

March 6

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. Philippians 4:11,12

IF we find our experiences in life very

R526 "Some...are blinded by prosperity: Satan throws them handfuls of gold, and their eyes become so fastened on it, that soon the *glories* of the glad tidings begin to fade from view, and they, too, are in outer darkness. Others are blinded by the *cares* of this life. They are made to appear necessities, so that all the energies of life may be absorbed in the things which perish; and that the heavenly things, being neglected, may fade from view. Let us beware of every blinding influence and keep the *one* thing constantly before us, saying as did Paul: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"

R2353 "Whoever is attempting godliness without striving for cultivation of contentment will surely make a failure of it. Godliness and the fruits of the spirit, meekness, patience, gentleness, longsuffering, brotherly-kindness, love, will not grow in the garden of the soul, where the weeds of discontent are permitted to sap the strength and vitiate the air with their noxious presence and influence."

A339-341 "There never was a time when dissatisfaction was so widespread; and yet there never was a time when men enjoyed so many favors and blessings. Wherever we look, whether into the palaces of the rich, replete with conveniences and splendors of which Solomon in all his glory knew almost nothing, or whether we look into the comfortable home of the thrifty and temperate wage-worker, with its evidences of taste, comfort, art and luxury, we see that in every way the present exceeds in bountiful supply every other period since the creation, many-fold; and yet the people are *unhappy* and discontented. The fact is that the desires of a selfish, depraved heart know no bounds... The whole world madly pushing and driving and clutching after wealth. A few only being successful, the remainder are envious and soured because they are not the fortunate ones, and all are discontented and miserable—more so than in any former time.

But the saint should take no part in that struggle. His consecration vow was that he would strive and grasp and run for a higher, a heavenly prize, and hence he is weaned from earthly ambitions, and labors not for earthly things, except to provide things *decent* and *needful*; for he is giving heed to the course and example of the Master and the apostles.

Therefore they have *contentment* with their godliness, not because they have no ambition, but because their ambition is turned heavenward and absorbed in the effort to lay up treasure in heaven and to be rich toward God; in view of which, and of their knowledge of God's plans revealed in his Word, they are content with whatever of an earthly sort God may provide. These can joyfully sing:

"Content, whatever lot I see,

Since 'tis God's hand that leadeeth me."

But alas! not all of God's children occupy

checked we may conclude that the Lord sees that we need both the heights and depths of prosperity and adversity to properly instruct us and qualify us for the position He designs for us in the future. Let us, then, as the apostle did, learn how to abound, not

this position. Many have fallen into the discontent prevalent in the world, and are robbing themselves of the enjoyments of life because they have left the Lord's footsteps and are casting their lot and taking their portion with the world—*seeking* earthly things whether attaining them or not, sharing the world's discontent, and failing to realize the contentment and peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

We urge the saints, therefore, to abandon the strife of greed and vainglory and its discontent, and to strive for the higher riches and the peace they do afford. We would remind them of the Apostle's words:

"They that will [to] be rich [whether they succeed or not] fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which *drown* [sink] men in ruin and destruction... But thou, O man of God, flee from these, and be pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness; be contesting in the *noble contest* of the faith, lay hold on everlasting life, unto which thou wast called and didst make a noble covenant" 1 Tim. 6:6-12"

R3734 "The meek ones of the Lord's followers even now... These have more enjoyment of the earth now than have others; while others are grasping these are enjoying. As the Apostle declares, "God hath given us all things richly to enjoy." (1 Tim. 6:17.) Freed from the grasping spirit, we can pass through the streets and observe the rich displays of the shop windows without covetousness, without wishing that we had the various works of art and beauty under our special care and control. We can feast our eyes upon them and be without the care of them at a time when all of our talents are consecrated to the Lord and his service, and when we have more important things to do than caring for earthly trinkets..."

KNOW HOW TO BE ABASED AND HOW TO ABOUND

R1919 "Things highly esteemed among men are wisdom, power and riches. But it is not the wisdom that cometh down from above, nor the power of godliness, nor the true heavenly riches that moth cannot destroy nor rust corrupt that is sought after by the world. Men of the world have not learned the value of these, and therefore they "spend their strength for naught, and their labor for that which satisfieth not." ... Worldly wisdom, which has not its foundation in the reverence of the Lord, tends to self-exaltation and pride; power in the hands of the ungodly tends to haughtiness and overbearing selfishness; and riches, among those who have not learned from God the responsibilities of stewardship, tend only to dwarf the soul, rendering it impervious to the noble sentiments of love and brotherly kindness..."

But let it not be so with us: He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." "Let him glory in this," saith the Lord, "that he understandeth and knoweth me." "And this is life eternal," said Jesus, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."—John 17:3.

allowing the abundance of earthly good things to swerve us from our consecration vows; and learn also how to be in want (need) and yet not to want anything beyond what the Lord's wisdom and providence see best to give—to be content. R3129:6

This is the knowledge that does not puff up, the wisdom that cometh down from above. The beginning of this wisdom is indeed the reverence of the Lord. Nor can we grow in this wisdom except by continuing growth in the reverence of the Lord...

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace [his favor] to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet. 5:5,6.) It is hard for those who are rich in the wisdom or power or wealth of this world to do this. (Matt. 19:24-26.) It was hard for the scribes and Pharisees who were rich in titles and honors and praise of men... It is hard for all religionists whose pride in the sectarian religious systems of Christendom blinds their eyes to the truth now due... It is hard for all those who reverence the opinions of men more than the words of the Lord. All those who either are rich or desire to be rich in the things of this present life, and specially those who are "rich" in a good opinion of themselves, or in self will, find it hard to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Indeed, the Apostle intimates that the greatest battle of each one coming to a knowledge of the truth is along this line; for it is after pointing to the severe humiliation of our Lord Jesus that he says, "Wherefore, my beloved, work out your own salvation [in like manner] with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you [by this severe discipline, this humbling process] both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Phil. 2:12,13...

Above almost every thing else, therefore, beloved, let us guard well our humility. It is only when we are little in our own eyes that God can use us with safety to ourselves. And yet he does not shield us from every test of fidelity. If therefore the Lord gives you a little exaltation to-day, a little encouragement of success in his service, receive it humbly, meekly remembering your own unworthiness and insufficiency except as God is pleased to work through you; and be just as ready to receive the humiliations of tomorrow as necessary for your discipline and the proper balancing of your character... Let us always remember that we are among "the things *that are not*." Let us endeavor therefore to make the Apostle Paul's experience our own, who said,—"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, and to abound and to suffer need. I can do all [these] things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4:11-13.

In God's dealings with his people at all times we can see his care in guarding them against pride and self-sufficiency."

R2352 "BE CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE." "*Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me --Heb. 13:5,6...*

If the forgiveness of his sins and reconciliation to the Lord, through the blood of the cross, the Christian's first experience in grace, was a great blessing that could scarcely be comprehended or measured, still more is this second blessing a cause for fullness of joy, in that it has brought to us begetting of the holy spirit, whereby we know that we are the sons of God, "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ..."

We that have such blessings would surely be unappreciative, unthankful, if we are not content with such blessed things as *we have*. We have such things as should make us happy under the most adverse circumstances, so far as the present life is concerned. We, by the grace of God, have found the pearl of great price, and are not only content with the terms upon which it is offered to us, but most gladly, willingly, joyfully, we count all else but loss and cross...

All who have intelligently taken the position of followers of Christ, knew from their start in the narrow way to expect trials and difficulties and adversities, and have

said to the Master:--

"Not for ease or worldly pleasure,

Nor for fame my prayer shall be;

Gladly will I toil and suffer,

Only let me walk with thee, close to thee."

We should view every affair and incident of this present life that is not painful as a cause for thankfulness to the Lord; because it is that much less than our covenant might legitimately require...

If your health is not the best, do not go mourning and complaining all your days; be thankful -- thankful that it is not worse... Whatever therefore you have, that is moderate or enduring or in some measure enjoyable, be very thankful, very grateful, and make the most of it...

If your position in life is a lowly one, and requires continual labor to secure the things needful, do not complain, but, on the contrary, render thanks--thanks for the health and strength to perform the needed labor; thanks for the realization that the present brief life is only the schooling time, and that the lessons of the present, rightly learned, will bring riches of grace and glory which the world could neither give nor take

away. Think then, on the other hand, of the fact that your condition is in some respects more favorable than that of some others who seem to be more prosperous or better situated: how many who have had wealth and leisure have found in them a curse!... "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God."...

"WHAT IS FAITH'S

FOUNDATION STRONG?"

In our text, after the Apostle has urged us to be "content with such things as ye have," he adds the reason or ground upon which this advice is given, saying, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Yes; this is the true ground of contentment...

Faith lies at the foundation of all loyalty to God and his cause. Faith in the divine supervision of all our affairs not only gives peace and content, but it saps the root of all selfish ambitions and vain glorings and boastings... Faith in the Lord's supervision *prefers* the Lord's arrangement to any other as respects the sufferings of this present time and the glory that is to follow; and hence it doth not puff up but builds up in the character-likeness of our Redeemer."

R3127 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0)
"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAY"
--PHILIPPIANS 4:1-13--JANUARY 11--

THE EPISTLE to the Philippians is one of the most loving of all the Church letters written by the Apostle Paul. In our last lesson we considered the story of the founding of that Church and the cost thereof to the faithful Apostle and his companion Silas. The Epistle to the Philippians contains no reproofs, no chidings, such as appear in others of the epistles, but rather it is full of approval, commendation and special love. Apparently, too, this little company of the Lord's people loved the Apostle as fervently as he loved them. His afflictions on their account bound their hearts to him in lasting gratitude. We find that on at least four occasions they helped to sustain the Apostle; once while at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:9), twice while at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), and once while he was a prisoner at Rome. On this latter occasion they sent their gifts and expressions of love by a special messenger, Epaphroditus who, arriving at Rome in the malarial season, took dangerously ill--probably with what is termed the Pontine, or Roman fever. It was on the occasion of the recovery of Epaphroditus and his return to Philippi that the Apostle sent back with him this epistle.

A contemporary writer, referring to the practical manifestation of love by the Philippian brethren makes the following comment: "The people of Malta were the only others recorded who expressed their love in this way to Paul. The Ephesians wept over him, but there is nothing said of their expressing their feelings by aiding him. Perhaps they did." Evidently the Apostle needed some such manifestation of affection and appreciation of his efforts on their behalf, for his own encouragement. It must have been hard, indeed, for him to love the Church at Corinth as he did--laying down his life on its behalf, as well as on behalf of the other Churches--while realizing keenly, as his epistles distinctly intimate, that he was but lightly esteemed in return.--1 Cor. 4:7-9; 2 Cor. 10:10.

In view of this close and dear relationship between the Apostle and the Church at Philippi, as between an under shepherd, or pastor and the flock, how full of meaning the *first verse* of our lesson! "My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown, --so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." These words from the pen of a conscientious and sincere man, such as the Apostle was, are fragrant with the very essence of Christian love and fellowship. How much they must have been appreciated, and how much they must have been deserved!

But if there was nothing in the condition of the Philippians to reprove, they, nevertheless, needed the exhortation to stand fast. They had already, by the Lord's favor, reached a considerable attainment in the graces of the spirit--they must needs be tested, however, to prove them, to try them; and for this ordeal, which every individual, as well as every congregation of the Lord's people must expect, the Apostle wished to prepare them--to urge that they do not retreat from the advanced steps of love and obedience already taken --that they continue firm, not, however, trusting to their own strength, but, as he expresses it, that they should "stand fast in the Lord," trusting in his power, in his grace, sufficient for every time of need.

Several of the sisters of this congregation appear to have been prominent helpers in the work, not only when the Apostle was with them, but subsequently. Two of these are mentioned by name (v. 2), and the exhortation that they be of the same mind in the Lord implies that in some respects at least these two were at variance. It is well that we note the Apostle's language to them very carefully, for there is wisdom in it. He does not exhort them to be of one mind in everything; quite possibly realizing that because of very different temperaments and dispositions, habits of life, etc., this might be impossible; but he does urge them to be of the same mind *in the Lord*--to preserve a unity of heart and head in all things relating to the Lord and his cause.

It will be of advantage to all of the Lord's people to pursue in such matters the course which the Apostle here advocates--not to attempt to "harmonize all earthly things" under present conditions;--to be content that each should have differences of opinion on various other subjects, and to insist only on oneness, fellowship, union, harmony in the Lord, in the truth, in the spirit of love, and toward all the members of the household of faith. Insistence on more than this--endeavoring to bring all to one view on social, financial and other questions--endeavoring to bring all to one view respecting dress and food, etc., has caused grievous strivings and estrangements between members of the household of faith; and all such endeavors should be recognized as contrary to the Lord's instruction through the Apostle--contrary to the "spirit of a sound mind"--contrary to the wisdom that cometh from above,--which entertains and exhorts for unity only *in the Lord* and along the line of questions positively settled by the Lord in the Scriptures--which generously leaves with each full liberty to act and to judge on all questions not positively settled by the Scriptures. We urge that all of the Lord's dear flock copy the wisdom of the Apostle in this matter, and heed his injunction, given to these two sisters, to let nothing come between them in the Lord.

In the *third verse* of our lesson "Yokefellow" apparently should be written with a capital, as the proper name of a brother in the Philippian Church--not only a Yokefellow in name, but as here declared, "a true Yokefellow," and, as we might expect, therefore, one who would be ready to cooperate with and to assist others. In the Apostle's judgment, some others were burdened, needing assistance. He specifies Clement and the two sisters already referred to, whose differences were burdening them. That the differences had not yet extended so as to injure them spiritually, the Apostle firmly believed, and hence he declares that he still recognizes them as fellow-laborers, still recognizes that their names are in the Book of Life. On this account they should seek harmony in the Lord, and Brother Yokefellow should fulfil toward them the true meaning of his name, by helping them over their difficulties; helping them to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace in the Lord.

There is no room for any of us today to become apostles, for there were only twelve of them, and never will there be more. (Rev. 21:14.) There may not be opportunities for all of us to do great

things in the Lord's service in this harvest time, either; but there are opportunities for every one of us to be true yokefellows--to assist the dear brethren and sisters with their burdens;--not merely financial burdens, or burdens of illness, but sometimes to assist them over difficulties and burdens of the kind suggested in this lesson--burdens of different temperaments and dispositions. Let us each and all seek to be true yokefellows to the various members of the body of Christ. We may be sure that the Lord will highly esteem such service, and that thus we will be growing in that grace which he so highly commended when he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."

Laying down certain general principles for godly living, healthful for New Creatures, the Apostle exhorts, --"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." This, the Golden Text of the lesson, represents the very essence of Christian living. Under present conditions it is not supposable that outward circumstances will always be favorable to rejoicing, from the natural standpoint. He, therefore, who would rejoice always in the Lord must have faith in the Lord,--trust, hope, love. Without these he could not so appropriate to himself the gracious promises of the Word as to be able to rejoice in tribulation and suffering and under trials and difficulties, and when falsely accused and misrepresented, and when slandered and evilly entreated for the truth's sake. ⁽¹⁾The only ones who can rejoice *always* are those who are living very near to the Lord, and who can feel always their oneness with him, and that his protection and care are over them, and that his promise is sure, that all things shall work together for their highest welfare, as New Creatures.

Others may rejoice today and be cast down tomorrow; only the faithful in Christ Jesus are privileged to rejoice always. The thought of the Lord's favors, past, present and to come, makes all the trials and difficulties of such to appear very light afflictions, as but for a moment, not worthy to be compared with the glory, honor and immortality promised, and the blessed privileges of divine service, both here and hereafter. The Apostle emphasizes the matter by saying, "Again I say, Rejoice." ⁽²⁾We cannot have too many rejoicing Christians, nor can they rejoice too much, if they rejoice *in the Lord*. This rejoicing is not necessarily boisterous, nor of necessity the reverse. It implies serenity, happiness, peace, pleasure of soul, however, and does not mean that noisy demonstration is essential, as some seem mistakenly to think.

The Apostle further exhorts that the faithful let their moderation, their forbearance, be manifested, not only toward the brethren, but toward all with whom they have to do. ⁽³⁾The Greek word here rendered "moderation" seems to carry with it the thought of *reasonableness*, and of not exacting our rights too rigorously. Mercy and leniency are certainly qualities required of all who would be members of the body of the Anointed. Faithfulness in the performance, as far as possible, of all that justice would require of us, and mercifulness in respect to all our requirements of justice from others should be our rule; so shall we be the children of our Father which is in heaven, for he is kind and merciful to the unthankful.

"The Lord is at hand!" The thought seems to be that we who are the Lord's are not living for the present time. We are expecting great changes to be ushered in when our King shall take to himself his great power and begin his reign. We are not to be struggling for the last inch or the last penny, nor for the extreme of our own rights; but, rather, to be so full of rejoicing in the good things coming, and already ours by faith, that it will make us generous as respects the things of this present time in our dealings with the brethren and with others. We are not expecting justice from the Lord, for nothing that we have or done or could do would *justly* call for such exceeding great and precious things as he has promised us. And as we are expecting grace or bounty in so large measure we can well afford to be generous and liberal in our sentiments toward others--especially toward the household of faith, because they are our brethren and fellow-representatives of the Lord himself, from whom our bounty is to come; and toward the world without, because they have not the future prospects which we possess, and hence set their hearts upon the things of this present time; and we can well afford to accord them their full share of these or more, since we are so rich through our heavenly Father and our heavenly Bridegroom.

That the Apostle did not mean to be understood that the Lord's second advent might be expected momentarily, nor before his death, is evident; for elsewhere in his epistles he clearly sets forth his expectation to die, and to wait for the reward, the crown of righteousness laid up for him; elsewhere also he clearly intimates that the day of the Lord could not come until after the great falling away men-

tioned in the prophecies, and the manifestation of the Man of Sin, etc. (2 Tim. 3:7,8; 2 Thess. 2:2-10.) Evidently, therefore, his only thought in this exhortation, "The Lord is at hand," was, as already suggested--that we are living in the close of the reign of evil, that the dawning of the day of the Lord is not far distant, and that to the eye of faith it is so near that its influence should affect even the smallest affairs of the present life.

"Be careful for nothing" is the next exhortation; but since our English word *careful* has lost its original meaning, there is danger of error here. The word originally had the thought of being full of care--anxiety, trouble. The Apostle's words correspond exactly to our Lord's injunction, "Take no thought," and signify, Be not anxious, burdened, full of care. It is proper that the Lord's people should be careful, in the meaning of the word careful as used today. We should not be careless, indifferent, loose in our conduct or words, but be circumspect.

Anxiety and burdens are unavoidable to those who are depending on themselves, their own wisdom, their own strength, their own skill; but the members of the body of Christ, accepted in the Beloved, adopted into the divine family, sons of God, are assured over and over again in the Word that if they abide faithful all things shall work together for their highest welfare. Why should they be burdened? Why should they feel anxious? He who guards their interests slumbers not. When Christians find themselves anxious, fearful, burdened, the evidence is that they are lacking in faith, and the probability is that they have either never grown to the point of having the proper faith in the Lord, or that they have allowed "earth-born clouds" and cares of this life to come between them and the Lord, so that they no longer have confidence that they are abiding in his love and in his care. All in such condition should go at once to the throne of heavenly grace, and to the divine promises, and obtaining mercy at the former, and feeding upon the latter, they should grow strong in the Lord and in confidence in him, and their corroding cares will give place to faith, confidence, peace of heart, whatever the outward conditions.

Such is the counsel of the Apostle--that instead of continuing in the anxious condition, we should lay all of our affairs before the Lord, supplicating his promised providential care, acknowledging our own lack of wisdom;--and gladly accepting his wisdom and the provisions of his love, we should make every request in a spirit of thanksgiving. This spirit of thanksgiving implies a recognition that the circumstances and conditions in which *we are*, have been supervised of the Lord, and that we are appreciative of his care and trust it for the future. Thanksgiving for what we have, and a full appreciation of the Lord's leadings hitherto and now, will preclude any anxiety for the future; for the thankful heart will conclude that he who favored us and redeemed us while we were yet sinners will much more favor and do for us now that we are his through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus.

⁽⁴⁾The question may arise, Why will not God give us the things which he sees us to need without our making petition to him and claiming his promises? Undoubtedly because we need previously to come into the proper attitude of heart to receive his favors and to be advantaged by them. Even as it is, we may be sure that we do not sufficiently appreciate the divine care bestowed upon us hitherto and now. Even in the attitude of prayer and thanksgiving we probably do not discern one-half of our causes for gratitude, as we shall see them by and by, when we shall know even as we are known. It is the same with natural hunger. Unless we were so constituted that the gnawings of hunger would show us our need of food we would probably appreciate it less, even if we ate as much and with the same regularity.

If we have the foregoing described spirit of rejoicing and trust in the Lord, and make all of our requests, so far as we are able to discern, in harmony with his promise, and *accept with gratitude and thanksgiving, whatever his providence may send us*, then the Apostle assures us, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The thought here is distinct. It is not our own peace that is referred to. ⁽⁵⁾We may by nature be more or less indisposed to peace, restless, dissatisfied, discontented, fearful, foreboding or quarrelsome; but, following the course outlined above, we learn to trust God in all of our affairs, and it is the peace of God--the peace which comes to us from a realization of God's power and goodness and willingness to hold us by his right hand as his children--that comes in, to keep us from worry, from anxiety, etc. The thought is that this peace stands guard continually, as a sentinel, to challenge every hostile or worrying thought or fear. It keeps the Christian's mind, so that he at heart has peace with

⁽¹⁾ ½ Feb. 26 Manna

⁽²⁾ ½ Feb. 26 Manna, Phil. 4:4

⁽³⁾ Feb 27 Manna, Phil 4:5

⁽⁴⁾ Feb. 28 Manna, Phil. 4:6

⁽⁵⁾ Mar. 1 Manna, Phil. 4:7

the Lord, fellowship, communion;--and it guards his mind also, his reasoning faculties, instructing him and assuring him respecting the divine power and wisdom and love. But it does not assure him of anything respecting his own perfection or worthiness of acceptance before God. This proper peace merely assures us of our standing in divine favor through *Christ Jesus*,--his worthiness, his sacrifice, his aid.

Now we come to the Apostle's grand summing up of the way in which the Christian is to set his affections --fix them, fasten them, hold them upon profitable things; that he may grow in grace as well as in knowledge and love of God. The Apostle points out that the will having been consecrated to the Lord, faith having been exercised in rejoicing and thanksgiving in all of the Lord's providences, the peace of trust having come in, the further steps in the development of character will be through *guarding our thoughts*: and this means also the guarding of our words and acts, because it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, and that the whole course of life is directed. What, then, should be the trend of the Christian's thoughts after he has reached the grand development already outlined by the Apostle? It should be toward things that are true, having no sympathy with anything that is false or even exaggerated. ^[6]Whoever sympathizes with falsehood or exaggeration is more or less defiling himself. Whoever cleanses his thoughts, and avoids exaggeration, etc., is in that degree purifying his mind and his entire character, and coming the more into touch and sympathy with the Lord himself, who is "the Truth."

Nor is it sufficient that we are sure of the truth of matters. We are to test them further, and discern to what extent they are honorable, noble; for although the Lord has accepted us, ignoble and imperfect, and has covered the ignoble features of our characters, and proposes to cover them to the end with his own merit, nevertheless, we cannot be in sympathy with the ignoble features of our fallen condition, but on the contrary must desire true nobility, and the highest standards of honor in our hearts, in our thoughts, in all of our dealings with our God and with our fellows. The test of honor is therefore to be applied after the test of the truth. The thing might be true, but is it honorable to think about it or tell about it? is another question.

^[7]Another test we are to apply is, Are the things just? We are not to allow our minds to run along lines that would be unjust, and we are to learn to apply this test of justice to every thought and word and act of ours, while learning at the same time to view the conduct of others from a different standpoint;--so far as reason will permit, from the standpoint of mercy, forbearance, pity, helpfulness. But we cannot be too careful how we criticize every thought we entertain, every plan we mature, that the lines of justice shall in no sense of the word be infringed by us with our hearts' approval.

Purity is another quality to be esteemed by us. ^[8]We are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that that which is impure will become painful to us, distressing, and we will desire to drop it from memory, and this will only be accomplished by continually thinking upon those things that are pure, and avoiding the giving of thought to the things that are impure. We are to recognize true loveliness, and to esteem it. From our standpoint the impure, the unjust, the untrue, the dishonorable things, cannot appear lovely, desirable, worthy of emulation. When we would think on the purest of things we must of necessity lift our mental vision to as high a point as possible, and, as nearly as we may be able, discern the loveliness of the perfect character of our God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and proportionately the loveliness manifested in one or another of the followers of Jesus, who walk closely in his footsteps. The mind that frequently calls up the lovely perfections of the Lord and the truth, and is well filled by these, is guarded greatly against intrusions of unlovely and unholy things, contrary to the spirit of the Lord. The Apostle concludes the list, by referring to all things of good repute: ^[9]things of any virtue or value, things in any degree praiseworthy--the noble words or noble deeds or noble sentiments of anybody, we may safely meditate upon, and as a consequence find ourselves growing toward these ideals upon which our minds, our new natures, thus feed. We will become more and more transformed by the renewing of our minds, and approach nearer and nearer to the glorious likeness of our Lord and Master, being changed from glory to glory, inch by inch, step by step, little by little, during the present life; and our thoughts being in this attitude and our union with the Lord maintained, we shall have part in the First Resurrection, which will perfect us forever in the Lord's image and likeness.

How many (how few!) can say what the Apostle says in *vs. 9?* "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do!" This should be the standard of every Christian, because they each and all are representatives of the Lord, ambassadors for him; hence, so far as in them lieth, their conduct and words should be such as would be living epistles, read by the brethren and by the world to profit. No wonder the Apostle adds that, doing thus, "the God of peace shall be with you." So surely as he was with the Apostle he will be with all others similarly walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

"I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length ye have *revived* your thought for me." These words seem to imply that their thoughtfulness for the Apostle, and earnestness to improve opportunities to serve him, had to some extent relaxed for a time and been revived. Then, as though fearful that his words might be understood as a reproof, he adds, "Ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity." How careful was this man of God not unnecessarily to wound the feelings of the brethren, and how careful we all should likewise be to let the love of God extend, not only to the degree of giving us liberal sentiments toward the brethren, but also to the extent of influencing our tongues and pens not to wound unnecessarily even the least of them.

The Apostle hastens to point out that he is not complaining of *want*. He had learned to put into practice himself the lesson which he was just communicating to them, regarding rejoicing in the Lord,--to cast aside anxious thought and to approach the Lord in prayer and supplication in thanksgiving, and he possessed the resultant peace. In this condition of heart, however many may have been his necessities, he was not in *want*, for he was *satisfied* that the Father would provide the things which he really needed--and more he did not *want*; for, as he explains, he had learned the lesson, "In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." We are not to be contented after the manner of the tramp or the indolent and shiftless, who would prefer to "live by faith," at the expense of others who "labor, working with their hands." We are not to be content to allow the opportunities and talents and privileges which the Lord has given us to lie idly by, unused; but while using these talents and opportunities to the very best of our ability and intelligence, and while seeking in prayer and supplication, rejoicing and thanksgiving, to use them all as would please the Lord, we should be *content with the result of such efforts*.

We should conclude that our heavenly Father who feeds the sparrows and who clothes the fields with verdure is quite able to supply our needs in the manner and to the degree that would be for our highest welfare; and so, after having done our part to the best of our ability, we are to be *thoroughly contented* with the results --even if the results should be the barest necessities of life. But we are not to be contented with the barest necessities unless these are the best results obtainable from a reasonable and judicious use of opportunities and talents which the Lord has given us, consistent with our consecration to his service. "Be content with such things as ye have" does not ignore our talents and opportunities, for these are part of the things which we *have*,--the things which, as stewards, we are bound to use to the best of our judgments.

Surely the Lord was fitting the Apostle for a grand place in the heavenly Kingdom, when he gave him such a variety of experiences as are detailed in the *12th verse*. Surely, as the Lord was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that he might be a faithful High-Priest for the Millennial Kingdom (as well as to us now), so the Apostle, by his experiences, evidently was being fitted and prepared for a very honorable and prominent place in the Royal Priesthood of the same Kingdom. And so with us: ^[9]if we find our experiences in life very checkered we may conclude that the Lord sees that we need both the heights and depths of prosperity and adversity to properly instruct us and qualify us for the position he designs for us in the future. Let us, then, as the Apostle did, *learn how* to abound, not allowing the abundance of earthly good things to swerve us from our consecration vows; and *learn also how* to be in want (need) and yet not to *want* anything beyond what the Lord's wisdom and providence sees best to give,--to be content.

The secret of the Apostle's success is stated in the last verse of the lesson. It was his close relationship to the Lord, his intimate union with him, his reliance upon him: he was abiding as a branch in the Vine, and was strengthened by the same spirit, and thus was enabled to do all these things and to pass through all these experiences with gratitude, with thankfulness, with rejoicing. Let us all thus learn to "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

[6] Mar. 2 Manna, Phil. 4:8

[7] Mar. 3 Manna, Phil. 4:8

[8] Mar. 4 Manna, Phil. 4:8

[9] Mar. 5 Manna, Phil. 4:8

[9] Mar. 6 Manna, Phil 4:11-12