

The Secret Of Contentment

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again, wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in respect of one, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.

[1 : 06] Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.

Notwithstanding, you have well done that you did communicate with my affliction. But we have now reached the last major transition of Paul's letter to this church in Philippi.

And while the overarching purpose and theme of verses 2 through 9 in this chapter is seen to be Christian peace, the theme of this final section of Philippians is focused in on Christian benevolence.

And together, these two sections make up what is by far the most practical portion of the entire letter that Paul has written to this church. For instance, Paul didn't write theoretically about peace to the church.

Rather, in those verses that we've studied the last three Sundays, he wrote about the means by which they could actually obtain true and lasting peace. And so this theological thought of the peace that comes from God is actually delivered in this letter in a very practical way of not something that we can think on, but something we can actually pursue in our lives.

[2 : 28] And he lays out all the ways that God has made that possible. Well, these final two paragraphs of the letter are no less practical than that, even though they're set within the framework of personal correspondence as opposed to instruction.

In verses 15 through 20, where Lord willing, we'll come to next Sunday, we see that Paul deals with Christian benevolence from the perspective of the church's giving.

But in these verses that we just read, 10 through 14, we actually learn about contentment, specifically from the example that Paul gives of his own life.

And so contentment then becomes the primary focus of our study of this passage today.

Contentment is actually a somewhat foreign concept in the culture in which we live, isn't it?

The essence of it actually goes against everything that we're taught to pursue and to admire and what has become known as the great American dream, right?

[3 : 35] In a sense, contentment is not only disregarded in our culture, it's actually considered in many ways to be complacent or lazy or even to an extent cowardly by some people.

We're conditioned to always be in pursuit of the next big thing, the next big promotion or the next big house or the next big milestone or the next big toy and so on and so forth.

It's a constant desire that we achieve more and that we gain more and that we add to what we have been given. But whenever we reach that thing for which we so feverishly labor, we quickly and almost immediately turn our eyes to the next thing.

Without giving almost any time to actually enjoy the blessing of the Lord, we almost immediately turn our eyes to what we desire to achieve next or what we desire to receive next.

And so contentment then as a culture, as a nation especially, is something that is quite foreign to our understanding, at least in the way that we practically live our lives.

[4 : 46] Add to that the insatiable desire that many of us have for material gain and the endless search that we have for the next buzz of some sort, whether it be in gain or whether it just be in entertainment value or whatever it may be in our lives, the amount of time and money that we spend on things is actually sometimes outrageous.

Businesses even capitalize on this, right? They know that we're willing almost to pay anything to get the newest car or the most recent smartphone or the most luxurious vacation.

And our lives end up becoming a constant struggle to keep up with the Joneses, as they say. And I'm as guilty as anybody.

I told Julie this week as I was studying through this passage and then writing the sermon of how hypocritical I'm going to be as I preach it on Sunday. For the last two weeks, I've talked about nothing but how I wanted to save up to buy one of the new Broncos that are coming out next year. And Julie, wouldn't you just love for me to go and trade in your car, your Highlander, so that I can get a car for me that's newer and nicer and better than what you have, right? And it's a constant struggle for me, a constant desire for more, a constant clamoring for something more than what I already have rather than being content with what God has actually blessed us with.

[6 : 15] It's not that a desire for progress is bad. It's not that it's a bad thing to want something or it even pursue a particular aspiration or goal.

But for many people, the pursuit of more is a sinful, lust-filled obsession. MacArthur is helpful for us here.

He said in a practical way, adding to the discontent is the blurring of the distinction between needs and wants. In actual practice, virtually everything has become a, quote, need.

Thus, men need better jobs, fancier cars, and bigger homes. Young people need unending sexual encounters to liberate their repressed egos.

Children need the freedom to express themselves outside of the, quote, bondage of parental control. And then he says, people always chase the contentment that is tantalizingly just out of reach.

[7 : 17] And even the church has begun to build its ministry around people's, quote, felt needs. What it is that they desire. What it is that they just want to receive in and of themselves.

Even the church has begun to capitulate to this culture of discontentment. But discontentment is not just about material things. It's not just about money.

It's not just about cars. There's lots of ways that we express this discontent. It could be in relation to a job. Unhappy with the job that you have and just wishing that you could do what this person does. Just wishing that you could have this position at your company. Never satisfied with what you've already been given. And others are discontent with their relationship status.

Single people just want to be married. Married people just want to be single. And so on and so forth. Or those that are married are so displeased with what they're receiving from their spouse that they just desire to have someone else's spouse.

[8 : 19] And they look at other relationships and they see, if my wife could just be like that later. If my husband could just be like that guy. And instead of being content with the lot that God has given, they're constantly discontent.

And it leads to unrest in their lives. For some people, it's in regard to a discontent with church. Not because of a theological difference or a sinful practice that the church has.

But it's just their children's program isn't what I want it to be. Or their music isn't exactly what I like. Or this or that. And constantly struggling to find another place to belong. Constantly looking for that contentment, even in a church setting.

That is tantalizingly out of reach. No matter where they are, they continue to be discontent. Others we've seen are discontent with their gender.

What God has created them to be. Others discontent with their body image. And how God created them. And constantly looking for another way to change who it is that God has made them to be.

[9 : 22] Constantly looking for a way to be different than what they are. Others are discontent with their abilities and natural skills. Some discontent with the amount of recognition that they receive.

Only wishing that they could get more. Others discontent with their nationality. And the place that God has chosen for them to live. And to glorify him most. Just wishing that they could be here.

Others with their health or level of fitness. So on and so forth. We could provide a huge list of ways that we express discontentment in our lives. And the Bible has a lot to say about contentment. God actually calls us to demonstrate a humble, thankful contentment. And he goes to great lengths to instruct us in how to accomplish this purpose. Let me give you just a few examples. Think about the book of Ecclesiastes.

Which is essentially the memoirs of a man who spent his entire life discontent. He was discontent with the life of his youth. And so he got a thousand of them.

[10:23] He was discontent with what he had materially. So he gained all of this financial provision. He had everything that the world had to offer. Yet he chased contentment. And he never quite achieved it in his life.

And in the end of it, he basically says, the end of the matter is this. If you will honor God. And if you will thoroughly enjoy the lot that he has given you. You will experience the blessing of life the way that God has designed for you to experience it.

You will achieve the contentment. Not for looking at more. But seeking to honor God. And what it is that he has given you. And in the way that he has blessed you. And in the place that he has put you.

The wisest man in all the world made that statement. On the basis of his own mistakes and lifelong pursuit for fulfillment. And then he writes to us in the book of Proverbs over and over.

About the dangers of pursuing material wealth as the primary goal of our life. That it always ends in sinful devastation. It produces in our hearts greed.

[11:24] And envy. Covetousness. Hate. Slander. Murder. Adultery. Fornication. So on and so forth.

Often is born out of this selfishness that we have. That is discontent. Only wanting more. Only want a different experience. Only wanting something more than what we already have.

To where it leads to all kinds of sin in our life. We move to the New Testament. In Luke chapter 3 and verse 14. Some Roman soldiers impacted by the preaching of John the Baptist.

Came to him after a sermon and said what should we do? And he said that they were to repent of the extortion that they were involved with. That was born out of their greed.

And instead he says be content with the wages that you have. And any discussion of contentment would be missing and lacking if we didn't at least reference Paul's teaching on money in 1 Timothy 6.

[12:27] Remember what he wrote to Timothy. Godliness with contentment is great gain Paul said. For we brought nothing into the world. And we can take nothing 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 the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith even.

And pierced themselves with many sorrows Paul says. Paul says the root of all evil in life basically comes down to discontentment. Love for money. Selfishness and pride that leads to sinfulness that you would have never dreamed you would have been involved with.

And it can be traced back to this idea of not being content. Just wanting more. Remember the earlier discussion of peace in chapter 4 came primarily in the form of instruction.

[13:33] Paul said I beg Iodias and Syntyche to get along. Rejoice in the Lord. Action verbs. In this part of the chapter the discussion of contentment comes in the form of example.

The letter to the Philippian church was actually initiated first by a financial gift that they had sent to Paul. Remember he's in his fourth year of imprisonment.

He's in Rome. And from what I understand Roman prisoners were reliant upon the generosity of others in order to just survive. And so they send this gift to Paul.

And so this section of Philippians is essentially Paul's thank you note. He's writing a thank you note to the church for what they had sent. And in it we find a wonderful example of godly contentment.

He exemplifies what the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs so profoundly described as. That sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

[14:47] That no matter where we are in life we freely submit to and delight in what God is doing with our lives. Well how was Paul able to do this?

How was he able to actually live with such contentment in such devastating circumstances? In verse 12 he uses this phrase that we read as I am instructed which literally means I have learned the secret.

He says I have learned the secret of contentment. And in these verses we find four qualities that make contentment possible. That reveal exactly what this secret is.

Let's look firstly in verse number 10 at Paul's satisfaction. We see his satisfaction. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, he says, That now at the last your care of me hath flourished again wherein you were also careful but you lacked opportunity.

Paul says I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. You can almost picture this expression of joy as Epaphroditus who was the messenger of the Philippian church walks into Paul's tiny little Roman prison apartment in Rome.

[16:06] Not expecting, he didn't have cell phones in those days where Epaphroditus could give him a call and say, Hey, I just want you to know I'm coming. I've got a gift with me. And Paul could have prepared himself and anticipated that arrival.

This would have been Epaphroditus walks through the door. Paul has no idea. And you can imagine the expression of joy. Great joy as he sees an old friend. And not only because he sees an old friend, but because that old friend has brought with him a gift of provision.

That would have meant so much to the apostle. Like I said, Roman prisoners from what I understand were reliant on the generosity of others in order to actually exist and have even what little of an existence they had as far as substantial needs were met.

With this gift, Paul would be able to eat more substantial meals and receive basic goods that most people take for granted.

And yet once again, Paul's joy was not in the gift. His joy, he says, was in the Lord. I rejoiced not in the gift.

[17:12] I rejoiced not in Epaphroditus. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. And therein lies the first secret to Christian contentment.

His satisfaction was found in Christ rather than gain. The thing that satisfied Paul's heart, the thing that satisfied his soul, the thing that got the focus of his desires and his attention in his life, was not the experience of more material wealth.

It was not in the gifts that would be brought from churches around Europe. It was in Christ and the work of Christ. It was in the gospel. That's what his satisfaction was truly found in.

It's clear throughout this letter. Paul would have rejoiced in the Lord no matter what, whether there was a gift or not. But the gift from Philippi gave him a reason to express this great joy that had so pervaded his heart.

Well, there's a couple of ways that I think that he expressed his joy in the Lord here. First, he rejoiced in the provision of God. He rejoiced in the provision of God. Look at the second phrase. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again.

[18:26] Flourished there is a horticultural term. It means blossomed. That once again your care, your concern for me has blossomed again. Significant to this rejoicing was his recognition that this gift was ultimately from the hand of God.

And it's a reminder to us that God uses ordinary means to accomplish his extraordinary purposes. And in this case, the ordinary means was a simple collection.

It was an offering just like we took a few minutes ago from a church in Philippi hundreds of miles away that he did not anticipate and that he did not expect. Yet on this day he was filled with great joy because God had provided for him in such a wonderful way.

An ordinary way, but an extraordinary way in the sense of God's hand of provision. Even though he recognized the gift as being from the Philippians, it was still the Lord that got the focus of his rejoicing.

He rightly understood that this gift was from God and he rejoiced in God's providential care. It's also worth noting here that this wasn't only the provision of money, but it was the provision of a caring friendship that encouraged Paul.

[19:43] Look again at this verse. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care, your concern for me. This is more than an offering. This was not a vain, well, Pastor Epaphroditus is passing the plate again.

I might as well throw a couple of dollars in to go help Paul. This was born out of a desire and love for the apostle himself. He says, I'm rejoicing that you care for me.

This was a friendship, a partnership in the gospel. The Macedonian churches were known throughout the New Testament for their giving spirit, but it was still God that received the credit from Paul.

So Paul rejoiced in the provision of God. He was meeting his needs. Secondly, he rejoiced in the work of God. He rejoiced in the work of God. Look at the last part of the verse. Wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Or you have always been concerned. You just couldn't give before now is basically what he's saying. It appears that it had been some time since Paul had last heard or received something from this church.

[20 : 49] And in case they misunderstood his previous statement and felt some kind of guilt for taking so long, he stated and reminded them, I know that you've always cared about me.

You just were unable to help me until now. And Paul's rejoicing then was in part due to the fact that God was still at work in the hearts of these people, these Christians, these new converts in Philippi. Think about it. It had been a long time since he had heard anything about them. It wasn't exactly easy to communicate in those days. He probably prayed for them every day as is indicated throughout his letter.

He had a great love for this church and a great passion for these people, but he hadn't heard anything from them in a long time. To see Epaphroditus walk through that door and not only come through the door, but come bearing a gift.

His rejoicing wasn't about the gift. It was praise the Lord that God is still working in Philippi. He's still using these people. He's still working in their hearts. Yes, I've always known that you've cared.

[21 : 49] You just lacked opportunity up to this point. In other words, I'm rejoicing that God is still at work in your life. Paul's satisfaction was found in Christ. It was found in God's provision, and it was found in God's work.

And that immediately leaves us with the question to ask ourselves in self-examination. What is it that satisfies us the most? At least, what does the pursuit of our life indicate is the thing that we think will satisfy us the most?

The example of Paul is that what satisfied his desires, what he wanted more than anything else in life, was for God to continue this work of the gospel. That God, no matter what it cost him, that God would still allow the gospel to go forth across the world.

That people would be saved. That churches and believers would be sanctified and walk in holiness and righteousness before the Lord. That they would be unified before the Lord. And every time he saw an example of that, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord.

Why? Because his satisfaction was in Christ and in the work of Christ. Yet many of us give no regard at all for the actual work of Christ. When's the last time we heard a report of someone even being willing to give the gospel, as Caitlin has done this week, and what we felt inside was a great joy.

[23 : 05] Praise the Lord. The gospel's still going out. We desire to know Christ, but we desire to see his work accomplished, rather than just focusing all of our satisfaction on what we can get.

If your satisfaction is found in material gain and comfortable circumstances, you'll always feel a measure of discontentment. But not Paul.

His satisfaction was found in the Lord. And I'm reminded of that Getty song, My worth is not in what I own, not in the strength of flesh and bone, but in the costly wounds of love at the cross.

And then it goes on in the chorus to say, I rejoice in my Redeemer, greatest pleasure, wellspring of my soul. I will trust in him, no other.

My soul is satisfied in him alone. Can you say that is true in your life? Could you sing that song with honesty? That Christ is my greatest pleasure.

[24 : 12] He's my greatest treasure. That he satisfies my soul more than anything else in this life. I don't know that every day I could say that, at least not in the way that I live. The spirit is willing.

The flesh is often weak. Well, we see his rejoicing, his satisfaction. The second secret that we see here in his example is his sufficiency. His sufficiency.

Look with me at verses 11 and 12. Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to

abound.

Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. This opening phrase, Paul says, not that I speak in respect of want.

Immediately following this expression of joy comes this paradoxical statement where he says that he's not actually talking about wanting or needing anything.

[25 : 19] Is it interesting? He didn't want the Philippians, I think, to mistake his joy as being an indication of discontentment up to that point. I think he didn't want them to think that he spent every waking moment obsessed with what he didn't have.

Was Paul in need? Of course he was in need. He was in great need. But he didn't find his sufficiency to be dependent upon material gain or earthly comforts. Neither did he find it to be within his own ability to withstand hardship.

Paul had found a greater sufficiency. The sufficiency that comes through a dependence on God. Let's look at this first phrase, to be content.

He says, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. This is the same Greek word that's used for sufficient in extra biblical text.

It was a term that was borrowed from ancient pagan Stoic philosophy. And it was probably used by Paul here with the intention of grabbing the attention of these Philippian believers.

[26 : 27] It was, as one writer put it, like a Stoic meteor landing itself in this Philippian letter. It wasn't a Christian term that he was using. This was a pagan term. And came directly from Stoic philosophy.

Well, the Stoic idea of contentment was an extreme version of what we would call modern, in modern day, minimalist. They believed that the greatest virtue was to be totally independent of all things and all people.

And according to one author, the Stoic line was, man should be sufficient unto himself of all things and able by the power of his will to resist the force of circumstances.

Another person wrote that the Stoic ideal was kind of a self-contained Superman who could rise above it all in independent self-sufficiency and serenity.

So the Stoics had learned a form of contentment that was ultimately futile because it found sufficiency in self and man's ability to withstand hardship and to make it through life apart from any person or anything.

[27 : 35] It's futile because it found itself in man instead of God. Kent Hughes is helpful here. He says, but Paul transformed the term with a powerfully Christ-centered redefinition of contentment.

Paul and all who were in Christ are God-sufficient as opposed to self-sufficient. Contentment is rooted in the eternal God rather than the temporal self. Thus, while Paul and the Stoics may appear to be close, they are a universe apart.

Paul is sufficient and content not because he is independent, but because he is totally dependent on Christ. So when Paul writes here, I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content, he's saying I have learned the secret of true sufficiency.

Sufficiency is not in my ability to irk out an existence here in this prison. My sufficiency is found in the power and in the work of God. I am totally dependent on him.

There is nothing in me that is capable of dealing with this circumstance in and of myself. Anything that I am able to gain now comes directly from the sufficiency that comes from the power of God.

[28 : 44] So sufficiency or contentment there is defined and then we see contentment is learned. He says, for I have learned in verse 11. And in verse 12, he says, I am instructed or I have learned the secret of.

Incredible amount of Paul's life is documented in the New Testament so that we can verify this claim that he says, which was a great claim.

He's saying I have learned to be hungry and full. I've learned to be abased and to live in abundance. I've learned to have it all and I've learned to have nothing. Well, is that really true?

That sounds a little bit like a hyperbolic statement on Paul's point. Well, we can look to the word of God to see that it wasn't an exaggeration at all, that this was very true of Paul's life.

Consider some of the things that we study about his life in the New Testament. Think about the start of the church of Philippi in Acts 16. We've mentioned that a lot throughout this letter.

Remember when he first arrived in Philippi and the ladies on the side of the riverbank were saved?

[29 : 45] He was invited, he and his team, to live in the house of a wealthy businesswoman named Lydia. She was from Thyatira and had a very profitable business that was great enough to at least have a large house that could house this church and their gatherings.

It could house this missionary team. She had plenty of servants that were serving underneath her. So even as he comes into town, the Lord blesses him in that moment to experience abundance where he would have lived in a house that was comfortable.

He would have had people tending to his needs, showing love and eating well. But then just a few weeks into it, he and Silas are preaching when they are arrested, beaten, stripped of their clothing and cast into prison, surely awaiting what they thought might would be their demise and their death in that night.

Even in the narrative of the beginnings of this church, we see Paul did indeed know what it was like to live in both abundance and in poverty and in devastation.

Think about what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 11. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews 40 lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods.

[30 : 58] Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day, I was adrift at sea on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, in toil and hardship through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

And then just a few verses later, he writes that he would boast in those things because they demonstrated the great work of God in his life. He had learned in every situation to recognize and trust God's sovereign hand and providential care, even when that sovereign hand meant that he was gonna suffer greatly.

He rejoiced in the work of God and he trusted in the sovereign sufficiency of God. He found God's divine purposes to be sufficient for his life.

And then we ask, are we willing to live according to God's divine purposes for our lives? Do we find sufficiency in comfort? Or do we find sufficiency in the power of God when he determines in his will to bring discomfort and disease and poverty?

We see the secret to his contentment was his satisfaction, was his sufficiency. Thirdly, it was his strength, Paul's strength. Not the strength that was in and of himself, but the strength that came from Christ.

[32 : 40] Look at verse 13. We love this verse. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.

This verse is without a doubt one of the most well-known and frequently quoted verses in all of the Bible. Only God knows how many gyms and lockers and mirrors have had this verse taped up as a form of self-motivation day in and day out that we can truly achieve whatever it is that we're trying to achieve.

One of the things that we often regard Steph Curry for, who was a former Davidson basketball star, is the videos that we see of him sitting before a game begins and taking his basketball sneakers and writing this verse, one half on one shoe and one half on the other shoe.

And we regard him for that and we rejoice that somebody was actually willing to write scripture and somebody that's such a superstar. But I think my favorite all-time use of Philippians 4.13 was on a coffee mug.

It said, I can do all things through a verse taken out of context. And that's exactly what a lot of people do with this verse. Unfortunately, they take it out of context and thereby distort its meaning.

[33 : 58] Certainly, more focus is often given to the first phrase, that I can do all things, than to the last phrase, through Christ which strengthens me. And so that its use really demonstrates an ego that only pretends to be spiritual.

Many have misunderstood it to mean I can do anything or I can do everything which puts the focus completely on man's will and assumes that God will just go along with it.

At times, we use a passage like this to treat God as somewhat of a spiritual bellhop that empowers us to do whatever it is that we set our minds to. That if we really dream it, we can do it as Walt Disney said, right?

That's not true. That's not what this verse is saying at all. It's not at all what Paul meant by this. Set within this proper context as we have already come to see, he's actually saying the opposite of that.

Paul understood every circumstance of his life to be under the guiding hand of God and he knew that Christ would empower him each step of the way. Whether it was in a basement or in abundance, whether it was in fullness or hungry, need or blessing, Paul found his strength to be in Christ.

[35 : 14] Paul is confident that he will be divinely strengthened to do anything and everything that God calls him to do. It's not that we can take Philippians 4.13 and say, I can do all things so I'm going to set my mind toward achieving this particular position at my job or I'm going to be this great of an athlete in the thing that I've chosen or whatever it is in the frame of life that we have chosen to pursue.

It's not that we sit here and say, okay, I can do this, I can do this, I can do this, God's going to give me the strength to do it. No, God's going to give you the strength to accomplish whatever it is he's called you to do, not whatever you called yourself to do.

And so when God calls us to suffer in abasement, Christ will give us the strength to endure the abasement. When God calls us to enjoy blessing, Christ will give us the strength to keep our heads from getting too big and to keep our pride from swelling too large so that we can give him glory in those moments.

Our strength is not in and of ourselves and God doesn't empower us to do what we want to do. He empowers us to do what he wants us to do, which is exactly what Paul's saying.

He's saying, I've learned not how I can just muster up and pull myself up by my bootstraps to do whatever it is. He says, no, I've learned the secret to contentment. The secret to contentment is that God is sovereign and he calls me into all different frames of life and no matter where he calls me, he will strengthen me in those moments.

[36 : 34] This is the realigning of our will to the will of God. And so long as we are resisting what God is calling us to in discontentment, so long as we are resisting the purposes of God in our life, we will never feel this contentment and we won't experience God's strength.

We receive his divine empowerment as we submit to his divine will. 2 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul said, that God said unto him that 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, he said, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ then, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. The greatest display of God's strength is actually through our weakness. And that's something we can actually rejoice in.

It's a promise that helps us to more gladly cling to Philippians 4, 13. Well, finally, we see his spirit in verse 14.

[37 : 58] His spirit. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Notwithstanding reminds us that contentment doesn't mean that we have a complete lack of desire in our lives.

Notwithstanding literally means in spite of or despite everything that I have just said, he writes to this church. What you have done is good and I'm grateful for it.

It didn't mean that he was callous, that he had no desire for anything, that he had no want for anything, that he didn't desire to be in a better circumstance in his life.

There's a balance in this text of having desire without being consumed by that desire. Paul's point wasn't to deny that he had wants and needs, nor did he mean to say that it is inherently sinful to want more, to have aspirations.

Those things are good things. If that was the case, he wouldn't have written this thank you note at all because he would have seen nothing to be actually thankful for. His purpose was to point out that his desire to obey and please Christ was greater than his desire for increase and comfort.

[39 : 18] That he would pursue Christ before he would pursue wealth. And if God blessed him with wealth, he would live in rejoicing and gratefulness for that.

But if Christ, as he indeed called him to, wanted him to suffer, well his desire was to please Christ first, not to experience his own comfort.

Some of us may be called to suffer while others are called to live in abundance. The first three points in 10, 11, 12, and 13 are the quote, secrets that produce contentment.

But this last one does not produce contentment, it is rather the product of contentment. Because Paul was content, he was actually filled with gratitude.

Gratitude doesn't produce contentment, contentment produces gratitude. There's a couple of things I think he was grateful for as we close. He was grateful for their gift, the actual gift itself.

[40 : 27] He said, notwithstanding, you have done well. In other words, thank you. Thank you for this. This is gonna help me, Paul says.

Thank you. The thing about this gift is we don't actually know what they gave. There was a time when this church was filled with wealthy people.

We know that people like Lydia and others had lots of money. The church was constantly giving, but we also know that this season went, this church went through seasons of great poverty too.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that it was the Philippians and the other churches in Macedonia that had given a great gift out of their deep poverty.

They didn't really have it to give, but they gave what they had in order for the gospel to be proclaimed and the ministry to advance. So we know they just had a giving spirit. We have no idea what this gift actually was.

It could have been a very small gift actually. The amount was irrelevant. To Paul it didn't matter how great or how small the gift was where as a less contented person, Mike would see a smaller gift and think, what a waste of time this is.

[41 : 36] You walked all the way from Philippi to give me just a little bit. What good is this going to do? That wasn't Paul's attitude at all. It could have been a very little bit.

What did he say? Thank you. He was full of gratitude for their gift. He was grateful for anything because he was content with everything.

The contentment produced the gratitude. He was grateful for their gift. He was finally grateful for their partnership. He was grateful for their partnership. Look at the end of the verse.

Notwithstanding you have well done that you did communicate with my affliction.

Communicate here is the same word we read in chapter 1 in verse 5, chapter 2 in verse 1, and chapter 3 in verse 10. In all three of those cases in the King James it's translated as fellowship, partnership, sharing in.

More than any material gift he was thankful for their partnership and their friendship. though they were not in prison with Paul.

[42 : 46] The Philippians did what they could to share in his affliction and Paul was grateful for that. What a great example. Full of gratitude in that moment. What does your spirit reveal about your level of contentment?

Do you have a spirit that is mostly grateful and thankful for what you have, what you've been given, the lot that God has blessed you with, no matter how great or how small that may be?

Or do you find yourself in a position that unless that next stimulus check is at least equal to what the last stimulus check was, then I don't even know why I'm living in this country anymore?

Gratefulness doesn't produce contentment, it reveals contentment.

Sometimes we live a life that is not very grateful at all, and the reason is because we're selfish people. We all are. It's part of our edemic nature.

But thankfully, God has given us a champion that has conquered through his own humility and his own selflessness death and sin and devastation on our behalf.

[44 : 05] So despite how selfish and how reckless and how prideful we are, we can turn our eyes to Christ and we can trust in his righteousness. We can trust in his perfection in this area, cast ourselves on him, and he applies that righteousness to us.

What a wonderful gift that is. The secret to contentment is a relationship with Jesus. That's really how we could read these verses.

Paul says in verse 12, I have learned the secret no matter what situation of contentment, and here's what it is. Verse 13, I can do all things through Christ. All things through Christ.

And I remember another song. Great is thy faithfulness. Great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see. And then the chorus says, all I have needed, your hand has provided.

How could a man like Lazarus, who was a homeless man eating the crumbs off the rich man's table, saying, all I have needed, your hand has provided. Because Christ is all you actually need.

[45 : 15] He's all you actually need. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Thank you for listening to this sermon made available by Lakeside Bible Church. Feel free to share it wherever you'd like.

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