And you rejoice in what He takes away because even the losses that you sustain produce gain in one way or another. Why? Because God is for you, and He works all things together for your good – yes, even your losses. And the illustration that Paul gives is of death. Most people think of death as the ultimate loss – the loss of everything visible. But because Paul was united to Jesus, even death was gain because it ushered him into the incredible glories of heaven that Jesus has purchased for us.

Look at chapter 3:8-14. Paul said,

Philippians 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

If you have Christ you have everything you need for life and for eternity. Even when everything is taken away you can be content. He goes on...

Philippians 3:9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Paul is saying that the beginning of contentment comes through salvation. When we realize that we have been rescued from hell and are now destined for heaven (simply because of faith in Jesus), it puts the present needs into perspective. There isn't anything bad on earth that could compare to the torments of hell, right? And there isn't anything wonderful on earth that can compare to the glories of heaven. When we realize that we have been rescued from slavery to sin and to Satan and that we have been adopted into God's family and are legally counted as righteous in Jesus, there isn't anything in life that we would trade for that. When we realize that we were once alienated from God and counted as His enemies, but are now by faith in Jesus ushered into friendship with God, how could we complain about anything that comes from His hand? In Jesus we have everything that we need for life and godliness. He connects us to God and to God's overflow of joy, peace, love, power, wisdom, and fulfillment. Don't settle for the counterfeit virtues in Bennett's *Book of Virtues*. Go for the real thing. That's why Paul says that from the moment of conversion and onwards, his goal and passion in life became chapter 3, verse 10:

Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

When verse 10 becomes your passion – to know Jesus and to know His power, you have the key to contentment. Do have needs? If you have Jesus, your needs will be provided in His perfect timing. Chapter 4:19 says,

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Do you lack love for others? Philippians 1:9 says that God is able to make your love abound still more and more. He can enable you to love the unlovable. Do you struggle as you seek to overcome besetting sins? Philippians 2:13 tells us that **“it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”** This is not simply theory; this is the reality of God’s supernatural presence in your life moment by moment.

However, it is not automatic. Even as a believer, if you are not walking in God’s Spirit you cannot possibly experience the overflow of His life. It’s one of the reasons why 1 Corinthians 10 treats murmuring, complaining, and grumbling as such a serious sin. It robs us of the life more abundant that flows to those who by faith walk in the Spirit. The moment we give in to that complaining spirit and any of the other negative emotions that are inconsistent with faith, we become like that little girl in picture #1. She’s the picture of us.

But let me give you an adult story that you can perhaps relate to. Tom and Mabel Willey were missionaries in the village of El Valle, Panama. When they first moved there, they lived in a mud hut with a thatched roof and a dirt floor – that was it. And Mabel had never lived in anything so bare. She thought, “A dirt floor?!” Tom was often out and about, visiting the Indians, and so Mabel found herself stuck at home taking care of the family without any of the conveniences that she had grown up with. She didn’t have a decent stove, decent diapers, decent floor, decent bed, decent anything. And it was getting to her. The lack of privacy was getting to her. They were a curiosity to the villagers, who often came around to stare at her. And of course, she couldn’t speak their language yet. When the children came in from playing, they were covered with little brown insects. She tried to remove them one by one, sometimes using a dab of Kerosene to make them let go. And everything was so small and dirty.

One evening after the children were in bed, Mabel was overcome with emotion. She ran outside, sat down on an old stump, and started sobbing her heart out and complaining to the Lord, and saying,

“Lord, all I ever wanted was a beautiful home. Is this my beautiful home? This mud hut with a thatched roof and creatures falling from the ceiling? And what about my children? Can I bear this for them?”

Kneeling down by the stump she continued weeping and praying. Suddenly it seemed as if the Lord spoke to her and asked, “Can you not live in this mud hut for me? Remember what I have done for you.”

And it suddenly flooded over her all that God had done for her. He had provided so many blessings that she was no longer focusing upon. All she had been focusing on were the endless needs. And needs are always endless, aren't they? And she realized that she had so much more than the natives, and she had salvation, and she had plenty of food, and she had God's protection. And her heart was touched to the point where she said, "Yes, Lord. I can live in this mud hut for you. I give my desire for a beautiful home, my children, my husband – all of us – to you. Do with me what you will."

She later recalled the change that came over her. She wrote:

"Suddenly, peace surrounded me. I rose from my knees and that mud hut might have been a mansion since my Lord had placed me there. It looked altogether different to my eyes. I saw what could be done to make it a home. I thought of the verse, 'Two men looked through prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars.' God showed me the stars."

B. The evidences of contentment are the evidences of a walk with God

1. Stand fast in the Lord (v. 1)

What was it that ushered her into the supernatural peace, joy, satisfaction, and contentment that she had been totally lacking only moments before? I mean, it was a rather sudden change. Let me outline those things for you, because they are the same things that Paul has been talking about in Philippians 4.

Verse 1 says, "**Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.**" The needs of life were drawing Mabel's heart away from the Lord and into complaining. And by faith she determined to reverse that and to stand fast in the Lord no matter what, and at that moment, the sense of God's presence was renewed. Standing fast in the Lord takes an act of the will to quit doing what your emotions are telling you to do, and to stand like a soldier in faithfulness to God. It is what Hebrews calls the obedience of faith. It's an action of faith.

2. Gain a new perspective of the value of those who irritate you (vv. 1-3)

Secondly, God helped her to regain an appreciation for the people around her that were irritating her – people whom Christ died for; people who were loved just as unconditionally as God loved her.

In verse 1 Paul modeled an unconditional love and in verses 2-3 he encouraged them to imitate his love in their relationships to each other.

Philippians 4:2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Apparently they had been irritating each other and quarrelling with each other. And Paul wanted them to think of each other *in the Lord*. I am united to the Lord and she is united to the Lord and I must embrace all whom Christ embraces. How I treat her I am treating Christ. And Paul goes on to say in verse 3,

Philippians 4:3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.

When you feel like you need a break from difficult people, it helps to remind yourself of how God looks at them. Their names are written in the book of life just like yours are. And we are called to embrace all whom Christ embraces with the same forgiveness and love that God showed to us.

3. Give over to God the things you “need” for joy and seek your joy from God’s presence (v. 4)

The third thing she did was to give over to God the things that she thought would bring her joy and to seek her joy from God’s presence. She gave God her desires for a house, she gave her husband, her children, and herself. That’s the only way it is possible to obey verse 4 and to rejoice in the Lord always. If we reverse that and try to find our joy in creation without the Creator, we have idolatry, and God never allows His children to be contented with idols. Automatically, our face is going to be like the face of that little girl in picture number 1. But when we submit to God and give up all things to Him, Mark 10 says that God can trust us to be good stewards, and He will give all kinds of things back to you 100-fold.

4. Resolve to stop lashing out and leave the outcome to God (v. 5)

The fourth thing that Mabel did was to stop lashing out at the unfairness of people, the unfairness of circumstances, and the unfairness of God Himself. Instead of lashing out, she quieted herself before God and left the results in God’s hands. And verse 5 talks about that – “**Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.**” Don’t lash out; leave it in God’s hands.

5. Adjust the way you pray (vv. 6-7)

The fifth thing she did was to adjust the way that she prayed – and it was a radical adjustment. She started off by complaining bitterly against the Lord and grumbling. Where was her focus in her first prayer? It was on the things she didn't have. She was complaining. And we already know that God doesn't tend to listen to grumbling. Look at the way verse 6 is worded:

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

When you fret in prayer, you aren't praying in faith; you're not grateful; you're not thankful. But when you offer up prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* it is impossible to grumble. In fact, the more time you spend thanking God for who He is, the more likely you are to rediscover your joy and contentment. Too many times when we pray our focus is on the problem rather than on the goodness and greatness of the God who supplies our needs. And God is honored to meet our needs (including joy, peace, and contentment), when we adjust our prayer life. In verse 7 he says that as a result of praying rightly,

Philippians 4:7 the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

6. Adjust the way you think (v. 8)

The sixth thing that Mabel Willey did was to adjust the way she thought. Her particular adjustment was to see her sacrifices as a gift for God. She thought God was saying, "Can you not live in this mud hut for me?" "Do it for *Me*." Well, she loved God, and she was willing to do anything for God, so she in effect said, "Yes, Lord. I can live in this mud hut for you." *If it's for you that's OK. If God will receive it as a gift, why yes, I will give him any gift that he wants.* It's adjusting your thinking. And your thinking might need to be adjusted in several places. You might have to start a think list where you put off negative thinking and you replace it with thinking that is consistent with faith. When you do that, God is honored, and He is pleased to usher you into His joy. So verse 8 says,

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

If you struggle with the things of this sermon, start a list of negative thoughts and words that you need to put off and next to that list make another list of positive things that you need to start thinking and affirming.

7. Take responsibility for your actions (v. 9)

The seventh thing that Mabel did was to own up to her bad attitudes and to take responsibility for her actions. Verse 9

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

8. Submit to God's will and His timing (v. 10; 1:15-18; etc.)

The eighth thing that she did was to submit to God's will and His timing. She said, "Do with me what you will." That's submission.

And Paul had the same attitudes toward God. In verse 10, he had submitted to God's timing. In chapter 1 he submitted to God's will in causing the Gospel to go forward through those who loved him and through those who despised him, and Paul said, either way, "**whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.**" And there are other examples of Paul's submission to doing God's will. When we are willing to submit, God delights in filling our hearts with peace, joy, and contentment. And that's what Mabel automatically found when God became her chief possession. She submitted to His will and His timing and found His peace.

9. Don't focus on needs; focus on the Christ who can help you during time of need and take you out of need (vv. 11-13)

The ninth thing that she did was to adjust her thinking from her needs to God and what God wanted. And it's odd, but I have noticed it in my own life too – when I focus on my needs I become discontent (like that little girl), and when I focus on God, I find joy and contentment in the good things that He gives. And in the same way, Paul said, "**Not that I speak in regard to need.**" He had the need, but his focus was on Christ.

John MacArthur has pointed out that our culture has become a needs driven culture. Advertising creates "needs" in us that we never knew we had. There are millions of women who didn't want to be liberated, but for the past 100 years they have been told that they need to be liberated. There are millions of young people who want to stay pure but who are told that they needed to be liberated sexually or they would have repressed egos. We are told that our children need their own bedrooms. We need privacy and a

host of other things that would have mystified our forefathers. There is a popular book out there for married couples called *His Needs, Her Needs*. It's a needs-based book that indicates that until our needs are met, we can never be happy in marriage. Freud, Maslow and other psychologists and psychiatrists have based their respective theories on various needs that men, women and children have. Almost every psychology is need driven. But the Bible assures you that it will be impossible to find contentment when your focus is on needs rather than on the Lord. Paul said, "**Not that I speak in regard to need.**" If all that we are and all that we have is not wrapped up in God and His kingdom, then the alternative is that it is going to be wrapped up in us.

Paul was wrapped up in something that was far larger than himself. As he wrote this epistle, Paul was in prison saying that he had everything that he needed to glorify God and to enjoy him - everything. He said, "**Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**" Paul was saying, "I have a little food and a little drink and a place to lay down with a blanket. In fact, I've got a personal guard who protects me from marauders. Come to think of it, I've got a free room and a roof over my head. And God has given me a captive audience of soldiers who have to listen to my witnessing. And this has led in chapter 1 of Philippians to many in Caesar's household having become Christians. Paul was saying, "Yes. I am content because needs don't drive me. I've got a servant's heart that looks to responsibility to God rather than need."

10. Focus on the blessings we have in Christ (vv. 10-13)

Tenth, Mabel Willey's response to God's statement, "Remember what I have done for you," was to realize how ungrateful she had been for the incredible blessings of the Lord. She had forgotten.

Now, I have teased apart the various strands of what Mabel did into ten different things, but it all happened in a moment of time. It was all just a simple prayer of submission to God and faith in His goodness. So, while understanding what happened is a bit more complicated (and I've tried to tease that apart for you), your ability to enter into Mabel's contentment and into Paul's contentment is quite simple. Thessalonians refers to it as turning from idols and serving God; it is possessing God by faith in Jesus and submitting your life to Him. When you possess the Creator of all things you don't need to worry about those "all things." Jesus said, "**seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**"

Conclusion

Let me conclude by saying that we really must remind ourselves of these truths every day. It is the pathway to joy. And you would think that once we have experienced the supernatural presence of the Lord like Mabel Willey experienced it, that we would never struggle with this issue again. But we do. As many times as I have experienced the supernatural joy and presence of the Lord, I still find myself occasionally growing dry like David did. We live in this world, and this world pulls on us. So the fight for contentment is a daily fight to possess our chief possession – God, and to find joy and satisfaction in Him.

So if you are that little girl that we started with who sees a toy or something else that you simply must have, and that discontentment has robbed you of your joy, please put on the principles we have looked at this morning and be renewed in Him. Amen.

The Secret of Contentment

Philippians 4:10-20

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 8-19-2012

Introduction – Contentment is not incompatible with a hunger for more of God’s kingdom

- I. Paul’s contentment did not come naturally
- II. The Radical Nature Of Paul’s Contentment

- III. It was something that Paul had to learn (v. 12)
- IV. The Graces That Accompany Contentment
 - A. Joy in all Circumstances (v. 4)
 - B. Gentleness (v. 5)
 - C. Lack of Anxiety (v. 6)
 - D. Peace (v. 7)
 - E. Patience (v. 10)
 - F. Gratitude (vv. 10ff)
- V. The Secret to Having Contentment
 - A. The key to contentment is possessing God Himself (1:21; 3:8-14; 4:13)

 - B. The evidences of contentment are the evidences of a walk with God
 - 1. Stand fast in the Lord (v. 1)
 - 2. Gain a new perspective of the value of those who irritate you (vv. 1-3)
 - 3. Give over to God the things you “need” for joy and seek your joy from God’s presence (v. 4)
 - 4. Resolve to stop lashing out and leave the outcome to God (v. 5)
 - 5. Adjust the way you pray (vv. 6-7)
 - 6. Adjust the way you think (v. 8)
 - 7. Take responsibility for your actions (v. 9)
 - 8. Submit to God’s will and His timing (v. 10; 1:15-18; etc)
 - 9. Don’t focus on needs; focus on the Christ who can help you during time of need and take you out of need (vv. 11-13)
 - 10. Focus on the blessings we have in Christ (vv. 10-13)

Conclusion

