

Philippians 4:10-13

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 11/11/2007

The Secret of Contentment, Part 1

Prayer

Father, we praise You that Your mercy and grace is free, that it is found in Your Son. Father, I pray as we look into Your Word that we would be changed, that we would be like Your Son, that we would allow Him to manifest His life in us, so that Your excellencies would be proclaimed, that people would be saved, that people would be made complete for Your glory. Bless Your Word as it goes out. May we hear it, believe it, receive it and then do it by Your strength. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Sermon

Well as you know living in this society that we live in, the world and our culture breeds a lack of contentment. And you just watch TV for a little while and see the ads on TV; and they are all basically geared towards the fact that you need something and that you need to follow your desires. There is one slogan for a drink company, basically it says, "Obey your thirst." Ultimately to follow your desires and fulfill those desires. But as you know and as we all know, that is really like what my parents would tell me when I was a kid: a frantic search for happiness. Once you fulfill one desire, it seems like there are more desires that need to be fulfilled. It seems like it breeds more lack of contentment, ultimately. You look forward to getting a certain thing. You are all focused on it. And you get that thing, and it is exciting for a little while. And then it wears off, and we start to want something else. Now obviously, the world has no way to deal with their own desires. The world has no way to deal with those run away desires which breed a lack of contentment. But we as believers should not be that way. We should not be like those who are living to fulfill their own desires.

God is a gracious God and He desires us to learn ultimately how to be content. And we are going to see that today, as we look at Paul's "Thank you" to the Philippians that closes this book up. We are going to see, I believe, the secret of contentment. Let's turn in our Bibles together to Philippians chapter 4. And Lord willing, we are going to get through half of this today. And Lord willing we will finish the book of Philippians next week.

But we have been looking at a wonderful book in which the Apostle Paul has revealed his heart towards these Philippians. He has revealed the fact that his circumstances are bad. But the gospel is not imprisoned. He may be chained up to a Roman guard 24/7, but the Gospel is not imprisoned. He has revealed his attitude in the midst of those circumstances because there was the very real possibility Paul could die. And he said, "To live is Christ and to die is gain." "To live is to be for the benefit of the others in the body, these Philippians," he says, "and to die is gain," because he would gain Christ. We saw ultimately that Paul desired Christ to be magnified in every circumstance.

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And then we saw Paul address the Philippians' attitudes, and thus our attitudes. That we are to be considering others as more important than ourselves. We are to have the mindset which was in Christ Jesus. That although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. But He humbled Himself, becoming a bondservant ultimately. Becoming obedient to the point of death. We are to have that mindset of obedience to the Lord ultimately, which will manifest itself in others being more important than ourselves. And then we saw some examples of this wonderful mindset of Christ in Timothy and Epaphroditus and in Paul himself. And then we saw that there would be those who would oppose this truth, that would oppose Christ. We were told to,

² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, (we are the true believers) who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, [Philippians 3:2-3]

And then Paul gave his testimony. If anyone could put confidence in the flesh, religiously the Apostle Paul could do it hands down. He had all the qualifications religiously to make himself "right before God." But he saw all of those things as dung compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord, (as He says) "...my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." And we saw that Paul's mindset was focused on knowing Christ and then being like Christ. Pressing forward, not looking back. Pressing forward to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. And we saw the motivations to imitate Paul and be like him. Now, there are many that are not like that and are headed to destruction. But we believers have a heavenly citizenship, and the Lord God is going to conform us into His image. He is going to transform our bodies also. He is going to complete the work that He has done. Therefore, we are to stand firm in the Lord.

And then I believe we saw some issues that inhibit us from standing firm in the Lord. One is disunity. We saw disunity between Euodia and Syntyche, and how the Lord worked that out through the Apostle Paul. "Be same-minded. Be like Christ." And then we saw we should let our forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. We should be anxious for nothing, but in everything, through prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be known to God. Because the Lord is near, He is sovereign, He is Lord of lords and King of kings, we need to pray rather than worry. And His peace will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

And then we saw the two things that we should continually be thinking about and then doing. We should be continually thinking about the things of Christ revealed in His Word. And then we should be continually doing what we have learned. What we have learned and received we should be doing by His power and strength.

And now, we are going to turn to this final section of the book, in which I believe we are going to see the secret of contentment. Again, would you turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians chapter 4? And we are going to start in verse 10. And I am going to read through the whole passage, but we are only going to look at three verses today Lord willing. But I believe that we are going to see today that those who are content through Paul's example are not driven by want. Those who have truly learned the secret of

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contentment are not driven by want. And secondly we are going to see ultimately the secret of contentment. And then next week Lord willing, we will see that those who are truly content care more about others than themselves. Ok, let's take a look at this first point: those who are truly content are not driven by want. I will read the whole passage. Verse 10,

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. ¹⁵ And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; ¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. ¹⁸ But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:10-19]

I believe the first thing we are going to see as we look at this passage is that those who are truly content, as we look at Paul who was, are not driven by desires or not driven by want. Again, we start back in verse 10, "¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want..." [Philippians 4:10-11a] Now did you notice this portion starts out with a "But"? That is a conjunction. And we are wondering, "Well what is being contrasted here?" And this is a tricky one because there does not seem to apparently be anything contrasted here. He is speaking about setting your mind on things above, those lovely, wonderful things of Christ. And then doing the things that you have learned. And then he says, "But I rejoice greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me." Well I believe although we really are not sure exactly what he is contrasting, sometimes contrasts are evident and clear. I believe what he might be contrasting is that he has gone from his direct commands in the letter for the believers now to his personal, closing thoughts. I think that might be what he is contrasting here.

But regardless of this term "But," notice that Paul says that he rejoices greatly in the Lord. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly" – *megalōs*. Greatly rejoiced! Was caused to rejoice greatly in the Lord, in the context of his relationship with Christ. Paul has been brought great joy. Now why? Why is he rejoicing in the Lord? Some translations say, "that now." The word is literally *oti*, "because." "Because now at last you have revived your concern for me." Now this sounds a little deceiving actually, unless we read the whole passage. Was it that the Philippians were concerned about Paul and then all of a sudden they did

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not care about Paul and then all of a sudden now they are caring about Paul again? I think knowing what this words means actually helps. The word “revived” literally speaks of a plant sprouting up, becoming green and flourishing again. Was it that the Philippians lost concern for Paul? Middle of verse 10, “Indeed you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.” They never lost a concern for the Apostle Paul, but here in our text it says they lacked opportunity. Evidently Paul is saying it was not that they were not concerned, but they lacked opportunity. And now that the opportunity has arisen, he rejoices in this.

Now some of you might be saying, “I still do not understand what is going on here with this context.” Let me share some history concerning the Philippians and the Apostle Paul. Look down to verse 15.

¹⁵ And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, (you see, Philippi is in Macedonia. And he is talking about when he first came to them with the Gospel. He shared the Gospel with the Philippian jailer ultimately when they (Paul and Silas) had been beaten. And then he shared the Gospel with Lydia and the Philippian jailer. And he says, “...at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia...”) **no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; [Philippians 4:15]** “Philippians, you gave when no one else gave.” He says, “I remember that. I remember that. You know that.” **¹⁶ for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. [Philippians 4:16]**

So what does Paul mean by they were “concerned, but lacked opportunity?” Well, I think the Philippians lacked opportunity possibly in a couple ways. And we do not know for sure, but there are some things we can gather from different passages of how they lacked opportunity.

First of all, possibly, it is apparent from the Scriptures that the Philippians were quite poor. The Philippians were poor. The Macedonians were very poor. And if you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and let’s turn there because I want to read a portion of this. The Apostle Paul is trying to encourage the Corinthian church to give, not putting them under compulsion but encouraging them. And he is using the example of the Macedonians. And those in Macedonia, one area of that is Philippi. Second Corinthians 8:1,

¹ Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, (that is those Macedonian churches; that includes the Philippians.) **² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. [2 Corinthians 8:1-5]**

These Philippians were terribly poor, and Paul did not make any demands upon them. But they wanted to participate in the ministry financially. They wanted to share. And they shared over and above their poverty. But ultimately, they shared first of themselves to the Lord and then the Apostles ministering.

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Just a side note: we need to be careful not to be writing checks to this ministry and that ministry and not ministering ourselves. We need to be involved, serving Christ; and as we are serving Christ, He puts on our hearts whom to share with, those finances ultimately. These Philippians were very poor and they gave. But quite possibly they were so poor now, they did not have opportunity to give anymore. That is one possibility. Paul knew it. They did not have any money now. There is no way they could support. They lacked opportunity. They still cared. That is possible.

Or maybe possibly there was no one available to deliver this gift to Rome from them. Rome was no small journey from Philippi – about 1,500 miles. And that is on foot. And think of someone without the security that we have these days, carrying a large amount of money on foot 1,500 miles in this culture. Very, very dangerous. Quite possibly they did not have opportunity to get it to him. And there is another possibility ultimately too – that maybe they had lost contact with the Apostle Paul when he was arrested. They cared, they were concerned, but they lacked the opportunity to get it to him. We do not know, and God does not tell us. But ultimately Paul says, “You were concerned. I know you were still concerned in the interim. And now the opportunity has arisen for you to share that concern, and I rejoice.” Paul is rejoicing that they are concerned and sharing with him.

The Apostle Paul understood that true concern will manifest when opportunity arises. Folks, you can be concerned about something and not be able in God’s sovereign hand to do something about it. But that does not take away the concern. And when God manifests those opportunities, you will do what the Lord has put on your heart. Verse 10, ¹⁰ “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me (it has sprouted and flourished again); indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.” [Philippians 4:10]

It is interesting this word “concern” is a word we have seen throughout Philippians. *Phroneó* – it means “think.” “Concern” just means you are thinking about somebody. They were concerned about the Apostle Paul. And Paul rejoices. He rejoices they were so concerned that they sent Epaphroditus to aid him in his imprisonment. Let’s look down, verse 18 now, back in Philippians 4.

¹⁸ But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. [Philippians 4:18]

The Apostle Paul received their generous gift – their offering to the Lord by serving the Lord through giving to the Apostle Paul. And he says he rejoices gladly. He rejoices gladly.

You know, on a side note, we could really learn from the attitude of the Philippians in giving – their desire to participate in the ministry. When you give, (Spirit-led, not out of compulsion, but when the Lord drives your heart towards His body to give), you participate, as we will see, in the ministry. You participate. Paul would say, “You participate in my tribulations.” You participate in the ministry. It is no small thing. Whatever God calls us to do in whatever element, we participate together as a body to get out His Word, to proclaim His excellencies, to serve Him for His glory.

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And I want to ask you, what is your giving like? Do you contribute to those who are doing God's work in the body, who are in need? I mean, we all should be serving the Lord, right? And if someone is in need, do you give to that? Do you care about that? Are you sharing and rejoicing in that? Paul rejoiced that the opportunity had arisen. I want to ask you, do you have an opportunity to serve someone in the body by helping them out? If you love the Lord, then you will! If we see a brother in need and we do not take care of that need, how could the love of Christ be in us? When a body functions properly, the whole body works together to take care of those things. And it is not out of compulsion. It is out of a love for the Lord and His church. Paul understood that true concern would be manifest when the opportunity arose.

Now at this point, some might misunderstand the Apostle Paul. They might think, "The Apostle Paul is about the money. He wants the money and he is buttering up these Philippians to get another gift!" And Paul says right here, we will go back to 10, ¹⁰ "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want..." [Philippians 4:10-11a] "Not that I speak from want..." Or literally, "According to want." According to want. The word "want" can be translated "poverty." It speaks of a need or a want or desire, ultimately to have something taken care of physically. He is not speaking in the context of being needy or wanting anything. He is rejoicing, as we will see in this passage, because the Lord has brought these Philippians to do this and there is great eternal reward for it; and he rejoices in that. His rejoicing in the Lord is not based on his own need or want. The Apostle Paul was not driven by his need. He was not driven by his felt needs. As we will see, he had learned to be content in any and every circumstance. ¹¹ "Not that I speak from want; for (he is going to explain) I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." [Philippians 4:11]

So then folks, those who are truly content do not speak or function based on their desires and wants, right? If you are focusing on filling your wants, you are not content. That is an evidence that you have a lack of contentment and you need to learn contentment. And I praise God that in this passage, Paul says, "I learned the secret of contentment," because we all start from not having understood it. And the Lord wants us to learn and understand and be content. I want to ask you, are you driven by your wants? Then you will be circumstance-driven, right? You will be. Because sometimes we do not get our wants. And then when we get our wants, we want more. This is how the world functions, based on how they feel – their felt needs. This is what the church is catering to these days, which breeds a lack of contentment in the body of Christ. Paul was not this way. Paul was not this way. He had learned to be content.

Now how and why did Paul learn to be content? Ultimately we will see here that those who are truly content know that their contentment is not based on circumstance but actually learned in circumstance. And, that Jesus Christ is sufficient for all circumstances. Let's continue on here. I will back up to 10 and read through 13.

¹⁰ "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to

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be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” [Philippians 4:10-13] What a wonderful verse.

Now the word translated “content” here is used only once but there are variants of it in Scripture. *Autarkés* speaks literally in Greek of being self-sufficient. It means not needing anything from outside. Now we know from Scripture, that is not *exactly* what Paul is saying here. We Christians do not need anything from outside *because* we have Christ. We are not “self-sufficient,” we are Christ-sufficient. We are content. We will see later that Paul’s contentment was completely centered around Christ, doing all things through Him. “¹³I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” [Philippians 4:13]

Initially we need to recognize that Paul is trusting completely in the sufficiency of Christ. That is the context of his contentment. It is not a self-sufficiency apart from others. It is a Christ-sufficiency, as we will see. So then our passage says, “For I have learned to be content.” To not be in want of anything. To not be in want of anything. Now in Scripture it is interesting, Paul says he has “learned” here. But remember, we have commands in Scripture in the context of finances to be content. We are commanded to be content. First Timothy chapter 6, let’s turn there also. First Timothy 6. And there were false teachers that Paul was addressing who were actually saying that if you do good and are godly, that this will gain you position in Christ. And Paul flips that around and he says basically, “True godliness really is a means of great gain, but not in the context that these false teachers are sharing.

First Timothy 6:6:

⁶ But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. (And he is going to explain this) **⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world,** (And you see the opposite is these false teachers were not content. They wanted stuff, right?) **so we cannot take anything out of it either. [1 Timothy 6:6-7]**

When you were born, were you born with shoes on? Did you have a TV or an iPod? We brought nothing into this world! We will take nothing out of it.

⁸ And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. (If you have food and you have shelter, you should be content, right?) **⁹ But those who want to get rich** (“want” right?) **fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. [1 Timothy 6:8-9]**

If you desire money, you are in deep trouble. “Those who want to get rich,” sounds pretty simple - “I want to get rich.” It says “fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.” You see this picture of plunged into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰ For the love of money (not money but the love of money) **is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it** (that’s just desiring it. Desiring to have a little more to take

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care of these issues. Just having a little more. “If I had just a little more money, we could really take care of our finances, we could really rest in this area.” Those who desire or longed for it...) ***have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.*** ¹¹ ***But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. [1 Timothy 6:10-11]***

Don't pursue riches. Pursue characteristics that are exemplified in Christ and a relationship with Him. If we have food and shelter, we are to be content. That is a command. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way, Hebrews chapter 13, and I will read this for you.

⁵ ***Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," [Hebrews 13:5]***

Be content in what you have. You have Christ! He will never leave you nor forsake you. Be content in what you have; you have everything. You have Christ. Be content. We are going to see that. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Ok so, we are commanded to be content, right? But here we see God's graciousness as we learn the process of being content. He says, “I have learned to be content.” The verb back in our passage in verse 11 is actually in an aorist tense. What does that mean? It is a completed action. Paul has learned this and the action is complete. He is not relearning contentment. He has learned it. He has learned it. Completed action. And actually in this text it is emphatic. “I have *learned* it! I have *learned* it!” He is not being prideful, we will see, because it is based on a total dependence on Christ. The Apostle Paul is speaking of coming into a new condition that he was not in before. “I have *learned* contentment. I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” Whatever circumstances! Then the middle of verse 12, “In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret.” Any and every! That covers everything right? Every circumstance there is – “I have learned.” Completed action. Paul had learned in any and every circumstance, we will see, Christ is sufficient. Any and every circumstance.

Oh brothers and sisters, what is the downfall of our walk at times? Our circumstances, right? Is it not our circumstances that throw us off kilter? Is it not our circumstances that cause us and tempt us to want and desire and not be satisfied? But folks, Paul had learned and he realized that God is sovereign over circumstances. And God puts us in the crucible of circumstances that we might learn to be content. To totally rest on the sufficiency of Christ.

So what did Paul learn? Ultimately here, specifically in our passage – “For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.” And then he gives an illustration, verse 12. (Remember he is sharing concerning their financial gift; And this is a financial illustration.) ¹² “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity;” [Philippians 4:12a] The verb “I know” is not *gnosis* or *epignosis*. It is *oida*. Well what does that mean? It is speaking of knowledge coming through experience. “Through the experiences God has taken me through, I know how to do this.” It is in a

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perfect tense. What does that mean? He has come to this knowledge in the past and that affects him now in the present. "I know; I have come to this understanding on how to live with humble means and how to live in prosperity." We do not need to know Greek to recognize what he is saying. "I know how to get along without money and I know how to get along with money," right? That is what he is saying. Live in prosperity or humble means.

And folks, true contentment means you are able to get along with a little and you are able to get along with a lot. It does not matter what you have. You are content because you have Christ. Whether you are rich or poor, Christ is still your sufficiency for every circumstance and situation. Now often we think of the difficulty of being content in the context of being poor. That is really what we think about. We think of the difficulty of being content when we are poor. But folks, we are not poor! We are one of the richest nations in the world. The poorest of our poor are very wealthy compared to those who are truly poor. There is an equal and opposite temptation to not be content when we have money. When we are sufficient. What do I mean? We can have an abundance and that can bring about incredible temptation as Dennis read in Deuteronomy 8 to forget to rely on Christ, to forget to rely on His sufficiency. We forget the Lord. We forget the Lord. Deuteronomy chapter 8, I will just briefly remind us of this. As they are coming into the land and Moses is giving them the law again, he says, "God brought you through these circumstances in the wilderness that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And he says in verse 11, "¹¹Beware lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments..." [Deuteronomy 8:11a] And he goes through, as Dennis read, and shares: "Once you into this good land and you have all these things, that you forget the Lord." Isn't it when we are self-sufficient we forget the Lord, we don't trust Him? We just move along in our day. When things are going well, we just move along in our day. We actually are not content in terms of Christ's sufficiency.

What does the writer of Proverbs say about our basic nature concerning riches and poverty? Proverbs 30:8-9,

⁸ Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, ⁹ Lest I be full and deny Thee and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God. [Proverbs 30:8-9]

When we are poor we get mad at God. He is not supplying our needs. When we are supplied we forget God. Both those things are equally dangerous for the Christian. Paul says, "I have learned. I have learned. And I know how to get along with humble means. I also know how to live in prosperity."

Look at the end of verse 12 into 13, "^{12b}in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." [Philippian 4:12b] "Being filled," having food, not starving or going hungry, actually going hungry. "Both having abundance and suffering need" – the full range of the spectrum Paul has learned. *Manthano*, we saw that last week. He has learned to be content in Christ. Folks, we need to learn to be content in Christ.

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It is through his circumstances that Paul has come to the knowledge of how to be content in his relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was brought through and I have many passages, I will just read a couple concerning the circumstances Paul was brought through. Second Corinthians 1:8,

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, (this is bad stuff) that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; (this is bad news) ⁹ indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, [2 Corinthians 1:8-10]

Paul was focused on Christ's sufficiency in the midst of terrible trials. He is content. Do you recognize, folks, when God brings you through a season of poverty? I am not talking about poverty because of your sin. We need to repent of that if we are bad managers of money and we are sinning and we do not complain – "I am really hurting here" – we confess our sin and we repent and we step forward in righteousness in our finances. I am talking about when God brings you through a season of poverty. He is teaching you to rely on Christ. And when God brings you through a season of abundance He is teaching you to rely on Christ. And the Apostle Paul had learned the secret.

Oh believer, learn it. Learn the secret. That we could say not in pride but for God's glory, "I have learned the secret. I have *learned* it." This word "secret" as we will see is a pagan word basically speaking of an initiation into foreign religions or secret religions. Paul is using it and sanctifying this word in the context. He has learned this secret that others do not know. It is not apparently evident. But we believers can learn the secret.

Well what is the secret to contentment? Verse 13, "¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." [Philippians 4:13] That is the secret. That is the secret! Now verse 13 is a very complicated verse in the original language, which is Greek. And we need to unpack it to thoroughly understand it. It is a complicated verse. Our text begins with the phrase actually in Greek, "All things." It is emphatic. Think about it. Everything, all things I can do through Christ who strengthens me. There is not one thing that is excluded in the phrase "all things" right? Not one thing. But there is a context to this passage. It is contentment in the midst of external financial circumstances that Paul had been brought through. But ultimately this applies to so many areas. But we need to be careful we do not twist it and take it wrongly.

He says, "I can do." The verb "I can do" is *ischuó*. It means "being strengthened, given the ability." "I have been given the ability. All things, I have been given the ability." Now it is interesting too (as I shared it is a complex verse) we have it translated here "I can do all things through Christ..." Your Bibles will probably have a little note there that says literally "in." If you look at your Bibles, a little note, and it will say literally "in." In the Greek text it literally says, "I can do all things *in* Christ..." *En* is the Greek preposition that is used here. This idea of being in Christ or in Him. You say, "Wait a second, you keep saying 'Christ' but my Scripture says 'Him.'" Well ultimately some Bibles will say "Christ" and some will

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say “Him.” Well there are different sets of manuscripts and some of the oldest ones do not have “Christ;” it says “Him.” Most of the newer ones, the majority of them have the word “Christ.” But ultimately, regardless of whichever way your Bible says, the context is clear that this is speaking of Christ. Indeed in Philippians, the term “in Christ” is used ten times. And if you skip down to verse 19, we see that it is in Christ our needs are supplied. Chapter 4, verse 19, ¹⁹ **And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. [Philippians 4:19]** Thus I believe he is saying he has been given the ability “to do all things in Him who strengthens me.” That word “strengthen” – *endunamoó*– we get the word *dunamos*, we get the word “dynamite.” It speaks of power. God strengthening us, Christ strengthening us, enables us to do all things. Paul is saying, “All things I am given the ability in Him who continually empowers me.”

Now I think it is important that we recognize what the secret is. And I believe the term “in Him” clearly reveals the secret. All things in Him. If we are in Him and true believers are, if we are abiding in Christ, we will be empowered by faith to do whatever He calls us to do. We need to abide in Christ. We need to be in Him. We will see this in a little bit. When I am walking in my flesh, in my own abilities, I have no strength from God. When I am abiding in Christ and His Word in me, then He empowers me to do all things He is leading me to do and strengthens me.

Now I need to make one caveat here. This is not a blanket promise that we can do anything in Christ. Can I be President because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me? Can I be an astronaut or win the Indy 500 because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me? Can I get that job because I am promised I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me? Folks, the promise is not based on our wants! “Not that I speak from want...” It is based on God’s sovereignty over our lives, in our circumstances. “I can do everything that God brings me into if I abide in Him!” That is what he is saying. If the Lord is bringing you into being something like the President, if that is His will for you and He is bringing you, then yes you can do that in Christ as you abide in Him. But it is not based on our will but His will. It is not a blanket promise. Paul had simply learned in the crucible of life’s circumstances to rest in the sovereignty of God. That is the secret. To rest in Christ. “All things I have been given the ability to do in Him who strengthens me.”

Paul learned the secret. Christ will empower us to do everything He requires. Christ will empower you to do everything He requires. Everything He has commanded you to do, if you abide in Him, He will empower you to do it, and it is by faith that we realize that. He has called me to preach; only He can empower me to do that. He has called you to serve and teach or whatever it might be; only He can empower you to that. He has called you to raise up your children in the fear and admonition of Lord; only He can empower you to do that. He has called you to love your wives like Christ loved the church; only He can empower you to do that. He has called wives to submit according to what it says in God’s Word; only He can empower you to do that. If you trust Him, He will do it. “I can do those things.” Paul knew what God commands. Truly applied in its right context, “I can do in Christ who strengthens me.” That is the secret. It is Christ. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the power of Christ manifest in a yielded life. Whether I am poor, whether I am rich, whether I am hungry, whether I am well-fed – whatever God allows in my life, I have learned the secret of contentment.

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What has God placed you into? Are you resting or wrestling? Are you powerless to respond or empowered by the living God? The following passages share this basic same truth that we believers must learn. John 15, if you want to turn there with me, as Jesus is sharing with His disciples. John 15, verse 4. He has given an illustration of the vine and the branches. John 15:4,

⁴ "Abide in Me, and I in you. (In Christ, right? In Him.) As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ("I can do all things in Him") ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (That is a statement. If you continually, habitually do not abide in Christ, you are not in Him.) ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, (There is the connection between the Lord working through His Word by His Spirit. "If you abide in Me" – resting in Christ and His words abide in us. He says,) ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this is My Father glorified, ¹that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." [John 15:4-8]

How do we prove to be His disciples? His Word in us, we abide in Him, and we bear fruit. "I can do all things through Christ, or in Christ, who strengthens me." That is the life of faith. We trust Christ in every circumstance. "I have learned to be content." Ephesians chapter 1, Paul prays for these saints. And He shares some truth that he wants us to know, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:15,

¹⁵ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, (Hey, when you trust Christ and it is evidenced by true love, praise God! He is thankful. Truly saved.) ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom (or literally "spiritual wisdom") of revelation in the knowledge of Him.(It is in the knowledge of Christ.) (Having had, or) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know (three things, first) what is the hope of His calling, (second) what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and (thirdly) what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. [Ephesians 1:15-19a]

I can do, I am given the ability to do all things in Him who strengthens me. God wants us to realize that Christ will strengthen you and empower you to do everything He calls you to do. You have to trust Him. His Word has to be manifesting and abiding in your life. You need to abide in Him. Chapter 3 of Ephesians, verse 20,

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, [Ephesians 3:20]

And one of my favorite verses, in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 5,

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⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, [2 Corinthians 3:5]

I do trust His adequacy. I trust His ability to work through me. I do not trust my adequacy; I am not adequate. And folks, we basically fall into four different areas concerning this abiding in Christ and His adequacy. Sometimes we will say, "I am adequate, I can do it," right? And that is basically pride because we are stepping out on our own. Otherwise we will say, "I am not adequate and He is not adequate either. He is not going to do it. I don't believe Him." Right? "And I don't believe His Word." And we have a pity party and that is pride also, right? Because we are self-focused. Another one we say is, "I am adequate. I have got all these skills. And God can use me and He is adequate too." Right? We are still relying on our own strength. And then the last one which we see in this Corinthians verse. We are not adequate, but He is adequate. And I trust Him to empower me for every good deed, every circumstance, everything in life.

Oh brothers and sisters if we just did that in our everyday lives, in every circumstance. If we just learned the secret of contentment. Paul was afflicted with a thorn in the flesh. We do not know what it was. We can guess, but God does not tell us. He obviously does not want us to know. But it was something that was humbling him because he would sin if he did not. He had seen these revelations and he would be bragging and exalting himself. He would be sinning. And it says that to keep him from exalting himself, he was given a thorn. Second Corinthians 12,

⁷ And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, (that is sin) there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (And now we see the mindset of the one who could do all things in Christ.) **Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, ("I am well content when I am poor because God is sovereign. I am well content when I have an abundance because God is sovereign. He is going to do through me in any and every circumstance what He calls me to do. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses,") with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. [2 Corinthians 12:7-10]**

Are you poor? Learn to be content. Are you rich? Learn to be content. Are you in a difficult circumstance? Learn to be content. God is working in you. "I have been given the ability to do all things in Him who empowers me."

Let me ask you, are you content in your circumstances? Have you learned the secret of contentment? Faith in Christ living through you. Do you realize that when you rest in Christ, He will empower you to do everything He calls you to do? Raising your kids? It is impossible. I am not adequate for that, but He

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is going to empower me. I can do all things in Him. When I abide in Christ I will raise my kids right when I am abiding in Him. He will strengthen me. Whatever application, as I trust Christ, not from my own wants and desires, but from His revealed will in Scripture. And what is the result of that? God is glorified. God is glorified because Christ is manifest. It is He who does it through us.

So then we see those who are content are not driven by want. Those who are content have learned the secret. "I am given the ability to do all things in Him who empowers me, who strengthens me." Oh brothers and sisters, if we only saw our circumstances in this light, what a changed life we would live. Have you learned the secret of contentment? It can be learned from His Word by His Spirit through His power.

Prayer

Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank you that the secret is not something kept from us. That You have freely revealed it to Your people. That it is Your Son manifesting His strength in us as we abide in Him, and His Word in us. That we can do and are given the ability to do whatever You call us to do. Father, may we not store up this truth like manna and have it rot. May we live by it moment by moment, day by day, recognizing You are able to accomplish through us what You desire in Christ. May we be those of faith who know Your will from Your Word, not from our want, and then step out in faith and trust You to work it through us. I pray this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

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