

***Question: What does the Bible teach us about being content?***

Our contemporary American culture is filled with discontent. We often think that if we only had more money, fame or power we would be content. Yet, some of the most discontented people are those who have the most things. There are individuals in almost every community who have incomes well in excess of \$100,000 who are saying, “With the present economy, I don’t know how I will be able to pay my bills.” However, those who have the least are often the most contented with their lives. You may recall the legend of the king who sent his servants throughout the kingdom in order to bring him the shirt of the most contented man. Upon returning to the king, the servants reported that the most contented man had no shirt.

The apostle Paul wrote as a prisoner in Rome to his Christian friends in the city of Philippi that “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need” (Philippians 4:11-12). What was the secret of contentment? It was that Christ can fill us with the strength we need to be content in any and all circumstances in life. This is what he was talking about when he said: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

Thus, we see that for genuine believers in Christ, contentment has nothing at all to do with our external circumstances in life; but it has everything to do with our faith in and relationship with Jesus Christ. Contentment is an attitude of heart that enables us to choose to be happy with life in any and all of its ups and downs. After surviving the German concentration camps of WWII in which he lost his parents, wife and children, the Austrian psychiatrist Victor Frankl said he learned that “everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances” (*The Meaning of Life* by Victor Frankl).

The Bible does not teach that we can do anything we want by the power Jesus Christ gives us. But it does teach that Christ provides the power to deal with whatever may come our way. Faith in Christ enables us to remain faithful to him and contented with our lives in all circumstances.

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