

Phil Ch 4 Vs 12-13

Content in Christ

Many of you have heard me comment in times past about the great philosophical words of Mick Jagger concerning his take on life. and He says, though “I try, and I try, and I try, and I try, I can’t get no satisfaction.” Now this is a man who seems to have it all, fortune and fame and all the carnal pleasures and perks that come with it that this life has to offer, and yet for all that he has he finds himself lacking in regards to contentment. and In our text this morning we have a man (the apostle Paul) who says, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Whether I am abased or abounding, anywhere and in *all* things I have learned contentment, what’s the difference between these 2 men? 1 Who for the life of him can’t achieve satisfaction and the other who regardless of his circumstances or personal financial position is content, there is 1 very pointed and distinct difference in the lives of these 2 men and that is Christ. 1 being in Christ, the other (at least to the present) who isn’t; and so as we’ll see the key to personal contentment (though contentment is a learned thing) is being in Christ, finding our sufficiency in Him. Paul was not a victim of circumstance, but rather a victor over circumstance through Christ. You try to find your identity in the things of this world, you seek satisfaction in the material things that this world has to offer and you’ll always find yourself lacking, nothing quite giving you the fix you need.

Oh, it may suffice for a season, but soon enough you’re in want again. What used to be such an incredible experience or entertaining hobby begins to wax a bit and it loses its edge, there’s a greener pasture somewhere else. So the result is a continual, perpetual goose chase that has you grasping at carrots that are always just out of your reach, and you think if I just had “that” whatever it is fill in the blank, then I’d be happy. and So you work and slave to get it only to find it in your hands and soon enough you’re disillusioned with it and think “well, it was great for awhile but if I had that then I’d really be happy.” and You lead your life continually deceived as to where true contentment lies, it’s like grasping at the wind, you think contentment lies in that which is just out of your reach.

The story is told of a lady who reasoning out loud said, “if I only had \$5.00 right now I’d be perfectly content.” and A Christian man who over heard her thought about what she said and wondered what it would be like to see a person who was perfectly content. and So he approached the woman and said, “I over heard your remark and would like to do something about it.” and So he took out \$5.00 and gave it to her, and with incredible sentiment she thanked the man, she couldn’t believe it. and When the man walked out of the room, he paused on the other side of the door, and as soon as the woman thought he was gone she said, “why on earth didn’t I say \$10.00” Contentment just beyond our grasp, the question was asked at one time to one of the richest men on earth, “how much is enough” and his response was “just a little bit more.” As people we struggle with this principal of contentment, but the scriptures reveal to us the secret, the secret to contentment isn’t circumstantial, but rather it comes through being found in Christ and His power coursing through me enabling me to be content in whatever circumstance I may be.

It's interesting to me that contentment is a supernatural quality given by Christ; it's not something that we possess naturally, in truth. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit, there may be people who say, I want nothing else, until you get to probing and then you find that what they mean is that they have what they can afford or whatever and therefore they realize that it's pointless to want that because they can't have it anyway, it's beyond their means. If they had the means they'd be wanting a lot more, so really they're not content, but such was not the case with the apostle Paul, we find ourselves in the center of a portion of scripture that deals with the secret of contentment.

The Church in Philippi had sent Paul a generous gift and he's now responding to that with thanksgiving. and He acknowledges that in the season that they weren't sending support to him as their missionary it wasn't because they didn't care but because they lacked opportunity, they'd lost track of him for a couple of years. So they didn't have opportunity to send a gift, now with us again I have to say it's not for lack of opportunity that we don't get behind right on ministries or missions endeavors which only leaves one other option, we really don't care. We lack in the compassion department when it comes to meeting needs that aren't our own. But notice vs 11. (read)

Now we camped out here last week for a while so I won't today but I want to draw your attention once again for just a minute to that word "learned." It's the Greek word "*manthano*" which means to learn not only in regards to understanding intellectually though it includes that, but also "to learn by use and practice, to be in the habit of, accustomed to." In other words contentment wasn't something that immediate in him upon salvation, it was something that he had to learn not only in theory but in reality. By experiencing times of plenty, and times of radical hardship, and that's what I love about the apostle, when he speaks it's not from an idealistic point of view but a realistic lifestyle and reality with in his own being

I mean would you be more willing to go under the knife of an open-heart surgery from a man who learned the procedures from an encyclopedia, or an individual who had some real life experience? Someone who knew the inner workings of the body who was familiar with different circumstances and situations that may arise and knew how to deal with them appropriately, well Paul was a man of learned experience. Well, why do Christians have to suffer? Why not? What makes us any more special than anyone else, it's like we have salvation what more do we want? But often times God teaches us incredibly profound lessons that we couldn't otherwise fully learn if we didn't go through various trials and hardships.

Oh we may know them in theory, but they're not real to us, hardship seems to have a way of invariably teaching us humility, of breaking us and keeping us usable because they cause us to cling to the feet of Jesus. Last year when we were at the men's conference I was speaking to Bill Goodrich (Pastor of Horizon Christian fellowship in Indianapolis) regarding some trials that I had passed through and various things that were in my life. And at various times in our lives we all feel as though we have people that come against us or stab us in the back and I suppose that maybe it happens a little bit more with Pastors, at least it can seem that way. I was telling him how I had gone through all this stuff and I was just seeking his insight in regards to it but I found that he did more listening than speaking, and when he would comment it would be in such a way as to cause me to continue on, and I told him some of the things that God had been teaching me through it, Because we always pray for a heart like Jesus', to be man after God's own heart and those things sound so good, but I'm not sure that we always understand the fullness of what we're asking for. Because as I was pouring out my heart before God just telling Him how I was lied about, felt betrayed by people that I thought were close to me, denied (in essence) by people I trusted, and on and on, I felt spit on, I felt as though I was stabbed in the back and in the midst of it all, the Lord whispered to my heart, do you want a heart like Mine Jeff? I thought you wanted a heart like Mine, and He led me to the gospel of John, because there in the 13th ch of John it sets the scene for all that's preparing to go down in the Lord's life. He's getting ready to be lied about, betrayed, denied, spit on and yet we read, *"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."*

The Lord just spoke to me, if you want a heart like His then you will be an individual who is acquainted with grief and sorrow, broken and humble and the Lord said to my heart, now that you feel kicked while you were down, lied about, beaten and betrayed, love those people, and love them to the end. and Bill was listening and he said, I'm really listening to you because God is taking you through some deep things and He's teaching your heart, you see He was giving me just one of several lessons that He would teach me through that, that I would learn by experience that otherwise I wouldn't really get beyond my own intellect (which isn't too far.)

You see we often pray that God would break us, but anyone who has ever had a broken bone knows that it's a painful process no matter how it comes. and In our spiritual vernacular we pray "God break me" with out stopping to think of the fact that a breaking is a painful process, and so when those times of breaking comes into our lives instead of embracing those times we cry out, "God help me!" "What's going on, don't you care about me, can't you see what I'm going through?" and God's all, "I though you wanted to be broken." "But then when I allow a circumstance to come into your life whereby the breaking process begins you accuse Me of forsaking you and not loving you when I'm doing what you asked, I'm answering your prayer." It's like, "make up your mind."

But another result or ramification of going through difficult times is that after it's over and we've received the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the strength to endure by God's grace that we are then able to comfort others with that, which we ourselves have been comforted. and That's what Paul is doing here, he's sharing insight with us that he has learned by experience so that we might have proper perspective as we journey through life during both the up times and the down times. and In vs 12 we read

Vs12

We mentioned several scriptures last week that pointed out the fact that Paul knew what it meant to be abased. He's been in hunger often, cold, and nakedness, shipwrecked 3 times, a night and day bobbing around in the sea, 5 times he was whipped with 39 lashes, 3 times he was beaten with rods, he was accused of being a liar, and ridiculed by Jews and gentiles alike.

Now I have to confess I can't honestly claim any of those things, I can't remember a time in my life where I went with out food because I had no choice, or no friends or family to turn to, now I don't mean for a day or whatever. But to honestly not know when I'll eat next, they didn't have gringos, if you caught fish that day you'd eat, if not to bad, again there's not a person here who can't eat because there's no other choice. Because if we need to we'll buy you some groceries, now obviously the bible says if a man won't work then neither will he eat. I'm not talking about being a sponge, but if you really can't afford food, then let us know. But personally I've been blessed my whole life with being able to eat pretty much whenever I wanted to, now often times we're all, "there's nothing to eat in this house." When in reality there's enough in the cabinets to live for a month, maybe not like we'd desire to but it's there nonetheless. You see in America we're not so much on the abased side as we are on the abounding side. Do you realize that nearly 3 billion people of the world's population live on less than the equivalency of \$2.00 a day? 1.3 billion on \$1.00, many of us give something similar to that to our kids for allowance and yet that's an entire days income for over a billion people worldwide.

Believe me when I tell you that most Americans are somewhere between the top 2-8% of the worlds wealthiest people. If you have change laying around somewhere in your home or in your pocket, I don't care if it's a few cents burrowed down in your couch somewhere, that immediately thrusts you in the top 8% of the worlds wealthiest people. Isn't that staggering? Brings new light to what James had to say doesn't it? James said, "*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.*"

Many of us have enough clothes in our closets to cloth 3 families and we gripe because we don't have anything to wear, and I won't even ask you ladies how many pairs of shoes you have. We don't know what it truly means to be abased, however Paul did, but concerning the hard times it's generally easier (from a spiritual perspective) to learn to be abased than it is to learn to abound. When I face hardship it takes me to my knees, but it's during those times of plenty that we're so easily persuaded off course, our focus can be so easily distracted. and We begin to amass unto ourselves vs blessing the lives of those who are less fortunate or getting behind the ministry or something that God would have us do. We get the raise and think, finally I can get that new (____) we immediately think of ourselves. Instead of turning to the Lord and saying, "God, You're blessing my life and my life belongs to you, how would You have me be responsible for this increase?" Israel is a perfect example, in the OT God would bless them and they'd feel a sense of independence and no need for God and so they'd stray from God; who needs God I have all I need. (Good job, making lots of money, pretty wife, healthy kids etc.)

So God would begin to tighten the reins a bit, they'd go off into captivity being plundered and enslaved, being "abased" as it were and what would they do? They'd cry out to God, they'd return their focus to the Lord, they never seemed to learn the lesson of abounding, but we're so similar in that when we're down on our luck (for lack of a better term) we're quick to cry out to God. We start going back to church, reading our bibles and seeking the Lord. But then when we're doing ok, living a little higher on the hog we relax our spiritual lives, kind of start doing our own thing and the next thing you know we're out fishing instead of coming to church or staying home to secure that business deal, no time to read the bible, too tired to pray and right back we go, forsaking the Lord to do our own thing. Believe me when I say that *prosperity* has done more damage to the church than *adversity* ever has. and You recall how Jesus rebuked the church of Laodicea (the lukewarm church) in Rev ch 3 and He said, "*Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--.*"

It's during the days of prosperity that we need to be careful to be responsible with that to which God has entrusted us. Most of us probably have the heart that we read of in Prov 30:8-9 where we read, "*Give me neither poverty nor riches-- Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.*" Meet my needs but don't let me get to that place where I cease recognizing Who it is that's meeting my needs and blessing my life. But as we all know it doesn't always go that way, there are times when it seems the ball is rolling my way, and then other times when I can't get a break and seems like everything is just snowballing against me. and If my contentment is based upon my circumstances then it'll be up and down, but Paul says I've been instructed through experience in the secret of contentment. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, *everywhere* and in *all* things, (let that blow your mind) it doesn't matter where I am or what's going on, as we read this he was in prison, I know how to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need.

Therein lies the secret, the secret to contentment regardless of our circumstances comes through the power of the Holy Spirit infused into my life through Christ. Now this vs has both specific and broad application, the specific application is in contentment in life, it comes through Christ. The broad application covers everything else; you see Paul is saying abased or abounding, full or hungry, in plenty or suffering need I can do all of it through Christ as He strengthens me to do it with contentment in my heart knowing that my sufficiency, my identity is in Him.

He never changes, He never leaves me nor forsakes me, He's the same yesterday today and forever, therefore I'm continually content, because He's not up and down like my circumstances, He's even keel, He never changes, therefore I'm never let down when I catch eternal vision, I'm content in Him. Now the broad application applies to any and everything else that includes His will for my life. and It's important to understand that this vs is confined to the will of God for my life. This vs doesn't make you super Christian able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, or out run a speeding locomotive, and catch bullets in your teeth. Now I suppose if God willed you to leap a tall building that through Christ you would have the strength, but lets stay practical here and keep our feet on the ground. The point is that whatever Christ has for you to do, experience or endure, He will supply the power for you to do that. Whatever it may be, with God nothing will be impossible, if God be for me, than who can be against me? The bible says that we are more than conquerors *through Him* who loved us. Everything that we need to be victorious rather than victims comes through Christ infusing His power into our lives. Jesus taught this same principal in John Ch 15 lets turn there together. (Read vs 1-8)

You see in here lies a simple illustration as to how Christ infuses our lives so that they might be fruitful to His glory, He's like the vine, or the tree trunk, we're just the branches, sever a branch from the tree and tree goes right on living, however the branch dies. It has no life in itself, no ability to produce apples or grapes; it has to draw from the life and the nutrients that are there in the vine. Jesus says it's the same way with us and Him; and vs 5 is the key (read) Philippians 4:13 and John 15:5 fit together like and hand in a glove. The two common words in each vs are "can do" the contrasting words are "all things" and "nothing", the qualifying element that distinguishes the two; Christ. Jesus says, apart from Me you can do nothing, nothing that's fruitful or of any eternal value for the Kingdom, the strength just isn't there, the efforts of the flesh just can't produce the fruit of the Spirit, try as they may. The strength and ability to be fruitful, to be of eternal value regarding the endeavors and activities of your life is found in the life and the power of Christ *in* you, through the medium or the means of the Holy Spirit's working in your life (you submitting your will over to His). The Greek word that's been translated into the English as "can do" has a # of ways that it translates, "can do" fitting this particular context.

In Acts ch's 6 and 15 both in vs 10 this word is translated "able" so it carries with it the idea of ability, In Acts 19 we find the word translated as "prevailed" when the demon possessed

man prevailed against the exorcists who were seeking to cast out demons in the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches. In James we find it translated as “avails” when he said that the “*effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*” and So this word carries with it the idea of ability, availing, prevailing, and power (Heb 9:17 translates it “power”). So there’s a lot packed away in this little word, we could expand this vs to say, “*I have prevailing power and availing ability through Christ who strengthens me.*”

In other words you don’t need any outside resource to make it, it’s all in Christ, in you, He is the strength of your life, David said in Ps 27 1, the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid. Jesus is our all in all, our strength, our ability, our enabling power to do whatever He calls me to do or allows to come against me, He is my very present help in time of need.

It’s Christ who strengthens us, our strength resides in Him, I’ll give you a few usages of this word translated “strengthened” Eph 6:10 “*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*” Notice where the strength is, it’s in the Lord, and in the power of His might, 1 Tim 1:12 here it’s translated “enabled” Paul says “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me,*” who has “strengthened” me. Here’s 1 more, 2 Tim 4:16-17 Paul says, “*At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me.*” The Lord will strengthen you in time of need to share the gospel with unbelievers, not only will He stand by you but He will strengthen you and enable you to do what He’s called you to do, which is preach the message of cross of Jesus Christ and hope that’s found only in Him because there is no other name given among men under heaven by which we must be saved.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me; God gives His personal strength to those who trust in Him to do what He desires of them. Why, do we challenge this vs? We think, man that sounds good, but what about this, or I’m not sure about that, we should rejoice over the promise of God’s word, not challenge the validity of it. Oh, don’t be deceived, apart from Jesus you can do nothing, but you can do *all* things, anything He calls you to through Christ who strengthens you. It’s a promise directly related to the confines of His will for your life, consider His will for you a set of train tracks (you being the train) as long as you stay on the tracks, you will be equipped to conquer any mountain, take on every valley, twist or turn that that train may encounter. Hop of the tracks and you’ll be a wreck; He’s not going to strengthen you to do that which is an effort of your flesh or something that He hasn’t called you to.

But you abide in Christ, abide in His word, receiving His direction for your life and He will strengthen you to accomplish each and everything He has for you through out your entire stay here on this earth, and you’ll be content during the process whether you abound, if you

abound thank God for it and utilize it for His glory, if you're abased trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He'll direct your paths. Either way we need to do that, but be content with such things as you have through the perfect peace that's found in Christ Jesus. Be content in Christ. Allow Him to strengthen your life that He might be magnified and glorified in you being more than a conqueror over the pitfalls and hardships of this life through Him who loves you. (Because to challenge this vs is to challenge God, to say you can't do what God's called you to do is to say that Christ can't do it, let God have His way in your life that He might glorified in you.)

Maybe you're here today and Christ isn't; nor ever has really been apart of your life, and today He wants to become the strength of your life. He wants to infuse you with the power of His Holy Spirit in order that He might begin to use you for His glory. Are you willing to give Jesus the throne of your heart? Maybe you're just feeling weak and overwhelmed with the issues of life, beat down and battered, Jesus can give you rest, He can give you peace, but you have to let Him. He died on the cross for you, shed His blood for the remission of your sin and He offers you forgiveness of everything you've ever done today, it's a gift, but you have to take it.