

The Return of the King Revelation 6-19

Unleashing the Power of Contentment into My Life & Ministry

Phil. 4:11-19

We were saved to serve God; but Satan wants to distract us from God using the world's allurements. One of the greatest needs in life is contentment. Contentment comes only by the application of the doctrines of God to my life.

Any lack of contentment signals a deficiency in experiencing God's truth in my life. Just as prayerfulness reflects **how much we need God**, so our:

Contentment Reflects How Well We Know God

There are three key truths about God that when embraced by choice in our lives, releases contentment into our lives. Those truths are: the goodness of God, the omniscience of God, and the omnipotence of God.

When those truths are held to, then we accept our personal unworthiness, we mortify our personal worldliness, we pursue our friendship with God, and then we enjoy more and more satisfaction in God.

Contentment is satisfaction with God's goodness, omniscience, and omnipotence.

Contentment produces a peaceful, thankful, and happy-with-what-you-have: type of life. Contentment unleashes God's power into my life and ministry: no matter how bad or good it is.

Among all the saints of the Bible, Paul was probably one of the greatest of God's servants. The vast majority of all believers down through the past two thousand years have been taught by Paul's Epistles, or came to Christ through one of Paul's spiritual children. He started more churches in the early days, traveled more miles, and did more for the spread of Christ's church, than any other. How was Paul so effective? Maybe it was because of:

Paul's Testimony on Contentment

How did Paul resist the materialism of the Roman Empire, and not get infected with the greed for things and the lust for comforts? He gives his testimony in Philippians 4. The lessons are very powerful.

Paul had learned to live with what he had, not for what he wanted. Contentment is learned, Paul said; and it comes by surrender. As we open to Philippians 4:11, and invite God to speak to us through His Word, we can listen to and learn Paul's secret.

Please stand as we give our full attention to God as He speaks to us:

Philippians 4:11-19 (NKJV) 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. 14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. 18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. 19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Paul writes out his testimony here in these verses, about his pathway that brought him to be an amazing tool for the Lord. To unleash such power:

God Used Contentment in Paul's Life & Ministry

Look at these simple points that Paul makes:

- Contentment ***permits me*** satisfaction with little v. 11.
- Contentment ***provides me*** independence from my circumstances v. 12
- Contentment ***prepares me*** for experiencing the power of God v. 13.
- Contentment ***preoccupies me*** with the needs of others v. 14-19.

One verse that just leaps off the page in this passage is v. 13. Listen to how others have translated and paraphrased this verse:

- "I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me" (J.B. Phillips).
- "I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power" (Ken Taylor, Living Bible).
- "I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency" (Amplified).

No matter which translation you prefer, they all say the same thing: we as believers have Christ's power ready for any of the demands of life. But, this power is only released by faith.

How can we each get started being enrolled in the school of contentment like the one Paul graduated from?

Paul's Course Guide to Learning Contentment

There are seven courses that Paul had to take in the School of Contentment.

We know Paul learned these truths because he either wrote about them or reflected them as lessons learned from the Word.

Embrace the Goodness of God. God is good all the time; and all the time, no matter what happens: God is good. Can you say that God is good all the time? Godliness is an attitude whereby what we want is to please God. Contentment, explains J.I. Packer, "is essentially a matter of accepting from God's hand what He sends because we know that He is good and therefore it is good". That is just Rom. 8:28 in action, embracing the God who works all things together for His good.

Rest Upon the Omniscience of God. God knows all past, present, and future events. Either we believe God, or by our fearful actions deny Him. Luke 12:30 (NKJV) For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and **your Father knows** that you need these things.

Trust the Omnipotence of God. God has the power and authority to do anything with us or anyone else that He wants to. As Hannah prayed in 1 Sam. 2:7, it is the Lord who makes us prosper or allows us to struggle.

Remember My Personal Unworthiness. Jeremiah states it so well in Lam. 3:22 when he reminded all of us that it is just God's mercy that keeps any of us from being consumed by His wrath on sin. No one is worthy of anything but Hell. Remembering that truth every day, is a powerful antidote to pride, ingratitude, and feeling entitled to anything.

Mortify My Personal Worldliness. James reminded the First of all churches, the one in Jerusalem, that friendship with the world, especially that which causes us to lust for what we don't have: makes God our enemy (James 4:4).

Pursue Friendship with God. James went on to say that each time we draw near to God He draws nearer to us (James 4:8). Jesus said that when we love Him enough to obey Him

God reveals more and more of Himself to us (John 14:21).

Enjoy Being Satisfied by God. David said that awakening in the likeness of God was his desire (Ps. 17:15). But Paul says it best right back in Philippians 4. God supplied his needs, God made him content no matter what. Paul said that no matter what comes, what I face: my God supplies me. I am satisfied.

History records how this satisfied by God conviction helped the 4th Century pastor named Chrysostom as he faced the Roman emperor, who threatened the pastor with banishment for fearlessly proclaiming the Word of God:

“Thou canst not banish me for this world is my father’s house.” “But I will slay thee,” said the Emperor. “Nay, thou canst not,” said the noble champion of the faith, “for my life is hid with Christ in God.” “I will take away thy treasures.” “Nay, but thou canst not for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there.” “But I will drive thee away from man and thou shalt have no friend left.” “Nay, thou canst not, for I have a friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee; for there is nothing that thou canst do to hurt me.”¹

How do we learn to be content and satisfied in God like that; and then model and teach how to avoid getting re-infected with materialism to our families?

Contentment Must Become a Learned Way of Life

One of the best ways to start is to do a study of 1 Timothy 6:6–17, which describes seven principles that promote contentment by resisting materialism.

Principle 1—Remember that things are only temporary: *Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out (1 Timothy 6:6–7).*

You cannot take it with you. There are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses.

“Discontent will destroy your peace, rob you of joy, make you miserable, spoil your witness. We dishonor God if we proclaim a Savior who satisfies and then go around discontent.”

They who are content do not have to worry about the latest styles or what to wear tomorrow. They can rejoice in their neighbor’s good fortune without having to feel inferior. They do not fret with wrinkles or graying because they accept what comes.

¹ Henry Hart Milman, *History of Christianity*, Vol. 4 (New York: Crowell, 1881), p. 144.

They do not have to worry how they might buy this or that because they have no desire for this or that. They have time for gratitude even in small things. They have time for relationships because possessions and the bank do not own them.²

Principle 2—Only seek necessities, and wait for the rest: *Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content (1 Timothy 6:8).*

We need shelter and the basic provisions of life, but everything beyond that is simply a great blessing. Whether it comes or goes is okay. God has said that all we are supposed to expect in life are food and clothing, so we should be happy with that.

Principle 3—Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity: *Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and many foolish and harmful lusts, For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:9–10).*

America has been fed a prosperity diet. You might say, “That is not me—I am not rich.” If you own a car, you are rich. Ninety-five percent of the people in the world can’t afford a car. Your watch and the clothes you have on are worth more than what hundreds of millions of people on earth have.

Principle 4—Flee materialism: *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness (1 Timothy 6:11).*

Do you seek to accumulate possessions—or to grow in Christlikeness? Value what will count for eternity!

Principle 5—Cling to eternal life: *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called. Keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing (1 Timothy 6:12, 14).*

We need a whole generation of people who are holding tighter to eternal life than they are to this world.

If we’re not careful, before long our possessions can possess us. They then become an anchor that holds us back. The care of riches clouds our minds from seeking the purity of Christ.

Principle 6—Fix your hope on God: *Command those who are rich not to be haughty, nor*

² Packer as quoted by Swenson, Margin, p.194-5.

to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God (1 Timothy 6:17).

There is nothing wrong with wealth, but we are to recognize the danger of relying upon it. All that we own can evaporate as quickly as a blip on a computer screen. There are few things that are real possessions in this world; but the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy, can never fail us—and our trust in Him is certain!

Principle 7—Give until it hurts: *Let them do good, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:18–19).*

The real cure for materialism is to give until it hurts! Giving “until it hurts” means giving at the cost of personal sacrifice. For example, the widow gave both of her mites, or all that she had (Mark 12:42–44). The woman who anointed Jesus broke the flask of fragrant oil and irrecoverably gave all she had to Him (Luke 7:37–47). Sacrificial gifts are especially important to Jesus.

That is why the last words that John wrote in 1 John, should speak to each of us:

1 John 5:20-21 (NKJV) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 **Little children, keep yourselves from idols.** Amen.

Contentment Resists Coveting

Do you remember the 10th of the Ten Commandments? Almost all of us at one time or another, have learned these words. Why not repeat the 10th commandment with me now:

Exodus 20:17 (NKJV) *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”*

In 21st Century terms, God is saying watch out for those dangerous desires that can ruin your life, destroy your eternal legacy, and pierce you through with many pains:

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house”.*
Don’t long for all the bigger, better, beautiful, spacious, comfortable houses you’ve seen and don’t have.

Don’t wish for it, or get a second job to earn more money for it, or spend all

your time looking for it: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the house you have; and use all your extra time to serve Me instead of longing for a bigger and better house.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife”.*

Don’t long for all the externally looking prettier, skinnier, younger women you’ve noticed in life.

Don’t wish you had one like the ones you see at work, don’t wish you had one like you see on TV, in movies, or online.

Don’t wish she looked like a gymnast, or a cheerleader, or an actress/model: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the wife God has given you; and use your extra time to serve your wife and children instead of longing for a better wife.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s male servant, nor his female servant”.*

Don’t long for a more comfortable life with less hard work, with less struggles and cares, and with more free time to do what you please, like all the rich and the famous you’ve watched, and heard about: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with the place in life where God has put you; and use your extra time live more of each day for His glory, surrendering for His will to be done in your life.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s ox” [his plow animal or job].*

Don’t long for that dream job that everyone else has, with all the freedom, perks, security, and high pay like you’ve seen or heard about: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with what God has placed into your hands to do for Him, and trust Him to guide your path; and use your extra time to stay tuned into His Word, and following God’s leading, and you will have the very best job in life that is possible to have.

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s ox” [his transportation].*

Don't wish you had a car (or truck, or boat, or bike, or motorhome, or snowmobile, etc.) like others have, that is bigger, newer, fancier, sportier, or more powerful or impressive: ***because that is idolatry!***

Be content with what you have, and thank God for all the struggles your car gives you because that is what God uses to increase our faith, our patience, and our dependence upon Him; and use your extra time and energy you save in not trying to impress everyone around you to start spending more time pleasing God.

- *"You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's."* God says we are not to long for anything we don't have that someone else has: ***because that is idolatry!***

#445 Something for Thee