

I HAVE LEARNED TO BE CONTENT

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A challenging learning process described in the Bible is the call to cultivate contentment, whatever the circumstances. "... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances", says Paul. "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.... I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13, NIV)

This text indicates that contentment also involves focusing on the spiritual rather than on material things. As adversity always hits everyone's life, how do we learn to develop the kind of contentment mentioned during times of scarcity or trials? The key to understanding it is found in verses 11 and 13.

In verse 11 Paul says, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." First, being content does not prevent us from looking for something better but removes undue anxiety. And when we cannot get what we are looking for, or it is improper for us to have it, contentment will provide us serenity and peace of mind. This is how contentment helps us avoid debts. The vast majority of debts result from an anxious or unbalanced pursuit of things we don't have and cannot afford.

Second, being faithful in tithes and "Promise" offerings challenges us to trust that everything belongs to God, that He is a good Provider, and therefore we can wait on Him while being content with what He left in our hands. Paul never felt himself restricted by scarcity because, in verse 13, he said, "I can do all things through [Christ]," not through borrowing money and incurring debt.

I'm sure you know people who say, "I can do all things through money." But the biblical invitation is for us to say: "Because I am in Christ, instead of incurring in debt, I will wait for Him to provide what is needed. Because I am in Christ, I know that what He can do for me, is not restricted by what I currently have in my hands. Because I am in Christ, I trust that even amid adversity He is working "for the good of those who love him" (Romans 8:28). His divine presence is my support and provides everything that is necessary for every situation."

When we faithfully return Tithe and "Promise" offerings, we are saying without words that we want to trust God as Provider. And this mindset will lead us through the path of contentment, helping us to avoid debt. As we return tithe and offerings, may we put our desires last and God first.