

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

January 2, 2020



Connecticut, Fall, 2009

Contentment

Can you say that you were content in the year 2020? I’ll be the first to admit that I’m not sure how I would answer that question. I think I was content most of the time but I also know that I had my moments of discontentment — more than I would like to admit. I found that I was preaching to myself more often in 2020. One oft-repeated sermon comes from Paul’s words in Philippians 4:11-12:

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

There are several lessons from this text, but I’ll just focus on a couple. I take comfort in knowing that Paul “learned” contentment because I’m still working on it. He even says it’s a “secret” Or a “mystery” that needs to be unveiled. Second, it reminds me that contentment and satisfaction are two different things. We’re *satisfied* when most or all of our desires are met, when our expectations are fulfilled. There are many things we should *not* be satisfied with. When working with another church years ago, I was speaking about the need to reach out to the community. Afterwards, a long-time member said to me, “I think we’re doing just fine.” She was *satisfied* with a lack of growth because it was “comfortable.” I think I just said, “seriously?” As elders, we are never satisfied with the level of growth of the church, either numerically or spiritually.

Personally, I’m never satisfied with the degree to which I have matured in Christ or my impact on others for the gospel or even the quality of my thinking. Yet, in all of this, we can be content.

Contentment is a state of mind that exists even when very little or even nothing is going the way we would like or the way we expected. It’s been defined as *“a calm acceptance of things as they are.”* That definition seems to reflect Paul’s view: *“I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.”* He had lived in the penthouse and in prison and learned to be content in both.

Some who live entitled, privileged lives all their life never learn contentment because they’ve never experienced being “brought low.” Whether poor, rich or middle class, men and woman find contentment elusive. They always want more, or less, or just “something else.” For the discontented, life is at best boring, at worst not worth living.

Paul — rich, poor, praised, defamed, in physical comfort or in chains, accepted his lot and went about his work.

To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. *1 Corinthians 4:11-13*

In other words, he says, “I have learned to be content.” That was the source of his joy, expressed so often in the letter to Philippians (e.g., 4:4).

The year 2020 provided ample opportunity to be discontented. And those who gave into it were probably not all that joyful. So, one of the best goals you can set for yourself for 2021 is to be content; to calmly accept the way things are even as you exert honest effort to be better. Don’t be satisfied with who you are, but be content with where you are. You — and every one around you — will be happier.

*Unless otherwise indicated the opinions expressed in this publication and images used are solely those of David Posey.
Email me at dpaulposey@mac.com or text me at (530) 558-5057