

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Philippians 4:9-19**  
“Contentment”

For some people with difficult lives, contentment is not easy. But isn't it sad that some super-rich people aren't content, even though they seem to have it all? Why is that? In this passage, by looking at Paul's life, I believe we see several qualities we can develop to become more content people.

**1: Sharing (v9-10).** First, to be more content, we should look for ways to help others. Thankfully, the Philippians not only **learned** good doctrine in their heads, but also **received** it in their hearts. It's a good idea to try to find someone more godly than you and **hear** and **see** what they **do** and consider if perhaps you should change anything in your life to be more like Jesus. Others should never hear us playing bad music or see us watching bad movies. And when we live right, the **God of peace** (before, it was the "peace of God") **shall be with us**.

**(v10)** We can **rejoice in the Lord greatly** when seeing others consistently living for God. Have you become exhausted in doing the right thing? Maybe it's time to **flourish again**, having a "second wind," so to speak, and pick back up where we left off. This church **was careful** to help Paul even when **they lacked opportunity**; in other words, the wheels of their mind were constantly turning, trying to figure out how to help Paul, even when they just couldn't do it. They were a sharing, generous church at heart.

**2: Far-sighted (v11-12).** Second, to be content, we should realize that circumstances are temporary. Being **content** is unnatural; we must **learn** it from God, and some people have much more difficult situations to work with than others. And Paul **didn't speak in respect of want**; he was the opposite of many TV evangelists who get extremely rich off of the donations of viewers. We'll see a little later Paul's motive in wanting the church to help him out, and it wasn't selfishness.

**(v12)** Paul was **abased** and shamed at times and knew **how** to handle it, and other times he **abounded**, perhaps a celebrity in some circles; he probably was **full** with great meals of his favorite foods during some of his travels, and other times was **hungry** with no meal at all, or maybe a meal that made him quickly lose his appetite! And he knew what it was like to **abound** with plenty of money **and to suffer need** and have virtually nothing. But why does he include *good* times in this list—isn't contentment inevitable when things are going well? Not necessarily; many ultra-wealthy and healthy people are not content.

But life for Paul was a roller coaster. If we're in a time of overall peace and prosperity, let's appreciate it more, since it won't last forever. And in the dark times, we can look forward to heaven; in short, we can be more far-sighted.

**3: Reliant (v13).** Third, to be content, we must rely on the strength of Jesus Christ. **Through Christ**, we should have a "**can do**" attitude, because all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26). This includes the positive, such as winning a baseball game, making lots of money, or getting over a sickness, when those things are in God's will. But "**all things**" also includes the negatives Paul just mentioned (suffering need, being hungry, being abased). Through Christ, we can gracefully *lose* a baseball game yet maintain a good Christian testimony; we can live with *little* money; we can get *through* a sickness. No matter what comes our way, we have a Friend going through it with us; and not just a Friend, but **strength** that He gives us right when we need it.

**4: Sincere (v14).** Fourth, to be content, we shouldn't use God's providence as an excuse not to help. We shouldn't think, "Just let God take care of them"; or worse, "If we don't help, they'll surely learn valuable lessons about contentment!" (cf. James 2:16) That's an insincere attitude. **Notwithstanding** God's providence, we should look for opportunities to **communicate with the affliction** of other Christians with our actions, not just our words. Paul's statement is similar to someone saying, "Even if you hadn't bought me that double whopper with cheese, God would have still taken care of me another way; but I'm sure glad you did!"

**5: Spiritual (v15-17).** Fifth, to be content, we should look more at the spiritual and less at the physical. Paul is remembering the early days **in the beginning of the gospel**; back when the risks were higher, and perhaps when some weren't all too sure about this "Paul" fellow, this church stood behind him. When we **give** and help a Christian in need, often we are actually the ones **receiving** the blessing (Acts 20:35, cf. Proverbs 19:17). I think other churches may have **communicated** to Paul with words, but only the Philippians did it with actions. Why did **no** other **church** help? Maybe they all expected someone else to do it. Or maybe they didn't really support him. That may sound odd, but do we as a church really support Christians in the heat of the spiritual battles of our day?

**(v16)** Paul must have been struggling, in **necessity**. This church helped at least twice (**once and again**)! That must have been so refreshing. Paul never forgets that. I think perhaps in heaven, before the party really starts and we're mingling with all the other Christians, maybe we'll just take some time to remember. "Remember when I was lonely and you made me feel welcome?" "Remember when the ministry was just starting out and you were such a help?" "Remember when I was sick, and you stopped by?" "Remember when I needed a meal and you gave me one?"

**(v17)** The *heart* of their gift cheered Paul perhaps more than anything else. Similarly, God doesn't want us to give because He **desires a gift** (Psalm 50:12), but because He wants our hearts and also **desires fruit that may abound to our account**. Interestingly, sometimes good people can do something which could be misconstrued as being selfish, even when it isn't. In fact, Paul isn't even thinking about his ministry reputation; he only wants *their* spiritual best. Could we say our motives are pure to that extent, as Paul's were?

**6: Thankful (v18).** Sixth, to be content, we should be thankful people. Paul writes a "thank-you" note to this church. If he were living in modern times, I could imagine him and Epaphroditus in Paul's prison quarters having pizza ordered in with soda pop and cinnamon sticks, having the time of their lives with a great feast. This was something Paul perhaps hadn't enjoyed for a while, and Paul is **full**; what a

great meal! He **had all**; maybe he could finally get that much-needed coat for cold weather, or new sandals. The **smell** of their gift was **sweet**; they had the right heart behind it, not trying to bribe Paul or earn "brownie points"; it was **acceptable** (cf. Genesis 4:3-7). Their gift was a **sacrifice** (Mark 12:41-44), which is **wellpleasing to God**. I think God smiles when a little child sacrifices the money that *could* have been used to buy ice cream; when the widow sacrifices the money that *would* have been used to buy a better meal; when that college student goes to church on Sunday with time that *could* have been spent studying; in short, whenever we really sacrifice something.

**7: Trusting (v19).** Seventh, to be content, we should realize that God takes care of His saints. I think Paul encourages them in this verse because he knows that perhaps they jeopardized their own finances to help him; but God will take care of them. "**My God shall supply all your need**" (not necessarily all our *wants*), even if that means calling us home to heaven. Reading of "**his riches in glory**", it's difficult to imagine; but I believe we must remember that God's riches are every bit as real as the physical bars of gold in the United States Treasury's vaults; and in fact, God can pull a few "coins" from these riches and sprinkle it on everyday situations, helping you pay that rent, to survive that sickness, or to have the right words to say. Can you imagine if **Christ Jesus** had not come into the world and died for us? All the riches in heaven would have been completely inaccessible to us forever.

In conclusion, to be more content, we should strive to be more (1) Sharing, looking for opportunities to help others; (2) Far-sighted, realizing that the circumstances on earth are temporary; (3) Reliant on the strength of Jesus Christ to be content; (4) Sincere, not using God's providence as an excuse not to help others; (5) Spiritual, looking less at the physical and more at the heart; (6) Thankful, appreciating the kindness of others and the gifts of God; and (7) Trusting, realizing that if we are saved, God is looking out for us and will never forsake us.