

知足常乐的秘诀——腓立比书 4:10-13

The Secret to Joyful Contentment – Philippians 4:10-13

Introduction, outline

- Scripture reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; Philippians 4:10-20.
- Sermon text: Philippians 4:10-13 (NASB95)

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 \square through Him who strengthens me.

- As the old Chinese saying goes, “A content person is always joyful.” Have you seen someone who manifests real joyful contentment? A content person always finds a flower in the most barren desert; a discontent person always finds a pile of dung in the greenest meadow.
- True joyful contentment is only possible for those in Christ. The Bible clearly teaches that true satisfaction can only be found in the Lord. One characteristic of the world is the incapability to be content. (cf Ecclesiastes 5:10; 6:7; Proverbs 19:23)
- But many Christians do not manifest joyful contentment! Today’s text will show you the secret of joyful contentment in the Lord.
- Outline:
 - Title: The Secret to Joyful Contentment
 - 1. The Resulting Expression of Contentment (v10)
 - 2. The Learning Process to Contentment (vv11-12)
 - 3. The Power Source for Contentment (v13)

The Resulting Expression of Contentment (v10)

- “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly”: The result of contentment is joy. For, to a content person, everything is an extra gift of grace, hence a source of joy. “In the Lord” indicates this kind of joy only belongs to those in the Lord. “Greatly” implies this is extra joy, not the basic joy in the Lord, but extra joy, because Epaphroditus has just brought generous giving from the church to Paul (v18). Thought the basic joy in the Lord is independent of external circumstances, you can have extra joy when you see God’s work in every circumstance. So, there are only two kinds of proper attitude for a Christian: to rejoice, or to rejoice greatly. There is absolutely no legitimate reason for not rejoicing.

- “that now at last you have revived your concern for me”: Paul’s extra joy isn’t for his own personal gain, but for their love. Paul’s joy is not self-centered, but other-centered. What he seeks is “for the profit which increases to your account.” (v17)

Ponder : The reason for joy is the love of the saints, but the source of joy is the Lord. Paul’s rejoicing is in the Lord, not in the saint’s love. How to understand? Answer: All things are but means for Paul to know more of Christ. The end goal is Christ. The true value of all things is how they can help us know more of Christ. Apart from this value, all things are but rubbish. (3:8) The love of the saints gives Paul a more intimate knowledge of the love of his Lord.

- “indeed, you were concerned before”: Concern is out of love. The Philippians love Paul, so they think of his needs often and how they can help support his ministry work (v16). Christians are to “set their mind on [same Greek word as “concerned”] the things above” (Colossians 3:2). Our love for heavenly things ought to cause us to think about the Lord’s will all the time and think how to please Him in all things.
- “but you lacked opportunity”: An atheist sees opportunity as random chance without design or purpose; but Paul’s view on opportunity is based on his trust on God’s sovereign and wise control of all things who causes all things to work together to conform those who love God into Christlikeness. (Romans 8:28-29)

Theology keypoint : Divine providence. God’s providence is His personal governance of His created world, guiding all things to accomplish His ultimate purpose of glorifying Himself. God works in two ways: by miracles, and by providence. Miracles happen when God *suspends* natural laws to do certain things; while providence is God’s work *through* natural laws. The latter seems ordinary, but is actually a greater miracle.

Since all circumstantial factors are God’s loving providence to fulfill His good will, Paul can always rejoice in the Lord with contentment in all things.

The Learning Process to Contentment (vv11-12)

- “Not that I speak from want”: Paul is not saying he has no lack, but that he’s not speaking this because of lack. He is a prisoner as he writes, and so surely suffers some lack of physical needs. However, his joy is not a result of his physical needs being met.
- “to be content in whatever circumstances I am”: This phrase reaffirms that his joy is truly not a result of his need being met, but that he has learned to be joyfully content in whatever circumstances he finds himself.
- “for I have learned”: Contentment is learned, and there is a learning process. If you have not learned to be content, don’t give up. Contentment in the Lord is what Paul learned. Learning requires diligent work. You must be humble and teachable and know contentment is something you must learn.

“content” is a compound word: “Self”+“Sufficient.” It’s not the kind of self-sufficiency that doesn’t rely on God, but it means this attitude that is not dependent on the circumstance at all.

- “in any and every circumstance”: Repetition emphasizes Paul’s contentment in the Lord is totally unrelated to circumstances. He can be content in the Lord in any and every circumstance.
- “humble means.....prosperity.....filled.....hungry.....abundance.....need”: Paul has experienced both extremes. We sometimes say, prosperity can bring more temptation to one's soul, for the more you have the more you want and the more prone to discontentment. True, but don't underestimate the temptation of difficult circumstances. The poverty Paul describes with these words is the kind of poverty that lacks food, clothing, or the shelter of a roof.

None of these circumstances can steal Paul’s contentment. This is something he has learned. And he tells you this so you know you don't need to worry about any circumstance you haven't yet gone through. He wants you to know the grace of Christ is sufficient. His power is sufficient to sustain you so you can face all circumstances God ordained for your life with joyful contentment.

- “I have learned the secret”: How has Paul learned this secret? What’s the learning process?
 - 1) **Studying the Bible.** He has been studying God's word since childhood. Although he was not saved then, the accumulation of knowledge of God’s Word laid a firm foundation for his understanding of God's will after his salvation.

Consider these OT verses on contentment in the Lord: Psalm 1:1-3; 16:8-9; 23:1; 28:7; 63:5.

- 2) **Knowing the Lord.** True learning starts at the moment of salvation. Without a real knowledge of the salvation of Christ, no matter how rich your biblical knowledge is, you cannot learn contentment in the Lord.

Consider Paul’s salvation. Christ’s calling to him in Acts 9:4 showed him that Christians are united with the Lord, so even suffering is for the Lord and hence a source of joy. (cf Colossians 1:24; Romans 5:3-5) 。

- 3) **Maturing through trials.** Through the trials God gave him, Paul practiced what he had learned from the Bible for a deeper knowledge of the Lord.

Consider the tremendous suffering Paul experiences (2 Corinthians 11:23-30) and the purpose of suffering (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

The Power Source for Contentment (v13)

- “all things”: Same as “in any and every circumstance” above, referring to all circumstances, namely, humble means, prosperity, filled, hungry, abundance, and need. All things refer to these! Not sport games, not final exams, not job interviews. This verse is not a magic spell for

wishful thinking, don't fall into the trap of prosperity gospel. The true meaning of this verse is way more precious than their distorted understanding! Don't abuse this verse and devalue these precious words.

- “can do”: Literally “have strength”, referring to spiritual strength. Here is the summary of the secret Paul has learned: Through the spiritual strength from Christ, Paul can face all circumstances with joyful contentment!
- “through Him who strengthens me”: Joyful contentment is not through self improvement, not through encouragement from man, not through the lies of secular psychology, but through Him who strengthens me. The Lord has said to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:9), and so Paul learned to be content. Contentment manifests the power of Christ.

“But a Christian finds satisfaction in every circumstance by getting strength from another, by going out of himself to Jesus Christ, he is in this way enabled to bear whatever God lays on him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ. there is strength in Christ not only to sanctify and save us, but strength to support us under all our burdens and afflictions, and Christ expects that when we are under any burden, we should act our faith upon Him to draw virtue and strength from Him.” – Jeremiah Burroughs

How to receive the strength of Christ? Listen to the words of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who once was an honored medical doctor before becoming a full-time pastor.

“Health is something that results from right living. Health cannot be obtained directly or immediately or in and of itself. [It] is the result of right living, and I say exactly the same thing about this question of power in our Christian lives. ... The secret of power is to discover and to learn from the NT what is possible for us in Christ. What I have to do is to go to Christ. I must spend my time with Him. I must meditate upon Him, I must get to know Him. That was Paul's ambition—‘that I might know Him’. What else? I must do exactly what He tells me. I must avoid things that would hamper. If in the midst of persecution we want to feel as Paul felt, we must live as Paul lived. I must do what He tells me, both to do and not to do. I must read the Bible, I must exercise, I must practice the Christian life, I must live the Christian life in all its fullness.”-----Martyn Lloyd-Jones