

Finding Joy

A study of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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11- *Finding Joy in Contentment in Christ*.....*Philippians 4:10-13*

Php 4:10-13 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

We have discovered that joy is ours if we will focus on the things that bring us closer to God and focus us away from ourselves. We explored joy in thanksgiving a couple of sessions back. We saw that a thankful heart will bring joy.

I- Contentment Rises with Thanksgiving:

Paul returns, or may I suggest he never left, to thanksgiving in our text. Paul commends the Philippians for reaching past themselves and ministering to his needs.

Php 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

It seems to me we are living in a time in which there seems to be epidemic of “*I deserve it ism.*” When we have such a slant to our thinking and on our heart we are always going to reach out in complaints. When we think our loved ones, our co-workers, our church family and the world owes us something because of who we are then we are set up for a disappointment.

Lord, You said if I want to follow you, I will need to carry my cross every day. I want to follow, Lord.

But there are days when I'm dragging my cross, making a trail for everyone to see. There are days when I'm pushing my cross, making my own path miserable and dusty.

There are days when I'm sitting on my cross, trying to get comfortable and going nowhere. There are days when I'm giving my cross to somebody else, who already has one of his own.

Help me, Lord, to carry my cross on my shoulder. When it's up there, it leaves no room for a chip!

(2000+ Bible Illustrations E-sword)

Do not even entertain the thought that Paul is reprimanding them for past failures when he says that their care for him had flourished again. Notice that he states they lacked opportunity. In that day, you could not wire money nor send a transfer electronically. It had to go with someone who was traveling. Paul was rejoicing that God had supplied for his needs through the Philippians. The HCSB says, “...*You were, in fact, concerned about me, but lacked the opportunity to show it.*”

How many of us would have felt abandoned and that our friends were not concerned if they had not been there for a while. Paul's joy was possible because he always looked for the good and contentment rose on the wings of thanksgiving.

II- Contrast of Desire:

I still recall driving through the jungles of Panama while I was there with the army years ago. The Panama Canal zone during

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that time was a small strip of land following the canal from east to west. To get to the Jungle Operations Training Center we had to drive from one side to the other. However, there were many places where the highway left the Canal Zone and went into Panama proper. As I was driving along I saw huts that people living in that you could literally see through the sides of into the house. I made the comment that I did not see how these people could live in these homes. I never will forget the reply that the Lieutenant Colonel I was driving for said, "They have never know anything else and cannot miss what they have never had."

I think one of our problems in modern days is we have seen and had so much that nothing brings us contentment. We are bombarded with advertisements that as someone said, "Makes today's wants tomorrow's needs." Our desires are shaped by things other than then will of God for our lives.

Notice how Paul put it. In **Php 4:11** *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

A large family sat around the table for breakfast one morning. As the custom was, the father returned thanks, blessing God for the food. Immediately afterward, however, as was his bad habit, he began to grumble about hard times, the poor quality of the food he was forced to eat, the way it was cooked, and much more. His little daughter interrupted him saying, "Father, do you suppose God heard what you said a little

while ago?" "Certainly," replied the father with the confident air of an instructor. "And did He hear what you said about the bacon and the coffee?" "Of course," the father replied, but not as confidently as before. Then his little girl asked him again, "Then, Father, which did God believe?"

Paul said he had learned many lessons in his life about contentment and joy. He had learned to be content in any circumstance and situation. Notice the contrast one with another here.

1- Abased – Abound The HCSB says, **"I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot."** Not that I need to but I remind us that Paul was in prison at this time. Most of us feel that we have had little but if we compare what material blessing we have with the world, and might I suggest to the Apostle Paul in his day, we have a lot. There are some statements that people make that we seem to always remember. One such for me is that I have all that God can trust me with. Most of us have not figured out how to abound or have a lot. We squander it away on our desires. Remember James said in **James 4:3** *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

2- Full – Hungry There is no doubt that many in our world are hungry for the necessity food to sustain life. Most of us do not fall in that category. Paul said he had been full and also hungry. Still it seems there is a famine in the land of plenty. No not a famine of food but of desire for God. Remember what Jesus said in **Mat 5:6** **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.** Perhaps it is time we learn to be hungry again for the things of God.

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Touching Lives by "Exposing the Word" of God

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Remember Christ reprimand of the church at Ephesus was, *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Revelation 2:4* They had forgotten their first love of Christ.

3- Abound – Suffer Need Let me allow this last one to be a summary. *The Message* gives us this verse as, *“I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty.”*

III- Contentment Comes from Christ Strength:

Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Many times, we are discouraged by our circumstance and see the trouble not the opportunity. I know at times personally I do not find joy in contentment because I am busy looking at my problems, problems that are common to mankind.

Some years ago a man living in Wales had the misfortune of being involved in a mining accident which necessitated the amputation of his right leg. After a period in the hospital, he went to a prosthesis maker to be supplied with an artificial leg. When the appendage had been strapped to the stump, which was all that remained of the injured leg, the attendant requested that the patient get up and walk across the floor. Awkwardly, the man struggled to his feet and staggered across the room. Then, dragging himself painfully back to his chair, he slumped into it, utterly exhausted and discouraged.

"That's not how to do it," said the attendant. "Watch this!" Then he walked gracefully across the floor. "Ah," exclaimed the

patient, "It's all very easy for you because you don't have any disability."

"Oh, haven't I?" replied the attendant. "Look." Pulling up the legs of his trousers, he disclosed that he was not wearing just one artificial limb, but TWO!

Now let me make another observation about contentment coming from the strength Christ gives us. **“Contentment is not Compliancy.”** The word translated **“strengtheneth”** means as Vincent Word Studies says, *“More literally, infuses strength into me.”*

If Christ is going to give us strength for all things would you not agree that the implications of this is that we are to use the strength supplied? In other words, we should not be compliance, as many Christians have become, and blame it on contentment.

IV- Source of Contentment and Joy:

As we close, I want to encourage us all to be content in one thing that should bring us great joy. Contentment in what Christ has done for us. We might ask, Is Jesus enough? For eternity? For now? For Salvation? May I simply quote **2Ti 1:12** ***For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.***

Christ is enough for eternity because He is the keeper of our soul. He is enough today because He supplies our needs and certainly He is enough for salvation because in Him and Him alone is redemption for lost men. Yes, we can find joy when we find contentment.

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