

# Why You Can Be Content

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[ 0 : 00 ] I'll read our sermon text for us today. Believing what God says about his own word.

In 1 Timothy, that the word of God is spirit-breathed. In Hebrews 4, we're told that the word of God is living, it's powerful, it's piercing. Hebrews 6 tells us that the word of God is the sword of the spirit. If you receive God's word as he says it is, then at the end I'll say this is the word of God. You can respond, thanks be to God. Our passage for today is Philippians chapter 4, 10 through 13. Philippians chapter 4, 10 through 13. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care for me has flourished again.

Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

[ 1 : 19 ] I know how to be abased. And I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Isaiah 40 reminds us that the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. In Luke 1, the angel Gabriel, he pronounces that no word from God shall be void of power. May it be so for his glory. Let's pray. Lord, I ask that your Holy Spirit will shine the light of your glory onto your people through your word.

I pray that as the preacher today, I won't get in the way. I pray that you will help me. And I pray, Lord, that you'll protect me, that the enemy won't accuse me of my own lack of contentment, the weakness of my own vessel, how much I still have to learn.

[ 2 : 55 ] But Lord, I pray that this testimony that Paul has given by the inspiration of the Spirit will be an encouragement to each one that you have brought here by your providence, that we will not leave this place the same, that you will change us, transform us more and more to be like Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Lord.

For your glory and for our good we ask. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Contentment has many benefits that health professionals have observed.

Reduced stress, lowered anxiety, enhanced gratitude, improved relationships. emotions like envy resentment and an outlook like pessimism are replaced by satisfaction peace and an optimistic outlook on life yet most people the vast majority of people are not content over 400 years ago a saved sinner a pastor named jeremiah burroughs gave this illustration that to me just put me right there you know the northern part of england those those grassy hills as they go into scotland he said you picture a child or a group of children they're on one hill and they look over to the next hill and they see a cloud hovering right above it and they think if we can just run to the top of that hill we'll be in the clouds we'll be able to touch the clouds so they go and as soon as they climb up to the top of the next hill the clouds are just as far away as they were on the previous hill for this reason he described christian contentment even among believers as a rare jewel we should all be seeking it when we find it it is so precious christian contentment the reason it's so rare is because contentment is an art that requires careful study and ongoing practice throughout a lifetime it wasn't until his very final years that the apostle paul as his cup is being poured out the last grains of sand falling through the hourglass he says in verse 11 of the passage we just read i have learned in whatever state i am to be content what a testimony paul's writing to a greek audience likely many roman retired soldiers who have had this classical greco-roman education and paul is very quick to clarify he's not talking about some stoic detachment which would be similar to what we have today with like a buddhist emptying of yourself paul says this contentment that i have learned it's not by my own strength at all but it's through christ who strengthens me so beloved congregation of our

lord jesus christ my objective today is to show you six encouraging truths from paul's testimony in these three verses three or four verses of why you and i can be content why you and i can be content number one when you and i are weak christ shows his care for you through his church when you and i are weak that's when we're most prone to discouragement isn't it and to not be content we're so weak everything's messed up my soul's stirring and in those moments he shows us his care through fellow believers in big and small ways i bet you could think back on the last month or maybe even today how the lord has brought you strength through a fellow believer if roman prisoners didn't get outside care they would go without food without a blanket even and certainly without company hungry cold lonely vulnerable to the enemy's attacks hardest circumstances to learn contentment yet in verse 10 paul says i rejoiced in the lord greatly the lord was with him all the time and now when this encouragement arrived he's rejoicing in the lord the lord's right there with him all

along that now at last it's been a while like this at last your care for me has flourished again that phrase to flourish again it's an agricultural term it's used to describe a plant that's sprouting or being renewed again so the buds are showing up that's a sign that there's fruit and life inside this plant and that's how paul describes the care of the philippian church what great encouragement to him now you notice he's not he's not excited about the financial gift he's rejoicing in the lord about their care their relationship their love paul does not treasure their money he treasures them if you take your eyes down to verse 19 paul says my god encouraging them now in return my god shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by christ jesus see the point that he wants to make regarding their financial gift is that it comes from god it's my god who shall supply all of your needs and all of my needs from his abounding riches through christ jeremiah burroughs pointed out that christian friends are to you and me but a conduit like a pipe that's going to carry water to me god uses christian friends to convey his goodness and his gifts to his people our friends conveyed the gifts of god to us because it's god who first loved us we love because he first loved us and gave himself god the son for us in john chapter 13 verse 35 this is the love flowing from god through his church jesus says this way the world will know you are my disciples by your love for one another the world will know you belong to me because my love from god whose supplies are endless flow through my people to one another so christian when you receive even a small gift from one of god's people you're receiving a gift from god the creator of all the christian can truly enjoy even the smallest little gift as burroughs put it because that's like a token on this earth and this life of the love of god for me picture a couple of little kids even from among our congregation and one spends several hours making a little string bracelet for the other and then that friend receives this little bracelet and they're going to wear it for weeks not because it's expensive but they treat it as if it's pure gold it's because of who it's from it's from their friend so when christians are sharing in this gift giving and this love one to another it's a token from god himself we ought to receive it and cherish it that way when we are weak and i know many of us are weak i'm weak these days too but when we are weak christ uses the care of his church to strengthen his people so receive the care from one another as god's love for you and continue being generous and showing that kind of care one for another number two when you can't see the care of others christ is your strength still when you can't see the care of christ through his people which is all the more good reason to feel discontent isn't it

christ is your strength still well you notice in verse 10 how paul says now at last your care for me has flourished again though you surely did care but you lacked opportunity paul is sitting there in prison in rome not seeing this gift that's traveling slowly for months from philippi to reach him he can't see it god knows it's in root he knows the philippians have not forgotten him he knows that they're praying for paul paul can't see it right now there's a time when it feels maybe like it's dry i'm not i'm not being fed by god i'm not being fed by god's people what do i do where do i turn paul's testimony here is that he rejoiced in christ christ was his strength still christ has proved that when he's in abundance with friends christ is with them when he can't see the love of god through the people of god christ is his strength still and in those times when it feels like we're not receiving the love from fellow christians that we expect or hoped for and it's right that we would feel that way that we turn to the source himself jeremiah has pointed out jeremiah burroughs pointed out you are thirsty and needy because it feels to you like that pipe has been cut off and god says to me come to the fountain and drink immediately if you'll notice in verse 15 philippians 4 15 paul tells this church in philippi that they were the only ones who had given him any support he received the gift from you only we know paul is calling out the sins of the church in rome that are seeking vain glory and yet

he says christ is my strength paul was forgotten by these other churches that he had planted now being neglected by those same people paul did not see the care of others but he still thought the best of them look at verse 10 again paul says surely you did care the lord taught him to think the best of the church in philippi they just lacked opportunity christ was his strength even then if you're feeling forgotten or abandoned maybe you feel like you have no friend by your side you can learn this kind of strength from christ himself because christ was abandoned no friend by his side forgotten by those he had discipled and this is why there's no one besides christ himself who can teach a christian like paul this kind of strength and christ can teach this to you and me as well the lord jesus had to hold on to this promise in god's word in psalm 22 that god the father does not despise the affliction of his son nor does he hide his face from him when jesus cried out even from the cross all alone psalm 22 verse 24 says the father heard him the father was near the son and christ learned even that level of obedience and humiliation because you and i can't come up with that on our own he has to be our strength his active obedience had to secure that strength for us so he can now teach us that when you don't feel the care of others god is your strength still he hears your cry and he wants you to trust him trust his timing he will provide

[ 15 : 48 ] number three when your needs are great christ himself comes close to train you in this art of contentment it is when your needs are great that christ himself comes near to train you in the art of contentment in verse 11 paul says not that i speak in regard to need for i have learned in whatever state i am to be content he says i have learned this term refers to being initiated maybe you've started a new job or a new position and you get a you get to learn the ropes you go to a new school you need to be initiated into how to survive and how to get by here paul says i've been initiated by christ himself in the school of contentment in order to learn how to swim you're going to have to get wet in order to learn contentment we're going to have to feel severe need to be content it means to be sufficiently supplied sufficiently supplied jeremiah burroughs defined contentment for christians this way that sweet inward quiet gracious frame of spirit that joyfully submits to god you trust god's wise fatherly provision for you in every condition another person said that contentment is when your soul is even with your circumstances christian life is even with your soul is even with your soul is even with your soul in the school of contentment luke 9 58 tells us that christ as the people expected him to be this conquering military figure he reminded them that foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head and when jesus was tempted by satan

In Matthew 4, 4, he quoted scripture back to Satan. He said, man does not live by bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

God is the supply. God is the one who is all sufficient. It's from the fullness of God that Christ in the flesh knew contentment.

John 1, 16 reminds us that from his fullness, the fullness of Jesus Christ, we have received grace upon grace.

We just sang this wonderful song that suffering, anguish, despised and rejected, bearing our sins, my redeemer is he. Hands that healed nations stretched out on a tree, and took the nails for me.

[ 18 : 58 ] Christ secured the contentment by living a life of love for God and love for man that we need. We can't have contentment unless we are united to him, fully satisfied in love with God, which settles our soul, and it turns into that love, self-sacrificing, generous love toward our neighbors.

When we are in great need, Christ himself comes close because he's the only one who can, and he trains you in this wonderful upside-down art of contentment in this world.

He does that when we're most in need. You think of a person making an instrument out of metal. In order to shape this instrument into something useful, what do you have to do to this piece of metal first?

You have to heat it up, get it really hot in the furnace, and then pound it. Pound it into its shape. The Lord Jesus became that.

He put himself in the hottest furnace, and he let the Father shape him for us so that he could turn around and graciously train us and initiate us into being content, into living in his fullness.

[ 20 : 19 ] Number four, when Christ is your strength, you learn contentment from being brought low. When Christ is your strength, you learn contentment from being brought low.

In verse 12, Paul gives this testimony. I know how to be abased. Brought down, made low. It refers to loss of reputation, rights, standing, or security.

And in Paul's case, all of the above. Paul was an elite intellectual, now a fool. He was a born citizen, now a death row criminal.

He was popular, now forgotten. Powerful, now he's weak. You learn from Christ how to be satisfied in God even when you are abased.

Some of you have suffered such pain. Some of you are facing the biggest reasons in life to feel anxious.

[ 21 : 40 ] The world says, see, here's proof that God doesn't love you. For some of you on the other side of that, you're bearing testimony like Paul.

I've been abased. And I can tell you, God is love still. And this is a mystery. It's definitely a mystery to the world and it's a mystery to Christians.

But this is the faithfulness of God to his people. Christ has taught you the answer to this great mystery. The Spirit has shown the great love of God for you in Christ.

And you can say now with Paul in 2 Corinthians 6.10, having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Because God teaches you contentment when you bring those cares, those concerns, those fears, that pain to him over and over again.

You open up your heart and you set it before God once again. When we're abased, we have to do that. There's nowhere else to go. When Paul was abased, he prayed, opened up his heart, brought it before God.

[ 22 : 57 ] And listen to the response from the Lord in 2 Corinthians 12.9 and 10. Jesus Christ said to Paul, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

And Paul now tells the church, Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, of my abasement, 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 on my own, then I am strong in Christ.

Think about what a gift this is for believers on this earth. Think of what we would be without Christ in these hardest of times.

When a proud, unrepentant sinner suffers a little bit in this life, we need to view that in the light of eternity. That's really a small tasting of the eternal judgment a proud, unrepentant sinner will face for all eternity in hell.

[ 24 : 11 ] But when we as Christians suffer in this life, we view ourselves in the light of the Holy God. Instead of asking, why do I have to bear this cross?

Christ graciously teaches us, why isn't my cross as great as I deserve it to be? Christ is the only source of such strength.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 50, verse 6, when he gave his back to those who struck him and his cheeks to those who plucked out his beard. Jesus was mocked and jeered, ridiculed and spat upon.

He was taunted and tempted. He was abased. But Jesus never sinned against God, even in that humiliation.

Jesus had his gaze set firmly, like Flint on the mission his father gave him to do. Jeremiah Burroughs said that one drop of the sweetness of heaven is enough to take away all the bitterness of the afflictions of this world.

[ 25 : 25 ] And Jesus knew the sweetness of heaven, not just for himself, but for those he was dying to save. And that sweetness made all of the torments of the cross a joy for him to bear so that you could enjoy the sweetness of heaven with him.

Jesus Christ knew no sin because he was the most content, soul that has ever walked this earth.

Burroughs again said that temptations can't enter into a content heart.

It would be like a wasp, tiny little wasp trying to fly into and penetrate a massive boulder. When your heart is content in Christ, temptations have no place to get in.

So when Christ is your strength, you learn contentment even from being brought low. And you pray, Lord, may I know how to be abased like Jesus, like Paul, trusting in your promises and your word.

Luke 14, 11, that he who humbles himself will be exalted. I know this is true because Christ humbled himself and the Father has highly exalted him. Number five, when your soul knows Christ, you are more content in him than in worldly abundance.

[ 26 : 54 ] When your soul knows Christ, you and I are more content in him than in worldly abundance. Abundance, kids, it means when you have more than what you need.

But you're not content in those things, you're more content in Christ himself. Look at verse 12. Paul says, I also know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

When we are suffering, when we are abased, when we're humiliated, it almost always drives us to Christ. But when we are in abundance, we can easily fall into a spiritual slumber.

We let down our guard. We're even more prone to temptations, finding their way into our hearts. So abundance may be a higher level of a course you've got to learn from Christ, even than a basement itself.

Paul learned how to abound from Christ. Think about how Christ secured that ability to be content in abundance. Think of how Christ left the abundance of heaven as eternal God the Son.

[ 28 : 15 ] He joyfully obeyed his Father's will so that he could merit on our behalf. He lacks nothing, but we need to know this, how to be content in abundance and not be attached to those things.

As an old verse put it, a wise content his even soul secured by want not shaken, nor by wealth allured.

Christ was not attached to his heavenly glory, the manifestation of his essence. He joyfully stripped himself of every comfort, every honor, every privilege to become a slave, Philippians 2, and to die a shameful death for you and me.

So he's the one who can train us on how to abound and not attach our soul to these gifts. when a lover of this world has some abundance in this life, that's all they have, and they live in constant paranoia of losing what they have.

But when a Christian has even a small thing in this life, it is a deposit of the full reward, the great treasure that Christ has secured and has stored up for them in heaven.

[ 29 : 34 ] When your soul knows Christ, you are more content in him than in worldly abundance. Well, the sixth encouraging truth from Paul's testimony, the last one for today, is that when Christ dwells in you, he is the strength that holds your soul contained.

When Christ dwells in you, he is the strength that holds your soul contained. In verse 13, Paul says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Literally, this very famous quote is this, in all, I am being made strong in the one empowering me, Christ.

In other words, Paul is saying, in all, in all, in all that God will have me endure in this broken world, I am being made strong in the one empowering me, Christ.

Being made strong. Paul says, I am being made able, becoming more powerful to prevail, being made able to overcome all.

[ 30 : 59 ] The word content, which is the theme of this passage, content means held or contained within the limits. You think of the contents of a can or something like that.

That's what it means, to be content. Your longings of your soul are contained within the bounds God designed.

What is the strength that holds those desires of your soul contained? It has to be Christ. His strength holding your soul in its proper place.

When Christ dwells in you, he's at the very center of your being, the very core of your essence. It's Christ inside you like this powerful magnetic force pulling your soul.

Keeping it together. Not letting your desires spill over and reach beyond the bounds that God has designed for you. Philippians 3 verses 7 and 8 tell us that it's the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

[ 32 : 13 ] That's my overriding ambition, says Paul. It's to gain Christ. See, it's this love for Christ at the core of my being, Him dwelling in me, that holds me together and makes me satisfied.

If you'll look at verse 7 as we saw last week, you find that verse 7, the peace of God. Put your finger on that. And then you'll look at verse 9 again.

We saw this last week as well. The God of peace. peace. It's only by grace that you and I can experience the peace of God. And once you've experienced this peace from God by grace, you won't settle for just the peace.

You want the God of peace Himself. You want more, not just the peace, but you want God. That's what your soul now wants. More and more and more. Because our souls are not made for anything else in this world, we will not find contentment.

No one will find true contentment until their soul knows the God of peace. Jeremiah Burroughs says to the church, my brethren, the reason why you do not have contentment in the things of this world is not that you do not have enough of them.

[ 33 : 40 ] What's the reason then? The reason, he says, is that these things are not proportional to that immortal soul of yours that it is capable of God Himself.

Your soul is immortal and your soul is capable of fellowship with God Himself. That's why nothing short of God Himself will satisfy the longings of our soul.

That's why there's no contentment outside of God through Christ. So Paul, verse 13, in all, I am being made strong in the one empowering me, Jesus Christ.

It's God's Spirit with us giving us Christ's own strength. I thought of how this church in Philippi got to witness firsthand that Paul isn't just saying these words, he's lived it.

You remember the Philippian jailer and his entire household? Surely some of them are still part of this church in Philippi years later. They've seen this contentment on display. Paul and Silas, we read in Acts 16, 25.

[ 34 : 54 ] It was midnight and these missionaries were praying and singing hymns to God. This is while their backs are open and bleeding and they're in stocks chained up and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Wouldn't you be listening if you saw two men in that condition physically singing, praising their God and praying out loud for all to hear?

That's the picture of contentment. I was thinking about all of the songs we sang today would have been a wonderful witness. If any one of us were to be arrested, we could sing any one of these five songs and the Lord can minister and we can pray as we prayed before the service today and the Lord will use that to draw others because it's his ministry in the life of a Christian.

So we don't need to know what were the hymns that Paul and Silas were singing because they're singing the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I do know that Paul being a Jew and being a Pharisee of Pharisees, he would have kept all of the festivals and approached the temple and approached the hill of Zion where you as God's people would go to be in his presence and you would have sung what you were supposed to sing as you ascend these hills toward Jerusalem. These were special psalms in the Psalter called the Songs of Ascent. And of those Songs of Ascent one of them is about contentment. Psalm 131.

[ 36 : 28 ] This would have been a familiar psalm to the church and to Paul. I have soothed and calmed my soul. Now my soul is content at rest.

Hope now in the Lord from this time forth and forever and forever more. Because God himself is training all those that he saved.

You and I we learn to treasure God with us more and more. And as Christ trains us Reformed Heritage Church we can be the most content people on planet earth for the glory of God and for our good.

Let's pray for his help to do this in us in our lives. Father thank you for your word. Thank you for this testimony. We thank you Lord for Jesus Christ who came and secured the contentment the access to the presence of God the only source of true peace and true joy.

please teach us to rejoice in the Lord always because Christ himself is our strength. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.