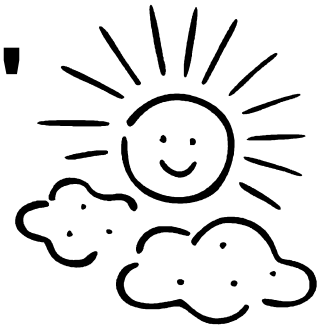
"Be Content"



I Corinthians 7:17-28
6-25-2023

Introduction (v.17,20,24)

*** Stay where God puts you!**

Paul told the Corinthian believers to "abide" ("stay put") where God has led them, unless God moves them

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(Your position in Christ and in His salvation needs no additives [like circumcision etc.])

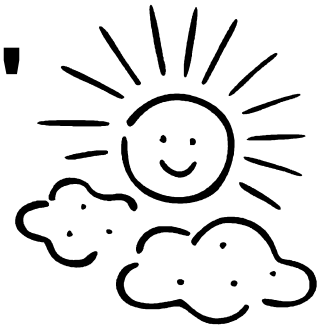
II. Be Content with your present <u>SOCIAL</u> status (v.21-24)

III. Be Content with your present <u>MARITAL</u> status (v.25-28)

A. Be content being <u>Single</u> (v.25-26)

B. Be content being <u>Married</u> (v.27-28)

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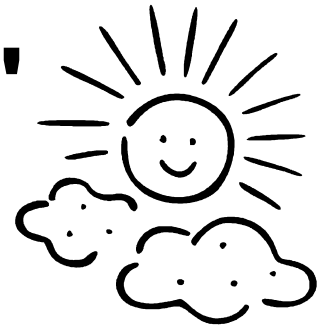
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Introduction (v.17,20,24)

Today more than ever it is a rarity in the USA to find a contented person.

The allurements of advertising, the fantasies of the soap operas, the pressures of peers (keeping up with the Jones'), and man's basic greedy, covetous nature -- all propel him to seek something new...different...better...more.

As toddlers we wanted someone else's toy. Rarely content with what we had.

As children, we are not content in grade school: "Oh, if I could only be in Jr. High" . . . "High school" . . . "College" . . . "Out in the ministry" etc.

As teenagers, we were not content being a son or daughter, we wanted the independence of adulthood.

When we became adults, we became dicontent with our careers, so we hopped from one employment opportunity to another.
(John the Baptist said: "Be content with your wages" (Lk. 3:13).)

Then married and with time became discontent with our spouse.

When God blessed our homes with children we compared them to others' kids and said "why can't you be like _____?"

Grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

EX: Lucifer was not content in his great position which he held.

A <u>content</u> person is one who is <u>satisfied</u> with his/her lot (portion) in life, whether that portion be: possessions, position, or relationships.

ILLUS: of Paul's contentment: Phil. 4:11-13 - *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

The opposite of being content is three letters: contention. Those who strive against what God wants for them always have lives characterized by struggle, strife, and conflict.

The theme of verses 17-28 is found in verses 20 and 24 - *"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. . . . Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."*

Don't seek to leave your present status! (Be content where God has put you!)

Paul's theme here: "We should not be preoccupied with changing our outward circumstances." (MacArthur, p. 170)

The word *"called"* or "*calling"* occurs frequently in verses 17-24.

The word is used here with the same meaning as *"saved"* or *"converted."* It describes God's sovereign act of saving our souls.

So Paul is peaking to believers from the point at which they became Christians. This message has specific application to God's people.

V. 17

The context of verse 17 involves the believer's faithfulness to his/her spouse (even though an unbeliever).

You must not pursue separation of divorce from your mate (v. 10-16).

What God is saying is this: Retain the place in life that I assign to you! (don't seek a way out; don't pursue a back door exit; don't be bitter over that which has been distributed to you by God; accept what He gives you.)

Simply: Don't run from God's will for your life! Don't be a Jonah or a John Mark!

*** Stay where God puts you!**

Paul told the Corinthian believers to "abide" ("stay put") where God has led them, unless God moves them

I. Be Content with your present SPIRITUAL status (v.18-20)

(Your position in Christ and in His salvation needs no additives [like circumcision etc.])

Now, lest you misconstrue and twist what I am saying, hear me out!

V. 18

"Let him not become uncircumcised" - fleshly circumcision id virtually an impossibility to reverse. For this reason, some may argue that Paul is using the term "circumcision" in a broader sense than merely the cutting away of foreskin (i.e. *"circumcision"* referring to being a Jew; *"uncircumcision"* - Gentile).

Although some Jews (to appear like Gentiles) did in fact undergo operations to reverse the circumcision (MacArthur).

Our ***"calling"*** is not to make a Gentile out of a Jew, nor a Jew out of a Gentile.

In Paul's day many (influenced by Judaizers) thought that circumcision was needed for salvation (Acts 15:1 - *"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."*).

At the Council of Jerusalem it was asserted by the Apostles that circumcision was not a requirement for salvation. Man's heart is purified by faith (Acts 15:9) because of God's grace (v. 11).

V. 19

Circumcision was a command given only to the Jews and is not binding to the Christian. It was a matter of obedience, not a matter of salvation (Rom. 4:1-12).

The issue of "circumcision" was a problem that the people in Paul's day wrestled with (many were discontent to merely rest in Christ).

I am content that I don't need water baptism, Roman Catholic sacraments, the experience of tongues or any other work of the flesh to be a child of God.

Paul is clearly teaching that:

1) Circumcision has no part in attaining salvation
2) Circumcision has no part in increasing spirituality

Nothing needs to be added to Christ (and His finished work at Calvary) to provide us with salvation (there are no additives requires to the "spiritual octane" that is in Christ Jesus).

NOTE: On the one hand, we are to *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (II Peter 3:18), and on the other hand, we are *"complete"* in Christ (Col. 2:10). How can both be true? My salvation is complete; my sanctification needs growth. My position in Christ is fixed; my practice for Christ may need adjustments.

If you are backslidden, you should not be content. Although your relationship to Christ is secure, your fellowship with Christ can be altered.

If you are unsaved, you should not be content. Spiritual contentment should not be the experience of those who are not related to Jesus Christ.

However, if you are in Christ, you should rest in Him, enjoy the peace that is in Him, stand fast in the liberty that is in Him (**SEE: Gal. 5:1-6).

The hymnwriter said it best:

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died,
And that He died for me!

II. Be Content with your present SOCIAL status (v.21-24)

V. 21
"Servant" - *doulos* - a slave

In the N.T. times, a man was either "bond (a servant) or free" (Gal. 3:28).

In the days of the Romans, approximately 60 % of the people were servants to someone.

The N.T. does not condemn the servant/master relationship (EX: the book of Philemon; I Cor. 7:21ff), but it does regulate it.

The O.T. Law concerning servitude (SEE: Exodus 21:1-11; Leviticus 25:39-55)

How did one become a servant?

1. **By poverty** - an impoverished man would often sell himself to an owner whom he would serve (Lev. 25:39-40)

2. **By theft** - The Law required a thief to pay 2 - 5 times the amount he stole. If he could not repay it, he then would be sold as a slave and thereby repay the debt (Exod. 22:1-4)

3. **By debt** - If someone owed someone money, but did not have the cash, he could sell one of his servants to pay the debt (Lev. 25:39; Amos 2:6; 8:6). The average price for a servant was about thirty shekels (Exod. 21:32)

4. **By birth** - the slave's children also automatically became the servants of the master (Exod. 21:4; Gen. 14:14; 17:12; Eccl. 2:7)

5. **By war** - prisoners of war (Num. 31:26; Lev. 25:44, 45)

6. **By choice** - A servant would so love his Master that he would become a devoted bondslave for life.

Forced slavery is wicked;
however, voluntary servitude (like that in India)--though not ideal--is regulated by Scripture (Eph. 6:5-9).

How could a slave be content to be a slave?

Answer: With the faith that God would use him/her in that position for a special purpose (God used Paul while a prisoner in many ways to a far greater degree than when he was free).

> (Phil. 1:12-14 - *"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds are much more bold to speak the word without fear.")*

"Care not for it" - Don't worry about it; don't let it trouble you [Use your social status to honor God whether a slave or free.]

God certainly did not command converted slaves to march for civil rights.

V. 22

Paul is saying that each Christian is both a slave and a free man. Though a servant of men, you are free in Christ. Though free from servitude, you are a slave to Christ.

V. 23

Many would choose to become a bond slave for life to a master. Paul says, if you are not one yet, don't become one.

Ultimately the only One who owns us is Christ. He bought us with His blood (I Cor. 6:20; Rev. 5:9).

"Be not ye the servants of men" = No man can serve two masters. Although a slave served a human master, he really only served one Master: God in Heaven.

"Divine obligation supersede human demands" (Gromacki, p. 94).

III. Be Content with your present MARITAL status (v.25-28)

A. Be content being Single (v.25-26)

V. 25

"Virgins" - Here: Unmarried celebrate men and women

(A phase being popularized: "Control your 'urgen' - Be a virgin")

V. 26

"Present distress" - The particular necessities, calamities, or crises experienced by the Corinthians made it beneficial for them to remain single (perhaps impending persecution or trials and tribulations made it advantageous to be single. They would be better able to face the problems impending if they were not married.)

Sometimes being content during a time of crisis is most beneficial. Never make a major move in a time of distress.

"In view of troubled times, Paul felt it best for men to stay as they were. When high seas are raging, it is no time for changing ships." (Morris, p. 116).

"It is good for a man so to be" - To be what?

An unmarried man; a celebrate virgin (v. 25). [Cp. 7:1 - *"It is good for a man not to touch* (be in intimate relationship, i.e. marriage) *a woman"*]

Benefits of being single:

1) You avoid the problems of marriage (***"Such shall have trouble in the flesh"*** - v. 28).

2) You can serve Christ without marital distractions or hindrances (v. 32-35).

   More freedom of time
   More freedom of finances
   More freedom from worries, concerns, preoccupations, that come with a family.

Be content to be single until God yokes you with His choice. How do I find God's choice?

1. Focus on being the right one rather than finding the right one (*"You reap what you sow")*

2. Be determined to date only those who are *"in the Lord"* (I Cor. 7:39)

3. By serving Jesus Christ, your path will merge with the one who is God's choice for you on the road of service (cp. Acts 13:ff - God steers those who are moving for Him)

4. Be patient

5. Be prayerful (cp. Gen. 24:12-15)

6. Respect your parent's insight into your choice of a mate

B. Be content being <u>Married</u> (v.27-28)

V. 27

ILLUS: Wedding day at the altar: How beautiful she looked, saw sparkle in her eyes, heard a sweet soft voice, smelled the freshness of her hair, you felt the excitement and anticipation of a lifetime to fulfill dreams and aspirations. . . . . With time has the glow dimmed? Have the expectations failed?

"Keep thy eyes wide open before marriage, and half shut afterwards." (Ben Franklin)

When the late Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, a reporter asked them, "To what do you attribute your 50 years of successful married life?" "The formula," Ford replied, "is the same formula I have always used in making cars -- <u>just stick to one model</u>."

"Bound" - To bind with chains. Pictures a permanent "wedlock," a past link-up (yoke) with continuing results.

The passive voice points to the fact that it is <u>God</u> who does the binding of marriage (Mt. 19:6).

Someone has identified the <u>wedding ring</u> as being like a <u>tourniquet</u> (a tourniquet is used to wrap tightly around a body part to stop bleeding). Your wedding ring is worn on your left hand to "stop your circulation" (you no longer date around).

"<u>Seek not</u> to be loosed" - It is wrong for a child of God to <u>actively pursue</u> a divorce (leave such a prerogative in the hands of the unsaved spouse - v. 12-13).

God is saying: "Don't look for a way to be freed from your mate. If you allow for an exit door in your marriage, you will be tempted to take it when the pressures of marriage come."

Be content with your spouse; let him/her satisfy your needs
(SEE: Prov. 5:15-19).

Be content with your <u>place</u> in the home (Eph. 5:22-23).
In team sports, great problems occur when players seek to fill others' positions.

--The wife should be content to be a <u>submissive supporter</u> (for her husband) (Eph. 5:22-24; 33).

--The husband should be content to be a <u>loving leader</u> (for his wife) (Eph. 5:25-33)

Will you ask God to make you content with His will for your life? (your role, place in your family?)

"Seek not a wife" - The seeking here specifically refers to one who has been released (*"loosed")* from a wife.

If you have been divorced (v. 15), you should be content to remain single.

However one understands the word *"loosed"* in the first sentence, he must (to be consistent) interpret it the same way in the next sentence (*"loosed"* = released, let go, unbound).

V. 28

"If <u>thou</u> marry" - The "*thou"* refers to the same *"thou"* as in verse 27 (ie. the one who has been divorced by his spouse).

"If thou marry, thou hast <u>not sinned</u>" - Remarriage is not a sin; divorce is the sin.

I, as a pastor, will <u>not</u> perform the wedding ceremonies of divorcees. My reason is <u>not</u> that I believe remarriage is a sin, but because I'm not bound to marry anyone to begin with, so I have chosen to perform the ceremonies of saved people previously unmarried so as to uphold God's <u>ideal</u> of a marriage before the eyes of our young people.

"<u>Trouble</u> in the flesh" - lit. tribulation, affliction

--Perhaps Paul is referring to the *"present distress"* (v. 26) which would make marriage more difficult

--Or Paul is referring to problems all couples will encounter simply because they have a weak flesh and a sinful nature. Marriage does bring out the worst in a person. Being in relationships tests our true spirituality.

CONCLUSION:

The Enemies of Contentment:

1. Pride
   In pride we view ourselves as worthy of more or better than we have or really deserve. A man said to a friend, "How come you never married?" The friend replied, "It was like this: I wasn't satisfied until I found the ideal woman." "And you never found her?" "Oh, sure, I found her. But just my luck: she was looking for the ideal man?"

2. Covetousness (dissatisfaction with what you have)
   Heb. 13:5 - *"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

   Paul testified: *"Godliness with contentment is great gain."* (I Tim. 6:6).

   Being content in life does not mean that you should never seek to better your situation financially; it does mean that money is not your obsession. Money will not conflict with my personal walk with God, my family, or my church attendance.

3. Jealousy (seeing what others have and then desiring it so you retain a feeling of superiority over them or at least remain equal with them [Prov. 23:17])

4. Fear (insecurities due to a lack of faith in God)

   Be satisfied even through the bad times.

   Accept the state (situation) you are in. Be satisfied! Don't make your circumstances your enemy if bad (where you fight it) or your god if good (where you won't let anything alter it).

   --Don't rebel or run

   --Don't make any changes unless you are 100% sure it is God Who is leading you on (to a new job, new state, etc.)

5. Ultimately, unbelief (a lack of faith that God can work in your present state)
   God placed you in the situation you are in for a purpose!

Basically, to test the genuineness of your faith.

Times of need are a test (to see if you will totally depend on Christ).
Times of financial prosperity are a test (to see how you will handle what God has given)
What is the secret of contentment? Faith in God's sovereign control over every detail of my life. God has given me the good I have (James 1:17) and will continue to do so until Christ returns (Phil. 1:6)

When our focus shifts from God, when our concentration in life is not beamed in on Him, we are sure to experience discouragement and emotional unrest (Ps. 42:5 - *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.")*

"Contentment makes poor men rich; discontentment makes rich men poor." (Ben Franklin)

The most joy-filled people I know are not those with the "nicest" things in life, but are those who are content with what they have.

Practice THANKFULNESS daily. Thank God for your Salvation; Job; Marital status; Wife/Husband; Children; Church; etc.

This is the secret to be free from worry! - Contentment
This is the secret to be free from covetousness! - Contentment
This is the secret to be free from jealousy! - Contentment
This is the secret to be free from lust! - Contentment
This is the secret to e free from loving the world! - Contentment

HYMN: "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"

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God has given me the good I have (James 1:17) and will continue to do so until Christ returns (Phil. 1:6)