

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Contentment

Part 4

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.24-25.09

You know, regardless of if we come here broken and empty this morning, we can say that, we serve a beautiful Lord. Or if we come here filled with all rejoicing, we can say the same thing, he's a beautiful Lord. We come here and worship a God that does not change but knows each one of our circumstances and is here meeting us this morning. Let's take a few moments and bow our heads and pray to Him. Maybe this is the first time you have spoken to Him today and so lets just make this a quiet time just to tell him how much we love Him for the cross, for his gracious provisions, for his forgiveness, for his acts of mercy, kindness in our lives. Lord, thank you for meeting us where we most need you. That there is not a moment in the day that goes by that you are not there, that there is nothing that we can do that would separate us from your love, no sin, how deep it might be in our eyes, how heinous it might be in the worlds eyes, you are a God of love and forgiveness, receive us as your children. Thank you that we do not stand before God on our own merit but rather through your righteousness and your righteousness alone. Thank you for taking my sin, all of our sins, on your shoulders on the cross and we say that you are beautiful. What a God like you that would, um, receive a sinner like us and love us and care for us and meet our needs, walk through our lives and this is your hour. We worship you, we thank you, you are a great and mighty God and all of God's people said amen.

Well, good morning Crossroads, it is good to see everybody this morning, we are in a study in the book of Philippians Chapter 4. If you have your Bibles I want to have you turn there with me. We are making our way, albeit slowly, Verse 10 through Verse 20, we are arriving today at Verse 14. We are going to take a rather large section as we continue the study on contentment. You know whenever you study God's Word you discover new things about it. It doesn't matter if you have studied a passage a dozen times or two dozen times, when you come back to it the Lord is always faithful to show you something new and to meet your need and to teach us something about himself, and I hope that has been true in your lives as you have been studying through this passage week after week.

You know we started by looking at a number of definitions of contentment. Do you remember that? We looked at three or four of them. One of the most basic is that contentment is the absence of worry, and we certainly could say that. We could say that contentment is the absence of worry, but we also, after studying this passage, could say that contentment is so much more than simply the absence of worry. We've learned a number of principles, for example: No. 1 – Contentment comes from trusting in a sovereign God, and we said that's where it all begins. Everything else hangs off of that concept that we trust a God who owns everything, who has absolute authority, who is in control of everything, and because of that we can move forward in our lives knowing that

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He is in control of the details when we can't even make out the details. What does that do? That brings a sense of contentment.

We have also learned really from the lifestyle of the Apostle Paul that we need to be people who are satisfied. That we are learning to be satisfied even with the very little. I was reminded when I was reading through the Book of Luke of the Lord's words when he said that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of his possessions, and that's true, because whenever you start to cling onto possessions, whenever you start to gravitate towards possessions, what do you find, you move away from contentment. So we are learning to be satisfied. To not get wrapped up in this sense of consumerism. Last week we looked at the idea that contentment comes from living above our circumstance. In other words, we are not gonna be victims of our circumstances. The reason is that we depend on God's power, Verse 13, he says "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." And that actually in the midst of those difficult situations, that it is those situations that we understand that we learn contentment. They are the conduit to contentment learning. As we said, it is no longer our power Lord it is your power that we are going to rest on.

So now, we come to the fifth principal of our study, and I got to be honest with you, I think we are going to add one more next week, cause I was looking through this text and I think I discovered something else, but we will see after I work through it, but right now we are gonna look at the fifth principle of contentment, and we are going to look at it in a block of scripture from Verse 14 through Verse 20, and that is contentment comes from being thankful. That our contentment rises as we are thankful, as we practice the idea of being grateful for what the Lord has given us. Now what I want to do is I want to pick-up from where we were at last week, start at Verse 14, and I want you to just listen to that. Listen to the concept of thankfulness in the life of the Apostle Paul and see if you can't hear it as I read the text. Beginning in Verse 14, "It was kind of you" Paul writes, "to share my troubles." Now just as way of reminder he is writing to the Philippian Church, the Philippian Church had sent him a financial gift because he was in all practical purposes, in prison, he was under house arrest, chained to a Roman guard, he had very few of his own personal needs met. So he is writing, thanking them, and he says, ".yet it was kind of you to share my trouble and you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the Gospel when I left Macedonia, no Church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I received full payment and more. I am well supplied having received from Epaphroditus you sent. A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever, amen."

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Did you hear it? There's just this overall air of thankfulness from the Apostle Paul to the Church at Phillipi.

Now let's just make our way back through that and let me just point out a few things. For example, beginning in Verse 14 he says it was "kind" of you to share my trouble. That word "kind" literally can be translated honorable or beautiful. You hear what he is saying? He is saying it was a beautiful thing what you did for me. Have you ever received something from somebody and felt that way? You know it was just a beautiful thing. They didn't have to do it, they went out of their way to do it. A beautiful gift that you have given and that is exactly what Apostle Paul is saying here. In Verse 15 he says, "no other Church partnered with me." Verse 16, he said, "Even in Thessalonica you sent me help." You tracked me down so that you could help me, that's what he is communicating here. Then he really starts pouring it on in Verse 18, he says, "I well supplied, a fragrant offering an acceptable gift." I have to look into that and I have to think you know that comes as an amazing statement because he says "I am well supplied." The word supplied could mean to abound or overflow with material possessions. Now remember, Paul is chained to a Roman guard. He doesn't have the ability to go out and make his own living, he is completely dependent on the gifts of others. He really has no material possessions and yet what does he say, he says, I am abounding, I am overflowing in material possessions, I am well supplied because of you. You got to look and you've got to think, ..... is he just rambling on, is he lying, no I don't think that's the case at all. You know why, because the Apostle Paul learned to be satisfied, right. Remember we learned that. He learned to be satisfied with very little, and so when someone would give him something he could truly say I am just overflowing, I am abounding with material things. That's hard for us to say isn't it? It's hard for us to say because we have so much and when someone gives us something ya know, .... I thank you, and we throw it on the pile of other stuff that we have. Not the Apostle Paul. He had learned to be satisfied with very little so when someone sacrificed and gave him something, it meant a lot to him, and he is communicating that to the Church at Phillipi. He is just pouring it out, and that tells us something, not only about the Apostle Paul, but about contentment itself. That is you cannot experience this type of deep Biblical contentment without being deeply thankful. A person who is grateful. You cannot experience, and I believe this with all my heart, you cannot experience the depth of contentment that we see lived out here in Philippians 4 if you don't practice being thankful.

You see the thing we have to remember is that thankfulness is something that God himself wants to see as a characteristic in our lives. And so we have to ask a question when we come to a text like this. Am I thankful? Am I a thankful person? Am I characterized by thankfulness? Is there something in my life that I need to maybe improve in this area, and if so, what do I need to do to become thankful. You see God

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wants us to be thankful. We see that all throughout Scripture. Back in the Old Testament sacrificial system when God was telling his chosen people, listen I want you to make a sin offering, I want you to make a wheat or grain offering, uh, with the first fruits I give you. Did you know he also says I want you to give a thank giving offering. Did you know that? The people of Israel were called to be thankful and to do that in the form of a ceremonial thank giving offering. You know he tells the exact same thing in the New Testament. That this ought to be a part of who we are. That if a transition has taken place. We've come out of the world into Christ and now a characteristic of ours should be that we are thankful people. Let me show you that. Let's just do a little bit of a Bible study on this concept of thankfulness. Turn with me to the Book of Romans, Chapter 1, the very first chapter in Romans. Paul is basically laying out a theology of how we should see life. And he starts by helping us to understand the world that we live in. He says that the world... that we live in is filled with people who are thankless to God. In fact, that is one of the characteristics of people who are unredeemed. That they are thankless. Then he goes so far as to say that it is one of the damning sins of society. He says in Verse 21, Chapter 1, he says, "For although they knew God," in other words they knew God because they could see all the universe that he created, they have no excuse, ..."For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give" what does the text say, "thanks to him." Paul is setting up this argument that really one of the damning elements of our society is that they go about thanklessly to God. But that changes when we are transferred from this world into the Kingdom of Christ. We now then become thankful people. In fact, it is God's will for you to be thankful. Did you know that?

Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians and you can see that. 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians Chapter 5 reveals to us God's will. You ever wanted to know God's will for your life? There is a number of Scriptures that tell us that this is God's will. Someday I will take you through that and it is very clear, this is what God wants for us. It starts in Verse 16 of Chapter 5, he says, "Rejoice always." Now remember we talked about that last week? This is part of Paul's mindset that he wanted to kind of give a ... sense of rejoicing into his life and let that flow out of everything he does. So he says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing." Verse 18 – "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" he says. So that when you become a follower of Christ God's will is for you to be a person who is thankful. Uh, just turn left in your Bible, go back to Colossians, Chapter 2, and we see it again. Chapter 2, Verse 6 – "Therefore," in other words since you are now alive in Christ which is what he just got done saying in Chapter 2, "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith just as you were taught abounding in thanksgiving." So this really ought to characterize us as a follower of Christ. Paul was a thankful man. He was in a terrible situation yet he was a thankful, contented man. Now the thing that we ought to be asking is how do you get that way? Why was Paul a thankful man? Now we can go through and say that he had disciplined himself. He practiced the spiritual

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disciplines of thankfulness. Yes, that, that would be true. You could say that he was being obedient to God. Yes, well, um that was true. But there was something else. Go back to Philippians because if you missed this you miss the whole context of this passage. Remember, we are learning the scriptures in context. There is something that comes before and something after that is connected together. We don't just \_\_\_\_\_ a passage and take it out, this is a context and what is Paul saying in the midst of this context? Why was he so thankful. Listen. He was thankful because the Philippian Church gave to him, met his needs. He had a reason to be thankful. He had people who loved him and who cared for him, and who „, sacrificed to meet his needs. So, there is a connection between thankfulness and giving, and we are going to see that in this passage. We are going to see that this \_\_\_\_\_ pattern of thankfulness in the scriptures. The Philippians, for example, here, gave to Paul. That, in turn, made Paul thankful. Well why did the Philippians go out of their way to give? Well, it's because Paul had ministered to them. Therefore, we could say that they were thankful and they just set up this, this pattern of circular pattern of giving and thankfulness. You see, what we are going to see is that in this passage is a whole other set of principles imbedded that teach us the principle of giving. It's a principles that teach us to give that lead, what, to thanksgiving that goes, where, to contentment. You see, we are still on track to the same theme. But all this time, we have been looking at Paul in his teaching and his life, but to see the full impact of this text we have to see the background. That's the church at Philippi and Paul is saying I am deeply thankful for this Church. Why? Because they gave. And to just show you the bigger picture. What we are going to see this morning is that when we give, we start a pattern. When we give, God gives back to us. And that does what? That cultivates thanksgiving. The church receives that, translates that into ministry, gives to somebody else, that causes them to be thankful, ultimately thanksgiving is then multiplied to God. And where did it start? It started with faithfulness, obedience, stepping out, giving, becoming thankful, then receiving the by-product of that, of contentment.

What we see basically in this text is a theology of Christian giving. Now what I want to do this morning is just give you a few things to think about in your own pattern of giving. Let me give you four things to think about in a theology of Christian giving.

No. 1 - We see from the text that the Philippian Church teaches us that it is a planned opportunity. That it is a planned opportunity. We plan for the opportunity to give. Look at Verse 10, you are probably very familiar with it, we've looked at it a number of times. Paul says, "I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern with me." You are familiar with that. But look at this, he says, "You were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity." There was a time in the history of the Philippian Church they didn't have opportunity to give. That changed. An what happened? They gave. So when we have opportunities what should we do? We should

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give. You know what else this tells us? That giving for this Church wasn't just off the cuff. It was planned. They had planned to give. They actually had made preparations to give to the Apostle Paul. They actually sacrificed. They were following his earlier teaching to the Church at Corinth.

Hold you place in Philippians and let me take you there into 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Chapter 16, end of the Book. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Chapter 16. Paul had already instructed all the churches on how they should go about caring for one another and, um, um, increasing the sense of ministry in the church and caring for the saints, and he tells us this very briefly in Verse 1 through 4 of Chapter 16 of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. He says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints." He says, "I have directed the Church in Galatia so you also are to do on the first day of every week each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive I will send those whom who accredited by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. So, obviously this was a gift that was going on to the saints in Jerusalem. Verse 4, he says "If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me." Now lets back up and look at this. What do we learn from this passage? Well, we can tell one thing right at the beginning, that collecting for the work of ministry, for the furtherance of the Gospel, was a regular part of worship. That Paul had instructed the church at Galatia and now he was instructing the church at Corinth, and he instructed the church at Phillipi and the rest in the Asia region, that how to act in, in... aspect of worship, and part of that was giving. He says we give. Why? Well, he says we give for the saints or for the church. We give so that we might continue the ministry in the church. When was this done? Well look at Verse 2. It says that it was done on the first day of the week, characteristically, Sunday. The time that they would gather to worship. So when do you give? You give on the first of day of the week when you come to give your tithes and offerings in the service or the worship of the Lord. That's what he saying here. He says alright, well, who is supposed to give? Well, notice again. Verse 2, "On the first day of the week each of you..." In other words, it's all-inclusive. No believer is excluded. No believer is excused. There is no exemption. He says that all of us are participating in this and we gonna find out why in a moment. But first, lets got through.

So far we got . . . why was this done, when was this done, well, where is this supposed to be done? Well again, look at Verse 2. "On the first day of the week each of you is to put something aside and store it up." That represents a store house, often times a church is called the store house. It goes from the Old Testament into the New Testament. For example, Malachi 3:10, it says, "bring the full tithe into the store house." Now why were they to do that? Well, he says this, he says I want you to store it up as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come. You hear what he's saying? He says, I... Don't want you to have to run around and collect when I come, I want you to do this on a weekly basis, planned and prepared, so that when I arrive we are ready to move forward

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in ministry. That's what he's saying here. And so, do this. Alright, now the next question is well, how much. Right? That's the question you are all waiting to be answered. How much are we supposed to give? Well, he tells us here at the end of Verse 2. He says, "You are to store it up as he may prosper." You are to give basically as you decide to give as you, um, personally want to prosper. You say, how does that make sense? Well, earlier in the Scriptures, Jesus taught that we are to give, and we are going to see this in a moment, and that as well give God gives back to us. In the next letter to the Corinthians Paul says if you sow sparingly you're going to reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you're going to reap bountifully. He takes an agricultural principle and he brings it into the spiritual world. All of us can understand that. If you take a small amount of seed and you spread it across a small amount of land you're gonna get a small harvest. Right? He says, well if you take a large amount of seed and you spread it across amount a large plot of land you are going to get a larger harvest. The exact same thing works in your spiritual life. You know, if you sow sparingly you are going to reap sparingly. So, you have to decide at what level you want to give. Now traditionally the church has said that we should start at the tithe. Now a tithe literally means ten percent. And you might be thinking, TEN PERCENT! Now that's a lot of money! Ten percent! You know, think of it a little bit differently. Instead of thinking how much you are to give away, think about where you are sending your heart. Right? Because many times our money kind of follows where our heart goes. And if our heart is really for the proclamation of the Gospel. If the heart, if our heart is to desire to see the care of the saints and the movement of the Church forward, then now it's not that much about amount, it's really about, oh, okay, where do I want to send my heart. I often tell people, you know what, start where you can start, and go from there. Start wherever you can start and watch God work in your life. Try to maybe move towards that ten percent but don't let that stop you. Maybe you need to move beyond that. Don't worry as much about the number, worry about your heart, where are your desires? See, I think that's what Paul is teaching here to the Corinthian Church. Because he tells us just in the next, in the next letter to them, that I, I don't want you to be a reluctant giver. I want you to just be satisfied in your mind what you need to give, and then I want you to move forward and give. But what we learned from the Philippians is that is was a planned opportunity, and they took that opportunity and they moved forward. It wasn't just something they had decided to do by a motion, or just off the cuff, or spur of the moment, but it was something they decided to do, and that it characteristic of giving that leads to worship. We plan ahead of time where we are gonna send our heart with our money.

The second thing we see from the Philippian Church is that it was a purposeful response. It was a purposeful response. Look at Verse 14 through 16 just for a few key words. Verse 14 Paul says it was kind of you to "share" my troubles. That word "share" means to associate with or to participate with. Down in Verse 15, it says no other church had "partnered" except them. So partnership is a key idea. It was a purposeful response,

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listen, so that they might partner with Paul. That's what I want you to hear. Do you realize that when you give that's basically what you're saying. I am partnering with the ministry so that the Gospel of Christ might continue forward. When you give, why do you give? Well you give out of obedience to God certainly. You give out because you have a desire to the mission of Christ move forward. You have a desire to see the saints cared for. But ultimately, when you give, you give as a representation of a partner. You are partnering with the Church and its proclamation of truth. And so what we see in the Philippians is that they are basically saying to Paul that we are purposefully responding to your need so that the Gospel might move forward through you, Paul. What a great example. A testimony of Christian stewardship.

The third thing we see, is, now listen, it is a profitable spiritual discipline for you. It's not just about giving, it's not just about what it does, it's what it does for you. It is a profitable, spiritual discipline, and Paul knew this. Paul knew that the Philippians would receive something because of their generosity. Look at Verse 17. What does he say? He says, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to, who? To your credit. He basically is saying, I'm not trying to get something from you, I want something for you. That's what he saying. He's says, I want, I want to receive this and I want you to give because I don't necessarily want it, but I want what it gives to you. It gives you a sense of spiritual growth. It's a discipline that you take on and you grow because of it. Now I can guarantee you that the Apostle Paul wanted two things. He wanted the ministry to thrive forward and he wanted people to grow in maturity. We can say the exact same thing here. I desperately want the ministry of Crossroads in this town to thrive forward. We want to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ. That's our mission. We want to proclaim the good news of Christ. That's why you are here. That's why you are partnering. That's what we are about. But I also want to see you grow through the process of giving. So a lot of people, you, well you, ... the church is always in my pocket and they always want more and more. We you know, let me just put this to rest once and for all. Yes, I want you to give more. Is that shocking? Now you can go out and tell, well, I knew it, that Armstrong he just wants more of my money. Yes, I do. You know why? Because I want the ministry to thrive forward and I think you do to and I want you to grow spiritually through it. Because Jesus tells us this. Jesus tells us in Luke, Chapter 6, you ought to see this. Luke 6, Verse 38. He makes it very clear how we are to live. He says, "give." Right out of the words of Christ. If you are not convinced of that, turn there, if you have a red letter Bible it's written in red, that means the words of Christ. He says "give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, it will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use will be measured back to you." Do you know why I want you to give? No only so that the ministry can move forward, not only so that you can, um, grown, but listen to this, so that you can experience that you can never out give God. You can't experience that until you try. But I guarantee you, you cannot out give God. He tells us

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right here, I want you to give and when you give it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, it's like he's, um, ...he's using imagery of a feed sack, he says it just running over, you can't push any more into it but yet it's just kind of flowing out and its, its flowing right into your lap, for with the measure you use will be measured back to you. Now some of you give and you give abundantly and you are partnering with the ministry. Thank you very much, I pray that you are receiving a blessing from that. Now some of you now are believers, are confessing Christ followers, and you don't give anything. To be honest with you that doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense on a number of levels. It doesn't make sense because you are depriving yourself of spiritual maturity. This actually probably is the wall for you before you can break through and begin to move further down the road of walking with Christ in spiritual growth. This might be it until you can move past it. Then you're, you know what, you're going to find something else you're going to have to move past, and something else. That's the Christian life. But right now, I found that early in the Christian life for many people, they get stuck here. It starts to be a trust thing. But it is also more than that, it is an obedience thing. God has called us to do that. Now you are going to say, you know what, I can't believe your talking about giving when I economy is in the tank like this. When it's this bad. Well let me help you realize two things. First, I didn't pick the text, God did. And I'm not God's editor, I'm just his conduit for him to speak through, and if it's in the text, I got to teach it. It doesn't really matter what the time is, what the culture it. We need to speak the truth and the whole counsel of the Word of God. More than that, it doesn't matter what the culture is like right now. You know why? Because the culture operates off of one word right at the moment. Fear. Right? They're afraid. They are running scared. But what have we learned? We've learned that we trust in a sovereign God who's in absolute control. And if we believe that God's in absolute control it doesn't matter what's going on in the world. What are we to do? Our response it still the same, it's to obey. Right? That's our calling.

I remember, I think it was about 16 years, I was trying to figure, it was about 16 years ago I was in seminary and Charles Stanley came to speak to the seminary. I don't know if you know who Charles Stanley is. He is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. A highly respected man. A godly man. has done much for the furtherance of the Kingdom in his time. Well he came and he spoke to all of us who were preparing for ministry. Now you've got to think about this, this is a large chapel filled with men, all of us have gone on missions or the church, or maybe to teach or something like that, and he speaks to us for five days. It was really a great treat. But to be honest with you, I can't remember a thing he said except one thing. And one thing has stuck with me for 16 years. He was preaching out of a text, I don't remember the text, and walked away from it for a moment, and he said to us, "Men, if God tells you to run your head into a brick wall, put your head down and start running towards that wall." We all kind of had this same response, a little nervous laughter. And he said, "I'm serious." If God tells you to

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do something that looks absolutely ridiculous, you put your head down and you start running towards that wall and you start praying that God would make a whole in that brick wall. But don't worry about and don't look at it. Put your head down and start running because the moment you decide to obey you take the responsibility off your shoulders and you put it on God's. And the same thing works in our financial giving and our financial obedience. If God tells us to give we are to put our head down and start running toward that wall, knowing all the while that He's responsible for it. Now another thing that Dr. Stanley said to us, he said that he had never once in all the years of his ministry, and I can back this up in my own experience, never hit my head against that brick wall. God always supplies for our needs. You cannot out give God. But it's a matter of obedience. The Philippian Church profited spiritually and they grew because of this particular spiritual discipline.

The last thing we see is that ultimately it's pleasing to God. That our generosity, our sacrifice, our heart towards the ministry of Christ, is pleasing to God. Paul says that it's a fragrant offering. A sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. Now think about it. Now before you put your outlines and close up your Bible and get ready to go, listen to this. It really doesn't matter what goes on in your life if your life isn't pleasing to God. Is it? Really, what matters in life if our life isn't pleasing to God? God tells us it pleases him when we step out on faith. When we partner with the ministry of the local church. That the ministry thrives because it does something more than that, it moves you closer to the hear of God. A God who demonstrates over and over again that he is a giving God. You want to be content? Paul says be thankful. You want to know how to be thankful? Be generous. When you do that, you are obedient to God and we see again the by-product is a contented life. Now the choice is yours. It was just kind of like the story of Peter, remember Peter when he was on the sea and the boat was rocking up and down and Jesus came walking out. What did Jesus say to Peter? Get out of the boat and come to me. He's saying the same thing to you today. You see it wasn't until Peter obeyed and trusted God, stepped out of the boat, that he experienced that closeness with the Lord. Obey. Let's pray about that.