

Philippians 4:10-13

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[0 : 00] Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Philippians chapter 4. Our text for today will be Philippians chapter 4 verses 10 through 13.

! We are approaching rather rapidly the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Philippian believers. Lord willing, we will complete our study next Lord's Day.

I do hope that your time with us in the Word and this particular letter has been rewarding for you. As it has been for me. Before I begin reading in verse 10, let me remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us, written for His glory and our good.

So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. Philippians chapter 4 beginning in verse 10. Paul writes, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

[1 : 10] 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. We will spend the majority of our time together this morning on the subject of contentment.

With a particular concern for the phrase, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I want to commend to you a book that I'll quote from, I think, twice this morning.

But I brought a copy of it up here. There's a few of these out in the book nook. It's a book by a Puritan named Jeremiah Burroughs called The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment. This is a book that I read in college and it was really shaping for me.

It really helped me to see what the scripture taught about Christian contentment. I grieve the fact that Jeremiah Burroughs called it a rare jewel.

[2 : 08] And I think that it's a rare jewel in our day as well. But there's more to this text than just that. So we're going to consider it in the following outline.

Number one, we'll note Paul's joy. Secondly, Paul's sensitivity. Thirdly, Paul's contentment. And fourthly, Paul's confidence.

So first, let's look at Paul's joy found in the first part of verse 10. He says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

Recall that Paul is writing this letter from Roman house arrest. Did you hear people say prison? Yes, it was a prison, but it was a little different than our conception. It wasn't a max security prison. He was in a home. He would have been chained to a Roman guard. And he would have only received care through the support of others. So it was a place that he had, but he could only receive things there.

[3 : 11] He couldn't leave there as he's chained to this Roman guard. It had been about 10 years since he had last been with these Philippian believers. And when Paul had left them initially and traveled to Thessalonica, the Philippians generously supported his ministry efforts.

You could see this in chapter 4, verse 15 and 16. So Paul is writing this letter in part out of gratitude for their generosity, which was brought to him by Epaphroditus, chapter 2, verse 25.

And Paul here expresses how joyful it made him that they sent such a gift, right? So we've been talking a lot through the letter to the Philippians about joy, abiding joy, deep joy in the Lord.

But you'll note here that Paul also is finding joy in this thing that was done by these Philippian believers, his generosity toward him. I imagine that it likely came as a timely provision.

We don't know for sure, but he very likely was in need and part of his joy. But it's doubtful that this was the primary reason for his joy.

[4 : 26] He states in chapter 4, in verse 17, not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

So there's more going on in this text and in the text that follows than just, thank you so much because I needed things. It's more than that. There's a much deeper, more spiritual thing happening here.

He is not concerned about the circumstance of his provision, but rather the state of the Philippians' hearts. Their generosity toward him was generosity toward God, and he sees it as such, and it brings him joy that they're being generous in this way.

Jesus told the following parable recorded in Luke chapter 12, beginning in verse 16. The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, what shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?

And he said, I will do this. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

[5 : 34] Relax, eat, drink, be merry. But God said to him, fool, this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Beloved, did you know that as your elders pay careful attention to the contributions to the work of the church, we do not do so primarily with an eye toward the balances in the accounts or our ability to pay our obligations, so we have to pay attention to these types of things.

But this is not our primary concern. Our primary concern is with an eye toward the condition of your hearts. Do these people recognize that God has been abundantly generous to them, and therefore they ought to be abundantly generous toward God.

People who understand the generosity of God towards them will turn in generosity toward others. And we'll talk about this a bit more next week.

But Paul's great rejoicing, this joy that we see him have, is because of this evidenced spiritual state of the Philippian believers. Note, secondly, Paul's sensitivity in the last half of verse 10.

[6 : 56] Very briefly, but of great interest, note how sensitive Paul is toward his brothers and sisters in Philippi. He's expressed his great joy at their generosity in the first half of the verse.

In the second, his concern shifts to how they may feel at his initial encouragement. He anticipates what his readers may be thinking and feeling, as if his statement might have been received like this. Finally, you have revived your concern for me, right? I was glad because you finally gave. So he takes a moment to ensure them that he knows they cared for him prior to being able to send him provision.

He says, you were indeed concerned for me. He knows this. He knows that they cared about him. But you had no opportunity. How very thoughtful this is.

How careful Paul is with his words. Beloved, we ought to do the same. We ought to be a people who speak with great care towards others.

[8 : 06] Thirdly, Paul's contentment. We'll spend a good bit of our time here this morning. Verse 11 and 12. He says, not that I am speaking of being in need, right?

It's not even really about the gift to begin with, as I mentioned. For 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. Now, we could stay in verse 11 for many, many weeks.

And we're not going to. So just know, I think, if you've never thought about Christian contentment before, this may be the very beginning of that for you. And it needs to go on. This entire book is written as a response to an explanation of what Paul meant by, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

So pick it up and read it. Let's talk about it. I'd love to say more about contentment than can be said just this morning. But we'll try. We'll try to lay some foundation for what contentment looks like in the life of a Christian.

[9 : 20] Before we consider Paul's contentment, though, let's let's give it a definition. And this is from Jeremiah Burroughs, the rare jewel of Christian contentment. It's on your bulletin if you have one. If for no other reason, you should grab one of these on your way in.

He defined contentment like this. Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition. It's a state of being in relation to how we understand that our good father directs everything in our lives.

Contentment is not a feeling of joy or peace that is defined by our temporal circumstances. It's not defined by the things that are happening around us, which is where the world looks for contentment. And I fear far too many Christians do the very same thing. We live in a world that is aimed at us not being content most readily so that we'll spend money thinking that whatever it is that we purchase will make us content.

[10:40] Just begin to think about the commercials that you consume or what you pin on Pinterest with a mind toward that. What is the aim ultimately at this Instagram feed?

It's to get you to buy things in the link. Your life is not as complete as my life. Therefore, you need. And my wife and I talk a lot about how that corner in the kids' playroom is only clean for the moment that that picture was taken.

They're pumping this at us all the time. Contentment is found in your circumstances. Change your circumstances. Buy these things. Add to your life in this way.

Contentment is not a feeling of joy or peace that is defined by our temporal circumstances. Neither is contentment a feeling of joy or peace that is somehow meditative.

Like you gain some mental state, some nirvana in your mind that separates you from the things that are going on around you. Like kind of a fortitude, a grinning and bear it.

[11:48] Everything's going to be okay. And I am fine. It's not achieved this way either. So it cannot come from without, from temporal circumstances.

And it cannot come from within under our own meditative power. So where does it come from? True and lasting contentment, right?

Joyful, peaceful satisfaction is a feeling that emanates from a settled, eternal circumstance. A settled, eternal circumstance.

Paul tells us that this is a lesson that he had to learn. In verse 11, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

And in verse 12, in any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret. So it's a mindful practice. It's a thing that we must take up and learn.

[12:55] If you were discontented this morning, there are only two possibilities for the state that you find yourself in. Number one, you have never placed saving faith in Jesus Christ.

You have rebelled against the loving kindness of God, the creator God, who fashioned you in his likeness to love him and worship him forever. And because you have rebelled against this God, his wrath rests on you.

You are spiritually dead now and you will remain in the state with accompanying torments forever. You will not escape the judgment of God if you've not placed saving faith in Christ.

Paul tells us in Romans 14, 12, each of us will give an account of himself to God. If this is where you are, you are right to be discontent for you have no reason to feel contentment.

In fact, any contentment you have ever felt is fleeting. It will not last. It's temporal in its nature. But praise be to God for the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[14:08] You do not have to remain in this state, but can turn to him in faith. Jesus met all the righteous requirements of God's law and he paid the penalty owed for your sin so that in him you can be restored back to God and have life now and forevermore.

This is the settled eternal circumstance that I referenced earlier, right? This is the source of true and lasting contentment.

Now, I mentioned there were two possibilities. The second is that you have placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, but you have forgotten about your settled eternal circumstance.

I think so many of us are cerebral so often about doctrine. We know a bunch of stuff, but we don't functionally believe it. It hasn't actually transformed the way that we live.

We fail too often to recall that what we deserve is death and eternal separation from God, right?

This is what we purchased with our sin, but that in Christ we have been given life and presence with him forever.

[15:30] Beloved, we have been saved by God, from God to God. We possess the greatest treasure. How can we be discontent in temporal matters when we have eternal reward?

Why do we continue to look again and again and again to the things of this world to satisfy us when they cannot satisfy us? Again, Jeremiah Burroughs, I think this is the last quotation from the book. He wrote 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.

No, the reason is because the thing is not suitable to a craving stomach. So catch that, right? You're trying to fill your stomach with wind, and that's not the thing you need to fill a hungry stomach.

[16:46] Again, I'm quoting Burroughs. Yet there is really the same madness in the world. 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.

We are too often trying to remedy a problem with a thing not suitable to remedy the problem. We will only ever be truly contented if our contentment is found in Christ.

This is where it is found. If we don't have it, then we have forgotten about this true source of contentment. But Christian, take heart.

Paul says it's a lesson that he learned. It's a process by which he arrived at this place where he learned in whatever situation to be content.

Paul's life seemed to be a crucible of this lesson, right? His life was full of much suffering. I am thankful that we have not yet left the school of Christ, and God will continue to teach us of the glories of being found in him.

[18:06] But we are to be about this work. It's a mindful thing. We must do when you find yourself discontented. If you are in Christ, you must think about the gospel of Jesus Christ, what you actually deserve and what you have.

You deserve the worst of deaths. You have the greatest of treasures. This should motivate great contentment, regardless of what's going on around you.

Let me give you another example of learned contentment from the scripture. So turn with me, if you will, to Psalm 73. You want to be there.

Don't go, oh, he's going to read a verse or two. You want to be in Psalm 73. I'm going to read the entire psalm. So get there with me if you can. The scripture is full of these examples.

This is one of my favorites. Psalm 73. This is a psalm of Asaph, who was a psalm writer. This is what he did for a living. Verse one says, truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

[19:19] Right. So he begins with this great declaration that God is good. And then he walks us through a thought process that he had. And I would imagine that he probably had and he had it again and he had it again as he was learning contentment.

But he records for us this verse two. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped.

For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Think I was discontented. Right. For they have no pangs until death. Their bodies are fat and sleek.

This would have been a positive thing. They had lots of spa days and plenty of good food to eat. Think that way. Fat and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are. They are not stricken like the rest of mankind.

Therefore, pride is their necklace. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness. Their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice.

[20:20] Loftily they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts the earth. Therefore, his God's people turn back to them and find no fault in them.

And they say, how can God know? Is their knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the wicked always at ease. They increase in riches.

Right. So he's juxtaposing his life. Right. And the thoughts he's having about these people. Right. Look at them. They just keep prospering and prospering. Even though they're wicked, they continue to prosper.

Right. He's trying to follow the righteous path and they are getting whatever they want. And they're being wicked. He says, verse 13, all in vain. Have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence for all the day long?

I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. Right. My lot is a miserable lot. Why do I continue to follow this righteous path?

[21 : 20] But then there's a turn in the Psalm verse 15. He says, if I had said, I will speak thus everything he's referred to prior, I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task until I went into the sanctuary of God.

Then I discerned their end. Truly, you set them in slippery places. You make them fall to ruin how they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors like a dream.

And one awakes a Lord. When you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. So what does he do? He recognizes that these people's end is destruction. Right. That they may have.

Right. Riches and glory in this life, but they will not have it in the life to come. Verse 21. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant.

[22 : 25] I was like a beast towards you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory. Right. When we are discontented, brothers and sisters, we are brutish and we are ignorant and we are beastly toward God.

Right. But Asaph recognizes that we are still in the school of Christ. God, our father, in his loving kindness, continues with us, holding our right hand, guiding us with his counsel and receiving us one day to glory.

He says, verse 25. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth I desire besides you. You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

My full satisfaction forever. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish. You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me, it is good to be near God.

[23 : 39] I made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works. Right. Learned contentment. Right. Paul is able to say, Philippians 1, 21.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Right. More of Christ. For the glory of God and for our temporal and eternal good, we need to learn the lesson of contentment.

Right. And this is the foundation on which it sits. Yes. Beloved, may it not be a rare jewel among us. Fourth, let's look briefly at Paul's confidence in verse 13.

He says, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Right. Here is the secret that Paul has learned. Right. This is what he's talking about here. He's not left us guessing.

And as I previously stated, the key to contentment is found in the settled eternal circumstance found in Christ Jesus. Right. That's the him Paul is referring to strengthening him for all things.

[24 : 48] Now, this verse may take the prize for most misquoted verse in the Bible. Right. It is horribly used in our day. This verse is not about winning football games.

Why do we not just have a massive amount of atheist football players? Right. Who quote this all the time and lose half of them are going to lose every time they do this.

Why do they not just give up altogether on God out of his kindness toward them? I suppose. Not about football games. Paul's talking about learning the lesson of contentment regardless of his circumstances.

That's directly what he's talking about. This verse should only be applied to a football game if the one quoting it is speaking of being content whether or not the game is won.

Right. All right, team. It's not really a good pep talk, though, is it? All right, team. Whether we win or lose, we're going to be content because Christ strengthens us to lose. It's not about the temporal circumstance, though.

[25 : 49] It's about the eternal reward. Right. Paul might say, I have learned the secret of facing a win and facing a loss.

Paul is confident that God will provide for all that he commands. Right. So he will be able, whether in abundance or in need, to be content in Christ.

And beloved, we can have this very same confidence. Paul is not some super Christian who's attained far beyond what we can attain.

We also have adoption as sons. We are also found in Christ. We are also spared from this eternal damnation and given to eternal life.

We can have this very same confidence. We can join with Paul in stating, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

[26 : 47] In summary, we, by the grace that God provides, are to find joy in the spiritual help of others, to be sensitive to one another's feelings, to find great contentment in a settled future circumstance.

We are to place all of our confidence in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.