

Paul's Letter to the Philippians:
An Epistle of Joy, #14

A Contented Sufficiency and a Godly Generosity

(Phil. 4:10-23)

--CEFC 11/10/19

Cf. NEFC 11/16/86

Thank you notes can be difficult to write.

I'm sure most of you have experienced the awkwardness
of having to send a note to your Uncle Harry
thanking him for the purple polka-dotted tie that he gave you for Christmas;
or a note to your Aunt Sally thanking her for the birthday gift
of a pink porcelain elephant—
a gaudy thing with the words "Percy's Pachyderm Palace"
written across the back end.

It's the thought that counts, I suppose. /

The Apostle Paul had a thank you note to write,
and, by tone of it, it seems that he found it an awkward task, too.

The Philippian church had sent him a monetary gift during his imprisonment,
and he wanted to thank them for their thoughtfulness and care.
Many see this as the primary reason for his letter to them.

Even in the opening verses of the first chapter one can see hints of this—
Paul prays with joy because of their partnership with him in the gospel (v.5);

he thanks his God for their every remembrance of him,
 as some would translate v.3,
 referring obliquely to their contribution to his cause.

But only now, in v.10 of the last chapter does Paul get down to the point—
 only here does he thank them. . . .
sort of.

V. 10 can sound like a rebuke—

**"I rejoice greatly in the Lord
 that at last you have renewed your concern for me."**
 "It's about time!" he seems to be saying.

Though in the next sentence, Paul is careful to clarify

that that's not what he meant.

The closest he gets to actually saying "thank you" is in v. 14,
 when he says, "**it was good of you to share in my troubles.**"
 Rather subtle, I would say.

This has to rank as one of the most awkward thank you notes

you would ever want to see.

What is the source of Paul's hesitancy?

I think it's the sensitivity of the subject, for it deals with money.

Paul seems to have been meticulously scrupulous about his financial affairs.

He had a firm policy not to get support
 from any the new churches he was planting.

He worked with his own hands, he tells us in Acts (20:34), as a tent maker,
 so as to supply his own needs and those of his companions.

He gives two reasons for this practice—

First, he just didn't want to be a burden on anyone.

As much as possible, he wanted to carry his own load.

But second, he was determined that

that his ministry and his message

would not be discredited or misunderstood (2 Cor. 6:3).

He wanted to make it clear that his were not mercenary motives—

he was not in it for the money.

You see, Paul was at pains to distance himself from the Sophists—

that class of professional itinerant teachers in the Greek world

who went from city to city giving instruction

in the general art of getting ahead in life.

For truth is, they themselves got ahead in life

by the fees they would receive from their audiences.

Paul wasn't like that.

He charged no fee for his teaching; it was free—

as was the salvation that he preached. And

Paul made this clear by his firm policy of not accepting money for himself

from any his converts.

Now, he could solicit money, but not for himself.

At a number of points in his letters we read of a collection he was making

for the poor Christians in Jerusalem.

But even with this money, he was exceedingly careful

lest there be even a hint of scandal.

At one point, he tells the Corinthians that to assist in gathering this collection,
he was sending a brother who is praised by all the churches
for his service to the gospel,
"What is more," he says, "he was chosen by the churches to accompany us
as we carry the offering . . .
We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.
For we are taking pains to do what is right,
not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men" (2 Cor. 18-21).

We would do well to emulate Paul's sensitivity to propriety in financial matters.
And I can assure you that our church's practices in handling money
reflect Paul's concerns.

But so many television and radio preachers seem to be forever harping
on the need for more cash,
that in the minds of many,
preaching and fund-raising have become almost synonymous

You may have heard the story of the airliner that developed problems
and appeared to be going down.
One of the panicked passengers looked around and saw a man in a clerical-collar,
and said, "Quick, do something religious!"
So the pastor took out a plate and began to take up an offering!

How can we combat this impression that preachers and churches

are just in business for the money?

One option, I suppose, is just to avoid speaking about money altogether.

We could just drop it.

We could treat it like we do the subject of sex,
something out of place in polite conversation.

But I am afraid that, like sex, money is too important a subject,

with too great an impact on our lives, to neglect.

First, we can't get away from it.

Money seems to permeate the world we live in

Second, money is so easily misused for selfish purposes.

And finally, it can be so very destructive in our lives.

But in spite of all this, money is not to be despised,

for ultimately, it can be a wonderful gift of God

when received with thanksgiving and when used in accord with his will.

Money has a important role in our lives,

but it must be kept in its proper place.

Through their messenger Epaphroditus,

the Philippians have sent Paul a monetary gift,

and in thanking them, the Apostle walks a delicate tightrope.

He has to navigate the nature of his relationship

with these fellow believers.

He loves these people—we've seen that in this letter.

They bring him great joy—

"God can testify how I long for all of you

with the affection of Christ Jesus,"

he writes in the opening chapter (1:8).

And the last thing he wants is for them to see this as some **business relationship**
with them as the **benefactors** and him as their **client**.
Nor does he want there to be some **obligation** established by their gift,
that he somehow had to **reciprocate**.

He walks on eggshells as he writes to them.

He struggles through this **thank you note**,
trying not to give **offense**, or **misunderstanding**,
while expressing his **heartfelt gratitude**—
and he does this by stressing two points:

First, in vv.11-13, he affirms **his own contentment**.

and then in vv.14-19, he commends **their generosity**.

He may not have **needed** their money,

but still, they have done a good thing in sending it.

And on both sides of this transaction, we see the work of Christ--

For through our relationship with Jesus Christ

we have the key to dealing with money rightly--

For in Christ--in knowing and loving him,

we have both a **sure ground for contentment**

and a constant motivation for **generosity**.

And in our money-driven culture,

both of these are rare and precious qualities.

I. First, let's look at Paul's contentment in vv.11-13.

He is glad that an opportunity had arisen for the Philippians' care for him to be renewed
like a dormant plant in spring that blossomed back to life.

but in v. 11 he says,

"I am not saying this because I am in need,
for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."

As we saw last week,

in v. 8 Paul extols a number of Greek virtues—

truth, nobility, purity, excellence,

and in v. 11 he holds up one more—

the Stoic virtue of "contentment" (*aujtaɔ̄rkhß*)—

often translated as "self-sufficiency" or "personal independence."

In fact, the New English Bible translates v. 11-

"I have learned to find resources in myself whatever my circumstances."

The Stoics highly valued the harmony of the inner man,

undisturbed by the vicissitudes of human emotion,

unchanged by the ebb and flow, the ups and downs,

of the material situation in which a person may find himself.

They cherished the fundamental notion that to be happy

a person must be independent of the forces of life that are outside his control.

Seneca, a contemporary of Paul, and the leading Stoic of the day, said,

"The happy man is content with his present lot,

no matter what it is,

and is always reconciled to his circumstances" (*de Vita Beata*, 6.2).

So when a person appears calm and collected
when everyone and everything around him is chaotic,
we say he a real Stoic.

Nationals star Anthony Rendon comes to mind—they say he has ice in his veins;
and a heartbeat that is barely perceptible.

The Stoic ideal.

It is in many ways an American ideal, too.
It conjures up the image of the pioneer frontiersman—
totally self-sufficient; self-reliant;
the man who is his own master.
He sings, “I am a rock; I am an island.”

He is independent,
he is free,
he must be happy.

Nothing or no one can disturb his inner serenity.

Paul's words do have a close affinity with this Stoic virtue—
outward circumstances just don't matter to him.

He can be on skid row or Park Avenue, it's all the same to him.

But before we equate the two,
we must take note of one fundamental difference--look at v.13--
“I can do everything—” he says.

And in the context here, Paul is not talking about some superhuman superpower
that can make him stronger than a locomotive

and faster than a speeding bullet.

No, he's talking specifically about

enduring all things,

being content in every circumstance--

I can do all this, not in myself,

not in my own resources,

but "through him who strengthens me."

Just as we saw last week—

where Paul did not find his peace simply within himself,

so with his contentment.

His contented inner state

came only as he looked outside himself to his Lord Jesus Christ.

What the Stoic seeks to obtain by isolation,

Paul attains by incorporation;

The essential feature of the Stoic virtue is profound independence;

For Paul, his contentment comes

through an entire reliance on and intimate union with Jesus Christ.

It is Christ who strengthens him.

It is Christ who is the source of Paul's contentment in all circumstances.

12 "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,

whether well fed or hungry,

whether living in plenty or in want.

I can do *all this* through him who gives me strength."

"For to me to live is Christ,

and to die is gain," he said earlier in the letter;

"I count all things as rubbish

that I may gain Christ and be found in him," he said in chap. 3.

"I want to know Christ—

yes, to know the power of his resurrection

and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

Paul's greatest desire is to know Christ and to be like him.

That's why he can suffer want,

or perhaps we should better translate that, suffer humiliation,

which is what the word means,

because isn't that what his Master did for him?

Paul doesn't have a self-sufficient contentment,

but a Christ-sufficient contentment.

This is the secret that Paul learned—

quite simply, that secret is the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in his life.

Contentment is hard to come by these days.

We have that longing for more and more things,
a longing that burns like a simmering fire deep in our souls,
a fire that the advertising industry fans for all its worth.

We buy what we cannot afford,
and the credit companies are all too obliging to make that possible.

And we buy what we do not need,
hoping that what we buy will somehow make us content,
and perhaps it does . . . for a moment,
but whenever our contentment is based on our material goods,
or even on our external circumstances, it can't last.

The world changes and our desires always seem to exceed what we attain.

We become like that rancher who is sure he would be happy
if he just had the land that borders his fences.

We so easily deceive ourselves.

It's like the story about the English Lord Congleton
who once overheard a servant say,
"Oh, if I only had five pounds, I'd be content."

Immediately he stepped over and gave her a five-pound note.

She thanked him profusely.

But as she left him, she said under her breath,
thinking her benefactor wouldn't hear her,
"Why didn't I say ten!"

Are you like that?

How much is enough for you?

How much would bring you contentment?

Or perhaps we should ask, how little would take it away?

All I can say is, Be warned.

Listen to Paul's words to Timothy:

"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap
and into many foolish and harmful desires
that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith

and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim. 6:9,10)—
the many griefs that flow from the love of money.

Does your life, does your happiness,

depend on the abundance of your possessions?

If it does, then you haven't learned Paul's secret—

which simply means that you haven't known Christ as he has.

Four hundred years ago, the Puritan, Jeremiah Burroughs in his book

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment,

defined contentment this way:

"Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit,

which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal

in every condition."

Paul speaks of it as a "secret"—

using a word used for the initiation process of the Greek mystery religions.

This expression suggests, as one commentator put it,

“that Christian contentment remains unintelligible to those [on the] outside
and can only be ‘learned’ from the God of peace (4:7,9).

Contentment is indeed a quiet secret known and cherished only by the few.”¹

Contentment is something we must learn—

if it came naturally, everyone would have it.

But I think we would agree that contentment is a “rare jewel.”

It must come through our enrollment in God’s school for disciples of Jesus.

We must learn “to submit to and delight in God’s wise and fatherly disposal
in every condition.”

Burroughs writes this:

“Many men think that when they are troubled and have not got contentment
it is because they have but a little in the world,
and that if they had more, then they should be content.

‘That is just as if a man were hungry,
and to satisfy his craving stomach he should . . . hold open his mouth
to take in the wind,
and then should think that the reason why he is not satisfied
is because he has not got enough of the wind;
no, the reason is because the [wind cannot satisfy] a craving stomach.

Yet there really is the same madness in the world:

the wind which a man takes in by [opening his mouth]
will as soon satisfy a craving stomach ready to starve,
as all the comforts in the world can satisfy [our hungry] souls.”²

¹ Bockmuehl.

² Burroughs, Jeremiah. *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (p. 48).

All the money in the world won't do it—that's just more wind.

Only God himself can bring real contentment.

That's simply the way he has made us.

We want to find contentment our own way.

But that can't happen.

God has created us such that our true contentment

can only come through a relationship with him.

We must learn that precious secret.

We must continue to remind ourselves that God is wiser than we are—

he knows what is good for us better than we do.

He is a Father who can be trusted,

even when we can't understand why he brings

certain trials and hardships into our lives.

We must remind ourselves that he sees the big picture,

we see only a small snapshot.

He sees the future, we see only the present.

He can turn what is evil in itself,

into a means for good.

We must remind ourselves that he often delights in turning tragedy into blessing

in ways that we could never anticipate.

Isn't that the great lesson of the gospel?—

that Jesus' cross leads to a glorious crown.

We must learn this—

sometimes by looking back and reflecting on

the ways God has been faithful to us in the past.

It is this faith in “God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition”
that can take the sting out of our adversity.³

And yes, we will have adversity—

and here is a great mystery.

We can feel the pains of sickness and diligently work to get well,
yet still be content in our affliction.

We can experience the hardships of financial need,

and work hard to improve our condition,

yet still be content in our poverty.

But that is something we must learn.

For as God’s children we can be certain that none of our pain or suffering
is meaningless.

We can be sure that in God’s wise providence
he can use all things for our ultimate good.

We must learn, in Burrough’s words,

to “Make a good interpretation of God’s ways towards [us].”⁴

Think about it—

if someone always thinks badly of you,

and thinks the worst of your intentions,

and interprets your words in the worst possible way,

wouldn’t that irritate you?

Should we do that with God?

In his providential ordering of the events of our lives—

³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴ Ibid., p. 133.

shouldn't we learn to think well of what he is doing
and not complain about it
and accuse him of malice toward us?

Do you recall those words Paul wrote in Rom. 8—

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all,
how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (v.32).
"All Things," it says!

Do you really believe that?

Do you really believe that at the end of the day,
nothing that could possibly have contributed to your eternal happiness
will have been withheld from you? Nothing!

But sadly, we too often insist on grabbing for all the things we want;
rather than receiving all the things God wants for us.

We dread the thought of life without our little comforts,
we think we couldn't cope.

Paul knew better--he'd been there—
in jail, through shipwreck, through floggings, hunger, and thirst—
he'd been there, and he had found Christ there, too—
always giving him the strength to cope, to endure,
to be content in every circumstance.

What the hymn writer says is true--

"Those who trust him wholly,
Find Him wholly true."

Our God is adequate, he is sufficient—
and in this knowledge comes our true liberty,
our true happiness,
our true contentment.

Draw near to Christ;
learn of his sufficiency;
as you learn to maintain a proper detachment from the world.

As Corrie ten Boom, who suffered greatly under the Nazis in WWII, said,
"I hold the things God gives very loosely in my hand,
so that it won't hurt if he ever wants to take them away."

And he may take those things away from you,
just to teach you that your happiness, your contentment,
can't be found in those things.

"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,
whether well fed or hungry,
whether living in plenty or in want." /

We had a wedding here yesterday,
and I had a great view of Daniel and Britany
as they stood right here full of joy in their love for one another.

And then they promised that that love would endure
for richer and for poorer,

and in sickness and in health—
whether well fed or hungry,
whether living in plenty or in want.

It would be their love for one another
that would see them through those times—
enabling them to weather the storms of life
and to stay on track in the good times, too.

A loving marriage relationship can provide joy in any and every situation.
And that is a pointer to the even deeper and more lasting relationship
that we can have with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
through the binding work of the Holy Spirit.

That relationship can sustain us, and in fact, bring us joy
for richer and for poorer,
and in sickness and in health—
and in death that relationship can fulfill our joy forever.

Those who have known God can say with the prophet Habakkuk:

“Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Savior” (3:17,18).

That is the rare jewel of Christian contentment.

Christian contentment—that's the first key to dealing with money rightly.

and Paul now moves to a second.

Paul didn't need the Philippians' gift;

still, it was good of them to give it,

for it clearly demonstrated the generosity of their hearts,

and in vv.14-19 Paul commends these believers for that generous spirit.

Certainly, this was not the first time

the Philippians had come to Paul's assistance—

v.15—"Moreover, as you Philippians know,

in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel,

when I set out from Macedonia,

not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving,

except you only;

for even when I was in Thessalonica,

you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."

Generosity was a pattern with them;

it was a habit,

generosity was a way of life.

Two things Paul wants to communicate to them about that generosity,

that should encourage us to follow their example.

First, their generosity to Paul was, in fact, an offering to God.

In v.18, he calls their gift “**a fragrant offering,
an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”**

This is Old Testament language,
used of the animal sacrifices and burnt offerings
performed in the temple as a part of the ritual worship of God.

Why is Paul using that language
to describe a gift of money to aid his ministry?

Well, already in the Old Testament,
the prophets made it clear that animal sacrifices and burnt offerings
were of no value in and of themselves.

They were to be an expression of the heart.

So Samuel could say to Saul,
“**Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?**
To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams” (1 Sam.15:22).

The Lord desires the sacrifices of the heart,
and so after the death of Christ,
when animal sacrifices were no longer needed to atone for sin,
the notion that stood behind the sacrificial system

was taken up and applied to the entire life of the believer.

So we read in Hebrews 13:

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—
the fruit of lips that confess his name.

And do not forget to do good and to share with others,
for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (vv.15-16).

Let's not get confused.

When we speak of the offering that we take during our worship service,
don't think of it like an Old Testament sacrifice
as if it somehow atones for your sin.

It is a sacrifice to God

because it is a token of that greater sacrifice of our very lives to God—
in which we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God
in response to his mercy toward us in the giving of his Son
to be the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins.

Our giving is a sacrifice to God because it comes from grateful hearts,
as we give to others in response to God's goodness to us.

It is not a matter of compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.

When given out of gratitude,
our gifts become a "a fragrant offering,
an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

We should be encouraged to grow in generosity,
first, because our generosity toward others
is, in fact, an offering to God.

And that leads to a second encouragement,
as Paul continues in v. 17—"Not that I am looking for a gift,
but I am looking for what may be credited to your account."

The Philippians' generosity to Paul will receive its reward from God.

Paul is using commercial language to express the profit
that they would receive by their giving.
Their gift will be accruing compound interest in their heavenly account.

Paul was confident that they would come to experience the truth of Jesus' words
that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul is suggesting that the temporal joy we experience in giving
may have an eternal dimension, too,
as we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

And this generous spirit comes with a promise—
v. 19—"And my God will meet all your needs
according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

This is Paul's confident prayer.
He cannot repay them, but he knows that his God will,

for in giving to him, they were actually giving to God.

And Paul knows that God is generous to those who are generous.

What did Jesus say?

Luke 6:38—"Give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over,
will be poured into your lap.
For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

You can never out-give God—

His generosity is in accordance with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

And the needs that he will meet certainly go far beyond mere material requirements.

Those are never our deepest needs anyway.

As Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians,

Our God "has blessed us in the heavenly realms
with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (1:3).

And Paul wants these brothers and sister to lay hold of those blessings—

The Lord will meet their needs to grow in God's grace
and to experience his joy,
and to live in his love.

"my God will meet all your needs
according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Paul may not be in a position to reciprocate such a monetary gift,
as friendship would demand,
but his God can and he will.

"Remember this:" Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly,
and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give,
not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times,
having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

Paul has shown his appreciation to his Philippian brothers and sisters.

They have done a good thing.

Their gift was generous—

it was well-pleasing to God, and it would receive its reward.

But one gets the distinct impression from this thank you note,
that the Apostle Paul didn't get too excited about money.

It seems that Paul had learned that

Money will buy:

A bed but not sleep;

Books but not brains;

Food but not an appetite;

A house but not a home;

Medicine but not health;

Outer luxuries but not inner comfort;

Amusement but not happiness;

A crucifix but not a Savior.

No, the Philippians' gift couldn't buy Paul a Savior.

For a Savior is a gift from God,
and it is that gift that I want you to consider as we close.

In this letter to the Philippians,
we have heard Paul speak of contentment,
of peace,
and, especially, of joy—
and all of these he would trace to this one gift—the gift of Jesus Christ.
This one gift makes all the difference—
"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

I ask you, is this a gift that you have received?
Do you appreciate the value of it?
Do you cherish it?
And have you said "thank you" for it? –
not with a note on a piece of paper,
but have you said "thank you" by offering him your heart
and your very life?

We are going to take our offering now—
before we do, let's pray.

Prayer—

"Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit,

which freely submits to and delights in
God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."

It is, indeed, a rare jewel.

Lord, may we trust your wise and fatherly ordering of the events and circumstances of our lives, and so find contentment.

You are good—and your purposes for us are good—
may we have thankful hearts that cherish your love above all else.

May we say with the psalmist--

Psa. 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

Give us contented hearts,
that may free us to give generously
and so receive a rich blessing
flowing from the glorious riches of our Lord Jesus.

We come now to our morning Offering—

We don't often say much about our weekly offering—
It's just a regular part of our worship—

as it is a time when we give from what God has given us
for the furtherance of his work in the world
through this church.

May we give generously this morning from grateful and contented hearts—

and may our gifts be a **fragrant offering,**
an acceptable sacrifice,
pleasing to God.

In the words of King David—

“Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;
you are exalted as head over all.

Wealth and honor come from you;
you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.

Now, our God, we give you thanks,
and praise your glorious name. (1 Chron 29:11-13)

Our ushers will now come for our offering.

Closing Song-- Shine on Us

Benediction: The words with which Paul closes his letter to the Philippians--
"To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever,
and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you spirit. Amen"

Paul's Letter to the Philippians:

An Epistle of Joy, #14

Nov. 10, 2019

A Contented Sufficiency and a Godly Generosity

(Phil. 4:10-23)

In his “thank you” to the Philippians, Paul writes affectionately, appreciating their generosity, while affirming his own contentment. We can learn from the Apostle here in considering these twin themes, as he is our teacher and he is our example.

I. Seek to Learn the Secret of Contentment (vv. 11-13)

“The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment”

II. Be Encouraged to Grow in Generosity (vv. 14-19)

A. Our generosity toward others

is an offering to God.

B. Our generosity toward others

will receive its reward from God.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Sermon Response

A Contented Sufficiency and a Godly Generosity

(Phil. 4:10-23)

- Why is talk about money such a sensitive topic?
- Why is contentment such a “rare jewel”? What keeps us from being content? How can we be content apart from our circumstances? Why is it something that must be learned?
- Reflect on Jeremiah Burrough’s definition: “Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.” What sticks out to you as you think of this?
- What about what Paul writes in this passage encourages you to be generous?
- How should you think of our weekly offering in our time of corporate worship?
- **Take time to pray in your group—**

Take a moment to reflect in prayer on contentment in Christ. Pray that the Lord would help us learn to experience this “rare jewel.”