

Contentment amid suffering

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[0 : 00] Let's pray, brethren, before we start. Thank you, Lord, for this time that we come as a body to worship and glorify your name.

All the praises, Lord, that show your goodness, your mercy to us, how good you are, Father. Come in this time, be your spirit, apply your word for the glory of your name, in Jesus' name, amen.

Today we're going to talk about the contentment and generosity in the life of a Christian. I've been preaching on Philippians, and in chapter 4 is the text that we're going to focus today.

But before I get into the text, as a way of introduction, as I was preparing this sermon, I was thinking about how naturally we try to achieve financial success and accumulate material possessions in order to feel fulfilled, in order to feel that we have success.

how common it is that people admire out in society those that have a lot of wealth, financial wealth, fame, politically or intellectually, and how that is the sign of success in the life of a person.

[1 : 42] But we see in scripture that it's a completely different thing. And that brought to my mind this great conqueror in Greece, Alexander the Great, how he conquered amazing amounts of territory from Greece to India.

And at his death, he asked, actually doctors, carry his casket. And a lot of jewels that he has, and things of a lot of value, were being thrown as they were carrying his casket for his funeral.

And another thing that he asked that was really odd was that his arm be put outside of the casket. When I saw that tape, it says that he wanted the doctors to carry the casket to show that no man, no matter how smart, intelligent it is, can stop death.

He asked them to throw his jewels and things of a lot of value to show that nothing will be taken after this life with us.

And the last thing was his arm went outside of the casket to show that we go empty-handed to eternity. And that kind of brought to my mind the things that I was reading in the text, how this man that didn't know God, as far as I know, show the reality, no matter how much success somebody has, at the end is the finality.

[3 : 34] There's nothing that we can take. And we will see today in Scripture how different that is for the Christian lives, to have that contentment only in God.

And for that, we will see the contentment, what it is contentment, the source, the cause of contentment, and what is the generosity that comes out of that, and what is the root of that.

And at the end, we will briefly touch on the relationship between contentment and generosity. And if you can go with me to Philippians chapter 4, and we are going to read from the verses in Philippians 1 to 20, but we are going to focus mainly on 10 to 20, but I will read the whole chapter pretty much there.

Therefore, my beloved and long-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

I implore Judea and I implore Sintiq to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, through companion, help these women who labor with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

[5 : 13] Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men.

The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in every sin, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there's any virtue, if there's anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.

The things which you learn and receive and hear and so in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care for me has flourished again.

Though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

[6 : 48] I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthened me. Nevertheless, you have done well, that you shared in my distress.

Now you Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving, and receiving, but you only.

For even in Thessalonica, you sent aid, you sent aid, once and again, for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit, that abounds to your account.

Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full, having received, from Epaphroditus, the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

[8 : 10] And my God shall supply, all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus. Now, to our God, and Father, be glory, forever, and ever.

And we will be focusing, on those ten verses, of the chapter, and we see the, final exhortation of Paul, to this beloved church, that he had in his heart.

Starting from the, verse one, he's telling them, how he feel, completely, caught up by Christ, and completely, satisfied in him.

And we see, after he tells them, the things that he had, to keep in mind, in verses, eight through nine, in verse ten, is when he starts, the part that we're going to touch.

And I read verse ten again, through thirteen. But I rejoice in the Lord, greatly, that now at last, you care for me, has flourished again. The brethren in, Philippi, sent to Paul, supplies, the offering, and the gift, that he needed, to satisfy his needs, in prison.

[9 : 36] This epistle, was written, when he was in prison, at a time, when the, inmates, were not, sustained, by the government. So, your relative, your family, friends, were the person, that were to suppose, to supply, your needs.

So, you imagine, in that case, if you didn't have anybody, you will be hungry, in need, in a lot of affliction, for a long time, if nobody supplied to you.

And the apostle, is, praising them, for their, desire, and their, willingness, to participate, with him, in helping, and giving.

And we see, the second part of that, of the verse, when he says, though you surely did care, but you lacked, the opportunity. They wanted, for a while, to send the gift, to Paul, but that was not, possible.

And we saw, in what we've been, preaching before, in the Hispanic service, how Epaphroditus, this beloved, brethren, brother, sent the help, to the point, that he was about, to lose his life.

[10 : 56] At the time, when he didn't have, any means, to, send, uh, mules, or, no cars, was in horses, he got sick, to the point, that Paul was concerned, that he may die.

And that's how, they made the help, get to Paul. And the apostle now, is, thanking them, for, their gift. But, more than that, we see, in verse 11, surprisingly, that he says that, not that I speak, in regard, to need, for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.

And content, we can, define, in what I was looking for, the meaning of the word, to be, satisfied, with what we are, and we have, and we've had, we have.

So, the apostle Paul, surprisingly, has learned, to be satisfied, in the midst, of a lot of, needs, and suffering.

Being in prison, no liberty, no, regular food, a lot of, needs, he was, changed, to a guard, so he couldn't, even move, around, without being, changed, with somebody else.

[12 : 28] And in the, midst of, tremendous, suffering, he says, that he has learned, to be content. And, he tells them, that he has learned, in whatever state I am, second part of verse 11, to be content, I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound.

Everywhere, and in all things, I have learned, both, to be full, and to be hungry, both, to abound, and to suffer need. And, we see how he tells them, the reason now, or the root, of that, contentment, what is, obviously, is not, in being satisfied, in the needs, that he has.

His contentment, was not coming, from circumstances, or, for moments, or times, of, abundance. The apostle is, in a lot of needs, and in the midst of that, he is telling them, how he is, satisfied.

Verse, verse 13, explain that. Says, I can do, all things, through Christ, who, strengtheth me.

Paul has found, in Christ, the reason, of his contentment. For us, to think, of something like that, is, amazing, in the times of abundance, that we live.

[14 : 05] How, somebody, with, the most basic needs, lacking in his life, not having food, or, clothing, the most basic, freedom, literally, to the point, that he couldn't move, more than a, small space, couldn't find, that satisfaction.

And, as Christians, we are to, look at that, at the example, example, that we are to follow. The example, that we are to follow, in this case, in Paul, living a life, of difficulty, that when our time, of difficulty, comes, in the midst, of suffering, we too, could find, satisfaction.

And, that satisfaction, is going to be found, in no other, than Christ. If we know, what we have, in him, and that will be, the main, the main factor, who we are, in Christ, being contentment, satisfaction, with what we are, if we know, that we are his children, that our identity, is, in our adoption, in him.

Children, of the most high, having, heaven, eternity, having, glorification, in the future, coming for us, having Christ, dwelling, with us, eternally, as our future, and presence, with his spirit, in this life, in every trial, and need, should be, the main thing, that will support, sustain, our life, in this ever-changing, times, that we live.

And, we see how the apostle, expressed, the connection, that this, this contentment, is going to have, with, being generous, with generosity.

[16 : 11] Not only, the Christian, based, the, success, or achievement, in his life, on, having, having material possessions, or having, financial wealth, or, a big reputation, or name, in society, but, not only, in that factor, but we are, to be generous.

Not only, to accumulate, but actually, the scripture, tell us, the opposite. The opposite, of, we, just, building wealth, or fame, or reputation, for society.

Not only, the scripture, doesn't call us, to that, but to be generous. To be willing, to share, of the sins, that God, supplies to us.

Be our talents, our time, our knowledge, even, our material possessions, or money, to supply the needs, of his people.

And, in verse, 14 through, 20, verse 14 through 20, the apostle says, nevertheless, you have done well, that you share, in my distress.

[17 : 34] In verse 14, he recognizes, the goodness, and the love, of these brethren, by, participating, in their, in his needs.

And, he quotes them, as being helpful, helpful to him, not only, now that he's in prison, but in the past. In verse 15, he tells them, now you, Philippians, know also, that in the beginning, of the gospel, when I departed, from Macedonia, no church, shared with me, concerning giving, and receiving, but you only.

They have sent, to Paul, before, for his, needs, when he left, Macedonia, that is the region, where, Philippi was, located.

And, we see this, how the apostle Paul, in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 8, in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 8, verse 1, through 10, where he's, praising, the churches, in Philippi.

I'm reading there, the apostle, tells them, in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 8, moreover, brethren, we make known, to you, the grace of God, bestowed, on the churches, of Macedonia, that in great trial, of affliction, the abundance, of their joy, and their deep, poverty, abounded, in the riches, of their liberality.

[19 : 24] For I bear witness, that according, to their ability, yes, and beyond, their ability, they were freely, willing, imploring us, with much urgency, that we would, receive the gift, and the fellowship, of the ministering, to the saints.

and not only, as we had hope, but they first, gave themselves, to the Lord, and then to us, by the will of God.

So, we urge, Titus, that as he, as he had begun, so he would, also complete this grace, in you as well.

But as you abound, in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love, for us, see, that you abound, in this grace, also.

I speak, not by commandment, but I am testing, the sincerity, of your love, by the diligence, of others. For you know, the grace, of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that though, he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

[20 : 47] And in this, I give advice, it is to your advantage, not only to be doing, what you began, and were deciding, to do, a year, ago.

So, we see that, the generosity, that the brethren, in Philippi show, we see, other churches, in the region, of Macedonia, doing the same thing.

And not only, in times of abundance, these churches, were, eager, to help, the brethren, in Jerusalem, that were in a, very difficult situation.

But they had, a lot of, financial, and material needs, the same churches, in Macedonia. And how, out of that poverty, their love for Christ, and their contentment, and joy in Christ, abound, for the liberality.

They gave, this offering, having need, themselves. And we see, the connection there, when Paul, tells them, that Christ, must be, our pattern.

[22 : 04] And we see here, they following, that example. In, in verse 8, when Paul tells them that, he don't give them, a commandment, but for, to the Corinthians brethren, when he wrote the letter, but that he, is trying, to test, their love, by the diligence, of others.

The diligence, of the brethren, in Philippi, the churches, in Macedonia, by giving, out of their poverty, was an example, that Paul, was calling, the brethren, the Corinthian church, to imitate.

And he put, again, the same thing, that he does, in Philippians chapter 2, the example, of Christ, as our, model, as our, perfect paradigm, to follow.

And we see, in verse, number 9, in 2 Corinthians 8, that Paul says, for you know, the grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that you, through, his poverty, might become, rich.

Christ, left, his throne of glory, being, with the Father, on all eternity, and came down, and took, human form, became a man, in the incarnation, and left, all his glory, not that, the Lord, didn't have glory, in itself, but left his throne, to become, a man.

[23 : 46] And even though, he was sinless, he walked this earth, having, multiple needs, hunger, pain, suffering, rejection, and all of that, for the love of the Father, and for us.

And we see that, this is the same example, that we are being called, to imitate. So when the world, looks for contentment, in possessions, in needs, in material wealth, we are to look, for that contentment, in Christ, and only, in him.

And to imitate, the same thing, in the same way, that Christ, humbled himself, we are to, willingly, and with readiness, give of our, time, talents, and money, because our, ultimate satisfaction, is to be, in Christ.

Christ. And, we see the same, example, in, in, in, first Timothy, chapter, six.

First Timothy, chapter six, where we are called, to not, be, unsatisfied, if we are, already with food, and clothing.

[25 : 09] The scripture tell us, through Paul, in verse six through eight, that we are, to be satisfied, content, with what we have, now. And having shelter, and food, we should be satisfied, if we have Christ.

It's the same, example, over and over, that the scripture, put for us, for we to imitate. In, the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 35, we read, I have shown you, in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support, the weak, and remember the words, of the Lord Jesus, that he said, it is more blessed, to give, than, to receive.

There's more blessing, when we give away, of our time, talents, material possessions, it is more blessed, because we get, in exchange, that sweet fellowship, that intimate fellowship, with Christ.

We experience his love, that communion, that cannot compare, to anything else, that when we actually, receive, the material good. So we see, how Paul, is, telling the brethren, in the book of Acts, that, there's more blessing, in giving away, than, receiving, material, possessions.

In, the, verse 6, verse 6 of, 1 Timothy chapter 6, that I read, the first, verse, chapter 6, in chapter 6 says, now, godliness, with contentment, is, great gain.

[27 : 13] When we show, satisfaction, in the midst, of difficulty, and even suffering, we are, showing the unique, treasure, that is Christ, that cannot compare, to anything else, that we have, or anybody else, for that matter.

So the relationship, of contentment, and generosity, comes, from a heart, that is, full, of Christ. And the same, thing, comes, for generosity.

And I like, a definition, that, John Piper, give of love, that is, the overflow, of joy, in God, that gladly, meets, the needs, of others.

So when we are, walking in fellowship, with him, when we are, dwelling, in his word, in prayer, in meditation, applying that, to our daily life, in a surprising, amazing way, that we cannot even, explain with words, that become, so unique, and special, that we, in need, and suffering, can have contentment, satisfaction.

And that, at the same time, will enable us, to do things, that we, otherwise, never do, never be able to do. And that, can be, in this example, the generosity, the being ready, and willing, to give, of us.

[28 : 52] And that's how, even some martyrs, has given their life, for the sake, of the gospel, with contentment. And that is, the amazing thing, of the Christian life, that you see, this dilemma, this paradox, in suffering, but having joy, in need, but feeling, that you have everything, because you have Christ.

In the book of Hebrews, in the book of Hebrews, in chapter 10, verse 34, the writer writes, for you had compassion, on me, in my chains, and joyfully, accepted, the plundering, of your goods, knowing, that you have a better, and, unending, possession, for yourself, in heaven.

Those brethren, went to visit, those that were, in prison. There were brethren, in prison, at the time.

So a group of, brethren went to, visit them, and it's not clear, what happened. Or their, goods, were confiscated, by the authorities, when they knew, that they were Christians, or somebody, robbed their houses.

The, end point was, that they, lost their goods, by one way, or another. And the amazing thing, is, that, it says the text, that they, accepted, the plundering, of your goods, with joy.

[30 : 36] But that was not a joy, because they were masochists, because they enjoy, losing what they have. No. If we think, the second part of the verse, is the same topic. Knowing.

But in this case, it's not like, intellectual knowledge. It's the experience, of walking with Christ, and experiencing, his love, his mercy, his care, his supply, in everything.

And, it says, knowing that you have a better, and an enduring possession, for yourself, in heaven. Salvation, holiness, the love of God, glorification coming, all those, spiritual, and heavenly blessings, that nothing, in this life, can take away, away from us.

Nor death, nor suffering, nor rejection, nothing. And, we are calling, this way, to do the same thing.

In, in 2nd Corinthians, in the chapter, in chapter 9, after Paul, has praised the churches, in Macedonia, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 9, in verse 6, he says, but, this I say, he, which sows, sparingly, shall reap, also sparingly, and he, which sows, bountifully, shall reap, also bountifully.

[32 : 12] Verse 8, and God, is able, to make all grace, abound, toward you, that you always, having all sufficiency, in all things, may abound, to every good work.

The Lord, will supply to us, what we need, not only, in many cases, for our, daily satisfaction, of the basic, necessities, but, to share, with those, in need.

And again, and again, we go back, to the example, of Christ. And we see that, God, has a, reward, reward, the Lord, the Lord, has a reward, for those, in Christ, that do that.

Look at, verse 10, in, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 10, now, he that, supplies seed, to the sower, and bread, for food, supply, and multiply, the seed, you have sown, and increase, the fruits, of your righteousness, being enriching, everything, to all bountifulness, which, causeth, through us, thanksgiving, to God, for the administration, of this service, not only, supplies, the want, of the saints, but is abundant, also, by many, thanksgivings, unto God, while, by the experiment, of this ministrations, they glorify God, for your professed, subjection, unto the gospel, of Christ, and for your, liberal distribution, unto them, and unto all men, and by their prayer, for you, which long after, long after you, for the exceeding grace, of God, in you, thanks be unto God, for his unspeakable gift, we see that, contentment, is rooted, in Christ, and that prepare our hearts, for generosity, to be ready, and willing, to give, of what we have, and we see that, this not only brings, thanksgiving, from one person, to another, but more than anything, glorifies, the name of Christ, and conforms, us, to the image of Christ, so, in this, exhortation, the apostle, the apostle, is calling us, to be conformed, to him, so, in conclusion, we saw, what is, contentment, what is the root, of contentment, generosity, what it is, and what is the cause, of that generosity, that is Christ, and the relationship, between, contentment, and generosity, in a, in a paradoxical way, the being generous, does not, depend on how much, we have, but in, the heart, that we have, for Christ, and we see, the example, of these brethren, giving of themselves, when they were, in need, and we saw, the example, of Christ, being rich, left his throne, of glory, for love, to us, and we are, called, to the same thing, and, we can get, couple of applications, here, from these, and one will be, what, to ask ourselves, what brings, contentment, to your life, when you are, in a difficult situation, health, family, financial, that's gonna come, over and over, don't look, at, the difficult times, without looking, at Christ, don't look, and I remember, a pastor, in Dominican Republic,

Pastor, Pastor Suhel Bichelen, he will say, when you look at, wanna know how much, God love you, don't look at, your circumstances, but look, at the cross, that's where we are, to look, at the love of God, for us, not, in the moment, but that, sacrifice, in the cross, to supply, every need, that we have, so, think about, what, you are going, through now, and how, it is, impossible, in this life, to find, complete satisfaction, but God's telling us, don't look, at those things, but to me, so, first of all, the contentment, pray to the Lord, and asking, forgive me Lord, if I haven't seen, things this way, that we can find, that contentment, not in human achievement, not in circumstances, even though, it's something to be, thankful to God, but ultimately, in Christ, in him, and him alone, and seeing, that the generosity, of our time, our talents, the things, that we may know, that we may share, with somebody else, the, being there, helping with the kingdom, for the kingdom, is not going to depend, necessarily on, how much we have, or how good we are, at the moment, but in, where our heart, is at, at that moment, what is filling our heart, what is the treasure, of our heart, so, may we pray, to the Lord, that he may put, these things, in our heart, so, let's pray, thank you father, that, your word, even though, preached by a weak, and imperfect man, is powerful, through your spirit, apply it Lord, that, that contentment, and a generous heart, may be a characteristic, of us, as a body, as individuals, and as believers, in your kingdom, and father, we pray for, anyone here, that may not know you, this, truth, are not for them, but, we, ask them, to repent, and believe, in Christ, so that they can have, real contentment, in him, we, praise you, and love you, in Jesus name, amen, amen, thank you, thank you, thank you.