

Being Content!

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. So nice to see you all this morning. Well, as we come to God's word now, we're going to continue to think a little bit about what it means to be content.

I recently came across something where somebody was describing a funny sight that they saw when they were walking down the road. They were walking down the road, and they saw in some fields right next to the road, four horses, two on one side of a wire fence and two on the other side of a wire fence.

So there was two horses on each side of this wire fence. Well, the two horses on the left-hand side of the fence were sticking their head through the wire, eating the grass on the right-hand side of the fence.

And believe it or not, the two horses on the right-hand side of the fence were sticking their head through the wire, eating the grass on the left-hand side of the fence. So basically, all of these horses were eating the grass on the other side of the fence.

Now, there was nothing wrong with the grass on both sides of the fence, but it seems that all of these horses were not content with the grass that they had on their own side.

[1 : 30] They wanted the grass that was on the other side. They wanted the grass that they didn't have. Well, this is a funny sight, and, you know, it's not something you would see every day.

But just thinking about this a little bit, I think that there is a danger that in some ways we can actually be like these four horses. And that I think that there is a danger that we can go through life never really content or satisfied with what is on our own side of the fence, so to speak.

And I find this a big challenge myself. I find this, you know, very difficult myself. We can go through life, whether we have a little or whether we have a lot, finding it very difficult to be satisfied with what's on our side of the fence.

And we can very often look over that fence, so to speak, at what we don't have. Whether we have a little or whether we have a lot, we can, I think, find it difficult at times to be content.

And to go through life never really being content, I think, really is a big tragedy. Because never really being satisfied or never really being content, I think just sucks so much joy from life.

[3 : 05] Because it's very hard to be joyful and to be truly thankful if we're never really satisfied or we're never really content with what we have. I think it's also so exhausting never really being content or satisfied with what we have.

Because always looking for more, always wanting more, always needing more is just so draining and exhausting.

Uncontentment is exhausting and it's just joy sapping. On the other hand, living a life of being content, of being satisfied, well, what a blessing that is.

And Grace was speaking about that word blessing. What a blessing it is to be content. Imagine being able to enjoy life, whether we have a little or whether we have a lot.

Imagine being able to live life with a peace and a thankfulness, whether we have a little or whether we have a lot. Imagine being able to live life without that constant strain and that constant need to have more, only to find that when we have it, there's always more to get and there's always more to want.

[4 : 31] What a blessing it is to be content. Someone said, being content and being in that place is like someone pouring soothing ointment on the soul.

That it's such a peaceful place to be, such a restful place to be, such a life-giving place to be. What a blessing it is to be content.

So I just want to briefly ask the question, how can we be content? Just to build on what Grace was saying, how can we be content? What is the secret to being content?

Well, the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 4 verse 12 makes really a truly incredible claim. In Philippians 4 chapter 12, Philippians 4 verse 12, the Apostle Paul claims to have learned the secret of being content.

Whether he has a little or whether he has a lot, he tells us that he has learned the secret of being content.

[5 : 49] And this is what he said in verse 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.

This really is some statement. It's some claim that he is making. He's telling us that whether he has a little or a lot, he has learned the secret of being content.

It's possible to be discontent having a lot and it's equally possible to be discontent having a little.

And Paul is saying whether he has a little or whether he has a lot, whatever that might be, he has learned the secret of being content.

And just to say that, I think Paul really did know what it was to have both a little and a lot. I think the Apostle Paul wasn't someone who only knew good times and he wasn't someone who only knew bad times.

The Apostle Paul learned the secret of being content in both experiencing good times and both experiencing bad times.

[7 : 12] There was times when he had plenty. For example, in Paul's day in the early church, they would have had these different fellowship meals and feasts.

Well, at these meals and feasts, the Apostle Paul being the great leader of the early church, you would imagine that he would have been looked after. You know, he would have been well respected.

He would have been seen in many ways as the great leader of the early church. So, when he was at some of these fellowship meals and feasts, I'm sure that he didn't go hungry.

You know, if there was an extra piece of cake left over or if there was an extra sausage roll or something, you would imagine that someone might say, you know, give it to Paul. There was times when he would have been well fed.

And thinking of when he would have had plenty, if we look through the epistles, we see that there was times when the Apostle Paul received financial support from other churches.

[8 : 13] So, there was times when Paul would have had his needs met. There was times when he would have had plenty. There was times when he would have been well fed. But then on the other hand, there would have been times when the Apostle Paul wouldn't be well fed.

When he was in need, when he was in great challenge. Like when he was writing these very words. So, when Paul wrote these words, he was actually in prison.

And the Apostle Paul actually spent quite a lot of time in prison. He spent roughly 25% of his missionary life in prison.

He spent over six years in different Roman prisons. So, there's no doubt about it. Paul would have known times when he didn't have much. When he was in need.

And on the back of experiencing both of these things. On the back of experiencing times of plenty. And on the back of experiencing times of being in need.

[9 : 21] The Apostle Paul said, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. Again, when we think about it, this is some claim to say that he has learned the secret of being content.

Whether he has a little or whether he has a lot. And we're kind of thinking, you know, at this point.

Okay, Paul, you know, what is it? You know, what is this great secret that you have learned?

You know, we need some of this secret. Well, this is his big secret. And it comes in the very next verse. And this is what Paul said. His secret in being content in any and every situation is, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Now, some translations say, I can do all things through him who gives me strength. Well, these words here in verse 13, which are often quoted in different ways, are actually in the context of being content.

Paul said these words in verse 13, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength in the context of being content.

[10:42] So these words here, with these words, Paul is saying, he can do all things, as in, he can be content in all things because of Christ who gives me strength.

That's what verse 13 is about. You know, it's often on fridge magnets. It's often on different things like that. But it's all about being content. Paul is saying, he can be content in all things because of Christ who gives him strength to be content in all things.

Paul could be content in all things, whether he had a little because of Christ who gave him strength, and he could be content in having a lot because he had Christ who gave him strength.

So the secret in being content is not having a little or not having a lot. The secret in being content is having Christ who gives us strength to be content in any and every situation.

And there's no doubt about it, Paul knew what it was to have Christ. Paul said in Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

[12:09] And Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5.17, he said, speaking about believers, we are in Christ, and we are new creations in him. The old is gone, and the new has come.

Paul knew he had Christ, he knew he was a new creation in Christ, he knew that he belonged to Christ, and so he had something much more precious and valuable than anything that this world could offer.

And so as long as he had Christ, as long as he knew Christ, as long as he was in Christ, that's what gave him the strength to be content in having a little, in having a little, or having a lot, because as long as he looked to Christ, he saw that he had in him all that he needed and more.

Really, Paul's identity, his purpose, his meaning, his worth, was not tied up in what he had or who he was.

All of those things, his value, his purpose, his identity, was all tied up in what he had in Christ and who he was in Christ.

[13:26] And so again, as long as he kept looking to Christ, as long as he remembered what he had and who he was in Christ, he could be content in any and every situation.

And really, the same is true for us. As believers, when we look to Christ, when we remember what we have in Christ, when we remember who we are in Christ, when we look to him in that way, we see that we have all that we need and more in him.

And when we look to him in this way, he gives us the strength to be content whether we have a little or whether we have a lot. So really, the key, I think, in being content is looking to Christ and it's remembering what we have and who we are in him.

But it's so easy to forget, isn't it? It's so easy to forget what we have and who we are in him. When I was looking at these verses, I came across the story of a mother and a son.

And the mother went to the son on Monday morning and said, it's time to go to school. It's time to get up. You're going to be late for school. But the son insisted he wasn't getting up.

[14:52] He wasn't going to school. He wasn't going to get out of bed. The mother kept saying, you know, you have to go to school. And the son kept saying, I don't want to go to school. And the mother said, well, why don't you want to go to school?

And the son said, well, the teachers and the kids, they don't like me and I don't want to go. But she kept insisting, you have to go to school.

And he said, well, why do I have to go to school? And she said, well, because you are the principal. So I was just thinking about that a little bit.

And it's so easy when things aren't the way we want them to be. When things aren't how we would like them to be, maybe on our own side of the fence. How easy it is to forget who we are.

Well, as believers, we have Christ and we are in Christ. And that is far more precious and valuable than anything that this world could offer.

[15:56] So we can be content in all things through him who gives us strength. Now, just to finish, none of this is to say that it is wrong, I think, to seek to do things well in life.

I don't think that any of this is to say that it's wrong in many ways to seek to progress or to press on or to improve in life.

being content in Christ, being content in Christ, I don't think means that we never seek to progress and to press on and to improve in life. I think what the Apostle Paul is getting at here is this.

in whatever stage we are at in life, even though we might want to progress and to press on, but in whatever stage we are currently in, we can be content in each and every stage that we are in when we look to Christ and we remember what we have and who we are in him.

You know, we might be looking at our lives and we might think that there is several ways that we would like to progress and there are several ways that we would like to press on.
[17 : 11] And there's nothing wrong with that, but I think the key is this. In whatever stage we are currently in, wherever we are now, even though we might want to progress, but wherever we are now, right now, we can be content in each and every stage when we remember what we have and who we are in Christ.

Amen.