

Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Contentment

Selected Scriptures

90-125

It's our privilege this morning to continue in this series. And I looked in the Lord's Day Bulletin and saw that this is part 16 and 17. I never intended it to be this long and I guess I don't intend to stop now, so we'll keep going on this study of the anatomy of the church. It's so wonderful to have the clear teaching of the Word of God with regard to the life of the church and what the church should be.

I was out at a large bookstore yesterday. I needed to go out there and sign some books and do some things and ran in to some pastors there who were thanking me for this series because they're getting on a weekly tape subscription. And I think they want me to keep it up, as they're giving it to their people and encouraging their people along these same lines.

We're grateful that the Word of God is so clear about what the church is to be. And, of course, we've been talking about the anatomy of the church in very specific terms, as opposed to general terms. We talked about the specific characteristics of the church which are foundational or structural, give it its form; kind of the skeleton, the hard form of the church that gives it its rigidity, the non-negotiables. And then we've been talking about the internal systems of the body, of the anatomy of the church, those...those spiritual attitudes that carry the life of the church. It's along that line that we want to continue in our discussion this morning.

But before we talk about the next in the long list that we could have of spiritual attitudes, just by way of sort of general comments, I want to talk a little bit about the...the reason why I think it's so important to reaffirm the character of the church. We live in a time today when there is a somewhat indifferent attitude toward the centrality of the church. And by that I mean that there are so many people who are...who are not really committed to the church. They're committed to Christ. They're committed to spiritual truth in one way or another.

And I was thinking of that as I was sitting in this huge bookstore yesterday and looking at everything from knick-knacks, sort of Christian stuff that you put on your shelf, the kind you have to dust and wipe off, that kind of stuff...Christian pictures, poems, T-shirts, belts, socks, you name it. Christian records and tapes and CDs and then books and just paraphernalia ad infinitum.

And the place was packed like the local supermarket, as people were going up and down the aisles and collecting all their stuff. And it struck me that there is very much of a consumer mentality in the church and it leads to some interesting perceptions. And I just drew some of those together just by way of setting a context for the importance of our study.

It seems to me that today we have a lack of commitment on the parts of people...on the part of

people to the church as such. And I'll tell you what I mean by that. We have a consumeristic view of the church. It's sort of...it's sort of the mood of the mob in this particular time in which we live in our culture. People have about the same commitment to the church they do to the mall. If there's something there that interests them, they'll go there.

They might even make a financial exchange, you know. They might give a little money for services rendered, if the services seem to fit their need. People have seemingly no more commitment to the church than they do to the mall. They look and say, "Well, is there something there that I can get?" It's kind of a marketplace mentality. There's really no responsibility. There's no accountability that I have to the local church, but I'm willing to go there if they offer me something."

And second thing that I would notice, as a contributor to a lack of real commitment to the church which, of course, leads to a lack of understanding of the church is not only the consumeristic mentality but the privatization of spirituality. The privatization of spirituality. We live in a time which basically rejects authority as such in favor of personal rights. We don't want to submit ourselves to an authority; we want to make sure that we have the personal right to do and be and believe and act in any way that we want. That's kind of in our culture.

Personal rights dominate our culture. And personal rights contribute to a privatization of spirituality. By that what I mean is I'm the person who will define for me what my spiritual life is going to be. I'll pick and choose; I'll assemble my own Christianity. And with a proliferation of tapes and books and radio programs and Christian TV and all of this, there's no end to the options. You can formulate any kind of Christianity you want.

You can pick and choose from fifteen different views of Christianity and assemble your own...it's kind of a Burger King mentality, have it your way kind of thing. And you have the individualization, the privatization of spirituality and Christianity, and it all is sort of eclectically is pulled together at the whim of any individual. And the idea is that my personal relationship with Jesus Christ and my personal spiritual life transcends any compelling corporate life that a church might oppress upon me or hold me to.

I think, also, in this time in which we live there is a sad but true contributor to the lack of interest in the church, and that is disillusionment with church leadership. Christianity is full of people who have been deeply hurt and wounded by church leaders, and that contributes to their distance from the church and contributes to their indifference to submitting themselves under the authority of teachers and leaders. They're reluctant to do that because they have been exposed in the past to false pastors and false teachers and false leaders who were either unholy in their conduct or unholy in their teaching, or both.

And some of you fall into that category. You've kept your distance. You're here but you're not integrated into the life of the church, and maybe it's because you've been exposed to preachers who secretly brought in heresy. They always do it secretly, and they tell you they're teaching you the Bible or they have something that God has given them to say. But they are basically unbiblical and you were exposed to that. And you've come to understand that and your trust level has been severely hampered by it.

Maybe you even have been exploited by certain leaders for personal gain. While they were asking

you to make sacrifices, they were getting wealthy at your expense. It is also possible that you have been under leadership that indulged sexual appetites, and as the New Testament says “Had eyes full of adultery” and destroyed your trust by having been engaged in sexual sin which came to light. And that continues to be a sad, sad tale. You have been exposed to leaders who didn’t know much about the Bible and who cheated you because they didn’t feed you the way you should have been fed.

They contributed to your spiritual weakness, rather than your spiritual growth. You may have been exposed to teachers who were authoritarian or pastors who wanted to dominate your life. You may have sat under people who had some oratorical ability but said nothing of value. And so you’ve sort of interpreted the church in the light of these things. You may have been in a congregation of people where there were a number of hypocrites, where there was little that God seemed to be doing, where there was a lack of power. And all of these things contribute to a sad kind of distance that people have from the church.

I also want to add a fourth and that leads me in to what I want to say to you this morning. I think another thing that contributes to people’s indifference toward the church is some kind of expectation for perfection that is really unrealistic. The expectation that the church should be everything that the Bible says, all the time without any failures leads people to a certain kind of disillusionment.

People leave a perfectly wonderful church, a marvelous church, a good, healthy, whole, sound ministry because of some perceived weakness or some real weakness, or some real weakness, or some perceived failure or real failure or some disappointment that came along and they wander away. I hear about people, and it’s always amazing to me who think about, “Well, we’ll leave Grace Church and we’ll go out, and all four of us will start our own perfection because we found a failure there.”

Sad to think about that, but that’s not an uncommon thing. I often wonder what people like that would have done in New Testament times when there was one church per city and that was it. So many people in so many places in the world would give anything and everything to have a good church, a noble church, a place where the Word of God was faithfully upheld. And yet some people will foolishly disregard that and the value of it in favor of something far less.

You find a church committed to the true teaching of salvation, you find a church that believes in the inerrancy of Scripture, you find a church that interprets Genesis 1 to 11 historically and literally, you find a church where Jesus Christ is presented as the only way to heaven and that He is both Savior and Lord, you find a church that believes in the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary death on the cross, His bodily resurrection and bodily return to set up His kingdom, you find a church that is committed to male leadership according to the Scriptures, that believes in a literal hell, a church that exercises church discipline, proclaims sound doctrine, loves people, evangelizes the lost and disciples the saved and when you find it, thank God you found it. And pour your life into that place and don’t have unrealistic expectations of perfection. And, worst of all, don’t believe you’re worthy of perfection.

It’s sad to me that people don’t get involved in the church, the only institution the Lord ever built. I grieve over this consumer mentality that views the church as selling something. And if you want to buy it, you go and buy it. But if it really doesn’t interest you, you’ll go some other place or no place. I grieve over the privatization of spirituality where we have people assembling their own spiritual lives in some kind of an eclectic fashion, controlled only by their own personal desires.

I grieve over the continued disaffection of the church toward leadership because of the terrible tragedy of sin among church leaders. I grieve over that. I also grieve over people establishing unrealistic expectations for what a church should be and expecting perfection, and when they don't find it, having a half-hearted or less than that commitment to the church.

This is the church, folks, and our Lord Jesus is the head of it, and He is building it and it is His body and He has called us to be a part of it. And if you're not a part of it, you're disobedient. You are forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, though you're commanded not to do that. You're to be together with God's people because you must stimulate one another to love and good works.

And you are to be reminded that the church gathers for the breaking of bread and for prayer and for fellowship and the apostles' doctrine. And in that environment the power of God operates. You are to be reminded, also, that if you are indifferent to the church to any degree, it raises the question of whether you're a Christian or not. Because Christians are known, according to 1 John 3:14, because they love the brethren. And love of the brethren results in the longing to be with those of like precious faith.

And Christians are also known because they hear the Word and do it, Jesus said. And they love to submit themselves to the authority of the Word of God and obey it. It's a very dangerous thing to isolate yourself from God's people and it's very indicative of the heart if you're not faithful. Proverbs 18:1, "He who separates himself seeks his own desire."

It's very clear. When someone is unfaithful to the assembly of the saints, unfaithful to the worship of God and fellowship and the breaking of bread and the hearing of the apostles' doctrine, it is because they have other personal desires that are far less noble than those that mark out the devoted Christian.

I'm calling you to faithfulness to the church. I'm calling you to the attitude of the psalmist who in Psalm 122 said, "I was glad when they said to me let's go to the Lord's house." There ought to be a gladness to be a part of God's people, a part of His church. We're talking about the church and what the church is to be. And the attitude that I want to present to you this morning, another of those spiritual attitudes, those spiritual attitudes on the inside of the church in which its life flows, is the attitude of contentment, contentment.

We have talked about the spiritual attitudes: faith, love, humility, unity, compassion, forgiveness, joy, thanks. And we've talked about how essential to the life of the church those spiritual attitudes are because they carry the church's life. They're the internal organs in the body of Christ through which the life flows and generates ministry. And one of those essential attitudes is the attitude of contentment, contentment.

What a rich word. It means to be satisfied, to be satisfied. And as I said in the little introduction I gave, there's so many Christians who are dissatisfied, dissatisfied. Now that is being fed today, and that is being fed in a rampant level. We hear all about those ministries that are directed at felt needs.

And I was reading a book this week and it's a relatively new book that has a telling tale, really. It's a research project on the whole Seeker-Friendly Church which is built around needs. And with the help

of the people who have started that movement being interviewed at great length over a two-and-a-half year period, they affirm that the whole driving issue in their ministry is to bring people to self-fulfillment, to recognize that people are not fulfilled, they're not satisfied, and they need to be fulfilled and satisfied.

Well that may sound okay at the start. But when you structure a ministry that is designed to approach people on the basis of a lack of satisfaction, and build everything around that and by that woo them to Christ, you have still sold everybody self-satisfaction as a viable goal. And then when you've got those people to Christ they are still going to be consumed with whether or not they are satisfied. You've promised them Jesus will satisfy you. And I don't know about you, but there are lots of things in life even in Christ that aren't from the human comfort level very satisfying.

As one writer says, "In endeavoring to identify with this unchurched person and identify all his needs and pick out his need for satisfaction, in endeavoring to move him from the world to the church, you have just moved the church into the world because you've redefined his greatest need as personal satisfaction. Now, you've got a church full of people who have been taught that the compelling issue is personal satisfaction defined in human terms." What a tragic situation to have to deal with.

And so, in our culture, we are constantly being sold dissatisfaction. That's how the whole advertising world works, to make you discontent and dissatisfied and to make personal satisfaction the most compelling issue in your life. The truth of the matter is it really doesn't matter at all. Nothing in this world that's going to burn up, nothing in this passing world really should be tied to our contentment, or our satisfaction, nothing. And we're going to talk about that this morning.

Contentment is a biblical word. Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:6, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." And then in verse 8, Paul said, "Having food and clothing, be content." The writer of Hebrews in chapter 13 verse 5 said, "Be content with what you have, for He said, I will never leave you or forsake you." So the Bible talks a lot about contentment and, basically, commands us to be content. It's another one of those essential spiritual attitudes in the life of the church. The church needs to be content. You need to be content. You're commanded to be so.

Well, as I thought about that marvelous attitude, that wonderful attitude that should pervade our lives, I asked myself, "Where in the Scripture would I go to find the greatest illustration of that?" And I found it easily, the first place I turned, Philippians chapter 4. Turn to it with me, Philippians chapter 4.

Now as the apostle Paul writes this epistle to the Philippians, you need to know a little about his circumstances. At the time he is writing he is a prisoner. He is a prisoner. He is in the city of Rome, the great metropolis of the Roman Empire. And because of his preaching of the gospel which has stirred up so much trouble among the Jews and the Gentiles, he has been made a prisoner.

It is a somewhat modified imprisonment because he has some kind of private quarters that he is in rather than being thrown into the dungeon with everybody else. Apparently there is some kind of a private environment in which he is chained to a Roman soldier. Now we do know that he was incarcerated in the filthy prison, probably the Mamertine Prison which is still visible if you go to Rome. But in this particular occasion, it seems as though he is imprisoned in a private environment in which he is in very sparse conditions chained to a Roman soldier.

He is in isolation from his friends, from people. He cannot go and come as he chooses, he cannot preach and minister. He has lost all freedom and he has lost privacy, continually chained to a Roman soldier. He has only the basic issues of life, a bare minimum of food and drink and clothing. He is afflicted with the difficulty of being a captive. And in some ways, being chained to a person would be worse than being in a prison cell or even in a cell full of prisoners.

He has only the very basic issues of life. In some ways this is the worst possible human condition. Only a few friends, occasionally, are able to find him and commune with him. He is in this condition waiting for a trial before Nero, a trial which could end in his execution. He knows that. He has been deprived of every human comfort.

He is a lonely man, as it were, humanly speaking. Every movement of his hand as he writes causes the clanking of the chain to which he is linked to the soldier. It is in that environment that we read Philippians 4:11. "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

What a blessed lesson to learn and he had learned it. You don't get that without learning. There's a process to learn contentment. Here he is in this horrible condition, isolation, no privacy, chained, imprisoned. And he says, "I have learned to be content." Here is the description of a contented man. And this is the kind of man you need to learn from because this is a man with nothing, absolutely nothing. First of all, I want to point out that he knew nothing of a victim mentality. He knew absolutely nothing of a victim mentality.

He has nothing to say about the difficulty of his imprisonment. He has nothing to say about the unfair judicial process to which he has been exposed. He has nothing to say about the undeserved hatred from the Jews, or the undeserved hostility from the Gentiles. He has nothing to say about himself being mistreated, maltreated, abused, etc. He knows nothing about being a victim. Boy, in our society it's a far cry from the mentality of today, isn't it? Where everybody is a victim of everything. It's just incredible how in a hurry we are to identify ourselves as victims.

The word "content" here, very interesting word. It means basically to have enough. A simple word, to have enough, to be sufficient. In fact, Lightfoot, the great Greek commentator says, "It refers to someone who doesn't need any aid." It refers to somebody who doesn't need anything. And when you look at Paul and you say, "Well there's a man who doesn't need anything," by today's definition that would be ridiculous. He has nothing but doesn't need anything. Now that's contentment. That is absolute contentment. To have nothing and need nothing. "I have learned –" he says – "I have learned to be content."

Down in verse 12 he says it again toward the end of the verse. "I have learned the secret. I have learned the secret." Again, he uses this verb "to learn." In the Greek it's a verb to be initiated into. It was used, for example, of the initiation into the secrets of the mystery religions. It's...for your Greek students...*mueō*. Some of you follow me in your little Greek New Testament. *Mueō*. It means to be initiated into the inner secrets of some religion. In fact, they used to say in ancient times that a person was an initiate. That is to say they were learning the inside secrets of their religion.

Paul says I've learned the secret, I've been initiated. "I have learned how to be content." That is a secret that eludes most people. And, frankly, folks...and this is one of the hardships you must bear in

our culture...the more stuff you have the harder it is to learn this lesson. It's a lot easier for people who don't have anything. It's a lot easier for people in India to learn to be content than it is for us, because we define life so much in terms of what we have. We're so used to these things. Paul says I've learned.

Now the question that comes in my mind is how do you learn this? How can you be so content? How can you get to the place in your life where you can say I have nothing and I need nothing? How can you get there? How can I learn that lesson? How can I get initiated into contentment? How can I stop riding that mood rollercoaster up and down dependent upon on how things go? How can I get over the hump of having been mistreated by my spouse, or my family, or my parents, or my friends, or my boss, or my teacher, or my professor who gave me a low grade?

How can I get above feeling like a victim, like I'm not getting what's fair and what's right? And I'm being this...how can I rise above that and say, "Hey, I have nothing and I don't need anything? I am sufficient, content. I don't have any needs. How can I get on that kind of plane and just stay there and not rise up and down, dependent upon how things are going in my world? Well we're going to find out in this passage. There are five...five principles that you must learn if you would be content, five principles. They are the secrets of contentment. And when you learn them you will move to contentment.

Number one, trust in God's providence. Trust in God's providence. Now this is only alluded to here, but I think in a wonderful way. Trust in God's providence, have confidence in God's providence. Let me just say a word about providence. Providence is a term that has been used by theologians for years to describe the fact that God works everything to His own will. That's what it means. It means that God takes the millions of contingencies that occur in the universe, and out of them all orchestrates His own will perfectly. And as I've told you in the past in talking about providence, providence to me is a greater miracle than a miracle.

If God just stopped the normal process of things and injected a miracle, He could do anything He wanted, and you could understand that. He has great power. He created things so He can stop the normal processes of the natural operation of the way the world goes and just inject a miracle. But what He does in providence is let all those contingencies take place, millions of people making millions of choices, doing millions of things, and demons and all of the host of Satan working their whole system. And then you've got all of the physical factors in a physical universe, all of the complexity of those millions upon millions of contingencies and God with them all perfectly blended together creates His own purposes and brings them all to pass.

That is beyond imagination to me. You put a few components in my life and I get confused, and I can't get where I'm going if there are too many components. It gets too complicated. I've often thought that intelligence...and this is purely a nonprofessional definition. Intelligence to me, as it increases, is the ability to handle greater and greater complexity, okay? Really, really dumb people, just plain old every day ordinary folks that aren't too smart, can't handle too much that's complex.

But as you keep going up that IQ ladder, the higher you get the more complexity people can handle. But even when you've got up to the strange folks, you know, who are up there around 175 and above, and start getting real...they can handle a myriad of complexities but can't find matching socks. You know those people. Well, even when you get up there there's an end to what they can handle.

But when you're talking about God, you're talking about a level of genius, you're talking about a mind that can handle all the existing complexities in the universe and pull them all together in a perfect plan to absolutely effect His will. Talking about something that is inscrutable, to put it mildly, and that's why you don't understand all the theological issues because your brain bails out, most of us long before we ever hit 175. By the way, the average IQ is about 100. The average college graduation IQ is about 120 to 125, so we do pretty well to figure out the things we figure out in this world. But not even near the genius of God.

There was a little circumstance God fit into the whole program in Paul's life. Look at verse 10. He says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly." He said, "I rejoiced for this reason, now at last you have revived your concern for me. Indeed you were concerned before but you lacked opportunity." Now why is Paul rejoicing in the Lord? Why is he not thanking the Philippians? Why is he not saying, "I want to thank you guys for what you did?" He's rejoicing in the Lord because he knows who brought it all to pass.

Here's the situation, if I can just kind of paint the picture for you a little bit. For ten years the Philippian church had never sent Paul any support. And he was basically an itinerant preacher who worked and owned his own living the best he could. But once you get into prison or once you're incarcerated, it's a little tough. For ten years the Philippian church had been unable to send him support. When you get into the story a little bit of those ten years and you ask the question why, there's two answers that come up. One, because they were poor and they barely had enough for themselves.

Now remember, it was ten years earlier from the writing of Philippians that Paul had gone into the city of Philippi. And he first went to that synagogue...it really wasn't a synagogue, it was a group of Jews down by the river. There weren't enough to start a synagogue. And he went down there and there were some men and women by the river and they were Jews and they were worshiping Jehovah and he went and met with them. And you remember how the story goes. He preached the gospel, and then some demon-possessed came along and Satan tried to cooperate with God to gain a little ground. And Paul cast the demon out of the girl, doesn't want publicity from Satan.

And then you remember what happened. Paul eventually preached the gospel in the city of Philippi, was put in jail. And while he was in stocks he and his friend Silas were singing praise to God in the middle of the night. An earthquake came, broke the walls of the jail, kicked all the stocks open. You remember the jailer was converted and a church was planted in Philippi. Ten years have passed since that time. Ten years since Acts 16 records that incredible story. And Paul says in verse 10, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before but you lacked opportunity."

During those ten years they never had the Kairos. That's the word "opportunity, the season." We don't know the specifics why, but it was certainly partly because of their poverty. There was persecution of Paul in that town and surely there was some difficulty for that young church in that town. But even beyond that there was Paul's...Paul's inaccessibility for one thing.

He was always on the move and may have been a little hard to track down. And, secondly, he was busy earning his own way as he worked with his leatherwork and his tent making. But, recently, he

got himself, of course, in a situation where he had no way to earn his own living anymore and his needs were great, and it was at that very appropriate time, ten years after he had started that church, that they revived their concern for him.

And what he's referring to here is that they sent him a gift. They sent him a gift. They sent him something to care for him...it may have been clothing, food. We're not sure what it was specifically but he sent...he was sent a gift. You'll notice down in verse 16, "Even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once, not that I seek the gift." So here, recently, they've started to meet his needs. They sent him some gifts in Thessalonica and now in the situation that he's in, in the prison in Rome, they have sent him gifts again. They're starting to be able to do that and the Lord is making it happen at the time of Paul's great need.

By the way, the term "revived" there is a horticultural word, just so you understand it. And it has to do with something that blooms or flourishes, comes to bloom. And he is saying, "Your concern has blossomed, your concern has bloomed. And you've been concerned before but you didn't have the opportunity or the capability and now you have. And that's why I rejoice in the Lord greatly."

You see, he knew what the writer of Hebrews said was true, that you don't ever need to be anything other than content for I will never leave you or forsake you. I mean, he knew that God was there. He knew what Proverbs 16:9 says that a man..."the mind of a man plans his ways but the Lord directs his steps." He knew what Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans of a man's heart, but the Lord's counsel stands."

Paul knew that he didn't have to sort out all the issues because as he said in Philippians 2:13, "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." He knew that his life was in God's hands. He knew the Old Testament. He knew the providence of God in the life of Joseph. His brothers sold him into slavery, and the fact that Joseph ended up in Egypt, became Prime Minister was what preserved Israel.

He knew the story of Esther, how Esther was planted in a pagan king's palace to stop a conspiracy that would have been genocide and wiped out the Jewish people, the providence of God. You don't even read the name of God or the word "God" or any reference to God in the whole book of Esther and He is unseen doing His will, providentially, in every verse.

You remember the story of Ruth and how God providentially worked through that incredible story to bring about the line of David and ultimately the Messiah, God working with all those millions of contingencies. And Paul knew all about that. He knew it from his understanding of Scripture. He knew it from his experience. He had learned that God was in control of everything.

Now there's a second principle that you must learn. Not only the providence of God, that at the time and the place when it is needed, God will act. But, secondly, you need not only to trust in God's providence, but to be satisfied with little, to be satisfied with little. This is not easy. I was reading a letter this morning between services...no, actually at home before I left...from a missionary who had just arrived in a very primitive area of Africa, having left the United States and now embarking in the first few weeks upon life in Africa.

And the letter was saying, "I suppose you're wondering how we have found Africa," and it went on for

about two pages to say, "Here is what we have found to be difficult." And it lists bumpy roads, mud, and just on and on about all this. The place needs painting, there's only cold water, and it goes on and on. "Pray for us, pray for us." And I can understand that. Here are people who are not used to little. It's a very big transition, trying to sort out just how they're going to live with that, let alone how they're going to reach the country with the message of Jesus Christ.

It's hard for us in this society. This is one of the plagues of prosperity. Verse 11 is where we get to this principle. "Not that I speak from want –" Paul wants to put a little caveat in here. He's rejoicing in the Lord because the Philippians just at the appropriate time have met his needs, but not because of his own personal wants, because he says – "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."

"It's not...it's not that I'm rejoicing because of my wants. Look, I'm content anyway. I don't have any needs. I mean, I'm rejoicing in what little you gave me, but that's plenty for me. I don't need anymore. It's not because all of a sudden my longings are being met. I just need the basics, and through you the Lord provided them. I trust He'll always do that providentially. But it's not because I need more."

Can you imagine somebody saying this today? I have no needs. I have no needs. That's very hard for us in this consumer mentality to say, isn't it? I don't have any needs. I don't need anything. There's nothing I need. And we have so much more than the apostle Paul who said there's nothing I need.

I mean, we had a few years ago, you know, the booming of the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel didn't last long because the poor got poorer giving their money to the prosperity preachers. So the prosperity gospel had a short life. People didn't get rich. It didn't kind of pan out that way. Just...it's like a pyramid scheme, you know. Just the ones at the top got rich. And the prosperity gospel kind of went away, it's kind of fading. And in its place has come the needs theology. We've got a lot of needs and we're all victims. And we've all been kicked around and beat up and hammered, and nobody understands us and life isn't fair.

Like that court case I heard about where the court awarded an employee \$11.2million because some other employee said something to him which he interpreted as a racial slur. Now, I don't think you should do that. But somebody said to this person something that he interpreted as a racial slur, which is not appropriate to do to anyone, and the court awarded him \$11.2million.

And I was glad to see that this week another case overturned that and said, "Hey, that's life. That's life, fellow, give us a break." Do you think you're going to go through life and sue everybody who you perceive makes you a victim of some unkind statement? That's life, this is the world. I was thankful for that judge. I don't know anything about him but somebody out there with a little sanity in the middle of this.

But we've got a...we've got a new theology that's built on need. And the idea is "I've got all these needs and God better meet my needs and Jesus better meet my needs. And boy, I've got to be satisfied and I need to be fulfilled and I need...I need to be successful. And I need to flourish in my business, and I need my marriage to be what it ought to be. And, boy, when you start down that track, that is a track to disaster.

And in reading about this church, this Seeker-Friendly thing all predicated on the foundation of fulfillment and personal satisfaction, what has happened is they've got thousands of people in their congregation every year going for psychotherapy. Why are they going for psychotherapy? Because they've been told that when you get into this Christian deal, you're going to get satisfied and you're going to have your needs met.

And they're living in a culture which tells them there's no end to those. And so they've got to run off and get fixed. Somebody's got to be there to tell them, "You're just a poor victim, poor you." That kind of thing is a tragic, tragic thing. The compelling need that you and I have is we need to escape hell and we need to worship the true and living God. It doesn't really matter whether we have anything in this life or don't.

You know, sometime...and we have so much. I mean, we are so rich and that's fine. God has blessed us, and we went through that in our study of 2 Corinthians. And that's okay. You can take it; you just have to keep realizing you don't need it. In fact, the more of it you get, the more you know you don't need it and pretty soon you don't even want it. When people say, "I want to give you a gift," they tell me sometimes I want to give...I say, "Look, if it isn't combustible or consumable, don't give it to me." If I can't burn it or eat it, I don't want to stick it some place. There was one other thing. If I can read it, give it to me.

Paul says, "I have learned to be content. I've learned to be satisfied in whatever circumstances I am." He's not denying that life has difficult circumstances, that's life. He's not denying that he's mistreated. But he is no victim. He has no victim's mentality. He is triumphant. He is satisfied with little. He never forgets what he really deserves, right? He also never forgets what...what is coming. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him," right? So he's trusting in God's providence to meet his needs. He knows the Lord never forsakes him, and he is content and satisfied with little.

This...this sort of Christian humanism that says, "I'm the center of the universe and my needs are the driving compelling force," is certainly an unbiblical approach. I don't want to say when I say Paul was content that there aren't some...some areas where he wasn't content. Let me suggest a couple. He refused to be content with his own spirituality. He was not content with that. He said, "O wretched man that I am." He was not content with his pursuit of holiness. He was not content...content with his goal of becoming like Christ. He said, "Not as though I have obtained it or attained it, I press toward the mark."

He was not content with the way the world was treating Jesus Christ. He was not content with the blasphemy against him. He was not content with people going to hell and rejecting the gospel. There were a lot of things that he wasn't content with, but they had nothing to do with his physical circumstances. It was enough for him that God had willed those circumstances and that God was showing Himself faithful and powerful in those circumstances.

He could say with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none on earth beside Thee. My heart and my flesh fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." To have God was to have everything and he needed nothing. He had learned that the chief end of man was to glorify God and the chief joy of man was to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.

And, listen, the love that he had for God in the relationship was enough. It was enough. It's like that kind of pure wonderful love that sometimes we even experience when we first fall in love with that life partner, or that love that we cherish with that little child, it's so pure in itself that it...it has no regard for circumstances. So we could say that the Christian's life must be a life liberated from need, liberated from need. Be satisfied with little.

Let me take you to a third point, and this one is related to the second one. It's the third element in the fabric of contentment. You need to be independent from circumstances. You need to be independent from circumstances. If you're going to be a person who is satisfied, you must be satisfied with little and you must be confident that the little is really what God has providentially provided. And thirdly, you must be independent from circumstances. And you see this independence in verse 12. It's a most interesting verse. It's a verse in which he cancels out everything.

Watch how he does it. "I know how to get along with humble means. 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." "In any and every circumstance," that's the key, that little phrase right in the second line, "In any and every circumstance." In other words, it doesn't matter. Circumstances are irrelevant. You will learn to be content when you have learned to trust God, providentially, to care for everything, when you have learned to be satisfied with a minimum and when you have learned to be indifferent toward your circumstances.

"I know how," he says. "I know how. I know how to get along with humble means." Literally the verb here has to do with just the basic bare necessities. "I also know how to live in *perisseuō*, abundance, overflow in the matter of earthly goods and supplies. I know both of those. "I know how to get along with little and I know how to get along with a lot." And sometimes that's tougher, isn't it, and keep your perspective. "Because in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret again, I've learned it. I've learned how to be filled and to go hungry, how to have abundance and how to suffer need." And what he's doing is cancelling everything out. He's just saying I'm content, it doesn't matter what the circumstance is. That is real spiritual maturity.

As I said earlier, so many people just ride the roller coaster of their perceived satisfactions. He found all his satisfaction in the relationship with the Lord, all his satisfaction in the hope of the future, all his satisfaction in being useful to God for kingdom purposes, all his satisfaction in ministry. He had suffered profoundly. In fact, most of his life was...I think, since he became a believer, most of his life falls into the category of humble means, going hungry and suffering need, rather than living in prosperity, being filled and having abundance. I think that was the exception rather than the rule.

But what he is saying is it really doesn't matter, it's not an issue. If I have it, if God provides it, fine. I want to be a steward of it and thank Him for it and understand its usage. And if I don't have it, that's fine, too. And he remembered, you know, 2 Corinthians 12, the experience that God was putting him through all through his life culminated in that 2 Corinthians 12 passage where he says he was content in persecution, distress, insults, weaknesses, because those were the things that humbled him, drew him to God and made him powerful.

So, beloved, contentment is an elusive thing in this society because this society wants to make you a victim. This society wants to emphasize and glorify your personal rights. This society wants to

personalize and privatize and individualize your spirituality and your Christianity so that its everything you think it ought to be. This society wants to turn Jesus into the genie. You rub the bottle; he jumps out and gives you what you want. This society, through advertising, wants to dissatisfy you with absolutely everything.

And I admit there are troubles and issues in life, and there are struggles in life, but so many of them stem from the selfishness that this sinful approach breeds. When you bring...introduce your selfishness into your marriage, it will mess it up. You introduce it into your family, it will mess it up. It will mess up the church. It will mess up any relationship. It will mess you up if you're driven by self-satisfaction. That's a terrible thing. That's a tragic thing. And when you tell people that Jesus...that they should receive Jesus because He will produce self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction, you have put them on a road to disaster.

Some of them may actually come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and then spend most of their Christian experience wondering why it didn't work out the way you were promised it would. If you're going to be selfish, if you're going to be a victim, if you're going to take every wound personally, if every time somebody says something that offends you or something you didn't like, you're going to strike out, then you will destroy all relationships. You will destroy your own life.

But if you will recognize that your circumstances are by the providence of God what He intended for you and that you should be satisfied with little and utterly detached from your circumstances in terms of their ability to change your contentment, then you will learn to be content. And wouldn't it be wonderful if we were all so contented, because it would turn to great praise for God.

Now let's come to the fourth principle. And this is a very important one and a very obvious one. It is brought to bear on this issue in verse 13. Let's say it this way. If we're going to be contented, we have to trust in God's providence, be satisfied with little, be independent of circumstances and be sustained by divine power, be sustained by divine power. Verse 13, "In spite of what my circumstances are –" remember he was a prisoner when he wrote this, chained to a Roman soldier in the worst kind of circumstance. But in verse 13 he says – "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." And I believe what Paul knew here was that nothing was ever too hard for the Lord.

His adequacy came because he was attached to the power source. And what I want to say to you at this particular point is contentment will only be yours when you are plugged in to that power source. If by virtue of sin and if by virtue of iniquity in your life you have begun to walk in the flesh, you're going to disconnect yourself from the resource that sustains you and you're going to forfeit that contentment. It might even be that God will deprive you of the things that you are promised if you're an obedient believer and you will sink into dire circumstances more than you can bear. And the Lord might even do that to bring you to repentance.

That is probably what went on in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 where a man in the church was sinning grossly by having an affair with his father's wife, probably his stepmother, a form of incest. And he was parading it and he was proud about it and the church wasn't doing anything about it. And the apostle Paul says, "Turn that person over to Satan for the destruction of –" what? – "the flesh."

There will be times in the life of a believer when the basic subsistence needs will not be met. And to the Corinthian church the apostle Paul had to say, "Some of you are weak and some of you are sick

and some of you have died because of the sins you have committed in the way you have approached the Lord's Table."

Now the Lord is always sufficient for the obedient believer, always sufficient for the trusting and submissive believer, always sufficient. And that's verse 13. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." That strength is available. That's why the apostle Paul prayed in that wonderful prayer of Ephesians chapter 3 verse 16, "that God would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

And the way that you experience that power is to be yielded to the Spirit in the inner man. It is to say to live a Spirit-controlled life, to walk in the Spirit...to use the language of Galatians...to be filled with the Spirit...to use the language of Ephesians chapter 5, another way of saying letting the Word dwell in your richly so that you respond to it in obedience.

Adequacy comes; contentment comes from being connected to the power source, to the One who can strengthen you for everything. I can do all things. Literally, he is saying I am able, I have the strength. I have the strength to do all things. And by the way in the Greek the "all things" is emphatic, all things I am capable of doing. All things I can accomplish. Why? "Because of Him who strengthens me." When you're connected to the power source you can go through anything, any difficulty, any deprivation, or any overabundance and even respond to that rightly.

And I believe the "all things," just to stop and take a look at those two words for a moment, I believe the "all things" that is in the emphatic position has to do with the issues of verses 11 and 12. And those are issues of material comforts and worldly circumstances, or earthly circumstances. And what he is saying is, "I can go without the food that I might want to have. I can go along on a bare subsistence level.

"I can go with just a minimal wardrobe, limited comfort, less warmth than I might desire, less freedom than I might desire, less personal care than I might desire. I can go through that. I can endure the pain, I can endure the threats, I can endure the punishment and the danger because I am infused with strength from the One who strengthens me."

He is literally talking about having the ability to overcome the most difficult, physical circumstances because of the great mercies of the Lord that were dispensed to him. He abides...he was abiding, as it were, in the vine...to borrow the language of John 15:5. And the Lord's life was being, as it were, pumped right through him.

The statement at the end of verse 13, "through Him who strengthens me," *endunamoō*, *dunamis* from which we get the word dynamite, with the preposition at the beginning of it intensifies it. And the preposition *en* means into. So the verb means to infuse dynamite into, to infuse power into, to infuse strength into. And thus the apostle Paul is simply saying, "In the midst of any situation, the Lord Himself infuses strength into me."

Now you always want to be in a relationship to the Lord like that so that you are infused with the strength to endure any difficulty. In 2 Timothy 4, there is a marvelous illustration of this from the life of the apostle Paul. This is, of course, the last letter he wrote, as you know. And he was this time in prison for the last time and about to be executed. And in verse 16 of 2 Timothy 4 he says, "At my first

offense no one supported me, but all deserted me, may it not be counted against them,” a prayer like the prayer of Stephen when he prayed that the Lord would not hold the sin against the people who stoned him and like Jesus who prayed that God would forgive His crucifiers.

Here Paul asks the Lord to be merciful to those who have abandoned him in the time of his great trial. He obviously was brought to trial in Rome and Christians, instead of coming to stand beside him, all fled just as the disciples had done when Jesus was taken prisoner. They deserted him and he doesn't want it held against them. That's how much he loved them. Here he is in the most difficult of circumstances and no one is there to defend him.

All those lives he influenced, all those people he led to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, all those churches he planted, all those people, and they've gone and there's nobody there. That has to be a sad way to end such a faithful life. One thing to get persecuted by the unbelievers, another thing to get deserted by the Christians. One thing to get deserted by the Christians you don't know, another thing to get deserted by the ones you poured your life into.

Don't expect too much. People are greatly capable of disappointing even the noblest of Christian servants. But in verse 17 he says, “Even though nobody was there, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.” And I'm not exactly sure what all that means; I'm not exactly sure what he meant by that. It certainly would include some kind of infusion of strength to go through a very trying physical ordeal, emotional and mental ordeal. And, certainly, it includes great spiritual strength so that “through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished and all the Gentiles might hear and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth.”

The Lord gave him strength at his defense to preach the gospel and strength to use his mind and his energy to give whatever kind of message needed to be given to postpone the inevitable, at least for a season. And even in the end when death does come, verse 18, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.” The worst they could do was send him to heaven. The indwelling Spirit is his strength. That's why he was being humbled by the Lord so he'd learn to trust.

Remember again, 2 Corinthians chapter 12, a monumental scripture, by the way, that all Christians need to know, where Paul has this thorn in the flesh that is tearing up his life. He prays for it to be removed. The Lord says “I'm not going to remove it but I'm going to give you sufficient grace to endure it. I'm just going to crank up the grace so that you can endure the pain. In fact, the pain is good because it humbles you.” So he says, “I'll boast about my weakness that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” The weaker you become the more dependent you become on the power of Christ. If you are to be a contented person you need to recognize that you have to be plugged in to the power source.

And Paul was. He says in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.” He saw Christ alive and at work in him. “For to me to live is Christ,” he said earlier to the Philippians. And this was his passion. And he can say here, “I have the capability. I am capable of all things through the one who regularly and faithfully infuses His power into me.

Beloved, if you're struggling with discontent, it could be because you don't trust the providence of God. You don't trust that God is orchestrating everything for His glory. It could be because you're not satisfied with little and for some reason think you deserve more and have talked yourself into some kind of victimization mentality. It could be that you're not living independently from your circumstances, but you're all sucked into them and you're riding the roller coaster of the up and down trends of life. Or it could be that you have allowed sin in your life, and as a result of that sin there is a short in the connection between you and the power source that provides the strength for every situation.

It may seem like it's a stretch for you to grasp this. But I can tell you this from my own limited experience in life, and that is this. I have learned to embrace the joyous product of suffering, pain, misrepresentation, misunderstanding, false accusation. I have reached a point where that kind of thing actually causes a smile in my heart because I understand its perfecting purposes instead of an attitude of retaliation. And through all of the difficulties, whatever they might be. And sometimes you think you're at the end of your strength, it's amazing how God infuses you with the strength necessary to accomplish that to which He's called you.

Well, one last point, and this is a very basic and a very important one. Without this you will continue to struggle with the matter of contentment. You must have confidence or trust in God's providence, satisfaction with little, independence from your circumstances, sustenance by divine power and, finally, preoccupation with the well being of others, preoccupation with the well being of others.

Selfish people are never content, never. And this is such a basic element of people's contentment, unselfishness, being much more concerned with how others are doing than how you're doing, much more concerned about that. And I'm always thrilled to get into a conversation with somebody who is suffering and have them want to talk about nothing but how I'm doing. That's such a mark of the work of God in the heart, such an evidence of contentment.

Let's look at it here in this wonderful passage of Philippians chapter 4 because it unfolds. Verse 14, follow the flow. "Nevertheless you have done well to share with me in my affliction. I'm really glad you sent me the gifts. I'm glad you shared with me in this time of my affliction, and you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone. You're the only ones.

"In Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs." Now here's the issue. "Not that I seek the gift itself. My concern is not that you sent me a gift for my sake,—" I love this. He says – "but I seek for the profit which increases to your account." He says, "The reason that I am so glad you sent me a gift is because of what it means to you."

What does it mean to you? Very simple, "It profits to your account." What does that mean? If they were poor and they gathered together the little they had and sent it to Paul, how did it profit to their account? Very simple. They were laying up treasure. Where? In heaven, and it would bring an eternal reward. That's the issue with Paul. He's saying, "I don't have any needs. I'm connected to the power supply and my God is supplying my needs, and I'm able to do everything through His strength. But I'm glad for the gift because of what it means to you." Verse 18, "I have received everything in full and I have an abundance, I am amply supplied."

This is...this is pretty...pretty grand language for a prisoner. He is in tribulation, pressure and trouble. He says that when he refers to his affliction in verse 14. It's the word *thlipsis*, pressure. And he says, "You're the first to help me." He founded the church, as we noted, in Acts 16, signaled the beginning of the gospel's penetration into Europe.

He had preached at Philippi; then moved on to Thessalonica and Berea. And when he left that region to go to Achaia, the Philippians were faithful to help him in those early years to get started, and then there had been years since they were able to do anything. And now at the appropriate time they send to help him to meet his needs.

But he says to them, "It's not that that blesses me, it's not because I wanted it. It's not that I might consume it upon myself. That's not the source of my joy. The source of my joy is the profit that increases to your account. The word "profit" there is actually fruit. It's actually the Greek word for fruit. It's...it produces fruit to your account.

It puts your treasure in heaven for which you will receive an eternal reward. It fulfills Luke 6:38, "Give and it shall be given unto you." Interest is already accruing with God, and God will bless you in life and in eternity. He really didn't want them to give because it would satisfy him. He wanted them to give because it would mean tremendous blessing to them.

That is the heart attitude of a contented man. All he can see is benefit to somebody else. He holds everything very lightly, gives it up very readily, gives it up very easily, gives it up very generously because he is far more concerned about others than he is himself. His needs are not an issue. His needs now are not an issue. his needs in the future are not an issue.

What is an issue is that God be glorified, that spiritual life and growth take place. So he can say, in verse 18, "I have everything, I have enough, I have more than enough, I'm amply satisfied. He says, "I don't need anymore because – " follow it in verse 18 – "I have received from Epaphroditus – " who's come from their church – "what you have sent. It is a fragrant aroma. It is an acceptable sacrifice. It is well pleasing to God."

"That's why I love your gift, not because of what it means to me, but because of what it means to you because it was given to honor God." That is sacrificial language, by the way, not accounting language. That is sacrificial language. He transitions out of the agricultural fruit, out of the accounting terminology which is used there, increasing to your account, and he turns to sacrificial language, and he sees the gift for what it really is. And what it really is is an offering to God.

It's an act of holy worship. It's a spiritual act of sacrifice on the part of those Philippians. And he knows that because it is that it will accrue to their spiritual benefit. I mean, he is living out here and illustrating what he said earlier to the Philippians. If you look back at chapter 2, familiar passage, verse 4, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interest but also for the interest of others."

You'll never be content until you do. You'll never have enough. You'll never be satisfied. You'll always be grasping. One of the sad definitions of sin is the desire to get things, to consume them upon your own desires. Paul was grateful not for what the gift meant to him, but for what the gift meant to them. Beloved, I can't stress this enough. Contented people are consumed with meeting other people's needs. That's just basic. And until you are willing to do that, and until that is the

priority, you will battle the temptations of discontent.

And you will feel yourself personally harmed if someone does something to you, takes something from you, cheats you out of something, et cetera, et cetera. Or if you don't gain all the things you need to gain, or if you don't have stockpiled all the pile you think you need to hedge against tomorrow, if that's what's consuming you, you will struggle with contentment. But when you recognize that the most important issue is somebody else and the meeting of their needs, you are free from dissatisfaction.

He sums up the reason for his joy in verse 19, a great verse. Wish we had time to develop this verse. He says, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." How can he say that? How can he say to those Philippians, confidently, "My God shall supply all your needs," God is going to meet all your needs, how can he say that? He can say that because there is a principle working and it is the principle of giving that says you sow and you will what? You will reap. You give and it will be given to you. That is a spiritual principle. Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians chapter 9, sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow bountifully, reap bountifully.

The issue is what you sow with God He returns. And God has pledged and promised that you cannot out give God. You can go back into the Proverbs and it says you bring to God your first fruits and your barns will be full. That's the principle. And Paul knows that principle, and that's why he rejoices because he says your gift to me is clear indication that you have stepped into that principle. And God in response to your giving is going to pour out gifts on you. My God is going to supply all your needs.

There are conditions for that. That's just not something you can sort of yank out of the context. If, indeed, you are honoring the Lord with what you have, He'll make sure all your needs are met. That is the issue. And that passage, which we studied some months ago in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, is so important. It says in verse 7...well let me read verses 6 and following and get the whole context. "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do just as he is purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." All right, you sow, you reap.

How much should you sow? Whatever you want. You purpose in your heart, you sow it, don't do it grudgingly or under compulsion, legalistically. Do it cheerfully; give whatever you want. And here comes the response, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in everything you may have an abundance for every good deed." God will pour out blessing upon you. Scripture says, "Test me and see if I'll not open the windows of heaven and pour out more blessing than you can even receive."

"He who supplies seed to the sower – " it says in verse 10 – "and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; and you will be enriched in all things for all liberality." You give and you sow, and God pours back blessing. That's why he can say verse 19 is true. That's why he can say to the Philippians, "My God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus," because you have taken the first step in that operative principle and you have given generously and sacrificially, and you have sown and you will reap. That's the principle. When we learn this, we are blessed.

Now, you see, that is why Paul was so greatly encouraged. It wasn't that he was encouraged

because he received what he received, but because the Philippians would receive from God the blessing that comes because of their generosity. It's not hard to understand why he was content, is it? Really not hard. In fact, it's fairly obvious when you go through this text.

Here was a man who had absolute confidence in God's sovereign control over everything. And he knew that God knew his circumstances and that God was aware of every single issue in his life and was in charge of every contingency in existence in the universe and all of it was working together for God to fulfill his purpose for the apostle Paul.

Secondly, he had learned to be satisfied with very little. Thirdly, he lived independently from his circumstances. They were really immaterial. Fourthly, he walked in the Spirit and so he stayed plugged in to the power source that provided to him the strength for every issue of life. And fifth, he was utterly preoccupied with the wellbeing of others.

Faith, humility, submission, dependence, unselfishness; those are the kinds of virtues that make a contented Christian. And Paul was that. So much so that he closes this little paragraph in the midst of his dire circumstance as a prisoner, by saying in verse 20, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." And that's all that mattered to him was that God be glorified.

Contentment, a wonderful blessing and a glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. If we say we belong to Him we ought to be content with whatever it is that He has called us to endure and with whatever provisions He has made for us. And for those of us to whom He has given much, the challenge is even greater to be content and to be willing to divest ourselves of that for the benefit of others, for the sheer joy of seeing God pour blessing on them. What a tremendous privilege. Well, more to say but we'll leave it at that. Let's pray.

Father, again we have traversed the Scripture and been reminded of principles that are so foundational in our lives. It's not enough, Lord, not enough at all. In fact it is a serious, serious violation of Your will for us to know this and not act upon it. So, Lord, I pray that You would lead us by Your Spirit in the days to come, teach us the lessons that produce contentment. Teach us how to be indifferent to the circumstances around us, how to be satisfied with little, how to trust You for everything.

Teach us how to lose ourselves in love for others and be more concerned about their blessings than ours. Teach us that kind of humility. Teach us that we need to walk in the path of righteousness so that we're always connected to the power source we need in the times of our great need. And we know that if we respond properly You will meet all our needs, and we with the apostle and many others will give You glory. To that end we pray because You are worthy. Amen.

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