

Christian Contentment

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[0 : 00] Father God, I pray that you find us humble this morning, coming to your word. Recognizing that you are a sovereign, all-powerful God, and that you spoke to us should be something special that we ought to pay very careful attention to.

And I pray, Father, that this morning's text, the truths contained therein, will be planted deep in our hearts and will grow into vines that bear fruit.

And I pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So you may be asking yourself, I thought we were preaching through the book of Romans. We are. We are still doing that.

Chapter three is where we are, the beginning of chapter three. And I'll start next week, I promise, on chapter three. But the beginning of chapter three in Romans wasn't really what was on my heart this week.

And I went to the doctor on Wednesday and received yet another prognosis of my condition. Those of you who know me well know I deal with a number of health conditions.

[1 : 07] I'm a type one diabetic. I have hypothyroidism. I'm in constant pain. And we're not sure why just yet, although we may be getting to the bottom of it.

But my my autoimmune system, for some reason, is is turning on my body, primarily my glands, the endocrine system.

And one by one, things seem to be getting ticked off that list. My pancreas, my thyroid gland are all being attacked by my autoimmune system. And it sounds kind of cool to have like a like a cranked up autoimmune system.

I wish that also meant that I didn't get sick at all. Unfortunately, it doesn't. I'm just a mess pretty much all the time. Very few moments of my day that I'm not in pain.

I have excruciating headaches most of the time. Last night, I got very little sleep because my left leg just would not stop aching. I don't know why. No idea why. On Wednesday, I found out that I have osteoporosis.

[2 : 10] Isn't exciting. I'm 31 years old. I have osteoporosis in my hips. I may secretly actually be an old woman. I'm not sure yet.

I'll let you know if I figure it out. But but so I'm osteoporotic in my hips. It's not in a terribly advanced state. So there could be some reversal of that. But we also discovered that I have a growth hormone deficiency, which may be what's causing the pain in my body.

At my age, growth hormone is still important for healing and recovering. It still exists. But what it means is that my immune system is also attacking and killing my pituitary gland. So another gland, again, is being attacked.

And so I'm sitting in the doctor's office and I'm I've gone from a bone density scan to an X-ray. And the lady that was going to administer the X-ray said, why are you doing this?

And I said, I really don't know. I'm not sure why this is being done. And she said, you're way too young. Let me go check and see what's going on. And that caused the doctor, who's a good friend of mine, to actually come in and say, hey, we saw something in your lab results.

[3 : 14] We're just checking into it. But you do look like you have osteoporosis. So I'm sitting waiting to hear after the X-rays were done, waiting to hear what was going on. And I thought to myself, should something like this rob my joy?

Should a new prognosis, another thing to deal with, should it rob my joy? And in my head, the resounding answer to that was, no, of course not. It shouldn't rob my joy. My joy is found in Christ. Of course not. But in my heart, I'm not sure I felt the same way. So sitting there with nothing but my phone, I began to run through scriptures in my head, things that would be an encouragement to me in this time.

And my mind was taken to Matthew chapter five, where Jesus preaches what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. And he begins in verse three, running through verse 12, these verses that we call the Beatitudes.

Beatitudes is Latin for happy or joyful or blissful. Each of these verses starts with blessed, which means the same thing, full of joy.

[4 : 20] And it's a joy that isn't affected by outside circumstance. So let's see what he says. What is it that makes these people joyful when speaking to Christians in light of all the things that he's talking about?

We're just going to run through them quick and we're going to move beyond to the book of Philippians. But quickly, I want to show you in verse three, we have the poor in spirit or the person with no spiritual equity.

The person who realizes how broken they are in this world and have no spiritual value whatsoever. What is the encouragement to them? What is it that makes them joyful and is at the center of their joy that they own the kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Verse four, those who mourn or are broken over their sin. They have a promise that they'll be comforted one day.

Verse five, those who are meek, who have the power to act, but it's tempered by love to receive persecution and trouble in this world. They're given a promise that they'll reign one day over the earth.

[5 : 28] Verse six, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who desire godliness and their lives someday that we set free from the captivity of sin.

Their fleshly bodies will cease to exist, will be liberated from the temptation of sin altogether. Verse seven, the merciful, those who are willing to forgive the wrongs do them.

Shall be forgiven. Verse eight. The pure in heart, those with undivided hearts toward God will get to see him.

We'll get to experience him here. We can't, but they will one day. The peacemakers in verse nine, those who share the gospel, those who are about the business of making peace between God and man.

They'll be a part of God's family. They will be called sons of God. Verse 10. Those who are persecuted, who suffer for righteousness sake.

[6 : 38] Again, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And then in verse 11 and 12, when they are reviled and persecuted, when they are mocked, made fun of, seen as strangers and aliens in this world.

Their reward is great. And here's where they find their happiness. John Newton, who was an 18th century Anglican minister, famous for writing the song Amazing Grace, said this.

Suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate and his carriage should break down one mile before he got to the city, which obligated him to walk the rest of the way to the inheritance.

What a fool we should think him if we saw him wringing his hands and blubbering all the way the remaining while. My carriage is broken. My carriage is broken.

What man who has to walk a mile to receive a great inheritance laments the thing that's broken behind him? And so my question for myself this week and my question for you this morning is, do we lament our broken carriage?

[7 : 48] My potty is a broken carriage. Or do we look to the reward and what's beyond? Turn to the book of Philippians with me, please. Paul's letter to the church of Philippi was written from a Roman prison.

It's not something I've experienced. Certainly, Paul is being persecuted for his faith. And I want to show you quickly that joy is crucially thematic in Paul's letter to the Philippians as he works to encourage them to continue in and contend for their faith.

So look with me quickly. I just want to show you the theme, the language that exists throughout. Chapter 1, verse 18. Two times.

What do we see? The word rejoice. Christ is proclaimed in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

Chapter 1, verse 25. He speaks of joy in the faith.

Chapter 2, verse 2. He talks about his joy. Chapter 2, verse 28. Twice, I believe again. No, once in 28, once in 29.

[9 : 01] In 28, that you may rejoice. And in 29, with all joy. 3-1. Finally, my brothers rejoice in the Lord. 4-1.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown. 4-4. It appears twice. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice.

And in 4-10, he says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. I would encourage you as you see words repeat throughout a book that you underline them and see what the writer is trying to say through that.

So this joy is a crucial thematic element in showing them that in order for them to contend for and continue in their faith, joy is a necessary motivation for that.

So joy in Christ fuels Christ-likeness. Joy in Christ fuels Christ-likeness. I'm going to show you three ways that it does so.

[10 : 02] But first, let's look at Philippians 1-21. I think that this is the thesis statement of his letter. Verse 12. He says, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

What does he mean by that? For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. For me, to live here on this earth, to be here in the body, in my flesh, is to experience and know and savor Christ Jesus.

To die is better yet because I get to go be with him. That's what Paul's communicating to us.

Because of the surpassing knowledge of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, I'll remain on.

I love living because I live for Christ. You can feel his joy in that statement. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Weight of Glory*, We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us.

[11 : 08] Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

As Christians, as we live in our flesh, we are far too easily pleased. We trade lesser things for the greater thing that is Christ Jesus, our Lord.

So joy in Christ fuels Christ-likeness in three ways. Number one, by empowering the Christian to resist sin. Fuels Christ-like living by empowering the Christian to resist sin.

Look at chapter 2. We're going to read verses 1 through 15 together. Verse 1. So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Now, you see him saying in verse 2, complete my joy. Further up in verse 25, he's talked about staying on for the Philippians for their progress and joy in the faith.

[12 : 26] So, here's where we've been and where we're moving now. So, if there's any encouragement in Christ, any love, any joy in him, verse 3, do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interest of others. Have this mind among yourself, which is yours, in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven or earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen. Verse 12. Therefore, so in light of all of this, your joy in Christ and what he's accomplished on your behalf, therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as light in the world.

[14 : 01] And what fuels all that? What do we go back to in all that? It's our joy in Christ. It's that we treasure him above all else. He makes everything dim as a result of his great brightness in our life.

Matthew Henry, who was a Presbyterian minister in the 17th and 18th centuries and wrote a commentary on the entire Bible, which is quite useful, once said, The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies and put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.

We'll put our mouths out of pleasure for those tastes with which the tempter baits his hooks. If you love Christ, you won't love this world. If you love him in the measure you should, in light of the gospel of grace, you won't love the things of this world and they'll become tasteless to you. It'll be easy to resist sin because of your great pursuit of Christ. Number two. Empowers us to live Christ-like lives by enabling the Christian to bear up under suffering.

Philippians chapter 4 verses 11 and 12 through 13.

[15 : 30] I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound in any and every circumstance.

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

And he gives us a clue what he's talking about earlier in the chapter, verse 4. He says, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So what is his key to learning in whatever situation to be content? It's the joy he finds in Christ. It's casting his anxieties and his worries at the feet of Christ and living a rejoicing life as a result of him.

[16 : 47] Jeremiah Burroughs, I keep telling you who these people are because I just want you to see that I'm not the only one saying such things. Jeremiah Burroughs was a Puritan pastor, wrote a great little book, cool read, called The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.

I would commend it to you. He said this. Many men think that when they are troubled and have not got contentment, it is because they have but a little in the world and that if they had more, then they should be content.

That is just as if a man were hungry and to satisfy his craving stomach, he should gape and hold open his mouth to take in the wind and then should think that the reason why he is not satisfied is because he has not got enough of the wind.

So a man is hungry and to feed himself, he gapes open his mouth and takes in the wind and then says, man, I'm still not full. I need more wind. No. The reason is because the thing is not suitable to a craving stomach.

Yet there is really the same madness in the world and in the church. The wind which a man takes in by gaping will as soon satisfy a craving stomach ready to starve as all the comforts in the world can satisfy a soul who knows what true happiness means.

[18 : 06] As Christians, we've experienced the joy of Christ. If you haven't, you should doubt your salvation. We know what satisfies.

Why do we run around looking for things that don't? Why do we look to our circumstances, our health, our loved ones for that which cannot satisfy?

Only Christ can satisfy a soul that's alive to him. A great example of that is found in Hebrews chapter 11 verse 24 through 26.

It's a little commentary on Moses by the writer of Hebrews. He writes, by faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Christ Jesus himself is the treasure at the end.

[19 : 08] He is the reward. And Moses, the commentator, says, knew this. The reproach of Christ was greater than the treasures of Egypt.

That's why he was able to be mistreated with the people of Israel. It's phenomenal. Number three, by encouraging the Christian to live radically.

joy encourages the Christian to live radically in two ways. In service and in evangelism.

In service. Philippians 3.8. Paul says, after he's given this pedigree of who he is as a religious person, and he's counted that as loss, in verse 8 he says, Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ. Jesus put it this way in Luke chapter 12.

[20 : 23] Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with money bags that do not grow old, with a treasure in heaven that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth

destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Jesus puts it plainly to us. Don't work for the approval of men here to gain for yourself in the now because eternity is so much more important.

Store it for yourself. Treasures there. What will that treasure look like for us? Will my mansion be bigger than someone else's because I'm a preacher of the word?

Not at all. Not at all. Faithful Christian living gives to us the ability to praise our Savior. Christ himself is the treasure.

And those things that we have done in this life will be judged and will then be given as Clay says, ticker tape. As I say, confetti. We'll be given something to cast at the feet of Christ to praise him for the great work that he accomplished in and through us in this world.

[21 : 32] That's what heaven's going to be all about, everybody. It's going to be loving Christ. We should be about it now. If we have the mind of Christ, Jeremiah 9, 24 says this, I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. Christ himself is happy. He is joyful in these acts of mercy. He finds joy in loving his creation.

And if we're to have the mind of Christ and be on board with his mission, we should be about the same. It also encourages us to deliver radically in evangelism.

So here we see Paul in a Roman prison able to receive visitors, sharing his faith with everyone he has opportunity. I'm sure the Roman guards either became Christians or were very annoyed.

Philippians 1, 18 Paul says, what then? Only that in every way. He's talking about some men sharing the gospel for their own gain. Some doing it out of pure motive.

[22 : 48] Some doing it for their own gain. He says, only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in that I rejoice. Paul was joyful.

He was happy in the good news of Jesus Christ being shared. If Christ is our treasure, the thing we value more than anything else in this world, we'll talk about him.

Am I right? No amount of teasing or persecution, awkwardness will prevent us from doing so. If we're not actively involved in sharing our faith on a constant basis, it is a indictment on what we value.

If you don't constantly talk about your Savior, you don't love him like you ought. J. Campbell White, who was leader of the layman's missionary movement, which was started at the first part of the 20th century, said, most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives.

Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose toward the world he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure, and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans.

[24 : 12] The men who are putting everything into Christ's undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards. Joy, then, or joy found in Christ empowers enables and encourages us to be worthy of that name Christian, to be Christ-like.

Isn't it freeing to know that our motivation doesn't have to be abject stoicism, that our motivation gets to be joy.

We get to seek our greatest happiness. happiness. We are promised by Christ's persecution in this world. We are promised that it will be difficult.

Christians ought to be the most troubled by the world's terms, but the most joyful in the kingdom of God. That's what makes us strange. That's what makes people look at Christians and say, I don't get it.

I do not understand. What is this hope that they have? Peter instructs us to be prepared to give an answer to that, right? If people don't ask you what is the hope you have, why is it that you can bear up under such things?

[25 : 33] Chances are you're not bearing up under such things. Blaise Pascal was a 17th century French mathematician.

Wes shared this with me I think a couple of weeks ago. I had this on my phone so it was an encouragement to me in the doctor's office. They found eight years after his death, sewn in, pinned into the inside of his jacket that he wore, the account of his conversion.

