



Contentment is a highly prized, but elusive virtue. Though it comes only from being rightly related to God and trusting His sovereign, loving, purposeful providence, people nevertheless seek it where it cannot be found—in money, possessions, power, prestige, relationships, jobs, or freedom from difficulties. But by that definition, contentment is unattainable, for it is impossible in this fallen world to be completely free from problems. In sharp contrast to the world’s understanding of contentment is this simple definition of spiritual contentment penned by the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs: “Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition” (The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment [Reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964], 19).¹

^{NLT} **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ **THEN** you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. **Fix your thoughts** on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. **Think about** things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ **Keep putting into practice** all you learned and received from me -- everything you heard from me and saw me doing.

Then the God of peace will be with you. ¹⁰ How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me.

¹¹ Not that I was ever in need, for **I have learned how to be content with whatever I have**. ¹² I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³ For I can do everything **through Christ**,¹ who gives me strength.

Lets just step through some very obvious things in this verse as it relates to worry and contentment

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 296). Chicago: Moody Press.

1. Vs 6 - **Commanded to not worry about ANYTHING** - **Don't worry** about anything;

List the 4-5 things you are tempted to worry about or fear? Why do you think those things matter so much to you?

2. Vs 6 - **Instructed to PRAY instead about EVERYTHING** - instead, **pray** about everything.

Share requests and burdens with God - **Tell God** what you need,

When we are worried ... what is the primary goal we are trying to reach with our prayers?
How do we pray? What do we ask for?

Spiritually stable means we will react to trials with thankful prayer. Such prayer is the antidote to worry and the cure for anxiety. The theology of prayer is not in view here, but rather its priority and the attitude the believer brings to it²

Thank Him!! - and **thank him** for all he has done.

I realize its “easy” to say “thank you Lord” for whatever you’re going through, but why is it hard to “feel” thankful ... to really BE thankful?

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 283). Chicago: Moody Press.

What needs to change in your belief, in your thinking and in your motives to truly BE thankful in all your difficulties or circumstances?

What worry or discontentment says about God. We become worried, anxious, and fearful because we are not trusting in God's wisdom, power, or goodness. We fear that God is not wise enough, strong enough, or good enough to prevent disaster. It may be that this sinful doubt is because our knowledge of Him is faulty, or that sin in our lives has crippled our faith, or what we want to happen has not happened. Thankful prayer in every hard situation brings release from fear and worry, because it affirms God's sovereign control over every circumstance, and that His purpose is the believer's good (Rom. 8:28)³

3. Vs 7 - **IF we do this ... God promises a peace** that is not able to be explained or understood in the middle of these tough issues **THEN** you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.

*Don't make this mean what it is NOT intended to mean. If we "say" thank you ... if we "try to not be anxious" we will not know peace in the storms of life. Go back to the answers prior to this ... one commentary states it this way, "the **peace of God**, the inward tranquility of soul granted by God. It is a **confident trust in His flawless wisdom and infinite power** that provides calm amid the storms of life."⁴*

Why do you think God promises PEACE without changing what is happening? Are you willing to be content with His peace and His plan even if circumstances don't change?

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 283). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (pp. 283-284). Chicago: Moody Press.

4. Vs 7 - **This peace will PROTECT our thinking ...** - His peace will guard your **hearts** and **minds** as you live in Christ Jesus. THINKING IS A HUGE ISSUE in worry and contentment

*When realized in believers' lives, God's peace **will guard** them from anxiety, doubt, and worry. Phroureō (**will guard**) is a military term used of soldiers on guard duty. The picture would have been familiar to the Philippians, since the Romans stationed troops in Philippi to protect their interests in that part of the world. Just as soldiers guard and protect a city, so God's peace guards and protects believers who confidently trust in Him. Paul's use of the phrase **hearts** and **minds** was not intended to imply a distinction between the two; he was merely making a comprehensive reference to the believer's inner person. Once again, Paul reminds his readers that true peace is not available through any human source, but only **in Christ Jesus**.⁵*

Why is it so important to have our thinking protected? Why don't we do a good job of this when we are in difficult circumstances?

5. Vs 8 - NOTE: Paul immediately goes to a section on **instructing us to be in control of our thinking** and to NOT place our thinking on WRONG things but on RIGHT things ... KEY TO NOT WORRYING ... KEY TO CONTENTMENT

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. **Fix your thoughts** on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. **Think about** things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

We see this very clearly also in ...

^{NLT} **Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.**

- a. *The principle that he is about to relate is both the summation of all the others and the key to implementing them. The phrase **dwelt on these things** introduces an important truth: spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks. The imperative form of *logizomai* (**dwelt on**) makes it a command; proper thinking is not optional in the Christian life⁶*

⁵ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 284). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁶ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 285). Chicago: Moody Press.

- b. *Paul's call for biblical thinking is especially relevant in our culture. The focus today is on emotion and pragmatism, and the importance of serious thinking about biblical truth is downplayed. People no longer ask "Is it true?" but "Does it work?" and "How will it make me feel?" Those latter two questions serve as a working definition of truth in our society that rejects the concept of absolute divine truth. Truth is whatever works and produces positive emotions. Sadly, such pragmatism and emotionalism has crept even into theology. The church is often more concerned about whether something will be divisive or offensive than whether it is biblically true.*⁷

Did you notice that we are told that when we "cast" on to God the things we NEVER should have had to start with ... that He promises that we will have PEACE and that that peace will "stand guard" over our minds? YET ... he then IMMEDIATELY commands us to ACTIVELY "fix our minds" or to "think about" those things that are right. Why do you think he does this? What are the kinds of things you need to be thinking on? What are the kinds of thoughts you should be having?

6. Vs 9 – **the God of Peace will be with us** if we will do what Paul has instructed ... - ⁹ **Keep putting into practice** all you learned and received from me -- everything you heard from me and saw me doing. **Then** the God of peace will be with you.

*It is a reminder that those who have godly attitudes, thoughts, and deeds will be guarded both by the peace of God and by the **God of peace**. His presence is essential for the strength, tranquility, and contentment necessary for spiritual stability.*⁸

We all LOVE when our heart and mind are "peaceful" ... at rest in God's goodness and unshaken or untouched by all the dumb things going on in life. However, we now see that there are conditions. This isn't a trick ... it's the way God has ordained for us to be molded into godliness and bring Him glory.

⁷ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 285). Chicago: Moody Press.

⁸ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 292). Chicago: Moody Press.

1. REFUSE to hang on to your worries, concerns, fears, anxieties. They are NOT yours ... you stole those issues from God and you are robbing him of the ability to get glory by working for you
2. SET YOUR THINKING on right things. You can't just "say" you are casting. You must PUT OFF the worrisome / fearful / anxious thoughts by turning over those issues IN FAITH to the God who they belong to ... and PUT ON a regular fight to think on right things.

THEN ... we will know peace that passes understanding ... AND ... we will know what it is to have God's active work on our behalf to live this life of peace and trust in the power that only the Holy Spirit can give to live beyond our ability.

So ... does it surprise you or even bother you that God has put requirements on you to fight regularly to think right? How do you think this truth should affect your response to current situations you are in? What do you need to do today to CAST OFF and FIX YOUR MIND ON?

7. Vs 11 – **contentment is LEARNED** ... not found - for *I have learned how to be content with whatever I have*

It might seem odd that God will give us peace that is beyond our understanding... yet the "greatest" man ever LEARNED contentment. But I think that should both ENCOURAGE US (that he had to learn it) and CHALLENGE US (that we better follow his example and diligently pursue this). What do you need to do today (maybe 100 times) to glorify God by learning to trust him and be content?

8. Vs 13 – **there is NO life circumstance that I CANNOT handle** with peace and contentment because of Christ. For I can do everything **through Christ**,¹ who gives me strength.

God's power that indwells believers is far more than sufficient to strengthen and sustain them in any trial. Contentment belongs to those who confidently trust in that power rather than in their own resources.

Jeremiah Burroughs observes:

A Christian finds satisfaction in every circumstance by getting strength from another, by going out of himself to Jesus Christ, by his faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into his own soul, he is thereby enabled to bear whatever God lays on him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ.... There is strength in Christ not only to sanctify and save us, but strength to support us under all our burdens and afflictions, and Christ expects that when we are under any burden, we should act our faith upon him to draw virtue and strength from him. (The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment, 63)⁹

NOW you see the actual context of what Paul meant when he said ... “I can do ANYTHING through God’s power.” Perhaps you see how that verse should encourage you in such a difficult venture. Its SUPER hard to be content, but you CAN. You MUST. And you CAN’T ... but as you submit to God’s Spirit and Truth you CAN ... and you WILL. What truth can you fix your mind on today to press more and more toward God and being trusting and content?

TEST: AM I DISCONTENT??

- Do I murmur and complain (even in my thoughts) when things in my life don't go right?
- Do I tend to worry and fret when I’m faced with the loss of something?
- Do I have difficulty focusing on my God given responsibilities when things do not go according to my expectations?
- Do I get discouraged when it seems my hopes and dreams are not going to be fulfilled?

⁹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). *Philippians* (p. 304). Chicago: Moody Press.

- Am I more motivated by how the things I want will please me than how they will glorify God?
- Am I willing to sin to get what I want?
- Do I get bored easily?
- Do I get angry or have some other sinful attitude if I do not get what I want?
- Do I become more grieved over the loss or lack of my material possessions than I do over sin?
- Do I talk more about being prosperous in the world than I do about being prosperous in God's eyes?
- Do I become anxious or angry in undesirable circumstances that I cannot control?
- Do I become anxious when people are rejecting me?
- Do I wish others would treat me with much more respect?
- Do I get irritable when people do things that cut into my free time?