

Learning To Be Content

Philippians 4:8-13

Paul wrote Philippians about 30 years after he was saved. As we study the life of the Apostle Paul, we see he never reached the point where he thought he arrived (Phil. 3:12-14). He was always learning and growing in his walk with the Lord.

Here I am in 2017. I was born in 1947, so you can do the math and figure out my age—47 years old! But in all that time, I'm still learning that no matter what I have, the newness and novelty eventually wears off. What I thought I really needed, I realize I did not need after all.

Before Paul was saved, he was educated and a fairly “well-to-do” individual (Phil 3:5-6). But after being saved for 30 years he came to this conclusion— *“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ... Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...”* (Phil. 3:7-8).

Paul went from having everything—to losing everything—to having everything he could ever want! Paul's attitude was: “I can lose everything, but as long as I have Jesus, THAT'S ENOUGH! I can be content.”

Since Paul was a sinner saved by grace, then everyone of us can reach that same place of contentment in our spiritual life.

➡ **How did Paul get to that point?** READ TEXT: Philippians 3:8-12

Paul LEARNED contentment (v. 11). Now Paul says, “I've learned this!” Paul's statement implies there was a time when he was NOT content, otherwise, why did he say he learned it?

I. **The DUTY to learn contentment.**

➡ We are **not content by nature**. We must be taught and “instruct-ed” (v. 12) to be content.

- A PRIORITY—Contentment in the Christian life comes as we **make learning a priority**. Unfortunately, learning is not a priority in some Christian's lives.
- A PROCESS—When Paul was first saved, he did not instantaneously become content. It was a learning **process**. Content-

ment is *acquired* as we learn and put into practice what we learn.

➡ **What hinders our learning?**

A. **Making “LIGHT” of what you hear.** How does this happen?

1. When you sit under the ministry of a pastor for a long time, you can become so familiar with how he preaches that it does not have the same impact on you as it did when you first heard him preach. **You get “used” to his preaching.**

As I regularly listen to some of my favorite preachers, I’ll get a “feeling” of where he is going in his message. I can sometimes predict the next point of his outline. If I’m not careful, I can miss the truth he is preaching because I’m more focused on his delivery of it.

2. I was once asked, “Al, what’s God teaching you right now?” That question can be very convicting, especially if you’re not learning anything. I ask you, “What’s God teaching you right now?”
 - God wants to teach us something all the time, but we just aren’t paying attention.

B. **FORGETTING what we you hear** (James 1:23-25).

➡ How much did we forget from the sermon last week to this week?

1. Jesus said, “*Let these sayings **sink down** into your ears*” (Luke 9:44). Are you letting His Word “*sink down*” deep into your ears, or are you only half listening? Jesus repeated, “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear,*” eight times! Obviously it is important for us to hear if we are to learn.
2. Jesus never wasted any words. We are to live by EVERY WORD that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Luke 4:4). God is all powerful. One who has power does not have to depend on a lot of words. So when God speaks, it is important. One reason why I know the Bible is the Word of God, is that it says so much in so few words.

➡ **James calls the Bible a mirror**—As you look into the mirror of God’s Word it will show you who you are... how you’re doing... how you’re not doing... what you should be doing... what you should not be doing. That explains why some don't like to read the Bible.

II. **The DIFFICULTY involved in learning contentment.**

➡ Learning is difficult (Eccl. 12:12; 2 Tim. 2:15).

➡ We learn best when we are facing adversity, trials, hardships, or we are under pressure. You don’t learn much when you are comfortable and life is easy.

A. Character building—Uneasy situations are God’s way of making you and I better (not bitter). Adversity builds character in our life. Improvements are made after a thing is put through rigorous tests.

1. I believe one reason why there is such a dearth of character in our country is because many “millennials” have enjoyed having things handed to them on a silver platter. They haven’t had to struggle or suffer for anything.

2. That is what made Paul such a great Christian—He endured hardship after hardship—peril after peril. Notice what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28—

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all [those Baptists] the churches.

➡ Reading that makes me want to throw up my hands and confess, “OK Paul. Forgive me for ever saying I had a bad day!” (AMEN?)

- B. Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians 4:11? (cf. 1:7, 13).
- So now Paul could testify, “*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” He could say that because he knew what it was like “*to be abased... to be hungry... and suffer need*” (v. 12).

III. The DIVIDEND enjoyed by learning contentment. The dividend is being content.

- A. Contentment has been defined as “freedom of care or external circumstances.”
- B. What could be better than to be absolutely content with Jesus regardless of our external circumstances? What could be better than to honestly say, “I have Jesus, and *THAT’S ENOUGH!*”
- “*...godliness with **contentment** is GREAT GAIN.*” (1 Tim, 6:6).
 - “*Be **content** with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” (Heb. 13:5)

➡ The man or woman who is content is not the one who has the most, but the one who *needs the least.*

SUMMATION: A rich business man saw a fisherman relaxing beside his boat. “Why aren’t you out there fishing?” he asked the fisherman.

“Because I’ve caught enough fish for today,” said the fisherman.

“Why don’t you want to catch more fish than you need?”

“What would I do with them?”

“You could earn more money, buy a bigger boat so you could catch more fish and make even more money.”

The fisherman asked, “*Then what would I do?*”

“You could sit down and and relax and enjoy life!”

“*What do you think I’m doing now?*”