

Jesus is Lord: The Power of Christian Contentment [Philippians 4:11-20]

Introduction

A 2014 Gallup poll, and endorsed by the United Nations, asked respondents several questions: whether they experienced lots of enjoyment, laughed or smiled a lot, felt well-rested, and were treated with respect. From these results, they tabulated the world's most **content** and **miserable** countries. If you were wondering the USA often ranks 15-20 in contentment.

Top 5

1. Paraguay
2. Panama
3. Guatemala
4. Nicaragua
5. Ecuador

Bottom 5

1. Syria
2. Chad
3. Lithuania
4. Bosnia and Herzegovina
5. Serbia

What do we learn from these results? If you are from Syria, move to Ecuador. If you live in Chad, move to Nicaragua. If you live anywhere else but Paraguay, move to Paraguay.

I think we find a deeper meaning, the entire world is searching for contentment! I believe you are searching for fulfillment and contentment, **maybe that is why you are here today**. And today as we search everlasting truth from the Word of God we will find the Power of Christian contentment.

Read [Philippians 4:11-20]

The Power of Christian Contentment (4:11-14)

What is contentment? Content (αυταρκής). Lit., *self-sufficient*. Only here in the New Testament. In Stoic philosophy (Marcus Aurelius or Seneca), deeply influenced by Socrates, and known by the early church, stressed that contentment denoted one who “**becomes an independent man sufficient to himself and in need of one else.**” For the stoic, emotional detachment is essential in order to be content.

It’s easy to see how the American idea of contentment is founded upon the similar roots of stoicism: *live or build your life to the point of independence and self-sufficiency*. However, the Christian worldview radically opposes the idea of self-sufficiency. **Christian contentment is grounded in Jesus—Christ-sufficiency.**

Contentment is learned (4:11). Christ-centered contentment is not an exam you pass but a life lived in the surpassing peace and power of the Savior. Said another way- **Christ centered contentment is learned and lived.** Contentment is learned through the school of hard-knocks.

The tenses I know-know-learned- of the verbs describe actions in the past that have ongoing results in the present. He did not learn this lesson in a day but throughout a lifetime of ups and downs. The **laboratory of his life experience** provided continued opportunities for you to learn the attitude of contentment.

Contentment in Christ is learned the hard way. Not in the comfortable pews of the church or the rituals of religion. You won’t find true contentment in a sermon. **Contentment is found in the daily grace of trusting Jesus Christ and constant submission to the King of Kings.** If you have taken your lumps—know that the Lord can use those to build overwhelming peace in your heart as you cling to the Prince of Peace! **Praise God for the lumps.**

Secret- Learning to have the attitude of contentment in poverty and in prosperity is so unusual that Paul employs a rare word, found only here in the NT, to depict this process of learning. So what is the secret?

Contentment is not a situation. It is extra-situational. **An extra-terrestrial is something from outside this earth, that loves Reese’s pieces.** Likewise, Christ-like contentment is above our circumstances. This is a glorious truth—because some of you can’t see the way out—but Christ!

I can do all things. What were the all things experience by Paul? **Little-** literally apostle said that he had so little that he was humiliated- lost prestige- had no status and was subject to strict discipline. He also went **hungry** – or felt the pangs of lack of food. **Humbled?** Christ is sufficient. Hungry? Jesus is the bread of life. Well fed? The Lord is opening doors for you to share. Abounding? Remember that Christ is abounding in mercy. **Christ-centered contentment is not a situation it is a Savior.**

Now, this mighty man of God gives us a verse to triumphantly hang our hats on. **13 All things, I am doing in the one (Jesus) who empowers me. We must remember that context is king.** Any use of this verse to support a claim or goal of a triumphant, victorious Christian life **without** weaknesses or limitations conflicts with the immediate context and wider teaching of Paul. Yet, we find that **Christ-centered contentment is powerful.**

The word *dunamis* (think dynamite) means to empower, to invigorate, or to be given strength. Here is what Paul is saying: **No circumstance can arise that is bigger than our Savior!**

This is not an abstract religious slogan. Rather, **God infuses his people with power so at the right time the power of the Holy Spirit is ready to be employed! Bottle Rocket Wars. When you wanted the war to end—you used the Roman Candle**

This is the Power of Christian contentment.

The Partnership of Contentment (4:15-20)

STILL- Lord does not merely empower his people for **solo** adventures, **we are empowered through the Holy Spirit to partner in Gospel contentment.** Still, you do well by partnering (συγκοινωνεω) with me in my hardship.

By sharing the Philippians chose to partner in the sufferings of Paul and **thereby partner in the Gospel.** The early days is a reminder that the church's **giving** to support Paul's gospel ministry was a **response** to receiving the gospel from Paul.

Your giving is a gospel response. The Philippians by their very act of giving have refused to let their wealth control them and have instead taken control of it (Thielman, 245).

I still remember the day one of my best friends received the news that his daughter would have spina bifida. The first diagnosis was catastrophic, she might not make. This small community of believers began to pray. The next visit: most likely paralysis. The next visit, paralysis from the waste down. Next visit, she would most likely need assistance walking. To have the needed surgeries the family needed to move to Houston, TX to the state of the art children's hospital. Before they left this tiny church in south LA took up a collection. After the sacrificial offering was collected, over \$4000 was given.

This outpouring of financial giving resulted in spiritual growth for the givers and spiritual support for the recipients.

This was a day I will never forget. It was the eternal reminder that my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in Glory in Christ Jesus. It was the eternal reminder how important it is to partner in the gospel. The everlasting truth that when we give to the Lord, he supplies.

When you partner in the gospel, **My** God will supply all your needs. My God is a personal God. My god has personally supplied my needs, and he will personally and providentially supply your needs if you put Him first. **Do you know God personally? Call you call him MY?**

When you partner in the gospel he supplies according to His riches. The measure of God's supply will be according to the measure of God's riches. There are two types of people: those who live according to man's supply and those who live according to the Maker supply. The Lord's supply never runs dry. *Put Him first.* **Are you giving from self-sufficiently or Spirit supplied?**

Glory- God's riches are not in the market, real estate, or in gold. They in in glory, absolutely transcending and infinitely surpassing all earthly wealth. If God's riches are in glory much also should our hearts be set on things eternal and glorious. **Put him first - Partner in the Gospel**

Conclusion

The most popular course in the history of Yale University was offered in the fall of 2017—**PSYCH 157: Psychology and the Good Life**. Nearly one-fourth of Yale undergraduates registered for it.

Dr. Santos says she "tries to teach students how to lead a happier, more satisfying life."

One of Santos' principle lessons is that the things Yale undergraduates most associate with achieving happiness—a high grade, a prestigious internship, a good-paying job—**do not increase happiness at all.** "Scientists didn't realize this in the same way 10 or so years ago," Santos says. **"Our intuitions about what will make us happy, like winning the lottery and getting a good grade, are totally wrong."**

If I were allowed to say one thing to these students- future leaders of the known world-- **The power of TRUE contentment is found In Christ-** If you have Christ, you have everything you need. The search is over. My God had supplied all I need in Christ Jesus

If true contentment is found in Jesus Christ, how do we find it? The powerful reality is that you don't find Jesus- he finds you. Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, 5 made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!

Notes

The Philippians by their very act of giving have refused to let their wealth control them and have instead taken control of it (Thielman, 245).

Phil. 4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. **11** I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be **content** in whatever circumstances I find myself.

Content (αυταρκης). Lit., *self-sufficient*. Only here in the New Testament. A stoic word, expressing the favorite doctrine of the sect, that man should be sufficient to himself for all things; able, by the power of his own will, to resist the shock of circumstance. Paul is *self-sufficient* through the power of the *new self*: not *he*, but *Christ* in him. The kindred noun *αυταρκεια* *sufficiency*, occurs 2 Corinthians 9:8; 1 Timothy 6:6.

In Stoic philosophy contentment denoted one who “becomes an independent man sufficient to himself and in need of one else.” For the stoic, emotional detachment is essential in order to be content (Hansen, 310).

The Philippians needed to hear—and to see exemplified in the apostle—that the enjoyment of material abundance is not the basis for contentment ((Silva, 204).

The strong double negation here and again in 4:17 stop anyone from misunderstanding him. Paul's great joy had nothing to do with the fact that the receipt of gifts met his dire needs (Hansen, 309).

Keys to Christian contentment (Motyer, 217).

1. Generosity of others
2. Christian's attitude toward circumstances. We must discipline ourselves to contentment. Deciding not to covet. Deciding no to grumble during difficult times.

12 I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.

Learned

The aorist tense of the verb learned encompasses all the varied experiences of his life described in the next verse. He did not learn this lesson in a day but throughout a lifetime of ups and downs. The laboratory of his life experience provided continues opportunities for him to learn the attitude of contentment (Hansen, 310).

Secret

Learning to have the attitude of contentment in poverty and in prosperity is so unusual that Paul employs a rare word, found only here in the NT, to depict this process of learning (Hansen, 312).

It was used metaphorically for gaining insider knowledge.

Little

To be humbled means to lose prestige or status, to be humiliated, and to be subjected to strict discipline.

Hungry

“to feel the pangs of lack of food”

Contentment

IS not the absence of pain (hunger, lack, etc).

13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. **14** Still, you did well by partnering with me in my hardship.

Contrary to popular cliché, experience is not the best teacher. Contentment is not learned merely by experience in all the circumstances of life but by being in Christ in any and every situation (Hansen, 313).

Context is key. Any use of this verse to support a claim or goal of a triumphant, victorious Christian life without weaknesses or limitations conflicts with the immediate context and wider teaching of Paul (Hansen, 314).

His all-consuming desire to know Christ sets him free from depending on other powers, either his own inner powers or the powers of friends and their money (Hansen, 315).

No circumstance could arise that was too big for Paul's God (Motyer).

Through/in

God infuses his people with power so that at the right time the power of the Spirit is ready for employment.

Phil. 4:15 And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. **18** But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Offering/Sacrifice

Uses OT language reiterating that outward rituals should be but the manifestation of inward realities (Silva, 207).

Sharing/Partnership

By sharing the Philippians chose to partner in the sufferings of Paul and thereby partner in the Gospel.

Early days

The temporal markers is a reminder that the church's giving to support Paul's gospel ministry was a response to receiving the gospel from Paul (Hansen, 318).

Every act of love increased their capacity to love more (Hansen, 322). Sacrificial gifts produce spiritual growth in the givers as well as support for the recipients

Epaphroditus

The church most likely collected a substantial gift, since it would hardly have been worth while sending a messenger with a small amount. In doing so, they brought the gospel to Paul (Wright, 133).

19 And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The previous sentence ends with God, this one begins with God (Hansen, 324).

Friendship requires reciprocal giving and receiving. Because he is in prison, Paul cannot return gifts in kind to the Philippians. They will receive their return from my God (Hansen, 324).

My

This pronoun recalls Paul's own experience of God's personal care for all his needs (Hansen, 325).

Riches

The measure of God's supply will be according to the measure of God's riches (Hansen, 326).

Glory

God's riches are not in the market, real estate, or in gold. They in in glory, absolutely transcending and infinitely surpassing all earthly wealth (Hansen, 327).

In Christ

The enrichment of the Philippians will come as their lives are transformed by the cross and the resurrection of Christ (Hansen, 327).

Illustrations

Kevin Kruse, *How Corporate America Invented Christian America*

The Worlds most content and miserable countries (247 wallstreet, 2014). Survey respondents were asked whether they experienced lots of enjoyment, laughed or smiled a lot, felt well-rested, and were treated with respect. USA is 15-20

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Power of giving. FBC Gramercy collected over \$4000 for the needs of our youth pastor whose daughter had special needs in the Houston hospital. This outpouring of financial giving resulted in spiritual growth for the givers and spiritual support for the recipients.

“God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” –Hudson Taylor missionary to China

Application
