

G'Day saints!

Please have your Bibles turned to Philippians chapter 4, starting at verse 10.

And if you like taking notes, please use the sermon outline in your bulletin

Let me pray before we begin

Intro/Contentment?

A story to begin with:

There was a rich businessman who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich businessman asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," said the rich businessman, "and buy a better boat so you could go deep-sea fishing and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the rich man.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied

(pause)

So how do we define contentment?

[PowerPoint 1-Contentment]

Contentment is a mental or emotional state of satisfaction from being at ease in one's situation, body and mind. Contentment is simply a state of having accepted one's situation and is a form of happiness.

How do we achieve this contentment?

[PowerPoint 2Heading Achieving Contentment]

Well that's the topic the Apostle Paul tackles in Philippians 4:10-23

By being stoic (self-reliant) or relying on God? (Phil 4:10-13)

The Apostle Paul makes the bold statement in verse 11 that he has learned to be content whatever circumstances he is in - see v11.

[PowerPoint 2a-relying on God]

The word he uses for content - in Greek - actually means self-sufficient

In the Greek culture that Paul lived in there were many Greek philosophies - one of them was *Stoicism*

Where we get the word stoic from

When someone is stoic - they endure pain and hardship by denying their feelings and emotions (like the Queen did at Princess Diana's funeral)

Stoic is often seen as a good thing in our society - it means we're strong and brave and self-sufficient - we'll get by in our own strength

At first glance it might seem that Paul is saying I've learnt to be stoic and self-sufficient - I can put up with anything

I'm okay if I'm in need and when I've got plenty - in v12

He'll get by - whether he's well fed or hungry

But he's not talking about being content in his own strength by being self-sufficient - that's what the Stoics did -

NO!

He's saying he's content in whatever circumstance he's in -

Because of v13 - *because He can do all this through the Lord who strengthens him*

For the stoics and all those today who are don't rely on the Lord - contentment comes from their own human achievement

But what are people going to do when they have no strength anymore - or when they can't cope - when they face a tremendous loss - when they face major surgery - or they have a problem they can't fix themselves?

At what point do people admit - they can't do life - without the Lord Jesus?

At what point do people say - Lord I need your strength to carry me through?

For Paul and for us as Christians - Paul says - our contentment comes as a divine gift of strength from the Lord

Illustration - every few weeks I have a blood infusion - some good blood is put through my veins, infused into my bloodstream and strengthens my immune system

In the same way - Paul is saying I can do all things through the Lord Jesus who infuses His strength into me!

Paul could face anything: he could have nothing and he could have all things; it made no difference, because in every situation he had Jesus.

The person who walks with Jesus and lives in Jesus - has Jesus living in them - and can cope with anything - Jesus is always with them!

Challenge for us today: Whose strength are we relying on - our own strength - or Jesus' divine strength? Will we let Jesus carry us?

(pause)

By valuing what we have (Phil 4:14-20)

[PowerPoint 2b-Valuing]

The next thing that leads to the Apostle Paul's contentment is valuing what he has - particularly what he has received from the Philippians - his partners in the Gospel.

Valuing what we have is important

There's the story of a man who was very envious of his friends because they had larger and more luxurious houses than he did.

So he listed his house with a Real Estate Company, planning to sell his house and buy a more impressive home.

Shortly afterwards, as he was reading the classified section of the newspaper, he saw an ad for a house that seemed exactly what he wanted.

So he promptly called the Real Estate Company and said, "There's a house described in today's paper and it's exactly what I'm looking for. I would like to have a look at it as soon as possible!"

The real estate agent asked him several questions about it and then replied, "But sir, that's your house that you're describing."

Unfortunately we're living in a world that has a "fast food" mentality for everything - not just for food. A world where people are never content until they have everything!

People want highly paid jobs - without any experience or qualifications

People want the latest gadgets all the time.

Many appliances, computers and mobile phones have a life-span of 2 years and then they're out of date! And we must buy the latest one or we won't cope!

People must have a 4 bedroom house with a triple garage and a pool - as their first home!

They want faster, fancier cars, and 4WDs just to go to Gorokan shops and back

They want weddings that cost \$50K

And expensive exotic overseas holidays - and world tours

People leaving school want to have "Gap" years - seriously!

People have 4 different credit cards - all maxed out!

And the media convince us that we all need this - and we'll be much more content

And if somehow people achieve all that - they're still not content!

So they chuck it all out and start again!

In general terms - many people are not content with where they are right now - and with what they have right now - and there's a constant striving for the next bigger and better thing

(pause)

So what does Paul have that he values so much and brings him contentment?

Remember Paul is in jail and he's still content!

What Paul has is in v14 - it's his fellow Christians - the Philippians - they shared in his troubles

How great it is for us personally - when our church family shares in our troubles - they pray, they show sympathy and empathy - they call - they visit - they help practically where they can?

The support of his church family brought Paul contentment

Challenge for us - does the support of our church family bring us contentment?

(pause)

The Philippians also supported Paul financially from afar in verses 15 and 16 - - right from the early days of his mission work -

The Philippians supported Paul when no other churches did

And Paul is so grateful for their gifts

The generosity of the Philippians made Paul glad not for his own sake, but for their sake.

Because as he says at the end of v18 - the gift of the Philippians to Paul is actually a sacrifice to God. He calls it a fragrant - sweet-smelling - offering to God. This was a popular OT phrase for a sacrifice that was acceptable to God.

It was as if the smell of the sacrifice was sweet smelling in God's nostrils!

(Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17)

It was not that Paul didn't appreciate the gift for what it did for him

But his greatest joy is that the gift from the Philippian church and the love that prompted it - were pleasing to God!

It's just as Jesus says in Matthew 25:40

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'

When we help our brothers and sisters - we're are also pleasing God

Challenges for us:

Are we thankful and content with what we have? Or are we constantly thriving for more and more?

(pause)

Are we thankful for whatever gifts and help we receive from others? And do we rejoice knowing that the giver of this gift or help - has pleased God and has opened themselves up to the riches of God?

(pause)

By appreciating the impact our contentment has on others (Phil 4:21-23)

The final thing Paul mentions on the subject of contentment is in verses 21 to 23?

[PowerPoint 2c-Impact]

And that is the impact that Paul's contentment has on people.

In the year 2000 - Heather and I had the privilege of going on 3 week tour of Sri-Lanka.

A beautiful county and beautiful people.

We came across many many poor people -

They lived simply and had very little possessions and not much money

But what struck me over and over - was that they were always happy and content with their lot

There was no striving for more and more - like we have here in Australia

They accepted their lot in life - and accepted it with no complaint - just with contentment

This had a deep impact on me - as in comparison I was rich in so many ways!
 I came across a guy in one of the hotels we stayed in - who was the cashier - quite a decent job - he told me his pay was equivalent to \$AUS 40 per month! Not an hour! Per month!

Yet he was content with his lot.

As I say the impact on me was immense

I have nothing to complain about

In the same way - even though Paul is in jail - under the supervision of the Caesar's imperial civil service - look at the impact that he had on the people around him

See v22 - Christians in Caesar's household - send their greetings

Paul's contentment and resting in the Lord's strength have led people to listen to his Gospel message and become followers of Jesus

Challenge for us: Do people see us as contented Christians? Or do they see us as greedy - ungrateful - striving for more and more? Are we having a negative or positive impact on the people around us?

(pause)

True Contentment (Phil 4:13, Psalm 23)

[PowerPoint 3-True Contentment]

The bottom line is:

True contentment can be found in only one person?

That's what Paul is saying in v13 - his contentment can only be achieved - *through Him [The Lord Jesus] who gives him strength*

And **contentment** is the topic of our OT reading from Psalm 23

[Please turn there now in your Bibles]

This Psalm describes how King David felt about God and how he attributed everything that happened in his life and everything that will happen to him - he attributes it all to God!

This Psalm basically says that God is like a Shepherd and we are one of His sheep

[PowerPoint 3.1]

v1 of Psalm 23 - says the Lord is **MY** shepherd. It's personal.

Do we see the Lord as our personal shepherd?

The rest of v1 says - **I lack nothing**

God is like a Shepherd to us - because he provides all our needs

Not necessarily all we want - but definitely all we need!

[PowerPoint 3.2]

Then in v2 - **He makes me to lie down in green pastures** - green pastures are good food for sheep. And this tells us that God provides all our physical food each day - AND - our spiritual food - which we can get from the green pastures of God's Word - the Bible.

Are we relying on the green pastures of God's word?

The rest of verse 2 - says '**he leads me beside quiet waters**'.

A good shepherd knows his sheep will only drink from quiet still waters - so he leads them to a place of peace and rest.

For us - this means that God leads us to quiet still waters at times in our lives for the purposes of giving us peace and rest.

Are we allowing God to lead us to these quiet still waters?

[PowerPoint 3.3]

And when we come to v3 it says: *he refreshes my soul*

Sheep need a shepherd to clean them - they can't clean themselves

Likewise we cannot clean ourselves from the dirt of sin - sin being the wrong things we do that offend God.

Jesus cleans us

Jesus describes himself in the Bible - as the Good Shepherd - and he talks about leaving the 99 safe sheep to go and find the one lost sheep.

Not only did Jesus go looking for people who were lost from God.

He was also prepared to lay down his life for his sheep (that's us) to be forgiven of our sins.

Do we believe that Jesus the Good Shepherd is our personal shepherd - and that He has washed away our sin and refreshed our soul.

The rest of v3 reads: *He guides me along the right paths*

Sheep have poor eyesight - so they need to be led, so they don't fall into a ditch or hurt themselves.

Just like the half blind sheep,

We need God to guide us in right paths

God guides in right paths through His teaching in the Bible and through His examples throughout history

[PowerPoint 3.4]

Verse 4 begins *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil; for you are with me*

Imagine how difficult it would be for a shepherd to lead his sheep through a dark, steep and dangerous valley? Not easy!

Each of us at some point in our lives will encounter dark valleys we need to go through - a dark valley - like the loss of a loved one, a broken relationship, a health crisis, loneliness, depression & so on.

Isn't it good to know we have the presence of God - in these dark moments?

The rest of v4 says: **your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

Shepherds use a rod to protect their sheep from wild animals.

They use the hook on their staff - to loop around the sheep and guide them out of danger.

Sheep cannot defend themselves from predators

We can't defend ourselves from Satan's attacks - we need Jesus our shepherd to defend and guard us - so we can pray to Him for protection.

[PowerPoint 3.5]

Verse 5 says: **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies**

Sheep are often surrounded by enemies. It's only in the presence of the shepherd that the sheep feel comfortable to FEED. Nothing dare attack the sheep because the shepherd is there.

And it's the same for us - with Jesus in our lives - we don't need to be afraid of anyone or anything.

The rest of v5 reads: **You anoint my head with oil;**

In ancient times shepherds would smear their sheep with an oily substance

To produce better quality wool and stop ticks

Also, shepherds would examine their sheep for cuts, sores and bruises

And soothe them with oil

In Jesus' time and earlier there was a custom of anointing guests to your home as an act of courtesy and hospitality

The idea was that once a guest was anointed

They were under the PROTECTION of the Host of the house

The idea of anointing - is to make the person feel special!

For us the idea of God anointing our heads - is to show we are SPECIAL to God

We are made special when we receive the God's Holy Spirit when we first

believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes and lives inside us and works in our lives to encourage, guide and strengthen us

(Pause)

"My cup overflows" at the end of v5

The idea of this is that without Jesus in our lives - there will always be something missing.

But with Jesus in our lives - our cup of **contentment** - fills to overflowing

[PowerPoint 3.6]

Verse 6 says: *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life;*

Having Jesus the Good Shepherd in our lives assures US of God's goodness and love;

Because he has FORGIVEN us and BLESSED us

And so we come to the climax of the psalm at the end of verse 6 which reads:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The final destination of the psalm is the HOUSE OF THE LORD,

The GOAL of our Good Shepherd, Jesus, is to get us into a right relationship with God and lead us to the house of the Lord

Where we can live with Him FOREVER

That FOREVER final dwelling place is Heaven - and it's a destination place for all who believe in Jesus.

That's something worth being content about - that Jesus is our personal shepherd - who guides us, strengthens us, protects us and presents us forgiven and restored - living with God in His house forever.

In the meantime - are we prepared to **rest content** in knowing Jesus is our strength - and in Him we can face all things in life?

Let's pray...