



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Numbers, Deuteronomy Sermon Series

Supports Session 2: Provision

Sermon Title: “Practicing Contentment” (Philippians 4:10-14)

Connection to Session 2

The children of Israel were blessed in all that they saw and experienced. They experienced miracles beyond measure. They saw God’s faithful provision in the daily manna. Yet, they quickly longed for something different. They were no longer content in the manna—they wanted more. Today’s sermon will lead us to understand what it means to practice contentment and hopefully avoid the never-ending desire for more.

Introduction/Opening

Some of us are old enough to remember when the only phones we had were at home. Some may even remember a rotary dial. Now, our phones can be an extension of ourselves, and we feel lost if we do not have them. If a new version of our preferred phone comes out, we feel like we need to be first in line. Our current version can be considered ancient shortly after we get it out of the box because we can’t be content without the next model. Practicing contentment can be difficult because our fleshly desires tell us we want and deserve more. In today’s Bible study, the children of Israel were not content with the manna God provided. Paul, however, gave godly wisdom for practicing contentment in our daily lives.

Outline

1. Contentment is a learned behavior (v. 11).

We must once again start with the context of this passage so that we make sure to interpret it accurately. Paul is the author, and he wrote to the saints at Philippi while imprisoned for his faith. The overarching theme of the book of Philippians is one of joy. This joy is not based upon circumstances, but rather upon the truth that God provides even during difficult times.

With context set, we can learn our first truth from the text that Paul had “learned to be content.” We can all recall learning our times tables in elementary school. We repeated the numbers over and over until we had them memorized. It may have taken us time and the encouragement of a parent or friend, but we learned the skill set needed.

In a similar manner, contentment, according to the Bible is a learned behavior. To be content means to be satisfied within one’s state, even if circumstances are difficult. Similar to our continual practice of times tables, we need to continually practice being satisfied with what God has provided to us in and through our relationship with Jesus, as opposed to always asking for or longing for something different.

2. Contentment is not based on circumstances (v. 11)

Our circumstances can be difficult. Some of us may be living paycheck-to-paycheck and the bill collectors continue to call. Some may have received a bad report from our doctor, and we are not sure what our next step should be. The list of difficult circumstances can be endless, and we have all experienced them along life's journey.

Paul, too, had difficult circumstances—he was in jail for his faith. Yet, this fact did not stop him from practicing contentment and experiencing the joy found in a relationship with Jesus. Paul told the church at Philippi that he wanted his joy to be made complete (2:2). This joy was based on the knowledge that Jesus had humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross (2:8). Yes, our circumstances can be difficult and discouraging. But we can still strive to practice contentment when we understand what Christ has done for us.

3. Contentment does not mean abundance (v. 12)

The world and our flesh can tell us, *If we have just a little more, then we will be happy.* We see it in commercials that tell us this product or that vacation spot will promise us the bliss we have longed to experience. Then, we purchase the product, only to find ourselves longing for something else. We learn that having more or new things does not yield the contentment for which we long.

Paul was able to articulate the truth that contentment is not based on abundance. He had learned contentment when he had learned to make do with little or when he had much. He had learned the secret of contentment whether well-fed or hungry. The secret was not in meagerness or abundance. Rather, it was in knowing Jesus personally and resting in Him instead of circumstances or surroundings.

4. Contentment is based on God's strength (v. 13)

Many of us may recognize this verse. We have seen it at ball games or may have quoted it to ourselves before an exam or important presentation. Let's look at this verse today with a fresh perspective and within the context of today's sermon. Paul's circumstances were obviously less than ideal, but he knew that he could make it because of God's strength. Paul was not relying upon his own strength as he knew he would fail. Instead, he was trusting in God to strengthen him through the current struggle.

The strength that was available to Paul is available to us today as well. Paul was able to weather the storm he was in, and we can weather ours too. But we cannot do it in our own strength, and we cannot do it if we are constantly longing for something more. Instead, we find this strength in our relationship with Jesus.

Conclusion

The choice we have in front of us today is obvious. We can go the way of the world which tells us to long for more and something different. Or we can pursue Christ and find contentment and strength in our relationship with Him. This pursuit is not easy as it is a battle against the flesh, but it is worth it. The first step in this pursuit is having a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is not about trying harder to be content. Instead, it is about surrendering our lives to Jesus and trusting Him more than our feelings or circumstances.

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