

Philippians 4:10-23

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Date: 25 May 2025

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[0 : 00] Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet! Especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

! So why am I preaching about contentment? Because Seth divvied out the verses and he thought, who's the most content person I know? Is that why it's that? No? No, that wasn't why. This is something the Lord is dealing with me about. And I have a want that gets stuck open sometimes. The throttle just gets. I just want, want, want, want. And I have a hard time trusting that the Lord is going to give me everything I need. If you ask me, I'd know better in my head. But just my reflex is to want and to look into, into grasp, like, just feel like, I use the analogy of a flying spaghetti monster, which is this thing the new atheists made up about. It's their mockery, but it's us. Like, there's this thing.

It just wants and it reaches for everything. Just wants to grab onto anything to fill, to fill the voids, to make ourselves feel satisfied and content. And it doesn't work.

No, because there's only one, one place that that can be found. And Paul gives us, gives us a little bit of that secret. So the vision of God as provider in union with Christ, that vision that gives Paul an unshakable confidence and contentedness in any and every circumstance. So verse 10, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length, you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

So Paul just rejoices so much throughout this whole letter to the Philippians. He loves these guys. Whether he was in prison and needed their support or encouragement, doesn't say where he was, but it's clear he was in chains. And Paul, you don't find any smack of self-pity or discontentedness in any of this letter. It's just an overflowing affection. It's a love letter to this church that are like his children. He loves them like family.

[2 : 33] Yeah, when Paul is engulfed in need, he rejoices that his children are on his side. And just thinking about, parents can probably relate, when you see your kids doing something and they don't need to be doing it, like they're doing it on their own. Like just what a joy that gives to your heart when they're obeying from the heart. And especially if they don't know that you're watching, that you're observing. Like there's a sweetness to that, that is unique.

Reminded me of 3 John 1, where Paul is talking about, or no, this is John, sorry. John was rejoicing. He said, For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to the truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. And Paul has received some gifts from Epaphroditus. And he's getting a good report about the Philippian church. He's getting support from them again and again and again. Sounds like this is maybe the third time that he's received support from them. And Paul rejoices that his Philippian children have a disposition towards him to be helpful to him and to be about the work of the gospel. As often as occasion rises. And now that he's in prison, it's arisen once more. And lo and behold, Epaphroditus is sent to Paul by the Philippians. And there were certain comforts that you could afford if you had provisions in a Roman jail. Not like a television, but I don't know what they had. But Paul rejoices over their generosity because it is good for them to be generous. So he doesn't only like to receive the gifts, but he loves to see his children in the faith being generous, having that sweet, generous disposition. So that when a need arises, they jump to it. When they see him hurting, hurting, they feel the hurt, and they go to fill that need. So it makes me think about something that is very common in a lot of the church culture, especially up north where I'm from, the Scandinavians. They don't like to receive help. They don't like to let people in to be helped. And they think it's a mercy to not let people be burdened by their troubles.

[5 : 17] And I want to say it is no mercy to a Philippian kind of people who love to help. It's no mercy to that kind of a person to deny them the opportunity. And if you want to pretend to be self-sufficient, if you tell yourself that you don't want to be a burden to anybody, you're not sparing anybody the trouble. You're not sparing the Philippian-type person the trouble, but you're robbing the body of opportunities for their own glory.

And we'll see this clearly in verse 17, when we get there, where Paul used the language, speaking of their gift to him in terms of the fruit that increases to their credit. Let's think back to Philippians chapter 1, verse 7. He's talking to the Philippians here. He says, It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart.

For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. But they're partakers with him of grace, both in his imprisonment and into the defense and confirmation of the gospel. So there's something about them sending him help and being with him in the fight that makes them partakers with him of that same grace. And they get part of the credit, the fruit that accrues to their credit. All the fruit that Paul's seeing in his ministry, that we're enjoying in our letter to the Philippians. Like, it's part of that fruit.

We'll see it again, his letter to the, his ministry to the Corinthians. These Philippians, it says in chapter 1, verse 7, that they were partakers with him of the grace, both in his imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

All right, let's go to verse 11. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. All right.

[7 : 30] So compare that with 2 Corinthians 9, 8, the idea of contentment, that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good word. And then 1 Timothy 6, 6, we'll get to here in a little bit. But there's this idea of contentment. Socrates, when he was asked who was the wealthiest, he replied, he that is content with least, for contentment is nature's wealth. And there is this idea in the Greek mind, especially the Stoics, that laid a huge emphasis on contentment as a virtue.

And it is a virtue, but there's different ways you can get at it. And the Greeks tended to do it by the strength of their own will, especially the Stoics. They would try to, they perfected contentness to discipline. And I don't know that it ever produced the fruit that God was after. It did it the way that they did it. Because they would go about it through the power of the flesh. But there's a reason that Paul is not talking about being in need. It's not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I've learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Paul doesn't speak about his own need, because he knows who his provider is. Paul doesn't speak of his need. He doesn't go on and on making his own needs known to them, because he knows that he's going to be provided for. He doesn't know how he's going to be provided for, know from where it'll come, but he simply knows that his needs will be provided for, because he knows who. And Paul's who has a perfect track record with providing for him.

And Paul has seen this Philippian church come through before, as they are coming through now, for him this time as well. Look at 1 Timothy 6, verses 6-10. I'm going to read a little passage here.

And this is another passage about contentment. It says, But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[10 : 18] It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. When Paul was in Corinth, He had needs, but he felt in the spirit not to allow Corinthians to fulfill his needs.

It's something about the relational dynamic there, and the way that they attach themselves to different teachers and pay other teachers to give them the new hot teaching of the day.

Paul just knew that he couldn't enter into that fray. And so he did everything in Corinth for free.

But it wasn't for free because he had provisional needs. But it was this Philippian church that provided for his needs, tying them again. And now he's in the lead again, and they're coming back through for him. And it's really sweet. And he really appreciates it. He's excited for them that they're so helpful.

In 2 Corinthians 11:9, he says, Okay, we're back to So back to that Socrates quote. I think G.K. Chesterton said it in a little more of a biting, wittier way, as was his custom. He said, There are two ways to get enough. One is to continue to accumulate more and more. And the other is to desire less.

[12:37] So I think Paul, that's kind of simplistic. I think Paul had a third way to realize that in Christ Jesus, all things are yours, that God is the provider, and that everything that is needful for you is in Christ. It's in him.

That's more than a natural way of desiring less. It doesn't quite encompass it. More than the Stoics exercise of will worship. But desiring only what God has for you, knowing that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights, who never changes.

He says, There's a stanza in William Cooper poem. He goes, Trials must and will befall, but with humble faith to see love inscribed upon them all, this is happiness to me.

So receiving everything as from the Lord, even trials, but seeing love inscribed upon them all, with the eyes of faith, seeing that God is working all things together for good, for those who love him and who are called according to his purpose, that nothing can touch your life that he hasn't allowed, and that he's not causing to work good in you and to bring you into conformance with Jesus, with the likeness of Christ. Trials must and will befall, but with humble eyes to see love inscribed upon them all, this is happiness to me. This is contentment. So you take, once you get trials down, once you learn how to handle those with eyes of faith and thankfulness in a content way, that's more than half the battle. There is another half the battle about abounding. We'll get to that, too.

But this is what Jeremiah Burroughs called subtraction. So he wrote a book, he's an old Puritan writer. His most famous work is called *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. And he had this concept of subtraction, where you desire less, where you delete your wants, just things that you know, all right, that's not coming from me, that's not from the Lord's hand, that doesn't have love inscribed upon it, that's not a necessary need. I'm gonna subtract that. Subtraction. I'm gonna cut it off. I'm gonna cut off my designer, my need, my felt appetite for that thing. So until we get to the point that we can echo Paul, that if we have food and clothing, we will be content. We still have work to do in this contentment arena. I'm not there yet. Nancy Wilson, Doug Wilson's wife, wrote an extended meditation on Burroughs,

[15:26] *Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Remember what's it called? *Learning Contentment*. And it doesn't use any puritanical language, unless she's quoting him. It's really sweet. We'll listen to some excerpts from it. Kira's listening to it these last few weeks. But in it, she remarked that even Eve in God's perfect garden, married to an unfallen husbandman, was enticed with discontentment. She listened to the enemy. She took the enemy's framing and gave ear to the accuser and was allowed to, allowed herself to have discontentment stoked in her heart in the garden. When God used to walk with her in the cool of the day, it's unthinkable. And it's very thinkable, if you know yourself at all.

And she also made a point about every sin she thought could maybe be traced back to an element of discontentment in the Lord. And of course, if you were perfectly content in the Lord, what handle would the enemy have on you to prod it and to pull? Like, obviously, you know, like, that's, we'll get there when we're full, when we know that we're fully known, even as we are, when we know as we are fully known. We'll get there. But we can make progress in it here on this side by the power of the Spirit. Yeah, how many lives has the enemy baked into the cultures, everything that we see, everything we encounter, every piece of media that we encounter, every social interaction in the world?

How much has he baked into our culture that tells us that we have, we have more need than we have provision? Or just that, that subtly sows the sea of disintention. It tells us, not really that well provided before. The Lord could be doing better, really, you know?

And it's a lie about our provider. And how much of the flappings of our own flesh are due to our giving ear to these subtle lies? And how much of the faith has, I'm asking the Lord to put his finger on some of those in my heart.

And I encourage you guys to think, okay. So we live in 2025. I mean, this part of the way, we've got historically, we're the richest. I mean, we could go to certain neighborhoods and wouldn't feel like we wouldn't stack up very well, you know, socio-economically. But, I mean, you could go anywhere in the world and see that you're doing really well. The Lord's a really faithful provider. And we're very rich. And then you think about across history. And it's unthinkable, the riches that we enjoy and

that we take for granted, and that we still allow that thing in our heart to latch on to discontent and to suckle it and to nourish it and cherish it and grow it. And man, it's just the enemies, it's the enemies work. And it's the flesh, the flesh loves to be at work with the enemy on them. But God loves to destroy that in his children and get glory from a contented people that look like they are really satisfied in him. Because they are really satisfied in him.

[19 : 01] What does Pipers say at the end of every sermon or at the beginning? Because God is most glorified in us, but we are most satisfied in him. It's their announcer on all the Piper sermons. But it's true.

Like, God gets more glory or looks more glorious to an onlooking world. And we are satisfied in our provider. Makes him look like a really good provider. And he is a really good provider, in fact.

And woe to us if we want to lie about that to the world, to ourselves, to our family, to whoever. All right. So, Paul knew how to be brought low, and he knew how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, he learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. Is God putting his finger on anything?

In your heart? He's been doing it for me these last couple of weeks a lot. And still got the wanter. But he's shutting it up. And he's going to help me to mature.

[20 : 06] Okay. Here's a little quote from the New Covenant commentary on Philippians. It says, This word secret in the Greek, it's a technical term for the initiation into sacred mystery religions.

So, there's all sorts of cults here in ancient Greece and the Greco-Roman world at the time that people just clamored for. And the secret religion. Oh, we have to figure out.

Think of Luke Skywalker wanting to get the secret that this dark side has, you know, and like, could it even raise the dead? You know, it's just this, this thought, you know, that they could tap into some mystery, some, some secret, some hidden knowledge. And this is the only time that this word, memmiami, is used in the New Testament. And I think Paul is directly, explicitly poking fun at these mystery religions. And their fascination with hidden things, hidden secrets. So, there were the, I'll just list four of them. There were Eleusinian mysteries, that was a cult. The Dionysian mystery cult. The Orphic, named after Orpheus. And the cult of Isis out of Egypt. So, those were, those were all mystery religions. They were kind of dying out at this time. We're still around. And Paul's using this, this word secret. And he's using it in kind of the same construction to, to teach his own people the actual secret, which is an open secret. It's no mystery. And it's very simple. It doesn't, let's see.

Oh, some of these, um, divine or mystery religions kind of live on in secret societies of our own day, like the Shriners and the Freemasons. Like there, there's a, there's a big element of that that's still at work, um, down to this very day. But, um, instead of God hiding the kernel of wisdom behind some elaborate and secretive drug-addled process of cultic initiation, Paul, rather, boldly lays the secret bare in broad daylight. It is just this. I can do all things in Christ, in Christ. Union with Christ. Fellowship with the very Godhead, and the indwelling spirit of the living God in you. Um, that's a pretty big secret. Like, that's, that's a pretty big mystery. Like, you could plumb that mystery for the rest of your life. I encourage you to do it. And you won't reach the bottom. It's, it's limitless. It's unfathomable. Although he tells it to us plainly. I can do all things in Christ. I can do all things through him who strengthens me, um, verse 13. So that's the one that we write on our basketball shoes. I had to throw that in there. Every sermon I hear about this, they talk about the basketball shoes. Um, but there's, there's more to it than that. Um, that I, I think there's, there is a way that we can give God glory and do all things in a Christ-like way in any arena.

So I think there's something to the, doing it on the basketball court and on the football field. You know, that's where we tend to think of it. Um, but that's not really what's at, under the purview of Paul. He was talking about being brought low, you know, how to bomb, was talking about learning how to suffer, suffer well, facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

[23 : 52] Um, and it's in that context that says, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. And I was looking for, um, all the in Christ, in Christ verses in this passage. And in the first verse, I rejoiced in the Lord. Okay. And then verse 13, I can do all things through him. Actually, in Greek, you can translate that Greek word, and as through, but most normally it's translated as in.

So I can do all things in Christ. Um, it's a perfectly, it's the more, more natural, um, reading of it, but it's not the way that we see it most frequently in our English translations. And then in verse 19, we'll see it again. Um, my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Um, 2 Corinthians 12, 9 to 10 says, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I'm strong. Um, because I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Um, Colossians 1 11 says it a little differently. It says, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Okay. This, this should make a big difference, um, in our, in our lives. Verse 14 says, yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And sharing in this context has a connotation of being connected or participating with, as in having fellowship with the word has the word, um, coinonia. I should've written it down.

[26 : 14] The word for fellowship in Greek is a coinonia. Is that it? Um, so it's sin coin no, yeah, or something like that. Um, but that's the sharing in his troubles. So like there's a, there's an element of having fellowship, sharing with, um, having sympathy. Um, Lightfoot in his commentary said it was not the actual pecuniary relief, not the money so much, as the sympathy and companionship in his sorrow that this apostle wanted.

And he rejoiced, he rejoiced in it. And he said, it's kind of you to share my troubles. And it was kind of you. It was thoughtful. It was really sweet. Um, Hebrews 10 33 is a nice parallel passage here. It says, whether it was Paul or not, I think it was, but it doesn't need to be Paul. Still the Bible. Um, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. So think about partnering. Sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. So it's just, there's a different way of looking at joining with people and partnering with people, um, partnering the gospel.

And these Philippians did a really good job of that. And, uh, let's go to verse 15. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

[27 : 55] And, uh, if you recall from the first chapter of Philippians, uh, verse five, he said, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ.

Um, it is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace, in my imprisonment and the, in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

And Paul's just beaming with the light, a healthy godly pride in his people. They're with him. They're in it with him in his defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Even when he's in shame, it's like, they're there. And we're like family. They send, they treat his own pain. They take his concern into their own concern.

Um, love is taking the good of another into your, as your own good. And they did that. They loved him. Even in Thessalonica, verse 16, you sent me help for my needs once and again.

[29 : 03] So even previously, when he was in Thessalonica, they sent him needs not once, but again. And there's maybe again and again. So these Philippians were notorious for their generosity and partnership in the gospel alongside Paul.

He really needed them and he genuinely appreciated their contributions, which enabled him to be all the more effective and publish the gospel that much further and faster. And then we'll look at this passage from 2 Corinthians 11, 9, where he's going to talk about the, the Corinthian situation and the Philippians, um, Philippians share in it.

Said to the Corinthians, and when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone. So we read this verse before, but the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia.

And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do.

What am I doing? And what I am doing, I will continue to do in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission, they work on the same terms as we do.

[30 : 20] So these other, um, super apostles, it just took the rug right out from under them. And Paul said, I'm not doing this for money. You can't even pay me.

I'm not going to take any pain. I'm actually robbing other churches to serve you. And like these super apostles, how could they compete with that? What these Corinthians, you know, it was a money game.

It was oratory. They were getting paid for it. You know, it was like, they were higher ones. And when Paul entered that into the equation, it really undercut the standing that those super apostles had. And they, I guess, dried up pretty quick when the money got cut off. Because Paul showed himself the true apostle, doing it out of love and as a father to them, not as, well, not as an employee of them.

And then, yeah, just what a difference that is from the Philippian heart. So the Corinthian heart, like they're not bought in with Paul.

[31 : 26] Like he was having to, it's, it's a very different way of relating to the teaching, into the gospel, to his message.

It's very different. And Corinthians had a lot of problems. And that was, that was normal. But there's something sweet about the way the Philippians related to Paul in that.

All right. And then verse 17, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. Yeah. Paul was just as excited about the Philippians having a share in his ministry, in the fruit, the spiritual eternal fruit of the ministry, that we're enjoying doing a study in Philippians, and I'm preaching through it.

He's, he's, he's stoked at that gift. And he's stoked, it seems even more that he's seeking the fruit that increases to their credit. Says I have, in verse 18, he says, I have received full payment and more.

I am well supplied. Having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus.

[32 : 49] So, I mean, he's just hitting it over and over again. God is your provider. This is the song we sing, Jehovah Jireh, my provider. My God will supply every need of yours, according to his riches and glory, in Christ Jesus.

I wish that would fit in the meat of the song, in Christ Jesus. I don't know. Because that's, that's really the heart of, of it all. God will supply every need of yours, according to his riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus.

I read one, they said, it didn't say out of his riches, it said according to his riches, like in like measure, with the riches of God, how rich God is. That's how he supplies the needs of his kids.

And we have all of eternity to enjoy and bask and glory in those riches. And God will supply every need of yours, according to his riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. All right. And then he greets the saints. I'm closing up here. But I wanted to just encourage us all to think about discontent in our heart and to really feel the, the betrayal of that against our provider.

[34 : 19] And just how, what it's saying about the kind of God that we serve, when we live in discontent, when we give ear and nurture and suckle, that kind of a spirit, that kind of a accusatory tone, or just that, that slips into the pity part of you.

And that thinks, all right, I'm deserved, I'm owed more than this. I'm owed better than this. God's not really providing. My God will supply every need of yours, according to his rituals, in glory, in Christ Jesus.

And it's promised. He does it. And he's faithful.