

Seeking contentment. Christ is the key to be contented, from *Philippians 4:10-13*

Philippians 4:10-13 : I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Introduction:

Some people think that dissatisfaction is good, because it drives you to greater success. One may confuse contentment with complacency. And complacency is undesirable. Complacent people lose their desire to work hard to improve themselves or to reach their goals. Complacency hints at a sort of arrogance that thinks - I have arrived! But our text is not about complacency. Paul is teaching on Christian contentment. He wants us to know that we can own peace and joy in each and every situation, whether good or bad. Do you own that joy that grows from contentment in all circumstances?

People are desperately seeking contentment today. Everyone is looking for security, peace and rest. The apostle Paul seems to believe that Christians can own contentment. He seems to think that he found it and that we may have it too. What then is his secret? What must we know and do in order to experience true satisfaction? How can we own and enjoy true contentment.

Materialism does not offer the answer

We need to learn is that what we have, is not who we are. Your possessions, assets and wealth do not define who you are. Your poverty and material struggle do not define who you are. Your qualifications, success, career failures, academic achievements or status in society do not define who you are. Your worth and value can not be defined by what you have or what you do not have. It says nothing about your character and it says nothing about your status in the church and in the presence of God.

Why do we look at people with money and great material success and think that they are somehow happier and better people? Would we be better people, better spouses, better parents, better friends or better children of God if we had more possessions? Why do we compare ourselves to other people who have more material things than we do and envy them? We need to know that we are not someone special because we have material things. And that we are not worth less, because we are poor. We simply are special because we are created in the image of God. We are special because God created each and everyone of us exactly the way he knows who we are supposed to be. (See Psalm 139.) We have all been blessed with more than we deserve. Listen to the apostle Paul writing to Timothy.

Timothy 6:6-8 : But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. We need to remember what is really important in this life and that nothing we have is permanent. If we have food and clothing, we have more than many other people in the world have right now and we are blessed. We must realise that our possessions do not define who we truly are or are supposed to be.

So do not compare yourself to others. You are not less because they have more, nor are you better because you have more. God looks at the true you. Materialism teaches that you are what you own and that you cannot be contented without a lot! This is simply not true!

Do not allow circumstances to control you

Another lesson we learn from our text is that circumstances should not control our emotions and rob us of peace and contentment.

Life is all about change. Nothing stays the same and if you expect that, you will always be disappointed. Your circumstances should not be allowed to control your emotions.

Many people's emotional health, even sanity, is controlled by who, what and where they are. When things are going well, they are happy and when things are going disappointingly, they are unhappy and even depressed. Their circumstances are always changing and therefore their emotions always change..

Listen to what Paul said in verses 11 and 12 of our text today: **I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.**

Paul said that whatever the circumstances, whatever the situation, he had learned to be content. How did he do this? What was his secret?

Paul saw more than just the outward circumstance. He saw through the circumstance. He knew that God was sovereign and that God is in control. He knew he could trust the Lord. He believed that God is perfect and holy and that he never is malicious and never act without perfect, divine integrity. He knew he could trust God and his sovereign decisions. He also knew that God was at work in the midst of even the most trying circumstances to perfect his purposes in Paul's life.

When we look at the circumstances of our lives, what do we see? Some are good and others are bad. Paul certainly did not say that everything that happens to you is good. The Scriptures nowhere teach that. But they do teach that God is at work in every situation, good and bad, for our benefit. God can take even a bad situation and use it to build good things into our lives. Before we label something good or bad, we should ask a fundamental question: What is God is doing in these circumstances? What is God teaching me in these circumstances?

Many things are out of our control in the world, but how we respond to those things is in our control. We can choose to be sad, or we can choose to trust God. The choice is ours. We do not have to let our circumstances control us. God is at work in each and every circumstance for our good and his glory.

We learn some of the most important lessons in life through the hard times. God builds into us character and compassion through the rough places.. So look at the changing circumstances of your life and ask what God is teaching you in them. You might find lessons so valuable that, given the opportunity, you would not change the hard times, even if you could.

Through Christ's presence in your life, you can do everything.

The key to contentment is to know and believe that everything is possible through the empowering presence of Jesus Christ. Paul had come to understand the truth that Christ's presence will empower you to respond to your circumstances in ways that will not rob you of your peace of mind, your faith and your contentment.

Paul says in our text: **"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."** We too often use this verse out of context, because we apply it to any and everything. We particularly often apply to it to a challenging call in ministry. And there is no doubt that through Christ we can do everything he calls us to do. But it is within the context of dealing with the difficulties of life that Paul makes this

statement. The comforting truth he teaches here, is that he can deal with any situation through the power of Christ. He teaches that he can respond to all circumstances in a way that will not rob him from being contented. No dilemma, or disagreement, or trouble cannot be overcome by the power of Christ. Christ's strength was the key to his peace, joy and contentment.

You and I can go through anything and survive emotionally, because we are never alone. Christ lives in us and through us. Listen to what Paul said to the church in Galatia.

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

We live by the power of God living in us and through us. We live by faith in Christ - the almighty King and Head of the church, our Saviour. We live by his strength and supremacy and grace and insight and righteousness. Christ is the secret. Jesus is the key to contentment. We can do everything through him who gives us strength.

Appeal:

Our challenge as Christians is to always trust in God and to always rely on the all empowering strength of Christ. We need not look to so many other things to resolve our challenges in life. We should turn to God in prayer to ask for his help. We should live by this truth that we can do everything through Christ, who gives us the strength to respond to our circumstances wisely and with peace in our hearts. Christ will help you to not be robbed of your contentment by your circumstances. Christ will help you to believe that you are not what you possess or lack in life, but that you are a child of God and that in his sovereign grace, he looks after you.

Through faith we tap into the power of God, whatever we own and whatever our circumstances may be. He will fill us with his power that we can live the Christ centred and supernatural life that we have been challenged and called to live. This we cannot do in our own power. It takes the power of God to follow Jesus. We have been given the power to follow him by his Holy Spirit. His presence will empower you.

Christ is the key to our contentment and to our peace and our joy. Jesus is our Friend and Saviour and he empowers us to never be robbed of contentment, whatever circumstances may hold.

Focus on Christ. Focus on his purposes and intentions for your life. He knows everything. He is prepared for everything. Jesus will be with you every step of the way. He will be your guide. He will be your strength! Through him you can deal with everything!

This is the Word of God.

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Amen.