

Sunday, June 26, 2022

The Secret to Contentment is Christ

Please turn to Philippians 4:10-13, pg. 982

- **The Big Dipper** has always been a source of peace; a feeling of contentment
 - Grew up in SC, Flashlight story. I have almost always been able to find it.
 - Arrows everywhere pointing to God. We simply need to look...

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Psalm 19:1

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:20

We simply need to look.

Title- The Secret to Contentment

Please turn to Philippians 4:10-13

-Stand, Read, Pray

Main Point- The Secret to Contentment is Christ

- Vs. 10, Context

- **Exposit**, Paul's in jail as he writes of this great Joy found in Jesus! Their revived concern and **opportunity** was because of this.
- When we think of joy we think of circumstance, but biblical joy is anchored outside of our circumstance and instead anchored to Christ!
 - Review- **Therefore, anchored in the Gospel. Address non-Christians.**
 - Rejoice in the Lord, Be not anxious, pray, be thankful,
 - Read Phil. 4:7

- The “guarded mind” thinks or meditates on whatever...
- Read vs. 8-9. What does it look like to have the “God of peace” with you?

Paul gives a personal testimony of this peace... but adds to this idea and uses the word “contentment”, **The Secret to Contentment is Christ.**

Vs. 11, **Learn;** to learn from experience, often with the implication of reflection—‘to learn, to come to realize.

-Give it time... It’s a journey

MY PRAYER IS THAT WE WOULD ALL TAKE A STEP TO FIND CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST!

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all ¹sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

The Secret to Contentment is Christ.

Stoic word meaning...

“man should be sufficient unto himself for all things, and able, by the power of his will, to resist the force of circumstances.” The Pulpit commentary

“man should be sufficient **in Christ** for all things, and able, by the power of **God’s will**, to resist the force of circumstances.”

But Paul transformed the term with a “powerfully Christ-centered redefinition of contentment.”

Paul is sufficient and content not because he is independent but because he is totally dependent- upon Christ.

Vs. 12

Not merely the πεινᾶν [hunger] but also the χορτάζεσθαι [plenty] , not merely the ταπεινοῦσθαι [low] but also the περισσεύειν [plenty] (v. 12), is the object of this new religious αὐτάρκεια [contentment]. How it works out is described in 2 C. 9:8¹. Enough means not only a sufficiency for oneself but what can also be given to one’s brothers.²

The implication to the above highlight is the call to find contentment is to find it in Christ in all things; hunger AND plenty, low AND high.

“He who knows how to use present abundance soberly and temperately with thanks giving, prepared to part with everything whenever it may please the Lord, giving also a share to his brother according to his ability, and is also not puffed up, that man has learned to excel and to abound. This is an excellent and rare virtue...” John Calvin

Vs. 13- In Context!!!

You can.... It’s time.

CULTIVATE CONTENTMENT in CHRIST

Take a step towards contentment in Christ. It’s available to all

-Give application

- **The Big Dipper is Christ. Easy to find, we need to simply look up! It points to the North Star, Which represents the Father and His steadfast love for all who believe... The Spirit is saying, look up! **The Secret to Contentment is Christ****

- **Communion**

¹ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

² Kittel, G. (1964–). ἀρκέω, ἀρκετός, αὐτάρκεια, αὐτάρκης. *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*

Bible Study Notes







Philippians 4:10-13

Main Point- In ALL things you can have contentment in Christ!

Key Words- Whatever, any and every, all things

Key Verse- Vs. 11

FCF- Putting stock in circumstances

 General  God  Key words  Command  Truth  FCF

[10] 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. [11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. [12] 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. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS/QUESTIONS

Vs. 10. Paul testifying of his "rejoicing" along with context; Paul's in jail. Their revived concern and opportunity was because of this.

Vs. 11. "But I'm not complaining..."

-**Learned**, it takes time.

-**"Whatever"**- Reference to previous verses?

-**Situation**- The "all things" is in reference to situations. All things does not mean "anything" (desires, dreams, sporting event, money goals) but to be *content* in all things.

Vs. 12

-Examples of situations: **Low & abound, any & every** (not "thing") but **circumstance**.

-**secret**; interesting word. Maybe mystery in the greek?

-**Plenty, hunger, abundance and need**. W/ Low and Abound;3 contrasts all to point to **any & every**)

Vs. 13

-This **secret of contentment** is through Christ who gives us the strength to do

Possible main point- **The secret to contentment in all circumstances is Christ.**

TRANSLATIONS

Vs. 10, Rejoice (ESV)

MSG- Glad in God

NLV- Praise the Lord

Revived your concern (ESV, NASB)

NIV, CEB- Renewed care

NKJV- Care for me has flourished

MSG- Strong concern

NLV- Always concerned

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity (ESV)

The biggest difference is care/concern is major translations

MSG- Not that you ever quit praying and thinking about me. You just had no chance to show it.

VS. 11, Not that I am speaking of being in need (ESV)

NASB-...speaking from want

MSG- Actually, I don't have a sense of needing anything personally

for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content

NASB- for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am

NIV-for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances
MSG-I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances.
NLT-for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.
Young's-for I did learn in the things in which I am—to be content

Vs. 12, I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.

NKJV-I know how to be abased³
NASB-I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity
NIV-I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty
CEB-I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot.
MSG- I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little.
NLT-I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything.

In any and every circumstance (ESV, NASB, CEB)

NKJV-Everywhere and in all things
NIV-whatever the circumstances
MSG- Whatever I have, wherever I am
NLT-living in every situation
Young's-in everything and in all things

I have learned the secret (ESV, NASB, NIV, CEB)

NKJV- I have learned
MSG- I've found the recipe
Young's- I have been initiated
*NIV & CEB add the word "content" again to this section. Greek study!

of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. (ESV)

NKJV-both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
NASB- being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.
NIV-whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want
MSG-full or hungry, hands full or hands empty

Vs. 13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (ESV, NASB, NKJV adds Christ vs. him)

³ live humbly [The New King James Version](#). (1982).

NIV-I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

CEB-I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

MSG-Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am

NLT-For I can do everything through Christ,* who gives me strength

Young's-For all things I have strength, in Christ's strengthening me

CROSS REFERENCES

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length ¹you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. **11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be ²content. **12** 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 ³hunger, abundance and ⁴need. **13** I can do all things ⁵through him who strengthens me.**

*1. We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **2** Corinthians 8:1-2*

*1a. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. **2** Corinthians 11:9*

*1b. because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **Philippians** 1:5*

*1c. for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. **Philippians** 2:30*

*2. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all ¹sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. **2** Corinthians 9:8*

¹Same word as content.

2a. *But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6-8*

2b. *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5*

3. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Romans 8:35*

3a. *To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, 1 Corinthians 4:11*

3b. *in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 2 Corinthians 11:27*

4. *And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. 2 Corinthians 11:9*

5. *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10*

5a. *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, Ephesians 3:16*

5b. *being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; Colossians 1:11*

5c. *I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 1 Timothy 1:12*

5d. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 2 Timothy 4:17

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, Romans 4:20

Thoughts

The cross references about contentment were enlightening. It seems that when this word is mentioned, it is anchored to an indicative that gives light to how we become content.

EX-"for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." (1 Timothy 6:6-8) &

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

The reality that we 1. have nothing & 2. Christ will never leave us, is the start to a perspective and belief system that **cultivates contentment.**

Also, the fact that content & sufficient are interchangeable in the biblical text is important. Christ's sufficiency is our sufficiency.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all ¹sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

¹Same word as content.

PEOPLE

Paul's testifying therefore brings us back to his context of writing from prison. This gives weight when he says "content" in all things. His testimony also speaks to the continued support of Paul for Philippi in word and deed.

GREEK WORD STUDIES

Need; to be lacking in what is essential or needed—'to lack, to be in need of, to be in want.'⁴ *Poverty

*Mark 12:44, For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (ESV)

⁴ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#)

Learn; to learn from experience, often with the implication of reflection—'to learn, to come to realize.'⁵

*Important to note, contentment comes from experience.

Content; pertaining to being happy or content with what one has—'content with what one has, content with the circumstances in which one exists.'⁶

In Cynic and Stoic philosophy it denotes one who exercises → ἀρκεῖσθαι in relation to his own inner possibility and who thus becomes an independent man sufficient to himself and in need of none else.

As distinct from the rich philosophical usage, the NT term seems first to have only the sense of a capacity for external contentment and privation. Yet this almost banal virtue of αὐτάρκεια [*Contentment*] is set in a new light by becoming a constituent part of εὐσέβεια [*Godliness*] (1 Tm. 6:6)⁷. What this means is made plain in Phil. 4:11-13. Πάντα ἰσχύω [*I can do all things*] (v. 13) seems to be fully identical with the philosophical αὐτάρκης ἐν παντί, [*content in all*] M. Ant., I, 16, 11. Yet the root is ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντι με [*him who strengthens me*]. From a concept of God and redemption which wholly affirms creation there arises a perspective on which even what is philosophically superfluous is the gift and purpose of Christ. Not merely the πεινᾶν [*hunger*] but also the χορτάζεσθαι [*plenty*], not merely the ταπεινοῦσθαι [*low*] but also the περισσεύειν [*plenty*] (v. 12), is the object of this new religious αὐτάρκεια [*contentment*]. How it works out is described in 2 C. 9:8⁸. Enough means not only a sufficiency for oneself but what can also be given to one's brothers.⁹

The implication to the above highlight is the call to find contentment is to find it in Christ in all things; hunger AND plenty, low AND high.

⁵ IBID

⁶ IBID

⁷ But godliness with contentment is great gain, 1 Timothy 6:6

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

⁹ Kittel, G. (1964–). ἀρκέω, ἀρκετός, αὐτάρκεια, αὐτάρκης. *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*

Strengthen; to cause someone to have the ability to do or to experience something—
'to make someone able, to give capability to, to enable, to strengthen, to empower.'¹⁰

Secret: to learn the secret of something through personal experience or as the result
of initiation

COMMENTARIES

New American Standard Commentary

Contentment (4:11)

4:11 The first reason Paul did not need the gift was his own contentment. Twice in these verses he stated that he had learned contentment. One word, *emathon*, was natural to use. It speaks to having arrived at a fact of understanding. The other word, *memyēmai*, often appears in the mystery religions. It means to *learn the secret* and conveys the idea of a secret knowledge to which adherents of the mystery religions aspired.³ The word conveyed what Paul desired. Contentment is learned through experience. Paul used another rare word for "to be content." The etymology means "self-reliant,"⁴ and the context supports that meaning. It is a self-sufficiency because of Christ, however, as Paul clearly stated in 4:13. He meant that he came to grips with his circumstances and fared well in and through them because of his own relationship to Christ. He did not need help.⁵

Adaptability (4:12)

4:12 Circumstances were the arena of spiritual growth, and through them Paul developed adaptability. In this verse Paul presented three contrasts that provided the occasion for learning and explained the nature of contentment. The first and last speak to physical needs in general, while the middle refers to food. In these varied experiences, Paul displayed spiritual equilibrium. He was equally unaffected by poverty and riches. This knowledge is learned by walking with Christ, who is the sufficient one, and by developing a solid theology of material things. Things ultimately do not matter. Relationships matter. Paul's attitude contrasted with the false teachers'. They were preoccupied with food and other earthly matters; Paul could rise above any set of circumstances.

Dependency (4:13)

¹⁰ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#)

4:13 Paul depended on Christ for strength. The expression “through him who gives me strength” clearly refers to the indwelling Christ, and Paul could accomplish all that God wanted through the strength he provided. Some people abuse this verse by taking it out of context. They assume Paul was making a comprehensive statement about the spiritual abilities of a Christian. Some even act as if there were nothing they could not do. Paul did not mean that. Two factors in the text reveal why. First, the passage discussed material and physical needs. In the day to day economic fluctuations, Paul knew a stability that enabled him to rise above them. The rule of context means that this must be applied to economic matters.⁶ Second, Paul expressed his dependence on the power of the Lord. In this, he knew that where the Lord led him, he had power. The will of God limited the application of the strength he knew. Many who misapply this verse step out of God’s will for their lives. They hope to cover their actions by a blanket promise of power, but power comes in the will of God. Thus, Paul expressed a crucial paradox. He was strong when he was weak! He was independent (self-sufficient) only when he was dependent! Although Paul realized the necessity of living in a Christian community, he also knew what it meant to face life’s problems alone and still triumph through them.

It may be more difficult to triumph in the good times than in the bad. A Christian’s victory comes from a conscious dependence on the Lord and his power, and that is easier understood when times get hard! One mark of maturity in Christ is that the mature know how to depend on the Lord in every situation of life, not only in those for which they assume they need help. Paul modeled this lesson for them and thus even in his thankfulness taught the truths of Christian living.¹¹

Pulpit Commentary

St. Paul is speaking of his present condition: he is content with it, though it involves all the hardships of captivity; his present contentment is a sample of his habitual frame of mind. Αὐτάρκης, here rendered “content,” is a common word in Greek philosophy. It means “self-sufficient,” “independent.” It is of frequent occurrence in Stoical treatises; but St. Paul uses it in a Christian sense; he is αὐτάρκης in relation to man, but his αὐτάρκεια comes from God (2 Cor. 9:8).

St. Paul represents the advanced Christian life as a mystery, the secrets of which are taught by God the Holy Ghost to the soul that longs to prove in its own personal experience “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” St. Paul frequently uses the word μυστήριον, mystery, for the truths once hidden but now brought to light by the gospel.¹²

¹¹ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, pp. 153–155).

¹² Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Philippians* (p. 158).

Opening Philippians

What was the key to Paul's contentment? He answers: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (v. 13).

This was not something that slipped from Paul's pen in an unguarded moment in which he was caught up with emotion. He genuinely experienced the strength of Christ. When he pleaded with the Lord to remove a physical condition from him, the Lord responded: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

He would later write, when completely forsaken by others, 'But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me ...' (2 Tim. 4:17).

Although God's people are called to be diligent in ministering to their brothers and sisters in Christ, they sometimes fail. When others fail us, we should be glad that the Lord never fails. And when we do not receive ministry from others, we should content ourselves with God and his sufficiency.

The best loved of all the psalms begins:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Ps. 23:1).

With the Lord as his shepherd, the psalmist (probably David) knew he would not lack anything he truly needed.

The prophet Habakkuk discovered the same truth. He put it like this:

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labour of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And he will make me walk on my high hills
(Hab. 3:17-19).

While we certainly do not consider ourselves to have attained the spiritual level of Paul, David or Habakkuk, the marvellous truth is that we, too, can draw strength from the Lord, as verse 19 indicates.¹³

¹³ Ellsworth, R. (2004). [Opening up Philippians](#) (pp. 89–90). Leominster: Day One Publications.

4:12-13. Paul spoke from experience. He had been through the extremes: surplus and poverty. He knew how to weather the dangers of both. This was his secret. Greek and Roman religions had secret initiation rites. Some religions and philosophies prided themselves on secret knowledge. Paul had a different kind of secret. His secret was his reliance on Christ, a reliance gained through his Christian experience. Stoics relied on personal will to gain contentment. Paul did not claim such personal inner strength. His strength came from Jesus living in him. Paul was in Christ and thus content no matter what his circumstances.

J. Vernon McGee writes:

Whatever Christ has for you to do, He will supply the power. Whatever gift He gives you, He will give the power to exercise that gift. A gift is a manifestation of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. As long as you function in Christ, you will have power. He certainly does not mean that he is putting into your hand unlimited power to do anything you want to do. Rather, He will give you the enablement to do all things in the context of His will for you (McGee, Thru the Bible, V:327-8).

The Christian life is not only difficult; it is also impossible unless we acquire the power to live it through Christ. To be sure, this truth does not come naturally to us but must be learned.¹⁴

The Pulpit Commentary

The stoics regarded contentment as the essence of all virtues. For them contentment described the mind-set of the person who had become independent of all things and all people. The Stoic line was, "man should be sufficient unto himself for all things, and able, by the power of his will, to resist the force of circumstances."

But Paul transformed the term with a "powerfully Christ-centered redefinition of contentment."

Paul is sufficient and content not because he is independent but because he is totally dependent- upon Christ.

"He who knows how to use present abundance soberly and temperately with thanks giving, prepared to part with everything whenever it may please the Lord, giving also a share to his brother according to his ability, and is also not puffed up, that man has learned to excel and to abound. This is an excellent and rare virtue..." John Calvin

¹⁴ Anders, M. (1999). [Galatians-Colossians](#) (Vol. 8, pp. 263-264). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.