

Contentment in Christ
Philippians 4:10-13
Sunday, April 13th, 2025
By Ryan Perry

Scripture

Philippians 4:10–13

[10] I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. [11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. [12] 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. [13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Let's Pray

Introduction

I'm not sure if you have been following the news over the last week and a half. If you have, you know that on Wednesday, April 2nd, President Trump announced what are called reciprocal tariffs on certain countries like China, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union, which are about half of what they charge us for imports. Also, on that same day, he announced that a 10% tariff would be imposed on all other countries as well as a 25% tariff on all foreign automakers.

This single action sent our country's financial system into a tailspin as the Dow Jones Industrial Average sank about 4,000 points in a matter of a day and a half. Nations were bracing for a future without the U.S. as their central trade partner, and U.S. businessmen and economists were bracing for recession.

But then something happened: President Trump, this past Wednesday, put a 90-day pause on these tariffs with the hope that long-term and sustainable trade deals could be put in place. Immediately, the markets rebounded by around 2600 points, and a global crisis was averted...**for now.**

Yet, here is what I am wondering. If you were following this news, **how did your heart respond?** Were you calm and collected, or were you panicking at the prospect of global crisis, job loss, higher prices at the grocery store, or even the loss of your investments and possible retirement?

If you have been following along with us through the book of Philippians, you know that the Apostle Paul, at the time when he wrote this letter, was also facing his own crisis. He was in prison in Rome, awaiting trial to find out if he would be set free or die, and he was under house arrest where he had to pay all of his own expenses.

Needless to say, he was a man in need.

This brings us to the final section of this book, where Paul is thanking this church for the monetary gift that was brought by Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25).

In fact, verse 10 in our text for this morning says that he ***“rejoiced greatly in the Lord”*** that they have at last revived their concern for him in this way. Not that they weren’t concerned, but Paul says they had no opportunity to show their concern.

However, one of the distinctive marks of his “rejoicing” is the fact that it didn’t come from the gift itself. Rather, Paul’s joy comes from the reality that this gift is a tangible sign that they are looking to the needs and interests of others (Phil. 2:4).

But how do we know that Paul’s joy wasn’t in the gift?

After all, he was in prison, under house arrest, didn’t have a source of income, and was required to pay his own expenses. **Couldn’t his joy simply be that his needs were met in the midst of dire circumstances?**

Thankfully, the apostle anticipated this kind of thinking and completely shuts it down.

He makes it clear in verses 11-13 that his rejoicing had nothing to do with money or alleviating his circumstances. **Because his contentment doesn’t come from what he has or doesn’t have. Instead, it fully and wholly comes from Christ.**

As he says in Verse 13, ***“I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.”***

Now, after easter, we will talk more about Paul’s gratitude toward the Philippians and their financial partnership with him.

But today, we are going to specifically focus on what Paul has to say about his contentment in Christ.

Because his mention of contentment isn't merely a passing remark in this letter. Rather, he is using his own experience of a **Christ-centered contentment** as an example to be followed.

So this morning, as we unpack Paul's contentment in verse 11-13, we will see three things:

1. We must learn to be content in Christ.
2. To do this, we need to find our sufficiency in Christ.
3. If we are going to pursue our sufficiency and contentment in Christ, then we must believe that he will strengthen us for the task.

Let's begin with the truth that contentment in Christ is learned.

Learn to be content in Christ.

Philippians 4:11

[11] Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.

I want to be clear: Paul isn't living in some la la land, nor is he delusional about his circumstances.

He talks about "being brought low, facing hunger, and having need" in verse 12, and he is clear about his "troubles" in verse 14.

He obviously understands that he has real physical needs.

But he wants them to understand that his joy and hope are not dependent on those needs being met. Because he has learned **"to be content"** in any situation or circumstance he faces. **Even when he is in great need.**

As he says in verse 11, ***"for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content."***

Now, when we talk about being content or having contentment, what we're talking about: **A state of satisfaction or happiness.** That's what the word means.

So, Paul is declaring that he is satisfied no matter what situation or circumstance comes his way.

But he isn't simply a super type B personality that was born with a go-with-the-flow attitude. Nor, is contentment and satisfaction something that just manifested itself in his life on the day he became a believer.

It was something that he actually had to learn. In fact, he explains this further in verse 12 when he says, ***"I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need."***

Contentment, and especially contentment in Christ, must be learned and put into practice.

And the reason that Paul is mentioning this to the Philippians is because discontentment and dissatisfaction were a struggle for them.

They were struggling with fear and discouragement over Paul's imprisonment and their persecution. This was causing them to be selfish, to grumble and fight, to believe false teaching, and it was causing anxiety.

Therefore, his example of learning contentment in Christ is a call to pursue the same thing, even when life is hard. **Because real and lasting satisfaction isn't found in our circumstances or possessions but in Christ alone.**

Application

But how do we know if we have learned to be content or satisfied in Christ or if that's something we need to work on?

I think we can ask ourselves some diagnostic questions that will give us a pretty good idea of where we are at.

- Like the Philippians, are we struggling with fear or discouragement this morning?
- Are we afraid of what might happen to our economy because of these tariffs?
- Are we worried about whether we will have enough to make it through even greater price hikes?
- Are you struggling with a possible health diagnosis?
- Do you continually find yourself longing for more security and ease in this life?
- Are you someone who is easily given to worry or anxiety?

If you can find yourself in any of these questions, and I think most of us can, then we probably have work to do. **This means we all need to grow in our ability to be content or satisfied in Christ.**

In fact, as I was preparing this message, I really saw my own struggle with fear, worry, and discouragement throughout the last year.

I was at times discouraged as people were leaving throughout this transition process.

At times, I struggled with fear as I thought about my future and the future of my family if I didn't become Senior Pastor. **I mean, we've built a life here, so what would that mean for us and our future?**

Even now, I am super hopeful about what God is doing at LEFC and what he has for this church in the coming years.

Yet there can still be, at times, that nagging voice of doubt and worry that says, "Is it actually going to be okay?"

But it all comes back to one central reality: **I need to learn to treasure Jesus as the only one who can satisfy my soul in all circumstances.**

I need to learn to be content in Christ, and if you are honest, so do you.

But how do we do that? How do we learn to be content and satisfied in Christ? The answer is by ***"finding our sufficiency in Christ."***

Find your sufficiency in Christ.

Philippians 4:11b-12

...I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be **content**. [12] 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.

Now, I've highlighted the word **"content"** again because the original word comes from Greek Philosophy, and it literally means to be **"self-sufficient."**

And this **"self-sufficiency"** was one of the main tenets of a popular philosophical system in that day, known as **"Stoicism."**

Because the main goal of Stoicism was to *"live above need and abundance in such a way that you are **self-sufficient**."*

It was a way to emotionally detach yourself from the world so that you wouldn't be affected by it.

And if you've ever experienced serious trauma, you might have felt this. That moment when you feel completely emotionless as something very hard is happening to you or around you.

That's where a stoic is trying to get to in their life. But emotionless self-sufficiency isn't what Paul is trying to achieve.

We can see Paul's emotions all over this book through his various references to joy and rejoicing and to the sorrow that he would have experienced if Epaphroditus had died (Phil. 2:27), **so Paul isn't anti-emotion.**

Likewise, he isn't trying to teach the Philippians some form of self-sufficiency either, because that would conflict with everything else he has said.

For instance, if he was teaching self-sufficiency, then the Philippians' financial partnership wouldn't be a cause for joy. **But we know that he “rejoiced greatly” when they met his need.**

But more than that, **Paul's whole ministry and message are built upon the truth that Christ is the one who is sufficient for us.**

Look with me at the following verses:

2 Corinthians 3:5

[5] Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God...

2 Corinthians 12:9

[9] But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Philippians 1:21

[21] For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Now, the word “sufficient or sufficiency” points to the idea of being **adequate, ample, or enough.**

Paul's point in all of this is that no matter what happens in his life, whether he lives or dies, **Jesus is all that he truly needs because Jesus is enough for him. That's where his sufficiency comes from.**

Think about what this means as we look again at Philippians 4:12:

[12] 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.

Jesus is enough, even when Paul is **brought low** and humiliated. This would include the beatings, imprisonments, the 39 lashes, and the criticisms he received.

But Jesus is also enough for him when he's **abounding** or excelling in his ministry through conversions and the planting of new churches.

Jesus is enough for him when he has **plenty to eat** and when he is **going hungry** in a prison cell.

And finally, Jesus is all that he needs when he has an **abundance** of money to sustain himself or when **he's broke** and can barely pay his expenses.

For Paul, Jesus isn't just the one who died on the cross to pay for his sins, but Jesus is the one who perfectly meets all his needs.

So no matter what comes his way and no matter how high or low he goes in this life, his joy, his confidence, and his satisfaction will always be in Jesus, and not his circumstances.

Because for Paul, Jesus is sufficient and is enough for him.

Application

Now, I'm really grateful that Paul gave us such a wide variety of life experiences in verse 12. And even though we haven't been through the things Paul has, I believe that we can still relate to the highs and lows, and abundance and need that he is talking about.

For instance, we have all had humbling experiences in our lives. Likewise, we probably have all experienced times when our accounts feel lean, crisis hits our family, circumstances feel crushing, and we feel unsure about how we are going to make it from one day to the next.

And in these experiences, our contentment and belief that "Jesus is all we need" are challenged. In fact, these are the things that God uses to show us where we are placing our trust and sufficiency.

As Peter says in 1 Peter 1:6-7:

[6] In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

God uses them to test the genuineness of our faith.

But for most of us, as Americans, we spent the majority of our days not in need, but in abundance and plenty.

We have money in our pockets, food on the table, roofs over our heads, and if we don't have something, we can generally go to the store and buy it.

In our abundance, we are being conditioned to believe that our sufficiency either comes from our surroundings or, like the stoic, that it comes from within us.

But Paul is trying to tell us, *"I've been there. I've excelled, and I've had abundance and plenty."*

Yet the only one who is truly sufficient for him and the only one who can truly bring him satisfaction and contentment is Christ.

This is similar to what the Preacher is trying to tell us in Ecclesiastes 1:14 when he says:

[14] I have seen everything that is done under the sun (apart from Christ), and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.

So my question is, are you fully aware of where your confidence and satisfaction are this morning?

- Is it in Christ or is it in the success of your business?
- Is it in Christ or is it in getting that much-needed vacation that is coming soon?
- Is it in Christ, or is it in that new car, house, relationship, or job that may be coming?
- **Would you be okay if you only made enough to pay your bills and feed your family?**

Now, some of us are closer to this than others, but if we take that last question seriously, we will probably feel the rub. **Because it may expose within us the fact that we're looking for our fulfillment and satisfaction in something else besides Jesus.**

Now, I'm not saying that having a lot is sinful or a bad thing.

But what I am saying is that we need to reject our abundance, ease, and possessions as things that can bring real and lasting satisfaction to our souls.

Because lasting satisfaction can only be found in our God, our creator, and our Savior Jesus Christ. The one who tells us in John 10:10:

[10] ...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (to the full).

Here's the thing: I don't know what place each of you find yourselves in this morning. Maybe you are in a season of need, and you are finding it hard to see the sufficiency and satisfaction of Christ clearly.

Or maybe you are in a place of abundance, which also might mean you're in a place of busyness, and you're struggling to hold onto your need for Jesus in the midst of a thousand other demands.

But wherever side you fall on this morning, I want to leave you with the good news our God and Savior is with you and will strengthen you.

Believe that Christ will strengthen you.

Philippians 4:13

[13] I can do all things through him (Christ) who strengthens me.

This last verse is like that moment in the movie when the big reveal comes. All of the tension and drama is building to the point when the great resolution comes, and we finally understand what everything means.

For Paul, his satisfaction and contentment in all situations, which comes from his ability to see Christ as sufficient for him in every high and low circumstance is beckoning for a resolution and an answer.

How can you do that Paul? How can you be content in Christ and truly see him as enough for you while you're in prison, and facing possible death?

And his answer is nothing new, it's not profound, it's not some secret knowledge that you didn't already have, but it is a simple truth that we all know and have to put into practice on a daily basis.

Paul believes that Christ will give him the necessary strength to do it.

Now, one of the things that I dislike about verse 13 is how badly it has been taken out of context.

It's been misapplied to mean that if we trust Christ, we should be able to accomplish anything we set our minds to do, regardless of talent, circumstances, or even if it's God's will for us. **But that isn't what Paul is telling us.**

Rather, he is saying that in any situation he faces, he can be satisfied in Christ because Jesus is enough for him and Jesus will bring him through it.

This is a very similar truth to what he wrote earlier in Philippians when he said:

Philippians 1:6

[6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:13

[13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

As the people of God, we have a promise from God that he is with us (Phil. 4:9), that he is working in us (Phil. 2:13), and that he will complete his work in our lives (Phil. 1:6).

Which means that whether you are in the highest of highs or the lowest of lows, the God of peace, our Savior Jesus Christ, will get you through them.

Because he is the one who will satisfy your soul, and he is the one and the only one who will be enough for you.

And what God is asking of us this morning, through the apostle Paul, **is to believe him.**

To take daily and prayerful steps of faith where we say to him and to ourselves, ***"I can do this and get through this, only by the power of Christ at work in me."***

And where we daily turn our eyes away from ourselves, our circumstances, and our possessions as sources of sufficiency and satisfaction, and instead we turn them to Jesus and say, ***"You are better, you are more than enough, and in all things, you are all I need."***

Conclusion

So, my challenge to all of us in the days ahead is simple. **Trust Jesus.**

Whether you are brought low or are abounding, facing plenty or hunger, abundance or need, and whether the economy booms or busts, believe that he is enough for you. **That he will satisfy your every longing and your every need.**

And no matter the situation or circumstance, walk through it with hope. Knowing that he is with you, that he is working in you, and that he will give you the strength and the peace to get through it.

**Because real and lasting contentment is only found in Christ, and he is all we need.
Amen.**

Let's pray.