

THE JOY OF BEING CONTENT **Philippians 3:10-13**

Intro: As we have journeyed together through the book of Philippians we have seen several keys to joyous living. We can see how Paul found joy in the love of his brethren, the spiritual goal of magnifying Christ, in standing firm for the truth, in serving others, in knowing the Lord and all the spiritual blessings he brings to us, in spiritual growth. We learned that we can rejoice even when life is tough if we can learn to react right, pray right, think right and do right. Now we come to the final section of this wonderful epistle. Here we see another dimension to Paul's joy—the joy of contentment. Let's read (Phil. 4:10-13)

PAUL'S EXPRESSION OF CONTENTMENT

Paul was glad for the contribution they sent but it was not because of a sense of want that he felt that joy.

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am (Phil. 4:11).

This was because Paul lived a life of contentment.

Contentment is from "autarkes"--"auto"--self as in an automatic transmission or dishwasher (transmit motive force from engine to wheels by itself), "arkeo"--to be sufficient. Hence, self-sufficient.

This self-sufficiency did not come from having never experienced good things.

"I know how to live in prosperity"

This self-sufficiency did not have to do with Paul providing everything for himself that he needed.

"I know how to get along with humble means".

This self-sufficiency did not derive from mental trickery. It did not have anything to do with numbing oneself to life's realities. Some of Paul's readers might have been aware of the use of this term by the Greek philosophers called the Stoics. "Autarkes" was the goal of their philosophy. They obtained this goal by training themselves not to care about anything. This was not why Paul was content.

This self-sufficiency derived from the power of faith in Paul's life.

PAUL'S "SECRET" TO CONTENTMENT

"I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry..."

Paul affirmed that he had learned a secret that made the difference.

Paul uses a word taken from the mystery religions who often gave the initiated a special knowledge or ceremony indicating their privileged status.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

"I can do"--Contentment is a personal effort; it is a positive effort.

"all things"--Paul's contentment knew no bounds. There was no circumstances so severe that he nor any Christian could not be content. (This part receives emphasis in the Greek text.)

"through Christ who strengthens me"--Contentment is not only a personal effort, it is one that derives from the power of Christ. Paul uses the verb "endunmoo"--from which we get dynamite. Paul possessed an inward power.

Paul had discovered the secret of contentment that led him to have joy even when circumstances were difficult. The power came from the Lord.

HOW CHRIST EMPOWERS US

Contentment is not natural. "I have learned to be content". Christ teaches us:

The difference between the insecurity of trusting in riches and the security of trusting in Him!

Most people love money because they are afraid of the future. Paul warns that riches are a poor source of our confidence. 1 Tim. 6:17 But if we put our trust in God will believe in something that will never fail. 1 Tim. 6:17; Heb. 13:5-6

Quote from John MacArthur: "You will never know real contentment in your heart until you have a total trust, a total confidence in the providence of God who is ordering every circumstance of life for His glory, and you don't need to manipulate, and you don't need to lose your mind in trying to control, everything."

When we learn to trust God to meet our needs, then we can be truly "self-sufficient". Our faith supplies the assurance we need to feel secure.

The difference between physical needs and wants.

Do you realize that most of discontentment is rooted in letting others dictate to us our needs rather than letting God define them? Madison Avenue works incessantly to convince us all that what they have to offer is what we need! Our material discontentment is rooted in a misconception of what is really necessary. We have more than most people of the world, but we never are content with it! It is because we cannot distinguish between needs and wants.

Socrates used to wander through the marketplace and among the stalls of the bazaars in ancient Athens asking the merchants and the consumers the question, "Where can we buy the things which are really necessary for life?" What he implied by his question Paul states forthrightly:

And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. (1 Tim. 6:8). Contentment is not gained by gaining more things, but by learning to desire less things. Like Paul we need to learn the difference between needs and wants.

To find satisfaction in spiritual things.

What most materialistic cultures do is try to fill a hole in the soul with a physical thing, a thing of man's creation. And it never works. A thousand trips to the shopping center can't fill our need for love, for a

relationship. Only a person can fill that! Only God can fill our need for ultimate love and security.

And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (Lk. 12:15). When will the people in this world learn that we are not what we possess!!!

That's why Paul could be "self-sufficient". He knew he was God's child, loved beyond measure and that his life did not consist of the few belongings that were in his possession. We need to learn to value this everlasting relationship rather than the transitory riches of this world.

To see God's purpose in the trials of life

People typically in the world assume that contentment is only possible in the absence of all problems. That's not the true meaning of contentment because if that's what contentment is no one will ever have it; because your life will never be completely free from problems. True contentment is being able to be satisfied and content in the midst of any problem.

What makes that possible is seeing how our problems fit into the overall purposes of God and how they serve a useful purpose in preparing us to experience the spiritual dimensions of faith. As we pointed out in an earlier lesson. Paul had one overarching ambition—to magnify the Lord by His life. And he had learned that he could do that in problems as well as in good time; and that God could, in fact, use Paul's faith in those problems to glorify Himself.

Conclusion: You too, like Paul, can know the joy of contentment. No matter how difficult life's circumstances we "can do all things through Him" who strengthens us. This contentment is rooted in faith in God and aligning our will with His purposes. Do you have this contentment?