

(04-26-26) Sunday Worship

The Recipe for Contentment

Philippians 4:10-13

We live in a world of discontentment. People are not satisfied with what they have. Instead, they praise the idea that more is better. If you are suffering from discontentment, it is an indication that you are out of focus with God and what God has been doing in your life. It is a symptom that you are spiritually deviated from the course that God has set before you. It is a warning that you need to anchor yourself to your Lord, who is the reason for our contentment, satisfaction, joy, and humbleness. So, we can define discontentment as the deficiency of recognition of God's rule over our lives.

Apostle Paul says, “**Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have.**” (Philippians 4:11).

We need to pay attention to the verb “**learn**” here. The Greek word for “learn” is “**μανθάνω**” (만싸노). It means **learning by use, practice, or experience**, so that what you learn becomes your habit. Apostle Paul had gone through all the situations of need and abundance, and now he wasn't swayed by outer circumstances he couldn't control; he could keep a steady emotional and spiritual posture in whatever situation he was in.

When Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi, he was in prison in Rome around AD 60-62. He didn't know what would happen, and he might have faced death. The city of Philippi was founded and sustained by retired Roman soldiers who held Roman citizenship, which meant they were ultra-loyal to the Emperor and the Roman system. When the small Christian community in Philippi believed and shared that “Jesus Christ is the Lord,” it was a direct challenge to them. The church seemed to experience difficulties as Paul said, “**For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ but of suffering for him as well,**” (Philippians 1:29). In his letter, Paul repeatedly mentioned the word, “joy” or “rejoice” sixteen times. He really knew how to be content despite his imprisonment and unpredictable situation.

Then we have to ask this question: How come Apostle Paul found contentment in his life? What is the recipe for our contentment?

There are five ingredients we must use to create a medicine for our contentment. Four of them come from Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians.

First of all, be repentant.

We must repent our discontent. At the root of our discontent is a deviation of our focus from God.

“Such God-denying people are never content with what they have or who they are; their greed drives them relentlessly.” (Job 20:20 MSG)

The Bible clearly teaches us that our discontent is from our denial of God, not acknowledging God’s reign over our lives. It’s a sin. That is why the very first step for our contentment is repenting of the sin of not acknowledging God and what God has been doing in our lives.

Secondly, be desirable.

We have to desire God’s presence in our lives.

“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” (Psalm 42:1-2)

If we are not happy, not content with our life, and feel empty, we have to check our hearts honestly. We have to see what we have in our hearts and what kinds of thoughts have been occupying our minds.

In today’s scripture, the Greek word for “content” is *αὐτάρκης* (아우타르케스). It signifies a state in which you are not influenced by external or physical circumstances such as wealth, fame, or even health. It is a state in which you are filled with God and His sufficiency. It represents your strong heart connected to God’s presence and His reign, which produces your joy and happiness.

“I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:12-13)

Thirdly, be thankful.

Instead of focusing on our needs and what we lack, we must turn our attention to God and to what God has been doing. To do this, we must maintain a thankful heart.

The letter to the Philippians starts with Paul’s thanksgiving, which had been held strongly in his heart until he wrote the letter.

“I thank my God for every remembrance of you, always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5)

In the last chapter of Philippians, Paul again emphasizes the importance of a thankful heart.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7).

We must build a habit of appreciating the small things we encounter in our lives.

Fourthly, be compassionate.

We need to recognize and address the needs of those who are struggling. Apostle Paul was very sensitive to the spiritual needs of other people. He always tried to put others before himself, caring for their needs.

“I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith,” (Philippians 1:23-25)

Apostle Paul was concerned with the Philippian Christians' progress and joy in the faith. He never forgot his responsibility to help them grow toward spiritual maturity. He confessed that it's far better for him to be with Christ and receiving his rewards. However, he cared for the spiritual growth and joy in faith of his brothers and sisters in the church.

“But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.” (Philippians 2:17-18).

Even though the Apostle Paul was willing to lose his life for his church family and their faith, he could still be glad and rejoice with them. By doing so, he taught them how to be content and joyful in any situation. Paul used his own challenging circumstances to reveal the secret of constant contentment, driven by his compassionate heart for the Christians in Philippi.

Last but not least, be eternal.

The last addition to the recipe for our contentment is to remember the destination of our lives.

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” (Philippians 3:13-14 NLT)

Even though Apostle Paul had to suffer, he never forgot the goal of his life, his destination, and the prize in heaven.

“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.” (Philippians 3:20-21 NLT)

The Apostle Paul longed for Christ's reign and the glorious transformation of the body. Throughout his writing, he repeatedly shared this eternal perspective, maintaining a steadfast focus on the reality where Christ reigns forever and believers participate in His glory.