

# Finding Contentment II

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As we get to be older, mature adults, we don't like to say we're old, we're just seasoned. We think about all the things we wanted to do and become and we look back on our lives—all the plans, the goals, and aspirations we had in our youth. All of that is gone. I'm speaking from the perspective of someone who has almost 8.5 decades under the belt. We look back on that—it's on our back trails. Most of us, when we started out in life, we had a bucket list of the things we wanted to do with our lives. Education, career, marriage, children, all of that. We thought about all of that when we were younger. Now that we are older—hopefully a little wiser—there's a reverse of that. Now we have a bucket list of the things we'll never do. I have one anyway. I don't know if you've gotten there yet, but everyone eventually does. Here's my bucket list of the things I'll never do now.

I'll never be president (who would want to be).  
I'll never be famous for anything. Maybe infamous for something.  
I'll never be wealthy. We get by and that's enough.

The biggest disappointment in my life—a tragedy really.

I'll never be a pro golfer.

In fact, I won't even be a good one. Seriously, we'll never achieve those things. We get to a certain point in our lives and we will never achieve those things. It becomes biologically unrecoverable. We have been retired for a while—18 plus years now. We had all those plans that we were going to do when we retired. We thought we would do a lot of traveling, but all of those plans fell by the wayside like so many things do in life. I was an instructor—retired as an instructor—and my former company would contract me to come back and do classes once in a while. A month here and there, even went back one time as a project manager for like three months to do some things for them. I did a little bit of a stint as a consultant. I spent a couple of years where I would fly down to Las Vegas one week out of every month. I would fly down there all expenses paid. Because of my training background we were writing technical manuals. They would give me a nice check, fly me down there, stay a week and work on those manuals, then I would wind up in McCarran International airport and catch a plan to come back home. I always tell everybody that I spent \$20 every time I go down to Las Vegas. That was for the shuttle bus driver. \$10 to take me to the training facility and \$10 to take me back. That's because in Las Vegas, half of their wages were in tips so we tried to be good to them.

Most of us get to the point in life where we don't like mirrors anymore. We look in a mirror, at our aging bodies, see all that grey hair, the extra weight, all those icky aging results and we look at this whole thing of growing old and decide it's not so much fun. In

fact, it can be downright depressing. Turn over to Ecclesiastes 1. There is a man in the Bible who you might say panned the record of a midlife crisis. We can't really say for sure that Solomon had a midlife crisis, but you get to a point in your life where you sit down and reevaluate everything. You just look at life in general that way—you go back over it all. Solomon may have gotten to that point. I'll be using the NLT. I realize that's a paraphrase but it doesn't change the meaning of the intent. All of the scriptures I'm going to touch on are very familiar anyway.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1** *These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem.*

2) *"Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless!"* (NLT)

We know the King James uses the word vanity for that. Vanity of vanities. Some translations put futile or empty. The word vanity is used 70 times in the Old Testament. 35 of those times are here in Ecclesiastes.

3) *What do people get for all their hard work under the sun?*

4) *Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes.* (NLT)

It's saying life goes on no matter what.

5) *The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again.* [East to west every day, it never changes.]

6) *The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles.* (NLT)

Every place on earth has a prevailing wind. Here it comes out of the southwest.

7) *Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea.* (NLT)

He's referring to the evaporation cycle—it just keeps going.

8) *Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.* (NLT)

I think we can see as the seasons come and go, people do want more and more. In the first half of this sermon I gave on containment, I made a list of all the things people want more and more of. I made a whole list of "more". More of everything. It's really not getting us anywhere. People want to travel, they want to see something new, they want something different. Maybe they want to travel to Europe, or the Rocky Mountains. Exciting places like Japan, China, Australia. I've been to those places and more. But all of those places where you go, like Solomon points out, you're going to see the sunset, the rivers flow, the weather and the climate—you'll see all of that. It just keeps going.

Man tries to fill his life, tries to find happiness and what Solomon is getting at is, he's looking for answers in this life. What are the answers? Let's continue in verse 9 to 18.

*9) History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.*

*10) Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually, it is old; nothing is ever truly new.*

*11) We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now. (NLT)*

We see that all the time. People come and go. People pass away and pretty soon people forget all about them.

*12) I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem.*

*13) I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race. (NLT)*

Solomon is searching. He's trying to find out what's it all mean? What's it all worth? I have a couple of books in my library, one is by Marcus Aurelius (stoic philosopher), his book Meditations is the same thing—he's searching for answers. I also have Viktor Frankl's book, Man's Search for Meaning. Man, always has that question and Solomon is no different.

*14) I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.*

*15) What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered.*

*16) I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them."*

*17) So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind. (NLT)*

Never found any real answers to life in any of that.

*18) The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief. To increase knowledge only increases sorrow. (NLT)*

And that's a conclusion that Solomon came up with—that life is basically meaningless and futile. I think you do get to a point sometimes where you evaluate everything in your life and you look back on the things that we once thought was so important. That's where Solomon was—he did all of these things and yet he looked back and evaluated it and realized that it was not the important thing. That's not what makes us happy. That's not what our lives depend on. That's a conclusion he came to. We can realize that too, in the grand scheme of things. Most of the things we thought in the past were so important, were really nothing in the grand scheme of things. What does it really matter?

Granted, in your life it may have been something, but it really was nothing in the grand scheme of things.

Solomon tried to find his contentment in wisdom and pleasure; he tried all of it. He tried to find answers in great accomplishments and hard work. He looked around the world and saw all of the evil and oppression. Not seeing any answers there, he saw the folly at work. He tried to be popular like a politician and that didn't give him any answers. He even saw the folly of organized religion. He even realized the folly of massive wealth. When I think of Solomon and everything he had, I think of some of these celebrities we have today in our society—I won't mention any names—some of the folks like late night hosts that make millions and millions of dollars and have vintage collections of cars, collections of airplanes, collection of yachts. I kind of look at that and see Solomon in that picture too. If he had the ability then and the technology and all of that, then he would have had that too. He realized all of those things were just vanity, they were nothing. You don't contrive your happiness, your self worth, from those things—you just don't. Let's go to the end of Ecclesiastes, chapter 12. He concluded that life without God is worthless. This is the end of the book and his story here. Down in verse 9-14.

**Ecclesiastes 12:9** *Keep this in mind: The Teacher was considered wise, and he taught the people everything he knew. He listened carefully to many proverbs, studying and classifying them ... (NLT)*

That's Proverbs—a collection of those things.

*10) The Teacher sought to find just the right words to express truths clearly.*

*11) The words of the wise are like cattle prods—painful but helpful. Their collected sayings are like a nail-studded stick with which a shepherd drives the sheep. (NLT)*

Today we say, like a cattle prod and noise. No real answers.

*12) But, my child, let me give you some further advice: Be careful, for writing books is endless, and much study wears you out. (NLT)*

And it does. You can spend a life time looking in the wrong place. That's what it's saying there. I know people who have spent years in college. They have the idea that there has to be answers to man's wisdom, to something—like huge libraries. Libraries of Congress where maybe millions of books that man has written. There has to be answers there. We've known people who have been professional students—and I'm not saying there is anything wrong with college education, I have some myself—but Solomon tried all of that.

*13) That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty.*

*14) God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad. (NLT)*

Solomon tried to find contentment and peace in all of these things—he was searching for answers—but realized he couldn't find it in a physical sense. Remember I tried to point out in the first sermon, the word *content* in the Greek just means “to be satisfied”. In a sense of being mentally and emotionally satisfying. A state of mind, as I tried to point out in that first sermon.

Finally, that brings the title for today.

But first I would like to preface the title with a question.

*Are we content, satisfied and at peace with our lives as Christians?*

Perhaps more importantly, as a state of mind, are you at ease with the way that God is working in our lives—with your life, my life. Are we at ease with that? Are we at peace with that? Do we have any measure of contentment with that? The title is:

### Finding Contentment II

I should have entitled it, “Finding Contentment and Peace”. That's what we're getting at. I think I mentioned in the first sermon about contentment that peace was a component of that. But I had limited time and you can only do so much. I'm going to spend a little more emphasis on that and that's going to be part of the underlying theme of the things I'll continue with here.

I think Gordon touched on that; he read a whole chapter on the curses today. I was listening to talk radio the other day—I do that when I'm out driving. I don't listen to it day after day. It drives you nuts, doesn't it? The talk show host was interviewing a political analyst and this analyst said something that I thought was kind of shocking and speaks a little to what Gordon talked about. He said we are in extremely *perilous times*. Maybe that man has read 2 Timothy 3, where it says that, *in the last days there will be perilous times* and we are certainly there. It's almost like humanities are in a vortex—a spiraling decline. We have a saying, circling the drain, and you can't help but think that way as we go forward.

In spite of all that, there is a kind of mental peace that can be had. Let's turn over to John 14. I think there is something interesting in what Jesus wanted to leave with His disciples. There is a record of that in John 14:22.

**John 14:22** *Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?” (NLT)*

You have to think about the setting here. The disciples are pretty uptight—they are anxious here. Christ was about to be crucified. They were not content or at ease. They were having a problem; things were going to be changing for them. Their world was

taking a drastic change and they weren't really ready for it. They needed to know, "What are we going to do when you are gone?" How did He address the disciples with that question?

23) *Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.*

24) *Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me. (NLT)*

He always pointed to the Father—always.

25) *I am telling you these things now while I am still with you.*

26) *But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he [it] will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

27) *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. (NLT)*

We can ask ourselves another question. "Do we have the peace of Jesus Christ in our lives?" Do we have that peace knowing that, as our elder brother and Redeemer, He also said *He would never leave us or forsake us*. Or are there other things that get in the way. I think we would all agree that there are things that distract us in our lives. He went on to describe the peace that He gave as a gift that the world cannot give. The world's basic definition of peace is *the absence of war*. A more carnal version of that would be having everything that we want, but that's not the kind of peace He's talking about. You won't find Jesus' peace anywhere in the world. No matter where we look, we just won't find that. When you think about it, what he's talking about is that His peace is foundational—to be content, being truly content. At peace with the way God is working with and in our lives. I hope I am getting across that I am speaking in terms of spiritual components here. Let's turn to Matthew 22. When you think about Jesus' life, you think about the things He went through; that the Father put Him through for a purpose. He talks about peace and true contentment and the purpose of life is not just to satisfy our personal needs, wants, and desires. It just isn't. When we accept that, when we have God's Holy Spirit and we can step away from the physical, we can see that.

Matthew 22:34-40. The context here is Jesus just had a confrontation with the Sadducees who don't believe in the resurrection.

**Matthew 22:34** *But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again.*

35) *One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question:*

36) *"Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?" (NLT)*

He's talking about the Torah.

37) *Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. (NLT)*

He quoted that directly from Deuteronomy 6:5. The whole chapter is about the greatest commandment. The greatest commandment we know is not about us. It's a focus towards our Maker, towards our Creator. It's not focused on our own needs, wants, and desires.

38) *This is the first and greatest commandment.*

39) *A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

40) *The entire law [the Torah] and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (NLT)*

The second commandment is a focus towards other people and the first commandment is a focus towards God and they are both outward focuses. They are not inward, it's not incoming, it's outgoing.

Humanly we try to find contentment in the things we possess. Like I tried to bring out in the first sermon, we think more and more stuff will make us happy and satisfied. Solomon tried all of that and we try it too, I think it's human nature. It's not in the experiences we have either. Like Solomon, he tried to experience everything. It's loving God with all of our heart and mind and loving our neighbors as ourselves. When you think about that, it's a pretty simple formula. Another example might be in Matthew 5; let's turn there and see a few things. Matthew 5:13-16. Something Jesus told us and all of His disciples.

**Matthew 5:13** *“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.*

14) *“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.*

15) *No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. (NLT)*

You can't hide who you are. People try to hide the fact that they are Christians.

15 continued) *... Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.*

16) *In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (NLT)*

What's the purpose of those good works? It's true that when we do good works, we have a good feeling and we should feel good if we help someone. There's nothing wrong with that. But on the other hand, the real purpose is that last statement.

*To praise and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

That's why we do that. Life isn't about satisfying everything we want. The focus and the spotlight shouldn't be on us. Number one, it should be on God. The point I'm trying to make is, *contentment comes from living our lives where the true purpose is based on the will of God*—that's what it should be. It's an inside out process, not an outside in, which we normally think—it's spiritual and through God's Holy Spirit. Let's go to Luke 10. I know we've read this many, many times. We've heard it preached many times. You know there is a powerful lesson here about what Jesus meant about the second commandment—your neighbor. This is a real-life story or a story of a real-life incident.

**Luke 10:29** *The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (NLT)*

This is the context of a lawyer testing Jesus.

*30) Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.*

*31) "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. (NLT)*

The context is, there is a Levite and Priest. Both Jews, both in high Jewish society and they look down and see this lowly person—a fellow Jew—laying on the road, beaten and robbed and probably unconscious at this point, and these illustrious leaders just pass him by. I don't want anything to do with that.

*32) A Temple assistant [Levite] walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. (NLT)*

Get as far away from him as they could.

*33) "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. (NLT)*

Somebody saw another human being hurt and needing help. We have to remember, to these Jews this Samaritan was the lowest in their society. They were despised by the Jews. The Jews ranked them lower than dogs. That's the way they felt about them. They never socialized with them or anything. It was a segregated society. The Samaritans were at the very bottom of that society.

*34) Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. (NLT)*

So, he took his own oil, his own time and took care of him.



35) *The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'*

36) *"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. (NLT)*

We might phrase that a different way. We might say, which of these three men demonstrated the second great commandment of "loving your neighbor"? Obviously, it was the Samaritan. The lesson here is—have an outward focus towards other people. Once again, Jesus turned the table on this expert lawyer and laid his own trap with only one right answer.

37) *The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy. Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." (NLT)*

I know it's easy to say, *"Have a contented and satisfied mind and be at peace in this life"*. But we do have needs and wants. We have desires and all of that and like I mentioned earlier in the first sermon, none of those things are wrong, God just might not provide those things at this point in our lives. As I tried to point out in that first sermon, it is the concept of *being okay with the way God is working in your life for your ultimate benefit*. Because it ultimately is all for our benefit, no matter what the case. If you can't do that, if we can't be at peace and at ease and content with the way God is working in our lives, the alternative to that is being resentful of what God is doing in our lives. That's borne out by the fact that sometimes people get angry with God. They get angry with God because things don't work out the way they think they should. Quite often that leads to a bitter resignation of the thought that God just hates me and is punishing me for something.

I'd like to take a look at a couple of examples of men who didn't go that route. They found peace with the way God was working with them. They were satisfied with it; they were okay with it. The first example is Deuteronomy 31. You start out with a question, was Moses content and finding peace with the way God was working with him? What was he about to do according to God's plan?

**Deuteronomy 31:14** *Then the Lord said to Moses, "The time has come for you to die. (NLT)*

Imagine what that would do to your state of mind. You might conclude that Moses was 120 years old and he was ready to die anyway so he'll just accept his fate—a resigned way of looking at it. But is that true? There's something deeper here that we see as we go on. The account of what God is going to have Moses do is pretty awesome when you think about it. Pretty significant in a lot of ways. You have to think about if Moses was really at peace at this moment in his life. Maybe he wasn't 100% at peace. You have to ask, if you were in this situation, would you be at peace and content with what God was doing in your life?

*14 continued) ... Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tabernacle, so that I may commission him there.” (NLT)*

God tells Moses you're not only going to die; I'm going to appoint your replacement while you're still alive. I retired from a corporation and you see them do that all the time. They bring in somebody and put them working with you and you think you're training them to help them do your job and all of a sudden, you're the one let go and they replace you. The kind of situation Moses was in.

*14 continued) ... So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tabernacle.*

*15) And the Lord appeared to them in a pillar of cloud that stood at the entrance to the sacred tent.*

*16) The Lord said to Moses, “You are about to die and join your ancestors. After you are gone, these people will begin to worship foreign gods, the gods of the land where they are going. They will abandon me and break my covenant that I have made with them.*

*17) Then my anger will blaze forth against them. I will abandon them, hiding my face from them, and they will be devoured. Terrible trouble will come down on them, and on that day, they will say, ‘These disasters have come down on us because God is no longer among us!’ (NLT)*

You think about our present society, we're not there yet. Maybe it hasn't gotten bad enough. Deuteronomy 32, I'm not going to read that, Gordon mentioned that, where Moses writes a song. He writes it to glorify and honor God even though God just told him he was going to die. You don't do that if you are angry, bitter, and resentful towards God. Let's go down to Deuteronomy 32:48.

**Deuteronomy 32:48** *That same day the Lord said to Moses,*

*49) “Go to Moab, to the mountains east of the river, and climb Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. Look out across the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the people of Israel as their own special possession. (NLT)*

That's where Moses wanted to be. God told him, you go up there, you get to take a look, but that's all you get. You have to think about that, if you aren't at peace with this, it's really tough to do. After all the things Moses had done, that's where he wanted to go and he expected to go. God told him no, you're not going there, you're going to die.

*50) Then you will die there on the mountain. You will join your ancestors, just as Aaron, your brother, died on Mount Hor and joined his ancestors.*

*51) For both of you betrayed me with the Israelites at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You failed to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel there.*

*52) So you will see the land from a distance, but you may not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.” (NLT)*

If you don't have peace and contentment, what might you think at this point? I read somewhere not long ago that people need a minimum of a handful of things just to live. I never thought of this before, but it's true. They need food and water. They need air to breathe. And they need someone to blame. So, Moses may have thought—he had an arguable point—he could have told God:

*“The reason I struck the rock was because the people were annoying, you know how they are. You know what I was dealing with. They're going to be like that in the future, they're not going to change. They are stiff necked Israelites and I'm the one who has to die?”*

He might have been thinking that, but Moses wasn't like that. He didn't do that; he didn't go there. He had to deal with these two or three times with the rebellion and everything that happened to him with the Israelites. Maybe he found some peace with what was going to happen to him. Maybe he had come to the place where this is what God has given me and I'm okay with it. Maybe he came to that point.

You have to have some sort of acceptance, some sort of peace and a lot of character at this point to accept all of this. Moses doesn't say bad things about his people either. In fact, a reference in chapter 33, he actually blesses the tribes of Israel. Let's go to chapter 34.

**Deuteronomy 34:1** *Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab and climbed Pisgah Peak, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him the whole land, from Gilead as far as Dan;*

*2) all the land of Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; all the land of Judah, extending to the Mediterranean Sea;*

*3) the Negev; the Jordan Valley with Jericho—the city of palms—as far as Zoar*

*4) Then the Lord said to Moses, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants. I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land.’”*

*5) So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, just as the Lord had said.*

*6) The Lord buried him in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place.*

*7) Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever. (NLT)*

It amazes me what verse 7 doesn't say. In other words, he is a perfectly healthy man. He could have lived another 20, 30, maybe 50 years more. Biologically speaking he could have fathered another whole generation. It wasn't his health that stopped him from going into the land, it was the way God was working with him and he accepted it. He was at peace with it. You can look at people today, who are suffering severe trials, people who have severe health trials, terminal illnesses, people who have lost children and God lets that happen. We have to ask ourselves at times, are we content with the way God is working in our lives because God allows things to happen in our lives. Are

we at peace with it? Are we at peace with the way God is working with us, no matter the circumstances.

When you look at that whole story, in trying to make the point about what I'm talking about, only a contented man, at peace with God, would do that. Willingly climb a mountain and die without reaching his heart's desire.

Another example, over in Philippians 1. Another man, Paul—I know I spent quite a bit of time on Paul in the last sermon about contentment. When you think about Paul's life, here is a man who was at peace and content with the way God worked with him. There are similarities there from what happened to Moses and seeing the same things here. Paul was a Pharisee. He was a Pharisee among Pharisees. He was very prestigious in that sect and had all of that taken away. He suffered severe persecution, death threats, imprisonment—I made a whole list of all the things, 2 pages, of what God put Paul through. He suffered hurt and pain for preaching the gospel. In all of that, you see the absence of resentment and bitterness towards God—it's never there. It speaks to the fact that he found a measure of peace with the way God was working with him.

**Philippians 1:3** *Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. (NLT)*

He had a special place in his heart for this church.

*4) Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy ... (NLT)*

You think about that and remember the great commandment to love others as yourself, Paul had it in his outward focus. He's thinking about the brethren and not about himself, even in spite of all the suffering that he went through. All the hurt and pain, the bruises, the cuts, the aches—he's thinking about the brethren.

*5) for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.*

*6) And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

*7) So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. (NLT)*

Even in prison—prisons weren't pleasant then—he's still thinking of them above all else. He has his mind on others.

*8) God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.*

*9) I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.*

*10) For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.*

11) *May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God. (NLT)*

Paul is in jail and he's thinking about other people.

12) *And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.*

13) *For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. (NLT)*

He's in jail and still focused on glorifying God.

14) *And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message<sup>[7]</sup> without fear.*

15) *It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives.*

16) *They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News.*

17) *Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me.*

18) *But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. (NLT)*

None of that mattered to Paul. Didn't matter how they misrepresented the gospel or how they mistreated and slandered him. You have to see that at this point in Paul's life, he is at peace with what happened to him. He doesn't dwell on it. It's just that the gospel itself is being preached.

19) *For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance.*

20) *For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.*

21) *For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.*

22) *But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better.*

23) *I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me.*

24) *But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.*

25) *Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. (NLT)*

Let's go down to verse 27,

*27) Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.*

*28) Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. (NLT)*

In the New Testament, some folks think that God is not involved, He's not there—*Theos* is repeated 1343 times in the New Testament. The Father is everywhere.

*29) For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.*

*30) We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it. (NLT)*

Do you know what that is saying? It never let up for Paul. Let's go to Chapter 2.

**Philippians 2:1** *Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?*

*2) Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*

*3) Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

*4) Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (NLT)*

The second commandment. Paul is humble, he's telling us to be humble. A couple of verses in chapter 4.

**Philippians 4:6** *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. (NLT)*

We might be thankful to God for the way He's working in our lives.

*7) Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (NLT)*

Paul was nearing the end of his life, he was in prison, he had been in prison, shipwrecked, beaten, and persecuted, yet he appears to be fully at peace with the way God is working in his life. He didn't die a natural death, we know that. When you think

about it, you think the way God was working with Paul was brutally tragic in a way. But you don't see that here. In reality we should be encouraged by the record we have of Paul's life. Let's turn to 2 Timothy 4, the last scripture. It's the end of the story for Paul. He's accepting that, he's content with it, he's satisfied with it.

**2 Timothy 4:6** *As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near.* (NLT)

Very similar to Moses.

*7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.*

*8) And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.* (NLT)

Once again, as we pause from time to time, like I said at the beginning, to reevaluate our lives, we have to ask ourselves, are we content? Are we at peace with the way God is working with me—with us—in our lives? Just as importantly, have we on a personal level, made peace with that. Can we see like Solomon? Thinking of physical things, looking at Solomon, all of those things we put so much value on, we put so much effort and emotion into and try to find happiness in those things, it's really not anything. It's vanity and worth nothing in the end.

What these scriptures teach us is, real contentment—and peace in that contentment—really begins with those two commandments.

*To love the Father with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself.*

It's all in there. Until we have that outward focus, we won't truly find that contentment and real peace with ourselves and with God—we just won't. No need to turn back unless you would like to, but I'm going to go back to John 14:27 just to remember Jesus' words and in a way it's a conclusion.

**John 14:27** *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (NKJV)