

Thought of Week – Are You Content?

(Week: 20180430) -- By Jim Fannin

Philippians 4:11-12

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 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.

Are you content? Oft times we find ourselves desiring something new, neater, greater, better, or perhaps just the latest of whatever it is that catches our eye. Discontent rises within our minds like a pot that slowly comes to boil. At first the water is calm and then slowly it begins to bubble, a wisp of steam escapes the pot and soon it is at a full boil.

Our discontentment steams its way to the rationalization that our discontentment is justified and deserves a resolution. We have worked, suffered some inconveniences, put in some long hours, dealt with a difficult boss or co-workers, managed to keep our marriage together for decades with being injured by or divorced from our wives, given regularly to our church and other causes, or survived some difficult medical condition.

I know from a personal standpoint, sometimes I wake up to find the pot boiling and steam starting to flow from my ears. I have found it hard to maintain an attitude of contentment. There is so much new, wonderful, neat, and wonderful stuff tempting me, or times when my aches, pains, or relationships (which may be pains as well!) have grabbed my attention, it seems there is always a reason to abandon my contentment.

Yet Paul in his letter to the Philippians, was able to declare he was content in whatever circumstance he was in. How does someone do that? A closer glance at Paul's life reveals some of the reasons. In 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28 Paul recounts his many trials which may be why he can find contentment in pretty much any circumstance.

As Paul begins, he summarizes his life by stating he has been in imprisoned more, flogged more severely and exposed to death probably more than anyone. To prove his point, he enumerates at length. I'll

summarize Paul's list, so you can more easily compare **your list** of reasons, as to why one or both of you should be discontented. Paul's list begins:

1. Five times received 39 lashes from Jews, his own people.
2. Three times he was beaten with rods
3. Once he was stoned
4. Three times he was shipwrecked
5. After one shipwreck, he spent a night and day floating in the open sea
6. He had to constantly move from town to town to avoid those persecuting him
7. He had been in danger from rivers, bandits, Gentiles as well as fellow Jews
8. He was in constant danger whenever he was within a city, whenever he was out in the country and from false believers everywhere
9. While **working to support himself**, he had gone without food, suffered thirst and been cold and naked
10. In addition, he carried the pressure of ministering to all the churches he visited and established

Hmmm! I think all our lists ... might fall just a bit shy of Paul's list of reasons, as to why he should be discontent. Yet, if Paul could still come to contentment despite all he had suffered, isn't there some way for us to reach that point? Yes. Here are four steps to help you get there.

1. **Establish your foundation of treasures in heaven** as suggested in Matthew 6:19-20. In that passage Christ tells us that earthly treasures can be stolen, broken, or may rust or decay. He tells us instead of earthly treasures, to lay up treasures in heaven because our heart and head will then be focused in heaven, not on our earthly possessions or relationships.
2. I know it sounds trite but **count your blessings!** You may reply that it is easy to look around and find those with less trials and more things. But it is also easy to see many people with more trials and less "things" than yourself.
3. **Trust that God has already set your path.** In Psalm 139:16, David writes "*all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*" And in Romans 8:28, Paul reminds us that we should be content because God is working through whatever circumstances exist in our life to advance His kingdom.
4. **The only time we should be discontent**, is if we know we can do better in our faith and spiritual devotion. In that case we should strive to improve those areas of our life.

This week let us focus on eliminating discontent from our lives. Guard constantly against the slowly boiling water. Jump out of the simmering pot. Renew your commitment to Christ and your dedication to living each day content with the knowledge, that God has given you salvation and the full the measure of grace, mercy and blessings He wants you to have.