



"Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation."
—D. Elton Trueblood

20-Aug-21

Faith and Contentment (Part Two)

In Part One, we began to consider an aspect of God's purpose by using a metaphor of a tree in a forest. We saw that [faith](#) is the trunk of our figurative tree, and one of its attributes is that it works to calm or tranquilize us, overcoming our anxieties and agitation through the realization of God's power and trustworthiness. We can then be content in any situation ([Philippians 4:11](#)). We can imagine contentment to be a branch coming off the trunk of faith.

Continuing with the metaphor, just as a tree receives nourishment from the sap that courses through its every part, the Holy Spirit fills the role of nourishing us spiritually. It enables us to function, grow, and produce fruit to please [God](#) in every aspect of our Christian lives ([John 15:8](#)).

In a tree, sap is equivalent to blood in a human being. It is full of nutrients and minerals, which it carries up the trunk to the branches when the new buds form in the spring. In like manner, the Holy Spirit provides spiritual life, understanding, and strength as it prepares and enables us to do godly works.

Two different substances are frequently lumped together when speaking about sap: *xylem* and *phloem*. Xylem transports water, minerals, and hormones from the tree's trunk to the outermost twigs in a long string formation. Again, the Holy Spirit nourishes, strengthens, and similarly empowers us. In a tree, the xylem channels die off each year, and new ones take their places. The rings we see in a cross-section of the trunk are the old xylem channels, one ring accounting for each year of the tree's life. Christians also have growth rings of a sort. We develop a new ring, as it were, as we grow and overcome through our Christian experiences. Our character becomes more like God's, and the positive changes become permanent.

The other sap substance, phloem, is the sticky, sugary material made up of the sugars created by photosynthesis. Phloem is then fed back into the branches and leaves as much-needed food during the tree's growth period. We can think of phloem as other substantive gifts of God that boost our growth. He gives us His Word, the example of His Son, the great cloud of witnesses who have lived by faith, the faithful ministry, brethren, healing, miracles, and so many other gifts that increase our confidence and motivation to be like Him and with Him for eternity in His Kingdom. All of those helps ultimately come from Him as well.

Trees also produce fruit. In [Galatians 5:22-23](#), the apostle Paul lists the [fruit of the Spirit](#), among which are [love](#), [joy](#), and [peace](#). The fruit of God's Spirit are character traits and attitudes that we express to others. So, because we have faith in God (the trunk), we can be content (a branch), and because we are satisfied with God's provision (the sap), we appreciate God for who He is and what He has given to us. In this condition, we live at peace with our neighbors and focus on the goal God has set before us. As the apostle James teaches in [James 3:18](#), we can begin to produce the fruits of righteousness.

The first fruit Paul lists in [Galatians 5:22](#) is *love*. Writing in "[How Does the Spirit Produce Love?](#)" John Piper states, "God . . . has the power to create love in our hearts any way [H]e pleases." He then refers to [Galatians 5:6](#): "For in Christ [Jesus](#) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." His conclusion from these statements is, "This means at least that love comes from faith. Faith 'works through love.'"

Faith, the trunk of our metaphorical tree, produces godliness through the outworking of love.

Paul's list next names *joy*. Notice [Psalm 13:5](#) (emphasis ours), "But I *have trusted* in Your mercy; my heart *shall rejoice* in Your salvation." David puts trust and rejoicing in a cause-and-effect relationship. That is, faith in God leads to joy. Faith stands under or behind this attitude and expression of gladness and delight in God, as it did with love.

The third fruit Paul lists is *peace*. The Greek word underlying "peace" is *eirene* (*Strong's* #1515). Like contentment, peace contains a central sense of tranquility. It can describe the state of calm between nations or a similar harmonious state of relations between people. According to the *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, it also suggests, "security, safety, prosperity, felicity (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)."

Christians can have peace because they are assured of salvation through faith in Christ, which allows them to be content with their present situations. So, because we have the faith that God is in charge, has chosen us for His plan, and carefully provides whatever we need, we can be satisfied with our lot in life and even share our satisfaction with others.

It may sometimes be challenging to maintain a feeling of contentment. We may become increasingly unsettled when it seems our prayers go unanswered and our trials seem to drag on. But, as one Jennifer Booth is quoted as saying, "Contentment is an attitude that says, I will be satisfied with what God has given me."

In a world that has gone crazy, when we have our faith firmly affixed to our immovable Father, the Source of everything good, we have the strength to endure such difficult times. He is that Absolute Certainty we so desperately need. If we have staunch faith in Him, we can be content even in the most chaotic and troubling circumstances.

In another context, life coach and motivational speaker Tony Gaskins offers this counsel: "Contentment is especially helpful in situations in which there is no way to improve things." When we lack control of matters swirling around us, we need not be anxious because God is in control.

As Gaskins adds, "It is also helpful when one is focused on positive things that can come from the difficult times." God always makes lemonade from lemons, so we can be content that "this too shall pass" and a good result will come upon its conclusion. Thus, Paul can write in [Romans 8:28](#), "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

People learn in different ways. Some learn by instruction, some by example, and some by experience. As the Author of the Bible, creation, and the sanctification process, God uses all these means to reinforce the lesson that real contentment only comes through trusting in Him.

- John Reiss

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From the Archives: Featured Article

[Living by Faith and Humility](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

People resist God because of their pride, but pride can be neutralized by humility, a character trait that allows a person to submit to God and have a relationship with Him. John Ritenbaugh provides many examples to reveal that God wants us to evaluate ourselves and recognize our dependence on Him, which draws God's attention and favor.

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