

Revival in Contentment

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INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be contented? When “content” is used as a noun, it refers to “contentment,” i.e. “(1) *the quality or state of being contented*; or, (2) *something that contents*.” When is used as an adjective, “contented” refers to a “*feeling or manifesting satisfaction with one’s possessions, status, or situation*.” When is used as a transitive verb, “content” means “(1) *to appease the desires of*; (2) *to limit (oneself) in requirements, desires, or actions*” [Webster].

This concept is communicated in the New Testament by a particular Greek word family. While detailed information is provided below, the basic idea is simple: Disciples can experience contentment because the Father has provided us with the blessings that we need, both in the physical and spiritual realms.

The verb *arkeō*, meaning “*to assist*” or “*to suffice*,” occurs 8x in the NT (Matt. 25:9; Luke 3:14; John 6:7; 14:8; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5; 3 John 10). BDAG say it means “(1) in the active voice, *be enough, sufficient, adequate*; and (2) in the passive voice, (2) *be satisfied/content with something*.”

*Matthew 25:9 (NASB95) — 9 “But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not ***be *enough** for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’*

*Luke 3:14 (NASB95) — 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And what about us, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and ***be *content** with your wages.”*

*John 6:7 (NASB95) — 7 Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread ***is not *sufficient** for them, for everyone to receive a little.”*

*John 14:8 (NASB95) — 8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is ***enough** for us.”*

*2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB95) — 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is ***sufficient** for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*

1 Timothy 6:8 (NASB95) — 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall ***be *content**.

Hebrews 13:5 (NASB95) — 5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, ***being *content** with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,"

3 John 10 (NASB95) — 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not ***satisfied** with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church.

The adjective *arketos*, descriptive of that which is "sufficient," occurs 3x in the NT (Matt. 6:34; 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:3) [Thomas #713]. BDAG define it as "enough, sufficient, adequate."

Matthew 6:34 (NASB95) — 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has ***enough** trouble of its own.

Matthew 10:25 (NASB95) — 25 "It is ***enough** for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

1 Peter 4:3 (NASB95) — 3 For the time already past is ***sufficient** for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

The adjective *autarkēs*, a compound of *autos* [self] and *arkeō* [to assist, suffice], referring to one who is "self-sufficient, sufficient," occurs once (Phil. 4:11) [Thomas #842]. BDAG say it is used of persons who are "content, self-sufficient."

Philippians 4:11 (NASB95) — 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be ***content** in whatever circumstances I am.

Finally, the noun *autarkeia*, derived from *autarkēs*, referring to "self-satisfaction, i.e. self-sufficiency," occurs 2x in the NT (2 Cor. 9:8; 1 Tim. 6:6) [Thomas #841]. BDAG say this word, which carries the general meaning of "'self-sufficiency in the sense of 'independence,' then generally, 'sufficiency,' has the specific meaning of "(1) external, state of having what is adequate, sufficiency, a competence; (2) internal, state of being content with one's circumstances, contentment, self-sufficiency."

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NASB95) — 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all ***sufficiency** in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

*1 Timothy 6:6 (NASB95) — 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by ***contentment**.*

MATERIAL BLESSINGS

Disciples should be content with the material blessings that we receive from the Father.

John the Baptist emphasized this theme, generally in answering the questions of the crowds and the tax collectors, and specifically, in responding to the soldiers (Luke 3:10-14, esp. vs. 14).

*Luke 3:10-14 (NASB95) — 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and ***be *content** with your wages."*

Paul affirmed that godliness must be coupled with contentment (1 Tim. 6:6-10, 17-19).

*1 Timothy 6:6-10 (NASB95) — 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by ***contentment**. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall ***be *content**. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NASB95) — 17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

He personally sought to live according to this principle (Phil. 4:10-20, esp. vs. 11).

*Philippians 4:10-20 (NASB95) — 10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be ***content** in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. 14 Nevertheless, you have done well to*

share with me in my affliction. 15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

In Sacred Scripture, fulfillment of individual responsibility coupled with divine provision results in a life that is all sufficient (2 Cor. 9:6-11, esp. vs. 8).

*2 Corinthians 9:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all ***sufficiency** in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9 as it is written, “He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever.” 10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.*

At the end of His discourse on worry, Jesus affirmed “Each day has ***enough** trouble of its own” (Matt. 6:25-34, esp. vs. 34).

*Matthew 6:25-34 (NASB95) — 25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34 “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has ***enough** trouble of its own.*

Accordingly, the writer of Hebrews stressed the need for contentment coupled with trust (Heb. 13:5-6).

*Hebrews 13:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, ***being *content** with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” 6 so that we confidently say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”*

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Disciples should be content with the spiritual blessings that come from the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

We find satisfaction in sharing a relationship with God (John 14:8-14).

*John 14:8-14 (NASB95) — 8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is ***enough** for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

We find satisfaction through the grace of God (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

*2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NASB95) — 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is ***sufficient** for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

We are satisfied by being like our Master. In His discussion on discipleship, Jesus said, “It is ***enough** for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master” (Matt. 10:21-31, esp. vs. 25).

*Matthew 10:21-31 (NASB95) — 21 “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 22 “You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. 23 “But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. 24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. 25 “It is ***enough** for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household! 26 “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 “What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 “So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.*

NEGATIVE USAGE

It occurs in the negative form in Matthew’s account of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, emphasizing the need for personal preparation (Matt. 25:1-13, esp. vs. 9).

*Matthew 25:1-13 (NASB95) — 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 “Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 “For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4 but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5 “Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6 “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7 “Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 “The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 9 “But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not ***be *enough** for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.’ 10 “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 “Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ 12 “But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13 “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

It occurs in the negative form in John’s account of the feeding of the 5,000, emphasizing the magnitude of the Lord’s miracle (John 6:1-14, esp. vs. 7).

John 6:1-14 (NASB95) — 1 After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). 2 A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. 3 Then Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat down with His disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the

Jews, was near. 5 Therefore Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" 6 This He was saying to test him, for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not ***sufficient** for them, for everyone to receive a little." 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. 12 When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. 14 Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

It occurs in the negative form in John's discussion of Diotrephes, emphasizing the malice of such evil man (3 John 9-12, esp. vs. 10).

*3 John 9-12 (NASB95) — 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. 10 For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not ***satisfied** with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.*

Warning against worldliness, Peter said, "For the time already past is ***sufficient** for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles..." (1 Pet. 4:1-6, esp. vs. 3).

*1 Peter 4:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is ***sufficient** for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

CONCLUSION

Let us be content with God's material blessings, enjoying His bounty, and trusting in Him to provide for our needs.

Let us take advantage of God's spiritual blessings which are found in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:13-14, 26-29; Eph. 1:3-6).

Galatians 3:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:26-29 (NASB95) — 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Ephesians 1:3-6 (NASB95) — 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.