

Contentment

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[0 : 00] Okay, Philippians 4, 10-13, and this is the word of the Lord. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me.

Indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. This is probably one of those verses, Philippians 4, 13, that's extremely abused.

And I say that without any hesitation. It is probably the number one sports verse, right? Locker rooms, banners, and everything, as kids go out to the field to go do this physical feat.

[1 : 12] Somebody will say to them or quote to them as they feel maybe like they're going to lose the game or they don't have the skill to do this thing. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me as though what God was writing about is that you can have the physical ability to do something.

Well, that's an abuse of this verse, and I'm not going to sugarcoat it at all, because we lose the hope, we lose the greatness and the joy and the glory of who God is and what He has for us when we misuse His Word, when we use it in a way that it was not intended to be used.

And so I want us then to kind of dive into this whole thing because we, Paul is basically saying that there is a way to live with contentment.

There's a way to live with contentment in every circumstance because of what there is available to us as we live in these circumstances.

In other words, God brings to us three things that help us to live in any and every circumstance. Those three things are joy, contentment, and power.

[2 : 27] Joy, contentment, and power. So that's what we want to look at. So let's begin then with the joy out of verse 10. What seems to be, now this is just based out of verse 10, what seems to be the cause of Paul's joy right here in verse 10?

They cared for him. They cared for him, exactly. They have revived their concern. They've revived your concern for me.

They had a desire to serve him, but no opportunity. The opportunity then is the means.

It's called money. That's the whole issue here. Money and supplies. Okay? We'll get into that here in just a second. They wanted to partner together with Paul for the spread of the gospel, but they didn't have the means to do so.

But now, not only do they have the means, now they have the concern again, and that's what he's rejoicing about. But here's the interesting thing about this word rejoice. I don't know how you would write this in English, okay?

[3 : 51] Because you lose it in English. But do you know the difference between active and passive voice? Here's the primary difference.

If I say that I rejoice and it's passive, it means that somebody has caused me, somebody's caused my rejoicing.

Listen, God rejoiced Paul. So Paul is basically saying, I was rejoiced. I was brought to joy.

I think that's a very important phrase. I was brought to joy. I was rejoiced. What he's saying is that by the power of God, in his life and in his heart, he was made to rejoice, even though, let's go back and remember, where's Paul as he's writing this letter?

Can you remember? He's in prison. So does he know for sure whether or not he's being released? No. If he doesn't get released, what's a strong possibility of what's going to happen to him?

[5 : 01] Do you remember? He'll be executed. Executed. So here's Paul in prison, under affliction, with execution hanging over his head, and God is rejoicing him.

God's causing him to rejoice, and he's rejoicing the fact that they have revived his concern for him. You were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.

Now, does he want the stuff that they're bringing? Is that what he's rejoicing over? No. No.

Because, verse 11, we'll find out that he says, not that I need this, but it's because God's at work in the Philippians.

He sees that God's at work in them. So, one of the things that this brings up about joy, as we deal with our circumstances, is we have to remember that joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

Right? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. We cannot have joy without the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

[6 : 08] No non-Christian is ever going to be able to have this joy in them that is promised to us and given to us. As a Christian, if we're not living in light of the Word of God, we also will not have joy.

Because here's the way I think this works. This is, we call this the Bible, right? Every word of it was inspired by whom?

God. God. Directly, which person of the Godhead? The Holy Spirit. So, as the Holy Spirit inspired men, moved men, 2 Peter, they wrote.

Right? So, the Holy Spirit, this, a lot of people want to say that the Holy Spirit works in us in some sort of mystical way.

That it's something that, that apart from, apart from, or maybe connected to reading this, but a time frame where we're, we're sort of silent or whatever, that, that just mystically, magically, the Holy Spirit does things in us.

[7 : 19] And that's not true. The truth is, is the Holy Spirit uses His very thoughts to work in us.

So, what I'm saying is this. That, the Word of God is, is the Holy Spirit's way of thinking.

So, when we're obedient to the Word of God, when we do what it says, then we see the fruit of the Holy Spirit working in us. So, joy comes because we're in the Word, and the Holy Spirit uses His Word in us.

That's what I'm trying to say. If we were to think of, say, like, a different fruit of the Spirit, let's talk about peace for just a second. One of the fruits of the Spirit is peace.

Now, your circumstances are crazy, they're terrible, is the Holy Spirit just going to mystically, magically give you peace, just all of a sudden? No.

[8 : 25] Remember last week, we talked about peace comes because we've prayed, and we have a purity in mind, right? That is, we're obedient to the Word, and then therefore, this comes.

So, joy, in our circumstances, isn't going to happen just magically, mystically, just because it's going to come because we're in obedience to the Word.

And I'm saying that on purpose because I really think so often we we abuse the Holy Spirit, and and we don't need to, you know? So, so there's the joy.

If we're going to have joy in our circumstances, it's going to come by the Spirit, and the Spirit's going to use the Word in us in order to bring that joy about. It is not joy about the circumstances, but it's joy in the circumstances.

Okay? The second thing is contentment. Contentment. Verse 11 and 12. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

[9 : 34] I know how to get along with humble means, and I know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

What's keeping Paul from speaking from want? What's keeping Paul from speaking from want? The answer is in verse 11. To be content.

To be content. Contentment? Yeah. That's right. Contentment keeps him from speaking from want.

Okay? Now, he's going to describe circumstances. He's going to use six different words to describe different circumstances.

What are these six words that he describes circumstances with? Humble. Humble. Prosperity. Prosperity.

Abundance. Abundance. Suffering. Suffering. Filled and hungry.

[10:43] Filled and hungry. That's right. So, he's using the idea of food or money or resources as his sort of example and template because they just brought him stuff.

Right? Because he's rejoicing or rejoiced by God because they've done that but it's not that he needed that. So, let's think about the word contentment for just a second.

Okay? The word contentment. What do we normally think of when we think of the word contentment? What does the average person out there think contentment means? Happiness or satisfied.

Okay. Happiness or satisfied. Okay. That's good. Somebody else? Rich. Rich. Okay. Successful. Successful. So, really contentment for them is more about prosperity and success than it is contentment.

Here's what's interesting. This word for content to be content contentment. It comes from two Greek words that are slammed together. One means self the other means sufficient.

[11:48] One means self the other means sufficient. Here's the illustration. If you have a country that has a lot of natural resources and they don't import anything from somewhere else then they're self-sufficient.

They're content. So, what Paul is saying is that because he has God he does not need to have any external resources imported to him to be able to live with the situation that he is in.

He is content because he has all the resources he needs to be able to go through the circumstances and the situations. Dr. Steve Lawson says it this way.

There is nothing lacking from the ample supply provided by Christ living within him. Nothing lacking. Paul has everything that he needs in the fullness of his Savior and Lord.

No matter what the situation is, Paul has learned to be content. He is independent of anything external. No outside aid is necessary for his Christian life.

[13:00] This is a remarkable statement of the all-sufficiency found in Jesus Christ. This is the secret of contentment. Now don't get him wrong.

He's not saying that he doesn't need the church or he doesn't need other Christians. What he's saying is that Jesus and all that Jesus brings to us, other Christians, the church, pastors, the word, all of that, he has everything in Christ that he needs.

This contentment is while Paul is in prison possibly facing execution and you'll remember the prison does not provide his food.

The prison does not provide his clothing. He's dependent upon family, relatives, friends, to bring stuff to him. That's how he's communicating with the Philippians.

They've sent someone to him while in prison to provide for him and he's writing a letter back to them giving thanks for this. But in the process, he's helping them understand, listen, this is how things are going.

[14:10] He says, I am not content because of what I have. I'm not content because of what I don't have. No matter how little or how much he is content and his contentment is unaffected by his circumstances.

his contentment is unaffected by his circumstances. I mean, I'd love for us to be perfect in this.

To be at the place where our circumstances do not impact how we trust in the Lord and lean upon him, how we feel.

I think one of the ways that Paul has this contentment, besides what he says here, if you look at all that Paul says in the scriptures, Paul is sort of a background thought, sort of a background thought, a foundational thought that Paul has as he's approaching this, is as he looks at the circumstances, he realizes and knows that God is in charge of all the circumstances of our lives.

God is in charge of all the circumstances of our lives. It's what Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11 is talking about, that God is the one who works all things after the counsel of his will.

[15:37] This is who God is, right? It's who God is. He works all things after the counsel of his will. He doesn't work good things after the counsel of his will. He doesn't work bad things after the counsel of his will he works all things after the counsel of Israel.

He is the God according to Psalm 135 that whatever the Lord pleases he does in heaven and in earth and in the seas and all their deeps. And Isaiah tells us that he is the one forming light and creating darkness causing well being and creating calamity. I am the Lord who does all these things. The point is this, there is not one random molecule in the cosmos.

There is not one random molecule in the cosmos. There is nothing left to chance. There is never a time that God is surprised by what is happening. There is never a time when God says, oops. Paul is, his contentment comes from the Lord himself. His resources. So, so when he says that he's content, Paul's not saying that he's got strength in himself to be able to do this. But he has the Lord. And so as he digs around in the natural resources of being in Christ, he knows he needs nothing outside of himself to come in.

[17:10] Knowing that God is in charge. And God is bringing this situation to Paul for Paul to pass through is then this groundwork of being able to have this contentment in the Lord.

How does that, how does that happen? How, how do we get to the place where that thought, okay, so we were rejoiced by God. He's the one that brings us the joy by the Holy Spirit through his word. We have this contentment built upon knowing who he is. But how do I, how do I do that? How do I get there? Right? And that's why he gets to verse 13. Right? Verse 13.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. This is, this is the secret, if you will. The secret of contentment is I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Here's some ways that this has been abused over the years. Let me just give you a couple, two, three. Some people will say that this means that God is responsible for our sin.

[18:18] Okay? What they'll say is that since God is in charge and God gives us the power to do then he must be making us to sin because now we have the ability to do whatever.

I mean that's a really bad way of looking at that but people have said that. All you gotta do is go to James chapter 1 verse 13 and 14. God does not tempt us with sin. Right? Some will say that this means that God will enable us to do supernatural physical feats.

Okay? So the best example from the Bible is when Jesus says to his disciples if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you'll say this mountain be removed and it will be removed here to the heart of the sea. How many of you have ever stood outside and looked at one of the mountains and go move!

Have you done that? Have you ever even thought about doing that? No. Why not? Don't you believe God's word? I've spoken to the wind.

Hurricane Harvey was coming. We were up in East Texas at Michelle's family's house because they have they have a homestead there and nothing will ever touch you there.

[19:36] I mean it's just like just rock solid kind of place and I'm watching on the map every little move of that thing praying you know that I don't want it to go over our house and it's like you know you sit there and you think to yourself you know God said Jesus says if you say this mountain be moved the heart of the sea if you have faith as small as a mustard seed so what does that mean?

Does it mean that we can actually go out to things like hurricanes and look at them and say be gone with you? It doesn't. And I would challenge you to read that verse in context Matthew chapter 17 verses 1 through 23 because it starts with the transfiguration and then it goes to the disciples in ability to cast out a demon and Jesus is using casting a mountain into the sea as an illustration of casting a demon out of a person.

Okay? So he doesn't strengthen us to just do any kind of supernatural act that we create in our own minds or we come up with. That is not what this is about.

Some will even say that this means that God will enable us to do whatever it is that I seek to do physically in my life. That goes back to the sports illustration. Right?

You know I can remember I can remember being in taekwondo and I can remember thinking to myself it's like this guy I'm going up against I'm fixing to fight this guy and like I don't know that I'm going to be him I'm not sure I've got the skill to do it and I remember our instructor Lord bless him he was a Christian man and he would say I can do all things to Christ who strengthens me and I'm going you mean I can beat his God Jesus is going to help me beat his rear end great but that is not what this means it's not what this means at all right?

[21:25] Some will say that since Christ is going to empower us to live with difficult circumstances then we don't need to pray we don't need to read his word because we'll just give his strength all we have to do is just say hey Jesus I need the strength that's all we have to do we don't have to do anything else all of those are an abuse of this passage so what does it mean?

alright let me give you a few things here okay number one it means that I am never alone in any circumstance in my life I am never alone no matter what the circumstance is that you've gone through no matter what difficulty you're facing no matter how enjoyable or how wretched it is you

are not alone number two it means I must be dependent upon God and I must yield to him in my circumstances I've got to submit I've got to depend I've got to yield whatever word you want to use I've got to just submit to him in the middle of my circumstances he's in charge of all things he has brought this circumstance about I will trust him in the middle of this right third it means that I must have a vibrant ongoing relationship with Jesus

Christ I must have a vibrant ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ I've got to know him I've got to love him I've got to get into his word and there's never a time in our lives when that's not what we're supposed to do right there's never a moment that we from now until the day he comes back or the day he takes his home we should be developing and growing in this vibrant ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ and fourth it means that I can go to him in every circumstance every circumstance that I cannot handle every circumstance that comes my way he will empower me to live in that circumstance with contentment I need to be content how do I be content he gives me the strength I go to him for strength

God will strengthen me to act in a way that he has called me to live in the face of the worst circumstance and I'll even say it this way no matter how bad the circumstances get God always expects us to not sin in those circumstances and part of that contentment keeps us from that sin now this all sounds great I mean when I say to you no matter how bad the circumstance is God Jesus Christ will give us the empowerment to live with contentment in that circumstance when I say that I am sure that every one of us could go back to little situations that we've had difficult situations maybe there's been one of the hardest moments of your life in your past maybe it's been recently maybe it's been many years ago and you look back at that and you can kind of feel this a little bit and kind of go like

I kind of remember their strength or maybe you think to yourself man I don't know how I made it through that let me let me just illustrate this if I can for you what kind of tree do you want to be do you want to be a tree that when it sees the hurricane coming it pulls up roots runs out the end of the pier starts waving its arms around at the hurricane and knocks it off course so that the storm leaves or do you want to be the kind of tree that stands there with the roots deeply grabbing onto the soil and when the storm passes by it's still standing I think sometimes when we think about wanting strength from the Lord we want it to be such that we can walk up to our circumstances and the storms of life and get rid of them and make them dissipate and make them disappear and make them not so difficult and make them not so wretched and make them not so dread filled but that is not the strength that he promises to give us he promises to give us a strength like a tree planted by the water that roots go deep and when the storm passes by the tree is still standing

[26 : 31] I think that's what he means in Ephesians finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might did you know this is such a what's the word I'm looking for oxymoron is that where you got two things that seem opposed right so here's the thing be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might this strength is his strength this strength belongs to him this is the strength that he has how can I be strong in his strength but yet I'm commanded I'm commanded to be strong in his strength but I can't force his strength I can't manipulate his strength I can't drag his strength or suck his strength out of him all I can do is I'm supposed to be strong in the

Lord and the strength of his might how do I do that it's just like I can do all things through Christ you strengthen to me how do I do that here's the way I think this works because I have this ongoing vibrant relationship with him when circumstances come and they get so difficult I lay down at night I'm passed out emotionally I'm spent spiritually I'm raw physically maybe I'm in pain you just create the situation just think about it and you think to yourself I don't even know how I got through the end of this day I don't even know how I got to this moment of laying down on my bed and you think to yourself as you go to sleep there's no way I can do it again tomorrow there's just absolutely no way that I can face it again tomorrow this was so gut wrenching this was so awful how can I get up tomorrow and even look at the day the alarm goes off and maybe even unconsciously there's this moment of saying I just can't do this but a foot falls over and drops to the floor and then another and then slowly you stand up and you get dressed and you read the word and maybe your mind just doesn't even understand hardly anything you're reading and it just goes in and out and maybe you're sitting there the whole time the situation you feel the emotions of it because it's so gut wrenching

Right? And you're just calling out Lord Lord I just need your strength I don't know what to do in this and how am I going to make it through this day and before you know it you're at the end of the day

and you lay back down in bed going like Lord where were you and I would say to you you're laying back down in bed again right?

And you said Lord please help me and you're still talking to him right? Contentment is and the power of the Lord is not that we knock the circumstances off but that at the end of the day we're still trusting in him and leaning on him even if we're crying out and through tears and if you're able to put one foot on the floor again in the morning and I mean that metaphorically because maybe you can't even move but just slowly will still let you if you're still Lord please and that's all you got then he is strengthening you to get through that contentment being okay with what he's bringing into your life my my my final thought here and then I'll let you guys discuss is that if we're going to follow the Lord and be content in our circumstances leaning upon his strength then we have to understand that we're not off the hook from seeking that strength just because we feel weak and you have to not believe the weakness that you feel you're going to feel weak he doesn't say I will make you feel strong through Christ who strengthens you but he will strengthen you and you will get through there is great contentment to be had but we just need to run to the Lord we need to run to the Lord