

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.  
The Tree of Life from the week ending 12/26/04  
The Doctrine of Contentment. Part 2.  
Philippians 4:11**

Our main verse is Phi 4:11, *Not because I am speaking with reference to poverty or lack; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*

We are now ready to complete our study of the **Doctrine of Contentment.**

**As a review, Point 1 was our definition.** The word autarkes, contentment, comes from Aeschylus down to us and it means sufficient for oneself, strong enough or possessing enough inner strength to need no aid or support, to be independent of external circumstances. Autarkes also means to be contented with one's niche, with one's means, even if it is a little. In the spiritual realm, autarkes means to be spiritually self-sustained and to become sufficient enough to be in need of no one else. It also means to be satisfied and contented with your wages.

**Point 2. Godliness or Living the Spiritual Life That God Has Provided is a Means of Great Profit When Accompanied by Contentment.**

We continue with **Point 3. The Challenge to Contentment is Boredom.**

Far too many people are not content in whatever circumstances they find themselves and become bored and dull. These people have problems doing the same thing again and again, they feel like their job and their life is boring, tiresome and just routine. Many things we do in life are monotonous and routine and looking at the routine things you must do in life as monotonous can cause you to feel like life has no meaning, purpose or significance and this is because you lack contentment in your life. Ecc 3:9-10, *What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.* The point is we are all going to have high and low points in our lives. The kingdom of darkness will try to use these times of lows for sensual temptations, **particularly** those of sex.

Remember the beginning of David's biggest problem in 2Sa 11:1, *Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.* This was a low point in David's life. He stayed back when he should have gone forward. He was becoming dull and stagnant; he had lost his contentment with the calling of God upon his life. The spring was the time in the ancient world for military activity and the norm and standard was for the king to go out to battle with his soldiers. Instead of going out himself David had sent Joab his chief of staff and his nephews, so David's real problems began by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Even though he is a mature believer he fell into a state of degeneracy. Arrogance and lack of contentment led to his **vulnerability** when he saw a beautiful woman bathing herself on the roof below Castle Zion. 2Sa 11:2, *Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.* Apparently he had been sleeping during the day, it was a low point in his life and another indication of David's spiritual status, he is sleeping during the day time while his soldiers are out fighting the war. Satan and his kingdom of darkness will try to use this time of lows or monotony with the routines of life to provide excellent opportunity for sensual temptations.

We need to be careful of these changes we go through that can produce highs and lows in our life and realize they are normal cycles for members of the human race. As long as we live on this earth, periods of emotional and physical highs will alternate with periods of apathy, calmness and passivity about certain things.

There are times that we all go through a state of dryness and even dullness in all areas of our life including the spiritual realm. To live on the dull edge is really to become a slave to life instead of the life that Paul wrote about in 1Co 9:26-27, *Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.* You cannot allow anything to take the fun and challenge out of life. To truly enjoy what you have is a very rare lifestyle. If you were to ask the people in your life the question, *what are you waiting for to truly enjoy life?* You would probably get one of the three different categories of answers that naturally come from the world system in which we live and God has an reply for each one of them.

1. ***I'm waiting until I get the things I've always wanted, then I'll be happy.***

Our Lord addressed this in Luk 12:15, *And He said to them, Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.*

It's foolish to connect happiness with **things!** If happiness could be found in having material things and in being able to indulge yourself into things that you consider pleasurable, than we in America would be deliriously happy.

2. Other people would answer ***I'm waiting until I meet the right person who will fulfill my life.***

Never put your faith in people to make you happy. David said in Psa 118:8, *It is better to take refuge in the Lord Than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.*

If you're waiting for some **thing** or **someone** to bring you happiness, you're in for a lifetime of waiting.

3. A third possible answer, ***I'm waiting until I have achieved my goals and realized my dreams.***

Goals and dreams outside of the PPOG even when accomplished will only bring momentary satisfaction. We spend so much time climbing, anticipating the view when we get to where we are going we miss out on enjoying the **view** along the way. Our Lord addressed this principle in Mat 16:26, *For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* In Jam 1:2-4, *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* It's not only waiting for that day to find the pinnacle or the plateau of happiness and contentment **but** finding it in the climb, in the struggle!

#### **Point 4. Contentment is related to lifestyle; Heb 13:5.**

Heb 13:5 is another important passage about contentment, *Let your lifestyle [not character but lifestyle] be free from the love for money, being content [+H] with what you have. For He Himself has said [Deu 31:6], 'I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you.* Here's another example of why we go back to the original language and why we use the NAS Bible. The KJV says Heb 13:5, *Let your conversation be without covetousness;* The word translated *love for money* in the NAS and *covetousness* in the KJB is *aphilarguros*. *Arguros* means money! *Phileo* means to love. The negative *a* means *don't*. So it means, *don't love money not don't be covetous.*

The word lifestyle is *tropos* which means your lifestyle or character not conversation! So it is correctly translated in the NAS Heb 13:5, *Let your lifestyle [not character but lifestyle] be free from the love for money, being content with what you have. For He Himself has said [Deu 31:6] I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you.*

Remember that there is nothing wrong with money; it is necessary to live. But when money becomes your master, you become a pitiful slave to money. So, your *lifestyle* is to be free from the love for money, not just your conversation, but your lifestyle. This verse does not say *Thou shalt not talk about loving money.* The objective is to have money as your slave and perfect happiness as your master and if you are content with what you have, you have perfect happiness in spiritual autonomy, the second stage of spiritual growth. The promise in this verse is God's guarantee to you from the day of your salvation, based upon God's perfect integrity. He

will never leave you or forsake you and this promise assures you of both temporal and eternal security. God will never leave you in life, nor forsake you in dying. However, as we have seen, this doesn't prevent God from disciplining you or allowing the law of volitional responsibility to function. Remember also that you can be poor and be a lover of money or you can be as rich as Solomon and be a lover of money. When a person loves money, money is their master and money is a very cruel master. But when you enjoy money and are content, you are the master and money is the slave and money makes a very good slave.

**Point 5. Contentment is the Result of Spiritual Maturity; Phi 4:11-13.**

Phi 4:11, *Not that I speak with reference to need, for I have learned to be content* [+H or to have capacity for life] *in whatever circumstances I am.*

You still have the Lord and you still have doctrine in your soul and the doctrine in the soul gives you capacity for life. Having things, acquiring things, collecting things, isn't going to change you. But, having doctrine in the soul, you'll have the capacity to enjoy life, and it really is wonderful and very enjoyable. So Paul says in Phi 4:12, *I have come to know how to be humbled and I have come to know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret or as we are going to note when we get there I have been initiated into the mystery of how to be filled, how to be hungry, how to be prosperous, and how to suffer need. I have the power to attain all things through Him* [God the Father] *who makes me strong.* Once you reach spiritual maturity, you have an entirely new and refreshing system of thinking, you never think in terms of needs. We all continue to have needs, but they become less and less important as we advance through the stages of spiritual adulthood because one finally comes to realize that God has known his needs all along. You still plan and still organize, but your needs aren't nearly as important once you reach spiritual adulthood, resulting in an improved prayer life that doesn't include just your needs. As long as your needs have number one priority in your life, it's impossible for you to reach spiritual adulthood. This passage tells us that contentment and happiness is something you learn, not something you have, want, or anticipate. You must learn how to live in adversity and how to live in prosperity.

To learn to be content takes a lot of doctrine repeated, knowledge about the uniqueness of the Church-age and all the mystery doctrine resulting in understanding your personal sense of destiny. You must also learn how to be prosperous and how to be happy in prosperity; yet very few prosperous people understand this. It is difficult for prosperity to successfully work in anyone simply because of arrogance. The arrogance of those in prosperity is manifested by 1Co 4:7, *What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?* Arrogance destroys capacity for life and especially capacity for prosperity.

Phi 4:12, *I have come to know how to be humbled and I have come to know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret or have been initiated into the mystery of how to be filled, how to be hungry, how to be prosperous, and how to suffer need.*

Note the phrase *how to be prosperous and how to suffer need* both categories are necessary for the advance to spiritual maturity and the fulfillment of the spiritual life that God has provided. Paul attained the fantastic point of having God's perfect happiness and true contentment in every possible circumstance through obedience to Bible doctrine. Circumstances make no difference if you apply the doctrine in the soul. You have capacity for life so the circumstances couldn't possibly bother you for any length of time in any way. And then he tells us how in Phi 4:13, *I have the power to attain all things through Him who makes me strong.* This is a reference to the availability of divine omnipotence for the execution of the spiritual life that God has provided for the Church-age believer. It is a reference to the same power available to us in the great power experiment of the Church-age as TLJC used before and on the cross. He was able to remain perfect even while being judged for all the sins of the world, because He was sustained by the omnipotence of God the Holy Spirit and because He had perfect happiness, the greatest of all problem solving devices. Whether you are strong or not depends on you learning that God's power exists in three categories (omnipotence of the Father, omnipotence of the Son,

and omnipotence of the Spirit) and that it is available to you, and then utilizing it through the perception of doctrine. It is very important for you to attain contentment and perfect happiness before you die, in fact it is the only way to die and the only way to live. Perfect happiness and true contentment actually equates living with dying for the believer. So whatever the circumstances, you still have perfect happiness. That's why Paul said in Phi 1:21, *For me, living is Christ and dying is profit.*

So in Phi 4:13, Paul says, *I have the power to attain all things*, this refers to the three stages of spiritual adulthood, the problem solving devices and the believer's tremendous invisible impact on history. Perfect happiness and true contentment is increased at each stage of spiritual adulthood but it must be learned. You have the same opportunity to attain the same spiritual adulthood and perfect happiness and invisible impact.

Then finally in Phi 4:13, Paul says, *I have the power to attain all things through Him [God the Father] who makes me strong*. The source of this power is the Father. This is the same power available to our Lord in Hypostatic Union and this power is now available to us. *Endunamoo* can be translated either through Him who makes me strong, or through Him who pours the power into me. It is God the Father who makes this power available to you.

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