

27<sup>th</sup> July 2024

## Contentment

**"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."**

Bible, *Philippians 4:11*

I envy St Paul's statement, because, like many of you I'm sure, I'm also seeking the same contentment. There was a lot going on at Philippi, and Paul was encouraging people to be steadfast and remain united. Clearly, some folk *were*'t content. Their steadfastness was wavering, with some breaking ranks and encouraging others to do likewise. "Hang in there", says Paul. "Don't lose faith." And he offers them an insight from his own experience:

*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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.*

In a modern context he might have said: "You may think the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, my friends. But there's plenty good grass still available on this side." William Wordsworth put it beautifully in his 1802 poem, *Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room*.

*Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;  
And hermits are contented with their cells;  
And students with their pensive citadels;  
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,  
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,  
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:  
In truth the prison, into which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,  
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.*

If nuns, hermits, students, maids, weavers, bees, even the writer in the rigidity of a sonnet, can find contentment, the confinement you might call a prison will *never* confine you. You *will* find solace and contentment.

Goodness! If St Paul *and* William Wordsworth believe that finding such contentment is a real possibility, there's hope for me yet ...

**A prayer for today**

*Contentment? I thank God that it's always a possibility. Amen*