Thought For The Week

Articles: *Learning Contentment* ~300 words, ~1700 words

Learning Contentment

From Steve's sermon on November 1, 2026 Scripture readers: Kevin (Philippians 4:10–13) and Roger (Proverbs 30:7–9)

Paul rejoiced that the Philippians' care for him had flourished again. Though they had always cared, they had lacked opportunity. He was careful to add that he did not speak from need, "for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:10–13).

The writer of Proverbs asked for two things: that God would keep deception and lies far from him, and that He would give him neither poverty nor riches but only the food that was his portion. The reason was simple and profound: "that I not be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7–9).

Contentment is a state of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment. Paul did not merely teach it; he lived it and then told how he came to it. If you are not content, it is not God's fault. God does everything in His power to look after you, meet your needs, and bring you to fulfillment. When contentment is missing, the place to look is inward—at our own thinking and our willingness to rest in what God has already done.

Paul spoke of God taking him from his mother's womb. From the moment he was born, God took over his care. The same is true for every one of us. Every child that is born, God personally begins looking after and meeting needs. You may not always have recognized His hand, yet He met your needs while you were growing up, and He continues to look after you in adulthood.

Jesus made the same point in the Sermon on the Mount. "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" Look at the birds: they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? See how the flowers of the field grow; they do not labor or spin, yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of them. If God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you? The pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:25–34).

From the day you were born until the day you are taken up, God is looking after you and meeting your needs. If you are not content, it is not His fault.

Paul learned this lesson the hard way. In 2 Corinthians 1 he describes a journey in which he and his companions were under pressure far beyond their ability to endure, so that they despaired of life itself and felt they had received the sentence of death. God allowed the experience for a purpose: “that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.” He delivered them from such a deadly peril and would deliver them again. Paul set his hope on the God who continues to deliver. His contentment rested entirely on God—not because God had only now begun to meet his needs, but because Paul had finally learned to stop trying to carry everything himself and to let God do His work. God is in control of our lives and meets our needs as we need Him. The very difficulties He allows are often the means by which He teaches us to rely on Him.

Children illustrate the point simply. Before they leave home they have few cares. They are not anxious about whether the rent will be paid or whether there will be food. They are content. Cows lying in the field, chewing the cud, give the same picture of quiet sufficiency under the care of another. Those are the signs of contentment. God says the same thing to us: you can be content.

Paul carried the lesson of 2 Corinthians into adulthood and wrote it plainly in Philippians 4. The key word is “learned.” “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” He had learned to place every care and concern on God. God had given him the strength to do it, and God will give you the same strength to learn to rest on Him. Contentment is a lesson. It is an experience.

One more thing is required: a right relationship with God. Imagine if God had left Paul on the Damascus road without sending him to Ananias. Paul had been vigorously persecuting the churches, binding and even killing believers, all the while acting in good conscience. Suddenly Jesus appeared and he realized he had been wrong the entire time. What burden would have rested on him for the rest of his life if he had been left with that knowledge and no way of forgiveness? Jesus knew He could forgive him; that is why He came and died—to reconcile us to God. God extended the right hand of fellowship. All Paul had to do was acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and be baptized. Ananias came and told him, “Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.” Paul did. That is how he could live in complete, total contentment.

A clean conscience is essential. With it we can come before God and ask Him to look after an aunt, a son, a daughter, or parents. Without it we cannot. We have ways of violating and angering God by word or deed. We defy Him every time we do those things. How can we be reconciled? How can we have a clear conscience? Only by being right with God. God says, “Accept my Son as a propitiation for your sin. Accept my Son who willingly went to the cross and died for you.” He is willing to apply His righteousness to you if you will acknowledge Him as Lord and Christ, become His disciple, and be baptized, putting Him on in baptism. That is exactly what was offered to Paul, and that is how he could live in complete contentment.

How about you? If you need that complete and total contentment, the invitation is open. Everything is ready. We can assist you to come to Christ, to receive the forgiveness that cleans the conscience, and to learn, as Paul did, to rest in the God who has been looking after you from the day you were born.

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Learning Contentment:

From Steve's sermon on November 1, 2026

Paul wrote that he had learned to be content in every situation—whether full or hungry, whether abounding or in need. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:10–13). The writer of Proverbs asked for neither poverty nor riches, only his daily portion, so that he would neither deny the Lord nor steal and profane God's name (Proverbs 30:7–9).

Contentment is a state of happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment. If you lack it, the fault is not God's. From the moment you were born He has been looking after you and meeting your needs, and He continues to do so. Jesus said the same in the Sermon on the Mount: do not worry about food or clothing. Your heavenly Father feeds the birds and clothes the lilies; He knows what you need and will supply it as you seek His kingdom first (Matthew 6:25–34).

Paul learned this the hard way. In Asia he and his companions were under pressure so severe they despaired of life itself. God allowed the trial so they would stop relying on themselves and rely on the God who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:8–10). The same God is in control of our lives. The difficulties He permits are often the means by which He teaches us to rest in Him.

Children illustrate the point simply. Before they leave home they carry few cares; they trust the provision of others. God invites us to the same quiet confidence. Paul carried the lesson into adulthood and could say he had learned the secret of contentment in any and every circumstance—by placing every care on the God who strengthens him.

One thing more is required: a clean conscience before God. On the Damascus road Paul discovered he had been wrong the entire time. Jesus did not leave him under that burden. He sent Ananias, who told him to rise and be baptized and wash away his sins. That forgiveness made possible the contentment Paul later described. God still offers the same: accept His Son as the propitiation for your sins, acknowledge Him as Lord and Christ, and put Him on in baptism. Then you too can come before God with a clear conscience and learn, as Paul did, to rest in the One who has cared for you from birth.

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