

Having the mind of Christ in his faithfulness

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[0 : 00] Everybody, nice to see you. I'm reading from Philippians chapter 4, verses 10 to 20. Philippians chapter 4, verses 10 to 20. I'm reading from the NIV, New International Version of the Bible.

The Apostle Paul writes, I rejoice greatly in the Lord, that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.

[1 : 16] For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.

I have received full payment and even more. I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God, and my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. So we're looking at our series on having the mind of Christ.

That's not the first slide, I don't think, is it? Having the mind of Christ in His faithfulness. From Philippians chapter 4 and verse 10.

And, sorry Josh, you were right on the next slide. It's quite right. God is faithful. God is faithful. To have the mind of Christ in His faithfulness is to think Christ's thoughts in our own lives, in our everyday lives, in our every situation.

[2 : 36] To think Christ's thoughts. To let our minds be renewed by the mind of Jesus. And to allow His thinking and His responses to influence how we respond to everyday situations.

It's that practical. How do I respond to a particular challenge? How do I respond to an issue of ungodliness or evil?

Or how do I respond in faith when things seem to be going against me? I can approach it from the point of view and perspective of the world.

I can panic and fluster and throw my arms up in despair. Or I can remember that God is faithful. And He will provide a way of escape.

That's what 1 Corinthians 10.13 is about. No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful. He will, with the temptation, so He won't ignore that.

[3 : 43] It's not as if it kind of caught Him by surprise. He will, with the temptation, also provide you with a way of escape. God will not tempt you.

But He allows temptation and testing into our lives to strengthen our faith. We are then at a crossroads. We can give in to the testing and the temptation and be weakened by it.

Or we can say, well, God, where is the way out here? How do I test my mettle? You see, when I was a young man learning to box, we had a blacksmith called Rob Stevenson.

And Rob was a lovely, lovely lad, blacksmith in the mines. He must have been about, I suppose, 19, 20 years old or something like that. Maybe just a little bit over that. But, and he used to look after us kids when we started.

And I was just a 13, 14 year old boy learning the ropes. And then one day, the trainer, Jock, old Scots Navy, ex-Royal Navy man during the war.

[4 : 49] He kind of, he kind of said, right, gloves up. You're going in with Rob. And I was just starting out. And he battered me around that ring.

I've never been so battered in all of my life. He battered me and battered me and battered me around that ring. And every time he hit me, he said, get your hands up. I was trying to keep my hands up.

And I was just a young boy. I was crying in pain. But I wouldn't give in. Get your hands up. Get your hands up. Batter me around the ring. And I thought, wow, what's the way of escape here?

Eventually, the bell rang. I think they forgot the time. The bell rang. And then Rob said to me, well done. You'll make a boxer. Because anybody can give it out.

But what makes a boxer is your ability to take it. God will strengthen us through temptation. He will allow it to come into our lives. To test us of whether we're going to trust him in this moment or we're going to give in.

[5 : 55] It's easy to give in. Too easy to give in. Because everything about temptation appeals to our desires and appetites. But to resist temptation is to take control by the grace of God over the things that otherwise will control you.

And you will be strengthened through it. God is faithful. Moses said in Deuteronomy 7 verse 9, He's saying, look, God will never let you down.

And God will never break His promises. Joshua chapter 23 verse 14, Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God has given you has failed.

Not one. God is faithful. Lamentations 3, Because the Lord's great love we are not consumed for His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. What a thing to wake up to. What a scripture to wake up to. Today, I will experience the goodness and the faithfulness of God.

[7 : 16] All my life you have been faithful. All my life you have been so, so good. I will sing of the goodness of God. And God wants us to know His faithfulness so much so that when Moses asked to see the glory of God, and God says, look, I'll put you in the cleft of a rock and you'll see my back parts, because you cannot look at me in full glory.

That would kill you. That would overwhelm you. When the Lord passed by, He said, God said, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

What God wants us to remember, what I want you to remember, He says to us, above everything else, is I love you and I am faithful to you. Every day. You want to know what I'm like? I am loving and I am faithful.

And the Apostle Paul says to us in our text today, My God will meet all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

If we are to have the mind of Christ, we are to remember that every day God is faithful, and every day God will meet all of our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus.

[8 : 33] So next slide, please. Our sermon focuses to express the mind of Christ by faithfully serving Christ in contentment.

To learn to trust Him for the provision of all our needs, knowing that God will meet all of our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus. Now notice the language, God will meet all of your needs, not all of your wants.

You see, you might say, well God, please meet my needs by a national lottery, whenever that is, and win several million pounds, or a hundred million pounds, whatever might be the stake.

That would be very tempting. But would it do you any good? I've read a lot about people who've won the lottery. It doesn't seem to do them a lot of good. It might do some people good, I grant you. But having enough money so that you might never need anything again won't necessarily make you any happier or any more content, and it certainly won't make you any safer, because there will be loads of people out there to fleece you.

[9 : 38] Including the people who might just hang on to you and tell you they're friends because you've got lots of money. God will not provide all of our wants. I mean, how many of us know what we really want anyway?

You know, we think we want something until we get it, and we realize we didn't really want that, because it's not quite as good as the other thing that we have just been told about, or it's just got old. You know, I got a brilliant new television, and now it's a really old television, clunky, and it doesn't do the things that these new televisions do.

You know, this kind of thing, it goes on, doesn't it? I've just got this new fashion. I'm going to look really cool on the high street. And then you see somebody with something that's nicer than yours, and so you think, I haven't got the new fashion.

I need it more. See, we live in a world that doesn't allow us to be content. It actually feeds our sense of discontentment. We get all these adverts.

You've got the latest technology. You'll need to find out there's new technology. You know, even if it's kind of like, you know, the kind of things that people go into now, where they don't like the shape of their nose, or the shape of their body, or whatever.

[10:45] And so they have surgery and treatment to change it, and then they look in the mirror and say, oh, but look at it, oh, she looks even nicer. I've got to get more surgery. He looks, oh, he looks, oh, I've got to get more treatment.

We're never content. We can't be content in a world like this. There is only contentment to be found in God. When we discover that the things of time and the things of life are temporal and are fading away, and therefore we won't put too much hope in them, but the things of God are eternal, and the best is yet to come, and that's where our hope will be.

So Paul, when he talks about his life, he talks about his light and momentary afflictions, and then you read the list of them, and you think, wow! Being whipped, being beaten, being imprisoned, being shipwrecked, that's not light and momentary, Paul.

He says it is compared to the surpassing weight of glory that is coming in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we fix our eyes, he says, not on the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen.

For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are unseen are eternal. So we heard about D.S. Sybil waiting to go to be with Jesus.

[12:12] From a human perspective, it's a tragedy. From a faith perspective, it is glory. For the best is still to come. So God will not always provide our wants.

He will provide our needs in order that we might learn contentment. Paul says, I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Whenever I think of that verse, I always think of the little boy I met in Zambia, in Luampa.

I went to play football with him. Some of you know this story. I went to play football with him and with all the boys on a Friday afternoon because we used to go across to the school compound and we would play football, but we would also give the children milk and cookies.

I called them milk and cookies because most of the missionaries, they were American. See, it's biscuits to you and I. And so we get there and what could I do? Well, we'll have a game of football. So Newcastle versus Zambia.

[13:27] Zambia did win because there was about 50 of them and about five or six on my team. And we had a bowl that was made out of sponge, a sponge bowl.

And there was no rules. It was just great. And at the end, we give them milk and biscuits and a little boy, it was a little boy's day. He was naked. A lot of the little boys were naked. And this little boy, he was naked playing his football, but he'd reached five years old.

And today he was getting his first pair of shorts to wear. Bright red shorts. Wow. And he went behind the tree to put them on because he was embarrassed because they were all looking at him and laughing.

And then when he came out, they all pointed and stared and laughed. And he was even more embarrassed to wear clothes. I never forget it. It changed my whole perspective on stuff, at least for a time.

I've learned to be content, whatever the circumstances, whether well-fed or hungry. I appreciated that compared to this little boy, even though I was a poor college student, I was rich. Massively rich in comparison.

[14:41] I went home, my suitcase full of carvings, wood carvings, I don't know how I got them through customs, and my suitcase empty of clothing, apart from what I had to have to go home in.

You see, you appreciate what you've got when you know what it is to have nothing, don't you? When you remember what it was to be hungry, you appreciate food, and you care about waste. When you know what it is to be poor, you appreciate the fact that you have a few pounds in the bank, and you can look after yourself and not worry.

You appreciate it. You don't take it for granted. You learn contentment. You don't think, I deserve this. You thank God for it. And that's what the Apostle Paul is saying here.

If you learn to appreciate life when you have nothing, and when it's difficult, you will learn contentment when you have the things that keep you comfortable.

Now, Paul says, I've learned to do this. Not stoically. Very easy to think that he's just a self-disciplined, strong-minded individual, isn't it? But you see, Christianity is not stoicism.

[15 : 48] Self-discipline is important, but we don't learn it by just gritting our teeth and getting on with life, and ignoring the hard knocks. No, no. You learn it from the things you suffer.

You learn it from the fact that you might have been without. You learn it from your experiences, and you learn to thank God for it, and then you appreciate what you have.

You learn it, too, by experiencing Jesus in the everyday life. By imitating his example, remembering that he, too, became poor, so that we, through his poverty, might become rich.

And if Jesus was poor, we have no right to expect to be rich. Thank God if we are, but we have no right to it. We learn it, too, from the things he suffered.

If he suffered, we won't think that it's wrong that we should suffer, because if we're following Jesus and being like Jesus, we accept that suffering is also part of our lot. We learn contentment when we're sick and when life goes against us because it went against him.

[16 : 51] You see, we learn to follow his example, and by experiencing him and knowing him, we accept what he says. I can be content if I'm sick in a hospital bed.

I can be content if I have to have an operation to remove a knee or a hip, and they're the latest ones in our church, or whatever else you might need, removing and replacing. Thank God it can be needed and replaced.

Learning contentment by faith, by trusting in Jesus. And it's not stoicism, because stoicism's about man conquering the world by conquering himself, as Zeno put it, but rather it is, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

There is nothing strong about John Winter. There is just a very strong Savior in John Winter that helps me to be content with life. So Jesus is the source of Paul's contentment.

Next slide, please. The power of Jesus within is the secret of strength and endurance. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. That's why I can do everything.

[18 : 02] So don't congratulate me. Congratulate Jesus in me. Ralph Martin says, put it like this, he has learned the secret of deep peace based on detachment from his outward circumstances.

In whatever conditions of life he finds himself, he discovers the will of God for his situation. This in turn arises from his concentration upon the really important things, the invisible and the eternal.

And above all, upon the closeness of his fellowship with Christ on whose strength he constantly draws. That's why. That's why we'll be able to face death in the end.

Because to die is to be with Christ, which is far better. So life can never be a tragedy for a Christian because Jesus is always the source of our contentment.

Paul says, I learned obedience from the things that I suffered. He modeled humility. He modeled obedience to the Philippians.

[19 : 06] He called them to humble themselves like Christ humbled himself. He called them to lowliness of mind so that they might consider others above themselves. He called them to voluntarily accepting a lowly status in life so that if it was their lot to accept it, they would be able to accept it.

He wants them to learn poverty if necessary. He wants them to learn suffering if necessary. He wants them to understand that compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus and being found in him, none of these things are of a great consequence.

And can I just at this point say to you, it is a fool's game to long to be rich, to long to have pleasures, and to long to have comforts in life and to be free from troubles.

It is a fool's game. That is never promised to you by Almighty God. Instead of wanting these things, why not just want to be with Jesus?

Why not just want to accept the life that he sends you away and to be content in that? Because that's where contentment is to be found. Remember I told you this quote from C.T. Studd the other week.

[20 : 29] He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

So if we're in need or we have plenty, if we are well fed or we are hungry, that need not rob us of the joy of having Jesus with us in our lives.

Some of the happiest Christians I ever met were those Christians in Zambia who had virtually nothing. And in contrast, some of the most miserable Christians I've met are in the West where they have so much.

And that tells you an awful lot about our values, doesn't it? The tragedy of the modern world is that people feel they have to come from there to here to find happiness.

It's an illusion. It's an illusion. I've got nothing against people coming from there to here to better their lives. But to think that you'll find happiness just through stuff is an illusion.

[21 : 39] Happiness comes from knowing Jesus and finding our contentment in eternal things.

Okay, so that's the focus. What about the context for a moment?

Next slide, please. The context tells us about Paul being in need and his needs being met.

Remember, he's in prison and when he's in prison the taxpayer isn't paying for his food and clothing and his parchments and his pens or anything else.

The people that provide that are the church. And the church that provided it we're a long way away. Paul is in Rome. The church is in Macedonia. That's in Greece.

They have to cross the sea to get there. It's the quickest route. If they go by land it's a very long way. So he has to wait a long time for his needs to be met. Paul being Paul he's quite reluctant to talk about money.

He doesn't like to do that. Just read 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9. In fact, the church that could have provided the very wealthy church Corinth he didn't ask them to do it because he found there a certain reluctance for them to part with their goods.

[22 : 48] And so rather than asking them and making himself a burden he then asked his representatives to let the people in Philippi know that he has needs. They find out you're talking about weeks and weeks and weeks they find out weeks and weeks later and then they say right, Epaphroditus let's gather together some stuff and we'll send it to Paul.

He couldn't fax it or anything else and transfer it through the internet. So they're taking clothing they're taking parchments they're taking food you know there might be some money but it's not just money it's their stuff.

And he has to wait a long time. And Paul says thank you that you've renewed your concern for me. I knew you were concerned but you had no opportunity to show it. Distance, time you know it's a big problem.

Now it's interesting isn't it Paul's attitude to money in God's provision. because you could you might be tempted to think that when Paul had a need all he did was pray about it and God sent it as if by magic.

Well that sometimes happens but normally what happens is Christians tell one another of needs share needs and then others are prompted to do something about it.

[24 : 01] And both are okay. We will tell you of needs and ask you to contribute to those in the church and we will then just sometimes tell God about it and both ways God will provide.

There's nothing more spiritual than one than the other. So they arrive Paul gets his needs met he then writes to them and sends a letter back to them via Epaphroditus and he says well done what you've done is a wonderful sacrifice from God.

You have amply he said amply supplied my needs. he's got more than he expected. Wow that's really good giving. Thank God for it. And then he says your generosity has not been unnoticed for God will reward you for it.

See God will be no man's debtor. If we give to God God will make sure that we are not in any debt whatsoever. He will make sure that we will be provided for.

He will always reward faithfulness. So Paul says I can rejoice in the Lord. Again he loves rejoicing in the Lord doesn't he? Verse 4 he says it again in verse 10. He just loves to rejoice.

[25 : 10] Thank God that all of my needs have been met through you and thank God that he will meet all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Sometimes when we come to having to give to something we think well maybe I ought to hold some back because I might leave myself short.

But then sometimes God will say and by the way you shouldn't do that you should give out the proportion of your giving so God never asks you to leave yourself short. He asks you to give in accordance with your wages.

And we in the Christian church follow the Jewish tradition of giving a tenth a tithe. So we work out what we earn and then we give a tenth of what we earn to the Lord.

That's not very much. We get to keep 90%. So he never asks us to give beyond that. But people do give beyond that. Sometimes they're tested. Sometimes they're prompted to do that.

And they go beyond. Well, you know, I can honestly say I have discovered in all my years as a Christian that God has never left me in debt. Never. God when you give.

[26 : 21] He will make sure you will be rewarded. He wants you to give with the right heart, with the right motives, not to be showy, not to tell everybody. But he wants you to give because it's a really good thing to do, to give.

It is a sacrifice, Paul says, that is acceptable to God. Just think, when you give, it's a sweet-smelling sacrifice, all the flavor gets to heaven and God says, I love what you did there.

And Paul interestingly says, I discover that I am massively content when I give to God's work. And so there are some points of application very quickly that we've got to learn.

The first is, next slide please, the secret of contentment. Can I ask you, are you content with your life? Thank God.

Great answer. I love it from the front ear. Especially if you, as I do, know their story. Being content with your life.

[27 : 32] It's a really important question to ask yourself. What are you content with? I've learned the secret of being content in every situation. I have learned it from Jesus.

I love the old hymn, I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather have him than have riches untold. When you get to a certain age, you kind of know that's true.

When I was young, I used to think, I'm not sure, because I'd quite like Newcastle in the Premier League. And I'd quite like to have a few million. But when you get older, you know nothing compares to Jesus.

What contentment we can have. To know that he's with me, that he's in me, that I am with him and in him, and I will be with him forever. What contentment.

Do you have it? Do you have it? Because if you don't have it, you have nothing that's going to last you know. Your money will be no good with you when you die. Your families can't go with you when you die.

[28 : 37] All your comforts will be gone. But when you know Jesus, the best is still to come. The second lesson to learn here. Next slide, please.

We won't do that. It would be great to sing. Carry on. The sacrifice of giving. Whenever you give to God, it's never wasted.

A fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to him. Let me quote to you from A.W. Tozer. Tozer talks about this. He says, As base a thing as money often is, yet it can be transmuted into everlasting treasure.

It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor. It can keep a missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality. I love that.

[29 : 42] I just give a little bit of money to the missionaries. And the missionaries went and spoke to somebody who was converted. And one of those little boys that grew up and got an education because of the money that perhaps you give to compassion becomes a doctor who saves lives.

Or that little bit of money you put into the offering gets used to buy food for somebody who's hungry and who as a result of the church meeting their needs for hunger, thanks God for the graciousness of the church and gives their life to Jesus.

as grubby as money is, says Toza, it can be used in the service of Jesus. And then the last thing, the certainty of faith.

My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. See, the certainty of faith. I am rich in Christ.

To be absent from the body will mean that I will be present with the Lord. And that sounds really arrogant, doesn't it? Except it comes from a heart of certainty.

[30 : 56] The Jesus I follow never ever lets me down. He will never leave me or forsake me. He will be with me always even to the end of the world. I have absolute certainty in Him.

He will meet all of my needs according to His riches in glory. in Christ Jesus. Let me end with Jim Simbala.

Faith deals with the invisible things of God. It refuses to be ruled by the physical senses. Faith is able to say, you can do what you like because I know God is going to take care of me.

He has promised to bless me wherever He leads me. Remember that even when every demon in hell stands up against us, the God of Abraham remains faithful to all His promises.

Jesus Christ can do anything but fail His own people who trust in Him. God is faithful.

[31 : 58] And 1 Thessalonians 5, 23 and 24, let's see this verse, says, May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who calls you as faithful, and He will do it.

Amen. Amen.