

## **Contentment**

### **Philippians 4:10-13**

Sometimes we tend to think that faith flourishes when life is good, but struggles when life is hard. The Bible sees things differently: it recognises that it is possible to get lost in the good times, just as much, if not more, than the bad. So we need to know how to handle both. And in this passage Paul wants us to know that true happiness is not dependent on life's circumstances, good or bad.

#### **Joy Above Circumstances**

To help the Philippians find true contentment in their tough situation, Paul shares something of his own experience.

In thanking the Philippians for their financial gift, Paul does not want to give the wrong impression about money. He does not want the Philippians to feel overburdened, nor that it is money that motivates him. So he tells them that his joy at receiving the gift was 'in the Lord': his joy came from knowing what their giving said about what Jesus was doing in their lives.

So, Paul is telling them that ultimately lasting joy does not come from our circumstances changing, but from Christ. And he wants them to see how he's been facing the tough times, so they can do the same.

#### **Be Content**

The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, 'do not covet', could be rewritten, 'be content'. Why does God command us to be content? Firstly it is for our joy. All the time we think we need something else to make us happy, we will never be happy. So discontent misses the joy of today, thinking that joy will only come tomorrow when things change. Paul says we can know a contentment that is not dependent on our circumstances: good or bad.

Contentment that is lasting must come from somewhere other than our circumstances. That is the second reason God commands us to be content: because ultimately we will only find contentment in Him.

#### **Learning Contentment**

Knowing contentment apart from our circumstances is not natural. Paul had to learn it and so can we. He learnt it in the school of life: hardship is not meaningless, and blessing is not mindless, they are both God's school room to teach us contentment.

The secret to contentment that Paul learnt is that Christ is always sufficient. So this contentment is not proud self-sufficiency. The strength to live like this comes from Jesus. Knowing that he was brought low because he loves us so much, gives us the strength to cope and be content in him when we are brought low. Knowing that He is worth more than anything else means that we will not be lead astray by wealth.

Christ's love is greater than our lack, and his riches of greater worth than our wealth. True, lasting, joy-filled contentment is found in him. And as Paul says elsewhere, it is great gain.