

Finding Contentment in a COVID-19 World

How has your contentment meter been reading in the last few months? I'm a really easy-going guy and I pride myself (with humility, of course) on the incredible depth of my contentment. And I was content with my contentment—and then COVID-19 came along.

- Pushing the cart down aisle 7 to pick up some paper products (i.e., toilet paper) and ... HOLY COW, SO MANY EMPTY SHELVES! THE ENTIRE SCOUT TROOP 464 COULD BUNK ON ALL THESE EMPTY SHELVES.
- Heading to the meat section and ... WILL YOU LOOK AT THESE PRICES?! AM I BUYING BEEF OR A LEXUS?
- Homeless guys were telling me I need a haircut, but I had to wait until the barbers were allowed to reopen their doors. And just this morning my wife handed me a pair of paper scissors—no joke—and asked me to cut her hair. That's desperate.



And on it goes. You have faced similar frustrations in trying to go about a normal life. And with every roadblock, our contentment meter is tempted to fluctuate.

I am reminded of what the apostle Paul said about his own contentment. History does not record a first-century shortage of tersorium (what the Romans used instead of Charmin), but Paul still knew what a shortage felt like.

"I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot" (Phil. 4:11-12).

Paul's "secret" was his walk with Christ.

*"In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. **I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me**" (vv. 12-13).*

That's the reminder I need. My contentment is not to rest on outward things. My life is pretty shallow if my contentment rises or falls based on whether my favorite restaurant has reopened its doors. But I don't gain Paul's

level of contentment simply by "psyching myself up" and repeating Philippians 4:13 (like many athletes do). I gain that level of contentment when I reflect on *why* I can be content in Christ.

The apostle Peter helps me here:

"Therefore, with your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:13).

With my mind ready for action. I need to remember that when I step into the day, I am going to face delays, frustrations, and hassles that want to pull me down. Be prepared.

Be sober-minded. I need to be alert and think clearly of how I am going to respond when those frustrations arrive.

Set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Ahh, this is the heart of it. Life is not idyllic, but I've got Christ in my life—and that's far better than a life without Christ. But it gets better. Life is not idyllic, but it will be. The presence of Christ in my life now gives me assurance and an unmovable hope of an eternal life with Him. That will be a life of unending joy and peace, a home with Christ where frustration and discontentment are non-existent. I need to keep my eye on the prize.



While this passage gives me great hope, I'm embarrassed to admit how quickly I let circumstances affect me. Peter was writing to 1st-century Christians who were facing real suffering. They were not being inconvenienced because they couldn't shop for clothes; they were facing real persecution.

We would all do well to learn to abide in the hope and contentment found in Christ. Let's make such contentment second-nature for ourselves. If we learn to live contentedly in Christ when we're facing mere inconveniences and restrictions, we'll be better prepared to live with that same contentment when real hardship and persecution come.