

Delight in God Leads to Contentment in Life

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 4, and I will read the whole chapter. Let's hear the word of God. Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, this is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

I plead with Yodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yoke fellow, to help those women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice, and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me.

[1 : 37] 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. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only.

For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.

I have received full payment, and even more, I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

[2 : 49] And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus, the brothers who are with me, and send greetings. All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Brother, come and preach to us. I want to bring you greetings from Grace Fellowship Church in Toronto.

They are praying for you today. And I am just so thankful you, of course, were a part of the formation of that church by your prayers and your help.

22 years ago, which as I was reflecting, looking around the room today, so many of you were here in those early days and praying along with us that the Lord might do something, which he has done.

[3 : 49] I was very thankful for the connection to Toronto today. Sam, what was the name of the second hymn we sang? I can't recall the title.

What was it? I think it was the one. Maybe that was it. Is that the one that speaks about his providence now? Yeah. So if you look at it, it's written by Margaret Clarkson. And Margaret was just passed away a few years ago.

She lived in Toronto her whole life. She also wrote a hymn called So Send I You. And then she wrote another hymn called So Send I You. And the reason she did that was because in the first one, if you see the earlier edition, it's kind of a guilt-ridden, like, we're the worst people in the world. We really should take the gospel to the ends of the earth. And then she was introduced to the doctrines of grace and God's providence overall. And she felt quite bad about her hymn. And so she wrote a second one.

And some hymnals have them side by side. And you can read them. And you'll find them to be quite strikingly different. The second one's much better. So I saw Margaret's name there today. And I thought, thank you for planning for that connection to Toronto.

[4 : 54] I want to thank you, brother, for that. We, as a church, survived COVID. Our COVID was about two years long with restrictions and other things. And not only did we survive, I feel like the church thrived through that time.

And yet, at the same time, not without all its troubles and difficulties, as I know we all face. We have an enemy, don't we? And we have the flesh to deal with. And we have the world against us. And Satan is always trying to find some way to wreck everything in the church of Christ.

It's a little bit like life. If you're a Christian and you're just seeking to live a faithful life, I mean, we know God is at work. We just sang about his great providence.

And we have moments of great confidence and trust in him and what he is doing. And then we find these other times in our life, all kinds of reasons to fret, to grumble, to be discontent with how things are going.

We think things like, if I just had more money. Or if I could just find a spouse. Or if I, you know, if somebody else was president.

[6 : 03] Or if somebody else wasn't president. I mean, we just kind of have all these things that we think, if this would happen, then I would finally be happy. Then I would finally be content and satisfied.

That's what we think. And of course, it's utter nonsense. Because when we think that a change of circumstances is going to bring us true soul contentment, we've put all our confidence and hope in the wrong places.

So you might be asking this morning, is there a secret to staying content? Thanks for asking. Yes, there is. And the apostle shows it to us in Philippians chapter 4.

So if you have your Bible open there, please keep it there. And what I want to argue for this morning is this. True delight in God. The true treasuring of Christ. Maintaining intimacy with Christ.

Will eventually result in contentment in your life. Okay, that's what we're going to try to show from Philippians 4. That true contentment will be found as I grow in my real, authentic union with Christ.

[7 : 12] So, you may want to begin thinking, am I a content person? Am I satisfied? Am I generally happy?

Am I soul satisfied regardless of what's happening in the outside world? Let's look at Philippians 4. We'll start in verse 10. I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but had no opportunity.

Not that I'm speaking of being in need. For I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

[8 : 17] I can do all things through or in him who strengthens me. Now, let's just work from the back up for a moment.

Let's look again at verse 13. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Here is the much misused verse that unlocks the great mystery of contentment.

If you think Philippians 4.13 is something you should put as a plaque in your workout room, you're not understanding what this is about. I can do all things. No, that's not what we're talking about.

I think we're really helped here if we look at that word through. So that word through can be translated different ways. The different English translations, either it's through or in.

And I would prefer the in. Most commentators would agree that it would be more helpful to translate this as in. Because that's consistently how Paul uses that little preposition. So when he says that, we could read it this way, I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

[9 : 17] And this, in Christ, in him, in Jesus. It's a very common language for Paul. If you've read the New Testament, you know this. It's very common in this letter.

Just turn back to Philippians 1 and verse 1, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi. Chapter 2, verse 5, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus. Or chapter 4, verse 1, Therefore my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodiam, I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Chapter 4, verse 4, Rejoice in the Lord. Always. Again, I'll say rejoice. And so you see this all the time. In the Lord. In Christ. In him. What does Paul mean when he uses that little phrase? Well, I think he's speaking about both a positional and a relational reality. Being in the Lord describes your position with God. [10:22] And being in the Lord describes that ongoing relationship that you have with the Lord. And I think this is well illustrated by Passover.

So if you think back into your Old Testament in the very first Passover, a lamb is to be sacrificed. The blood of the lamb is painted on the doorframe. And then everyone who is in the house, in the house, is spared and protected from the avenging angels. In a similar way, Christ has been sacrificed for his people. His blood was poured out. And everyone who is hidden in Christ, behind his blood, is protected from that eternal death. And so that illustrates for us the positional aspect of being in the Lord. But if you still keep your mind back there in the time of Passover, that's not where the story ends. Passover leads to Exodus. A new life follows after redemption. So Israel did not stay behind their blood-stained doors. They came out and they began their pilgrimage, their new way of life, to a new land.

[11:41] In a similar way, all those who are hidden in Christ now venture forth into new life, a new way of living, heading to a final promised land with all that we need in order to please him along the way in ongoing fellowship with him.

All that we need. all that we need to live our life in ongoing fellowship pleasing to him. This illustrates the relational reality of being in Christ.

We are to stay connected to our Redeemer. But you might remember how it went with Israel. The Israelites of old very quickly doubted and grumbled about their circumstances once they got out and free from Egypt.

They doubted that God was good enough. They doubted he had good intentions and that he brought them into places where, when he did bring them into these places where they had to trust him, like when there's no water, no food, what do they do?

They were discontent. So God alters their circumstances and they grow discontent. In other words, God was not enough in their evaluation.

[13:01] He was not their primary delight. Which means that their contentment was dependent on circumstances. We need a change in circumstances in order to be happy.

We need a change in our surroundings in order to be content. They had God and they're thinking we'd like a nice steakhouse.

Thank you very much. Even after God provides manna in the wilderness, Numbers chapter 11, verse 5, this is what Israel says. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt.

What's Egypt? The land of slavery. The land of enslavement. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing. Well, just your lives. The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

But now our strength is dried up and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at. That sound familiar, friend? Ever find yourself anxious to change your circumstances so that you can finally be happy?

[14:14] What if there was a way to be content regardless of your circumstances? I think that's exactly what the Apostle Paul is modeling and teaching us in Philippians chapter 4.

He's taking this opportunity to thank the Philippian Christians for their support of Him as a kind of canvas upon which to paint this truth.

True contentment comes as you find your delight in God. And he describes three things we have to do. I like it when he tells us what to do because I can't figure things out on my own.

So here's the first one. I'll give them to you. You've got to, first of all, properly define need. You've got little kids, especially around Christmas time, I need a Nintendo Switch.

I mean, I need it. Ah, I do not think we are thinking about need the same way. Look at Philippians chapter 4 verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern

for me.

[15:19] You were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity. What's Paul doing here? He's treading very carefully here because he wants to thank the Philippians for their financial gift to support him.

They supported him in the past. They're doing it again now and that's great but look at what his very next words are in verse 11. Not that I'm speaking of being in need.

Paul says, I'm super grateful for your generosity but I want you to know that even if you hadn't been generous I would have been fine. The fact was to the outward eye Paul was not fine.

He was in great need but he wants these brothers and sisters in Philippi to know that at a very fundamental level he was totally content.

Even when he was missing money or food, whatever their gift was to him, he was fine. And that's kind of crazy because Paul says he is not in need and what he's saying by that is he's saying not that kind of need.

[16:23] I wasn't at that level of need. I mean the man is in prison and prisons of his day are not like prisons of our day. You may just go hungry unless somebody brings you food or water and yet he's telling them I'm not in need.

So when Paul is talking about need here it is at a very fundamental very core of his being he is saying I lack nothing. We might look at his life and think we would expect him to say I need a bed I need some food I need some water I need to get out of this prison.

But at the very very core of his person he says I am not in need at all. So we've got to define need the way Paul does as something fundamental to our human existence.

Something that is akin to the source of life which leads us to the very next thing the second thing we have to do first we've got to define need right second we've got to define contentment right.

Philippians 4.11 not that I'm speaking of being in need for I have learned in whatever situation I am pause whatever situation I'm in I've learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Paul says I live in a state of perpetual contentment. I'm never it's never flustered it's never flabbergasted it is just constant.

[17:57] The word that he uses here for contentment would have been broadly known by people but he's he's using it in a kind of different way the ancient Stoics were the ones who invented this word and they were speaking about contentment as being completely self-reliant.

The Stoics were those who would say I don't need you and I don't need anything and there's a kind of total indifference to circumstances but it was all based on self-reliance the self-made man I am untouched by whatever comes around me and so we use that word he's a real Stoic nothing flusters him well that's not what Paul is doing here.

What that is is not entirely different from the fatalism of say Islam like whatever is going to happen Allah is going to do what can we do whatever is going to happen is going to happen or Doris Day for that matter whatever will be will be I mean there is a grain of truth to this that our God is in the heavens he does whatever he pleases but what's missing from the Stoics and what's missing from the Muslims is relationship we're not pawns on the chessboard of some distant deity if we are Christians we're brothers and sisters of Christ we are sons and daughters of God the Father the Holy Spirit dwells within us we have a real and a dynamic relationship with the person who made everything so the contentment that Paul describes here is not just dull resignation to predetermined outcomes that's called fatalism there's something far deeper going on with this man he's telling us that the circumstances of life have zero impact on his contentment he's not a fatalist he's not some unfeeling self-absorbed hermit he is content he is satisfied he's happy if you will in the Lord he's not some self-sufficient stoic

Paul is telling us something about himself that is far deeper and far more joyful than that in fact sometimes people say the whole letter of Philippians is about joy but here's the deal he wasn't always that way he had to get there that takes us to number three you've got to work to discover the secret of contentment Paul is telling us that he's content but he's also telling us that he wasn't always this way he was not always content he had to change he had to change he had to grow he had to learn something as a Christian look at verse 12 I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound in every and every circumstance

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger abundance and need I have learned the secret we had not long ago a faucet in our kitchen that came loose I mean the whole thing it wasn't like the whole thing was moving around which is very frustrating when you're my wife who uses it

more than I do so eventually slowly I decided to fix the faucet so if you fixed a faucet maybe you did what I did you took everything out from under the sink and I stick my head under the sink I'm lying on the floor and I installed the thing so I'm like surely I can fix it and I'm looking at it and I'm looking at it and I can't figure out what I'm supposed to do so I just I slow down and I just try to go back over the installation process in my mind of course I didn't keep the instructions but I'm just kind of going through and I'm looking and I'm like yeah there's the thing I'm like oh yeah and you've got to take the thing and that other thing and I saved that tool thing so I got the thing and I put it on the thing [22 : 07] I took the other thing off and it worked and I was very content because I had discovered the secret now Paul says I learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger abundance and need I learned the secret of contentment it's the only place in the Bible this word is used it's one word in the original language I have learned the secret it's just one word and it means I have inside knowledge something has been revealed to me I understand something that other people do not understand and when Paul says that he's not elevating himself in front of us he's telling us something he's not bragging he's discipling this is something he wants every Christian to understand and to share it and by saying that he learned the secret he's indicating that being content in any circumstance is not automatic which means a person might be saved of God they repent from their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ have you done that?

and then you are saved by God but you may go through your entire Christian life never learning contentment how sad what was your contentment like let's say from March 2020 to today one of the things that concerned me in my country I'll talk about my place for a while I talked with a lot of Christians during the hard parts of the pandemic who were very angry I talked to some Christians who felt they were being directly persecuted and they were very angry very anxious sometimes despairing sometimes raging this was perplexing to me because everything I see in my New Testament about Christians being persecuted resulted in their joy you noticed that before? and so it was an interesting season for Christians in Canada and out of some of that rage and some of that despair there was even some grumbling and some complaining like a certain group of people wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and I wonder if that maybe caught you by surprise too I'm not going to try and be a prophet about COVID but I do think that COVID helped expose something in the churches in my neighborhood expose something in me that maybe we thought we were content and satisfied in God when in reality we were mostly content and satisfied in our circumstances and when the sovereign God that we just sang about chose to alter our circumstances we were very discontent in other words we didn't know the secret so what's the secret?

Paul tells us verse 13 I can do all things in him who strengthens me this is all about contentment what does it mean?

Paul is speaking here about our position and our relationship with God through Christ once that position is secure through repentance and faith in Jesus we increasingly submit our entire life to Jesus depending on him in everything and for everything and those who are positionally in Christ now live out their lives in dependent relationship upon Christ they're in Christ and of course this is exactly what Jesus taught his disciples in a place like John 15 abide in who?

[26 : 47] in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing abide in me abide in the vine stay remain continue on in the vine that's a positional and a relational reality when you are born again you are positionally put in Christ so identified with Jesus that all of his life is credited to your account that's you hiding in the house with the blood that covers the doorposts but you are also brought into a real and ongoing relationship with Christ and he's your superior in every way so it is not a relationship of equals but one of dependence you are to depend on him for everything just like

Israel ought to have depended on God for water and food in the wilderness are you married have you been married ever experienced some dry times in the relationship when you feel distant to that spouse when that relational distance creeps in you are no less positionally connected to them by marriage you may be relationally distant but you are positionally one with them and Paul is saying friends I found the secret the secret is to stay relationally connected to God to find my soul's happiness in him moment by moment would you be happy in a marriage if your spouse lived on another continent there was no FaceTime Zoom calls letters or anything and for years and years

and years and years there was no communication between you would that be the joy of your life and your marriage of course not is that what your relationship with Christ is like Paul is teaching that the secret to contentment is to keep investing in the relational aspect of your position Jesus said apart from me you can do nothing Paul says in Christ I can do everything those are the same statements friends one's negative one's positive and because of this Paul says I am able to remain content spiritually happy if you will whether it's hunger need humiliation or overflowing abundance a full belly and having more than enough he takes the two ends of the physical needs spectrum and thus includes everything in between and he says as far as my contentment goes I remain unaffected by these external things I don't get happier when I have a steak in the freezer and I don't get depressed when I have to skip a couple meals because there's nothing to eat why Paul because everything

I do in life I am doing in Christ I do all things in Christ I do poverty in Christ riches in Christ hunger in Christ feasting in Christ I do them in Christ I do welfare in Christ I do inheritance in Christ I do childbirth in Christ I do the loss of a child in Christ I do getting a raise in Christ I do losing a job in Christ I do health in Christ I do cancer in Christ I do all things in Christ who empowers me and since I really content and you can be too why look at verse 19 my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory where in Christ Jesus kids have you ever gone fishing I have an associate pastor who fishes all the time and he tells me that when you go fishing you should always use live bait I quote live bait is better 10 out of 10 times I think fishing is weird if you do it that's up to you it's fine you can just go to the grocery store and buy a salmon anyway I'm going to put some live bait on the hook because I'm trying to bait you for the coming year to actively seek your delight in God by dangling the promise of true contentment that's the worm on the hook but there is no hook because delighting in God is wonderful and soul satisfying in and of itself and you must delight in God in order to discover true contentment so the path to what you want contentment is in and of itself a wonderful thing don't you want to live in this world content in every and any circumstance

[32 : 00] I'm trying to show you that the counterintuitive way of discovering this is to die to yourself and live in dependence and unity with Christ instead of seeking your life in people or stuff or political outcomes or money or physical pleasures seek life in God you are in Christ positionally now so do all you can to live in Christ relationally now and as you do that as you do that you will discover the deep soul contentment that doesn't require liquor or pot or sex or bitcoin or this person to act a different way to find real soul contentment how does Paul show us this I think the whole letter of Philippians is just full of this quickly chapter three verse eight indeed

I count everything there's one of those great words everything is loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing ongoing relationship knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ these are relational terms Paul's whole existence is tied up in knowing and loving God through Christ and thus Paul turns to the Philippians and he tells them to pursue the same thing look at chapter four verse six do not be anxious about anything nothing but in everything everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in

Christ Jesus does that sound like contentment to you a peace that you cannot humanly manufacture that comes as a result of communion with God in prayer sounds a lot like contentment so Paul is telling them to strive after to run after to diligently pursue this ongoing relationship or delight in God go back to chapter two verse twelve therefore my beloved as you've always obeyed so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it's God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure do all things without grumbling or disputing do all things like COVID like your car breaking down or if you're in Toronto trying to get five miles within ten minutes all things do them all without grumbling or disputing we kind of come full circle here haven't we discontent people complain discontent people grumble discontent people whine discontent people get angry but those who delight in God are content they're unaffected by their circumstances because they are happy in the Lord poverty prosperity cannot touch their happiness their satisfaction in God and absolutely none of this would be within our grasp apart from Christ this is why Paul says in Philippians 3 10 it's to know him and the power of his resurrection that's the goal of my life he's not out to know about a dead prophet he is out to know in ongoing unending relationship a resurrected savior a living man his

God and his delight Christ's resurrection from the dead opens the door for us to live our lives in the power of his resurrection dead to sin alive to God Paul says I can do all things in him who strengthens me and that's because your savior sits at the right hand of the father are you content are you content regardless of what's going on around you if you are that's not a sign that you are politically naive or out of touch with reality or afraid to stand for the truth if you are content you've discovered the secret you're delighting in

God through your resurrected Lord Jesus who think of this is never bored never frustrated never unfulfilled so the more you live your life in him the more you become like him content happy in the father regardless of circumstances may God make it so for us all let me pray for us it seems Lord there are few truths that strike at the core of our weakness than this one we are so prone to be startled into discontent so prone to complain and grumble forgive us even as we look back over the last year it's been a year of grumbling and complaining please wash away our sins

[37 : 41] Lord forgive us of all our complaints and Lord as we set out into this new year we pray that we would be a people who seek every day to find our souls happy in the Lord to live our life in Christ to be empowered by doing all things in him make this so that each of us would run our race in a way that pleases and honors you we ask in the name of Jesus amen