

Philippians 4 (Part 2): 10-23 • Keys to Contentment

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Philippians chapter 4, and we're going to begin at verse 10 and read through the end. If you're ready, here's what it says.

“¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I'm looking for a gift; but I'm looking for what may be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and even more I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet all saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings.

²² All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” (ESV)

Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for giving us this, your Word. Thank you, Lord, for the Book of Philippians. It's been a wonderful study, and as we dig into this last

section of this letter, we just pray for your Holy Spirit to enliven our hearts, to hear your voice, to respond today to what you want to say to us, and to apply to our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, in these final comments that Paul makes to the people of Philippi as he closes out this letter, he begins to talk about giving and support. Those of you who have been attending Calvary Chapel for any length of time, you know that we don't ever talk about money unless it comes up in the word.

It was a long time ago when we started the fellowship, a little over 28 years ago, that we kind of made the decision. I say we, I got together with the elders of our fellowship, and we just talked about money and how we were going to deal with money, money issues and money concerns and things like that. And we kind of came to the conclusion that the body of Christ hears too much about it as far as from the pulpit when the church needs money or whatever.

We kind of made a determination as elders way back then to appeal to God instead of the body. So, we never talk about money. We don't take an offering. It's just the Lord has to move on your heart for that to happen.

And let me say, with the Apostle Paul, we have been amply supplied. God has honored that in any way. Like Paul says, I'm not saying this to let you know that we're in need. God has been incredibly gracious. However, here we are with a part of the word that deals with the issue of giving and support and that sort of thing. So, we're going to cover it.

And Paul begins by saying in verse 10, *"I rejoice greatly (in the Lord) (that now) at last you've (reserved) renewed your concern for me."* And so, he acknowledges the fact of their support that had come by the hand of Epaphroditus, this man who had brought whatever the Philippians had put together to bring to Paul. He wants to know, and he even tells them, like two times in this section about giving. He says, I want you to know that I'm not bringing this up to try to stir you to give a little more. He wants them to know I've been well taken care of, so I'm not saying this for that reason.

Then he goes on in verse 11, if you look with me there again. He says, *"I'm not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."* And with that single verse, the apostle Paul opens up that can of worms that we call contentment. I call it a can of worms because it's one of those things that we all kind of know that we need, but very few of us actually have. And I'm encouraged by the fact that pretty much the first thing Paul says about contentment is that he had to learn it.

Did you catch that? He says there in verse 11, “...*I have learned to be content...*” And that encourages me because that tells me that if the Apostle Paul had to learn contentment, I'm pretty sure I do too. And it also tells me that it doesn't just spring naturally from our flesh. You know what I mean?

Contentment doesn't just kind of ooze out of us. It's something that has to be learned over time. And so, how does that happen? How do you actually learn to be contented? Well, there have been different attitudes about contentedness over the years. I don't know how many of you have ever looked into stoic philosophy.

Stoicism is the philosophical movement that kind of grabbed a lot of hearts at a particular time in the history of man. And the Stoics believed that it was stupid to get all worked up about things you couldn't change. And Stoicism essentially taught that if you're facing a circumstance that you can do nothing about, then that must be the will of God.

And since you can't change the will of God, you might as well just buck up and learn to cope with the situation. And that's, to be honest with you, kind of what I learned as a kid, that whole idea of, well, I can't change my circumstances so, I guess I'll just have to learn how to cope with it.

Here's the problem with stoicism: It basically depends on my ability to kind of wrestle my heart to the ground and pin it. And try to get it to obey by a force of my will, I'm going to be content if it's the last thing I do' sort of a thing. It's this exerting this force of will. That's not how Paul achieved an attitude or a heart of contentment.

I want you to listen to his words here again in verse 12. Look with me there in your Bible: “*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret* (notice that word Paul calls it a secret), *of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*”

He's dragging it out for us here. What is it, Paul? Verse 13: “*I can do everything* (all this) *through Him who gives me strength.*” And that's the secret which, by the way, isn't a big secret for us because as Christians, this is the theme of pretty much everything that we say, I can't do it, but Christ can do it in me. But obviously, it's a secret to the world.

The Stoics didn't understand it. They thought that contentment was only going to come as they dredged it up inside of their will and said, I will be content and so forth. Paul says, you know what? I don't have that kind of power. I don't have

that kind of strength. I don't have that kind of inner fortitude to just be content on my own.

I don't like being content, necessarily. And, like I said before, my flesh usually longs for other things, which just breeds a greater attitude of discontentment in my heart and in my life. So what am I going to do? Well, as a believer, as somebody who has come to Jesus Christ, made him my Lord and Savior, and received his Holy Spirit into my life. I'm going to depend on his power to enable me to walk in an attitude of contentment.

Now, once again, that means it's not just as easy as saying, 'Okay, God, do that work of contentment in me, because here we are, because you got it. I don't.' Here we go. Boom. Now, there's some dying to self that has to go on as well at the same time.

Whenever we talk about releasing the power of God in our lives, there's this corresponding work that of laying down my wants, my wishes, and the things that actually make me discontented. In fact, as I was going through the Word of God, I was thinking to myself there's other things in the word that lend itself to helping us deal with contentment.

Obviously again with contentment, we know that it's a work of the Holy Spirit. It's got to be the power of God that enables us, but there are other insights and keys to contentedness, and I'm going to put them on the screen for you. We're going to do about five of them. In fact, we'll title it here, Keys to Contentment. Okay.

Keys to Contentment

1. Learn to give thanks in all things

And the very first one we'll put up on here is learn to give thanks in all things. Right? I think— this is really important to have a thankful heart. Remember what Paul said to the Thessalonians? Let me put it up here for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

And that's challenging, particularly when my life is full of need in some respect or another, to give thanks in the midst of that circumstance.

We've talked about this in the last few studies. There's always something to give thanks for, but again, when life is lean, it's an act of obedience because you see, I don't feel like giving thanks. I don't feel like giving thanks for my... maybe the relationship you're in isn't just meeting your needs or your job isn't meeting your financial needs or, whatever is going on in your life, your body isn't cooperating with life these days, or something like that.

And then along comes God's Word and says, "...give thanks in all circumstances..." and we're kind of pressed by that, and challenged. Give thanks in the midst of that? Yes. You know what?

It's the mark of a child of God who's growing up, to be able to give thanks in the midst of even the challenging times, the lean times. The times when my heart really wants more, but then to give thanks it is a, it's a barrier against falling back into discontentedness.

Keys to Contentment

1. Learn to give thanks in all things
- 2. Learn to rest in God's ability to provide**

Secondly, on our list, learn to rest in God's ability to provide. Man, sometimes we start to strive so much, we struggle to get, instead of resting with what God has given. And can I just tell you, the reason we struggle to get more, or to have things that we don't already have, is because we doubt God's ability to provide in our lives. We just doubt it.

We're not really sure always that he has our best interest in mind, or that he's really thinking about all the things we really need. And that's why we strive to try to get them on our own. But the more we get to know the Lord, the more we learn to trust that he's working these things out in our lives, and we can, and sometimes he's just encouraging us to learn to wait.

I don't know about you, but waiting is not easy for me. I find waiting very difficult. I'm a very impatient person and when the Lord calls upon me to wait for something, I get real fidgety, and real frustrated, and I can even tumble into anger. But the more we learn to wait, and to trust, and to rest in his ability to provide, the more it will settle into an attitude of contentedness.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6?

Matthew 6:27, 31-32 (ESV)

...which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

...which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

He says, great question so which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, what are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? What are we going to wear? Where's that husband? Where's that wife I've been waiting for? Whatever, whatever the need might be. He says, "...the Gentiles seek after all these things..." and by the word Gentiles, he's basically, he's talking to a Jewish audience at the time, and so that's essentially the godless. But then he says this, "...your heavenly Father knows your needs..."

Do we forget that your heavenly father knows your needs? He knows, he knows what you need. The question is, are you going to learn, am I going to learn to trust him and rest in that?

Keys to Contentment

1. Learn to give thanks in all things
2. Learn to rest in God's ability to provide
- 3. Be satisfied with what you've been given**

Third thing on our list to encourage contentment, be satisfied with what you have been given. You might remember that Paul wrote to Timothy in 1st Timothy chapter 6 and he said,

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV)

...godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

...godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into the world and (we can take) we can't take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing (we'll be), with these we will be content.

I read that and I kind of go... seriously food and clothing? That's it. I mean, it's like, excuse me God, I'm from America. We are never satisfied with just food and clothing, right?

Do you know how many people in the world would be just thrilled to death to have food and clothing? Just food and clothing. Wow. And Paul had kind of made a determination when he said that to Timothy, we've determined that if we have food and clothing, we're going to be satisfied with that because you see, it's a choice, we make a choice. I'm going to choose, I'm going to choose to be satisfied.

Keys to Contentment

1. Learn to give thanks in all things
2. Learn to rest in God's ability to provide
3. Be satisfied with what you've been given
- 4. Refuse to compare your situation with others**

Fourth, refuse to compare your situation with others. Comparisons, very interesting. Have you ever noticed that when we compare ourselves with other people, we always compare ourselves with people who have more than us? We never compare ourselves with people who have less. If we did that all day long, it would be a completely different thing.

But we're always comparing—it's that, keep up with the Joneses. You don't care if the Joneses are poor. You're not going to compare yourselves with them. But if they're wealthy or have more than you do, then you're going to always be, working to kind of get up another notch or whatever.

I got to tell you something. This last week, or actually a couple of weeks, I've been emailing back and forth with a guy in India who just reached out to me through email, through the internet. He'd found us online, and he's a pastor of a little Baptist church in the south of India. He started sending me pictures of his fellowship, and his name is David. He's a wonderful man, and we've had some fellowship online and stuff.

But I look at these pictures that he sends me, and I mean there's not one single person who attends his church who owns a pair of shoes. Not one. And he doesn't even wear them, when he goes to minister. And nobody wears shoes because they don't have any. This is a really, really poor part of India that he ministers to. These people are very poverty-stricken and uneducated and it's pretty strugglesome.

He was writing to me here just this week and telling me that, they actually have a little small building that they meet in, which he purchased out of his own funds. He said, but when it rains, our church building fills up with water, and that's kind of a bummer. And he said, actually, the worst part is when it rains, the water also runs into the people's houses. That's really hard on the children. That kind of is what the Lord's been setting me up with this week on this study of contentment.

And as I was thinking about this and putting together my notes and walking around my own house, I was thinking, what if those people came to my house? They would say, you live in a palace, pastor Paul, you live in a palace. And I'm considered middle class, just like you here in America. But we live in palaces compared to those people. We don't deal with the things they deal with. When's the last time you drove through a leper colony?

So the issues are just completely different. And yet, I don't usually compare myself to those people. If I did, I think I'd be more thankful. I mean, I really do. I think that thankfulness would probably rise up more in my heart than this kind of feeling of envy for what I don't have.

Remember what James said in James chapter 3? He said,

James 3:16 (NIV)

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Yeah, busted. So comparing yourself with other people, at least those who have more, don't do that.

Keys to Contentment

1. Learn to give thanks in all things
2. Learn to rest in God's ability to provide
3. Be satisfied with what you've been given
4. Refuse to compare your situation with others
- 5. Learn to focus on the needs of others**

Finally, fifth thing, learn to focus on the needs of others. I personally think that a lot of our discontent is founded on the fact that we have a very unhealthy focus here in America on our own little world, on our own little existence.

And I'm constantly thinking about me and myself and what I have and what I don't have. And it's kind of my world and what's happening in my world. And what's really funny about us Americans, we not only think about ourselves, we think everybody else is thinking about us too. One thing I've learned about people who are going through a strugglesome time, they will actually stay away from church because they're going through a strugglesome time.

And they, because they think that everybody at church knows they've been going through that kind of a time and they don't want to be confronted by it. And they'll say, well we're not going to come to church for a while until we kind of get our deals straightened out and stuff like that, and because we I know...They think everybody's thinking about them.

And I'm like, sweetie, I'm sorry. I hate to pop your bubble, but they're all thinking about themselves. Everybody's thinking about their own deal. They all got their own issues to deal with and I'll be honest with you, you probably haven't even shown up on their radar. But yet people we, because we think so much about ourselves, we just naturally think other people are thinking about us too. They're not.

But you know what? We need to think about other people because it will be a guard in our hearts against discontented attitudes. And that's why, even when Paul was in prison, he would talk about praying for people. I'm praying for you guys.

If I were in prison, I'd probably be praying about getting out of prison. You know what I mean? But he's praying for the churches! He's lifting up these saints that are all over the place in these churches that he's planted. He's in prison and he's praying for them, and I'm just blown away by that. But you see, I believe that lends itself, it fosters a greater contentedness with my current situation, because I'm praying for other people, and thinking about the needs of other people.

You'll remember earlier in this very letter here in Philippians, Paul talked about it. What he said was, if you go back to chapter 2, he said,

Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Why? It'll help you with your discontented issues. It'll help. Think about what's going on in other people's lives. Think about how you can help. So, these keys to contentment: Learn to give thanks in all things. Learn to rest in God's ability to provide. Be satisfied with what you've been given. Refuse to compare your situation with others. Unless they have less. In that case, it might even help. And then learn to focus on the needs of others.

Verse 14, let's keep reading here as Paul finishes out this letter, he says, “*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*”¹⁵ *Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;*¹⁶ *for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.*”

Stop there for a minute. What Paul is saying to the Philippians here is, I mean it's fairly self-explanatory. He says, when I left your area, none of the other churches helped me out. You guys did. And in fact, you helped me again and again.

And I don't know what you think about when you think about the Philippians sending aid to Paul: support, money, whatever. But in America, of course, I think of it as an American, and I think, well, these churches, growing and prosperous, and they're giving Paul out of their great abundance, and they're saying, here, God has blessed us, apostle Paul, and we're going to send you this stuff to help you out, and there you go, God bless you.

But that's not what was going on. Because you see, Paul actually talked about the Philippians when he wrote to the Corinthians. And he talked about their giving. Do you guys remember we went through this in 2 Corinthians? Not that long ago. Here's a reminder from chapter 8, verses 1 through 4.

2 Corinthians 8:1-4 (ESV)

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

He says to the Corinthians, *“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace that God has been (giving, or) given among the churches of Macedonia (that's the Philippians), for (us) in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy (and their extreme wealth, oops ooh, that's not what it says) and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, and as I can testify, (even) and beyond their means of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.”*

That's what was going on in Philippi. The people there were the only church, when Paul left Macedonia and started heading elsewhere, they were the only church that reached out to support him, and they did it out of their extreme poverty. So this wasn't just this overflowing abundance of goods that was coming into the coffers.

These were people who barely had enough to scrape by. And yet, what is it that motivated them? Did you take a look at that? How, what, what was overflowing in their lives? They had an abundance of joy. They had an abundance of joy. And joy causes us to cheerfully give. And that's why Paul told us that about that very thing. So, it's pretty amazing when you think about it.

Verse 17 again he repeats: *“Not that I'm looking for a gift; but I'm looking for what may be credited to your account.”* Paul didn't keep a ledger as to how much the churches gave. When he talks about something being credited to the church's account, he's talking about the records that God keeps in heaven.

And he says, I'm not looking for a gift, I'm looking for what may be credited to you as a church, in the eyes of the Lord, right? And then he says, *“¹⁸ I have received full payment and even more I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”*

Isn't that interesting? He uses the exact wording that's used in the Old Testament to describe the animal sacrifices. When they're offered with a heart, a true heart to worship the Lord, it's an acceptable fragrant offering, pleasing to God.

And then from that comes verse 19, which is another one of the most powerful and probably most often quoted verses by Christians: *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

You hear a lot of Christians say that, don't you? God will meet all your needs, according to his riches and glory. Don't worry, brother, God's going to meet all your needs, according to his riches. Cool. But you got to remember, what were the circumstances that generated Paul's repetition of that promise?

Well, we already looked at it. We read about how he described their extreme poverty, but their overflowing, abundant joy, which caused them to give and be concerned first about the kingdom of God. And as a result or as a consequence of that sacrificial giving, Paul says, *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches...”* You see, so that's not one of those promises that you and I can just pull out of our pocket and throw out at any time.

Joe Christian over here has racked up all kinds of debt, buying things that he really likes and wants, and he's got five credit cards maxed out, and he's really struggling over here. So we're coming out and we're going, hey Joe, don't worry man, God's going to supply, He's going to take care of all your needs, according to His riches and glory. And that was really dumb, to be able to quote that to somebody who has not been a good steward, frankly, of the resources that God has given them. This promise is given to a church that gave until it hurt, and that's the kind of giving that God takes notice of.

Remember when Jesus parked himself by the place where people would drop their offerings on the way into the temple and all the people were coming along throwing in bags of money or whatever, making big donations for everyone to see. And then along comes this little old woman, and she's got these two copper coins that are worth about a half a penny, and she tosses them in, and Jesus begins to speak.

And He says, do you see this woman? She's given more than all the rest. And the guys must have been incredulous. Like, I don't know if you're seeing something different than what I'm seeing, but she gave in like nothing. All these other people gave huge gifts. He says no, no, no. Here's the point. She gave out of her poverty, they gave out of their wealth. And because she gave all she had to live on, she has given more than all the rest. (Mark 12:41-44)

And you know what? I have no worry about how that woman lived her days in the future because I know that my God met all her needs according to his riches in glory because of her sacrificial giving. Never forget the fact that the promise of verse 19 is predicated upon sacrificial giving, very, very important that you and I understand that.

Paul ends with these words: “²¹ *Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus.*” Ken, come on up, and we're going to end with a little bit of worship in a second.

But he says, “²¹ *Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings.* ²² *All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.*” I read this and I'm kind of, it almost is kind of funny because he says it here at the end. Paul usually does this, yeah, greet all the saints there in Christ Jesus. All the brothers that are with me, they say hi. Oh, and by the way, all the believers who are, especially those who are in Caesar's household, send their greetings. And we're all kind of like, huh, okay.

No, do you remember who Caesar was at this time? It was Nero. Do you guys know about Nero? He was a monster. He was literally out of his mind. He would kill people at a whim. He used to take his enemies, including Christians, and put them up on poles and light them on fire to light his garden at night. He was a madman. I mean, he makes Hitler look like a boy scout.

And yet, here what, here's what Paul says, hey, especially all the believers that live in Caesar's household, they all send their greetings. And we're all what? But this is one of those incredible verses that speaks about the power of the gospel to invade the darkest places on earth. And I think that's pretty cool. God's Word can penetrate even the darkest and most challenging places.

And then he ends by saying in verse 23, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*” And with that, we conclude our study of Philippians.