Disciples Church

Joy in Contentment<>Philippians 4:10-23

Week of August 30, 2017

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Philippians 4:10-23** (ESV)

**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.

**14**Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. **15**And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. **16**Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. **17**Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. **18**I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **19**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20**To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**21**Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. **22**All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

**23**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

**Intro - From a Heart Beating for the Gospel**

Tonight we complete our MidWeek Philippians series with the final section of the letter, and it’s a very helpful section of Scripture.

So let’s jump in. We’ve got so much to see tonight.

We’ve seen the gospel all through this letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi. Therefore, as we get into the closing remarks from Paul, let us not forget his Christ-like, Christ-glorifying heart we’ve seen so clearly. In fact, we’ll see this heart again in our passage tonight.

**Do Good to Others**

As our passage tonight begins, Paul proceeds to take notice and give thanks for the renewed kindness and generosity of the Philippians to him.

**Philippians 4:10**

**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.

It’s renewed because there was a period Paul alludes to that it was not active. As Theologian John Gill says, in this passage we see the believers in Philippi “had formerly, at the first preaching of the Gospel, showed great respect to [Paul], and took great care of him…but that for some time…had not shown it; but that now it revived again.” When Paul says, “You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity” it is “signifying that [Paul] believed they had entertained the same sentiments of him, had the same affection and inward care for him *all along*; but they had no opportunity of showing it [for some time], he being at such a distance, and they having no convenient or proper persons to send to him; or were hindered through multiplicity of business on their hands, that they could not attend to him.”

And that is reasonable at times right? We, even when our hearts desire, cannot do good to others in the fullest way we want. Perhaps our other work and family commitments limit us, or the ministry to certain folks we are doing fills our plate limiting getting to *others* we desire to do good to as well, or other real reasons why we may fit into this somehow. That’s real life…we are not omnipresent and omnipotent, etc, we have limits…and that is okay….and it’s helpful to see that reality here in the text.

**Gratefulness and Rejoicing in the Lord Greatly**

But the main point for us in this first passage is that Paul “rejoiced in the Lord greatly,” for their kindness and generosity to him. Let’s be sure not to miss his example in this.

I want us to see that the good deeds of others towards him is worthy of thanksgiving….*and that* the ultimate praise for even horizontal goodness goes to God.

Here is what I mean in this.

First, it is Christianly to have hearts of constant, authentic thankfulness. When you see good done to others or when good is done to you, whether these are gifts, acts of service, or acts of mercy, or so on it should be our disposition to be grateful, and to express that gratefulness. We’re commanded all through the epistles to be a people of thankfulness. And expressing gratefulness to one another is a helpful encourager of it. We don’t do good to others to get praise or thanks sent our way, rather we do good for others good and for God’s glory, but in God’s economy it is proper and encouraging to have and express gratitude.

Second, it is Christianly to have hearts that know God is the sovereign One behind every truly good thing, and therefore the ultimate thanksgiving and praise should be toward Him. We shouldn’t skip the first point, thanking others, but we most certainly shouldn’t skip this second point. The way Paul put this is strong, he said, “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.” I…**rejoiced**….*in the Lord*….**greatly**. Strong words. This was no small flash in the pan prayer of thankfulness, or thinking to oneself that God is good….”now on with my task.” No, we have **great** *rejoicing* here. Don’t miss that detail. Glean from it. How are each of us doing in “rejoicing in the Lord greatly” for all He is to us, and all He does for us, even when it comes through others horizontally. I want Disciples Church to be a people of abounding good towards one another and great thankfulness to them and God, in it. Let us be marked by that. Our joy is seen in that.

**Christian Contentment**

Now, the kindness and generosity shown to Paul is a catapult for him to teach on contentment. He’s a pastor….Paul uses real life as an opportunity to teach those he ministers to. You know how that works; Many times when you share something with Josh, Rob, or I or we’re experiencing life with you in something, we take the opportunity to bring in God’s truths and encourage. Along with others, that’s certainly a ministry Pastors are to do, as Paul models here. So let’s see what Paul teaches from this situation…starting with verse 10 again for context…

**Philippians 4 Various**

**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.((Jump down to verse 19 now))**19**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

That’s a great passage. *And* it even contains one of the most misused verses from the Bible, so we’ll get to that as well.

So, Christian contentment is Paul’s focus here. Coming off of being thankful for the believers in Philippi’s kindness and generosity, he wants to teach them further. The transition verse to this lays the trajectory for his pastoral shift:

**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**.

He uses himself as the example of Christian contentment he wants them to have. Paul using himself as a model is not problematic nor necessarily prideful. Our culture may think it is, but when a godly trait is in someone, they are not wrong to speak of it from the right heart—a heart that is looking to glorify God, not self. Paul actually does this rightly often in his letters. In fact, the most direct he is about this is in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he says, “Be imitators **of me**, as I am of Christ.”

This is the mindset that those leading others must have. When we lead others in the home, discipleship, etc, we must be an example worth following and we must ask those following to look to our example. Christianity is not a “to each his own” lifestyle; no, all of our aim is to conform to Christ, and we do that through the means of leadership and accountability of others that should be in our lives. So that’s what Paul is doing here in verse 11:

**Philippians 4:11** “***I have learned*** in whatever situation I am to be content.”

Then he continues this instruction and model of contentment:

**Philippians 4:12-13**

**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.

We’ll talk about verse 13 in a bit, but let’s focus mainly on verse 11 and 12.

When Paul says “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound” if we think about Paul we know some basic facts about his circumstances right? He has flourished as an Apostle of Christ in community with other believers, well taken care of, etc AND he’s been starving, sick, tortured, and jailed for being a Christian…and that’s just what *we* know. So when he says “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound” he’s not making up stories. Think about the heights he’s experienced and also think about the insane hardship he’s endured…incredible. But he’s not saying that just to say it. He’s saying, “I’ve experience these things first hand and God has sanctified me in and through it all.” Look to the rest of the verse and 13:

**Philippians 4:12-13**

**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.

He’s stating very clearly—“the path God has taken me on as a human in this fallen world has been both very real in it’s dynamic and worked together for my learning how to have Christ-like contentment in any situation.”

When someone divinely inspired, as Paul was in this writing, says “I have learned the secret” we should pay close attention. He’s using himself as a model of Christ-likeness for Christians to follow. This is great stuff.

So what is the “secret?” What is the lesson we are to learn from Paul in all of this? He’s told us before in chapter 2 of this letter, and he says it another way here in verse 13.

**Philippians 4:13**

**13**I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Here in this often misused verse is the big point.

What this verse is NOT about is hitting the gym with some supernatural power enabling you to perform on a miraculous level—like many try say with this verse.

This verse is also NOT about being guaranteed to achieve all kinds of financial success and prosperity —like many try say with this verse.

And this verse is also NOT about what many of us have wrongly thought it to be, namely a promise from God that you’ll get through any and every situation on your terms because you have Christ, because you are a Christian. There is some nuance there we will expand on in a moment.

We’ve taught clearly in this church that many words in the Bible have several ways they can be used, and so the immediate context of the verse and the whole of Scripture (tota Scriptura) have to inform us as to what the words mean. The word “all” is definitely one of those words!

All can mean several different things. It can be used to mean “all types of things” (not all things specifically), it can be used to mean “all of the things in question” (not everything in existence), it can be used to mean “all types of people” (not every single person), and so on.

Simply said, often the word “all” is not used to speak of every possible thing, or even every literal thing in existence. And that is certainly the case here.

Let’s consider our verse to see this generally, then specifically.

**Philippians 4:13**

**13**I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Can Paul or us fly like a bird? No, so all does not mean every literal thing in existence, such as flying.

Can Paul or us be bodily at two places at one time? No.

Can Paul or us stop sinning before being made perfect by God after death? No.

Clearly the “all” in this passage is not used to speak of every possible thing, or even every literal thing in existence.

Ok, now what about going beyond our human limits at the gym or something even more important like overcoming cancer, does this verse **promise** things like that unequivocally?

If we are answering that biblically, the answer is **no**. God does not unequivocally promise us here, or anywhere in Scripture for that matter, things like that. He may heal a believer from cancer, because he has that right, or He may not heal them, because He has that right. **This verse has nothing to do with being promised the ability to have the outcome we each want in temporary circumstances**.

Let’s confirm what this verse actually means. “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” The immediate context of this verse and the consistent teaching from all of Scripture, is that we—the redeemed—can obey God’s commandments and we will do whatever God has determined for us before time, in the secret counsel of His own will. What Paul is ultimately saying is that there is nothing that God is putting in Paul’s life that is too difficult for him to see through according to God’s commandments and endure—even if it’s an enduring unto death.

Have you felt at times like the circumstances you’re in are too difficult to endure in a God honoring way? What this passage and others like it are teaching is enduring through it is a reality for believers—it may be extremely difficult, but it is not impossible to get through any circumstance in a God honoring way.

What about obedience? Have you felt at times like certain commands of God found in Scripture are unrealistic or burdensome? What this passage and others like it are teaching is that despite our fallen perspective, God’s commanded will is best for us and God does empower us to joyfully obey.

The Apostle John speaks to these things in,

**1 John 5:2-4**

**2**By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. **3**For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. **4**For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world…

See both elements there? First, Christians will overcome the world (such as the circumstances we find ourselves in in this temporary creation). And second, Christians shall obey God’s commands, and they are not burdensome.

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me” applies directly to all the saved in regards to these things. Let us not doubt that, we have God working in us unto these ends.

For Paul, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me,” has included learning how to be Christ-like in contentment whether in need or in prosperity. It was God’s will to take a wicked Pharisee like Paul and convert him, then train him to have Christian contentment in a vast spectrum of circumstances.

Let’s see other passages that undergird this teaching...that we can obey God’s commandments and we will do whatever God has determined for us before time, in the secret counsel of His own will.

I mentioned earlier that Paul had said this in another way in this very letter, it’s a passage we should all know in our hearts:

**Philippians 2:13**

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

This is the mystery behind “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” God is the one who strengths and empowers Christians to do **ALL** that He wills and therefore causes. As we studied before, this happens by the Holy Spirit working in the saved to progressively change our affections, grow us in holiness, align our will to genuinely be to honor God’s will, and empower us to see through these things.

Take careful notice to what Philippians 2:13 helps clarify in the statement from 4:13…..“I can do all things through him who strengthens me” is not about getting exactly what I want, dream about, set my mind to. No, the “I can do all things” are things that God will’s for us to do, as Philippians 2:13 says, as I’ve been saying tonight, we “will [and] work for his good pleasure.”

Hebrews 13:21 tells us this as well:

**Hebrews 13:2**1

[May God] equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight

Similar language and point; the focus of all these verses is Christians being empowered to do what God has decreed in His will according to His plan.

As you know, Ephesians 1:11 carries this point as well!

**Ephesians 1:11**

In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, *having been predestined according to the purpose of him* who works all things according to the counsel **of his will**

…….Look, as with many other verses, Philippians 4:13 is a beautiful verse teaching a beautiful truth that is unfortunately missed by many in order to use the passage to say something its not saying.

But let that not be the case for us Disciples Church. Let’s revel in the truth it actually teaches, so we find comfort and help in our sovereign God to do through us what He has decreed! We don’t want a verse telling us we can do anything we want, we want a verse that tells us God will do anything He wants in and through us!

And that is the framework we need to rightly understand Paul’s statement in verse 19:

**Philippians 4:19**

**19**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

You can see the opportunity to misunderstand this too right? Without the greater clarity of Scripture, one might hear Paul say “God will supply every need of yours” and take that to mean something it doesn’t….such as God would never have His elect go through times of not having what they need, even unto death.

But, as we know, this is not that kind of promise. The promise here is rooted in the rest of verse 19, “God will supply every need of yours **according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**” This is once again another way of saying, each of God’s chosen ones are exactly where He has ordained and will be provided for according to His plan, which is to bring Him all the glory and honor.

Church, let’s take these verses rightly understood, and bank everything on them! God is in control of our lives, His glory is supreme, and we are blessed in and through it, whether “facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.” “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).”

Now, by way of that clarity, let’s apply this to the context of Christian contentment since that’s what Paul is teaching believers about here.

**Philippians 4:12-13**

**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. **13I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**

Using himself as the example, Paul is teaching us that believers can have Christian contentment in all circumstances because that is God’s commanded will for us.

Let’s see this command for contentment in other passages, what does it look like? What are we to do and not do?

**Hebrews 13:5-6**

**5**Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” **6**So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

There it is again. The author of Hebrews commands clearly “be content.” What’s one way to do that, the specific way commanded here? “Keep your life free from love of money.” We’ll talk more about money in a bit, but this command is clear, do not LOVE money.

Ok, but look, what motivation and comfort does it give for being content in all circumstances? Answer: God’s promises that He is sovereign and with us, just like we’ve seen so far tonight, God “has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” **6**So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?””

God is the treasure of our hearts and the great Helper…we don’t need to fear circumstances or covet what we don’t have….we can be content! We must be content!

Look at another passage God inspired through Paul:

**1 Timothy 6:6-10**

**6**But godliness with contentment is great gain, **7**for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. **8**But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. **9**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils…

Same themes here, right? “godliness with contentment”

Here Paul gives once again an humbling mindset, the Christian mindset—an ETERNAL mindset: “for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” He humbles us and reminds us there is eternity in play here and things/stuff that are temporary from this life don’t matter in eternity. And in verse 8, back to the reorientation, “**8**But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” He’s saying we can be content with even the bare minimum…..or we know we are called to be content with less than the bare minimum as we see in other passages tonight.

Then he continues with a warning, “**9**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils…”

Now, that’s huge for us in this culture. There is so much temptation to have an unhealthy desire for riches in our rich culture.

….Notice how I say *unhealthy* desire, that’s because having “much” is not in itself evil. Having aspirations to be successful and have the fruit of that is not sinful. Nice things are not sinful, money is not sinful, but the love of, the idolizing of these things is. That’s what this passage is getting at.

Do you know the Scripture encourages hard work that produces honest money?

**Proverbs 10:4**

A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

**Proverbs 21:5**

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

So, when Paul says “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation,” he is talking about a certain kind of desire for riches—a sinful type.

There is nothing "more holy” about having little, not having expensive things, etc. Just like there is nothing more holy about having much, having expensive things, etc.

Where the holiness is in either of these is in

being generous with whatever you have,

being content in your current or any other situation God may have ordained for you,

and treasuring Christ above any stuff or circumstances.

Let’s analyze those points briefly:

The holy are generous:

Our Lord taught a very strong point we find in Mark 12, please turn there.

**Mark 12:41-44**

**41**And [Jesus] sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. **42**And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. **43**And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. **44**For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Christ emphasis on generosity here is unavoidable. He’s saying clearly that our generosity must be sacrificial—that’s the complete opposite of seeking to be rich for the sake of selfishness. He’s calling for us to have a heart that longs to give generously, and sees it through.

Look at Paul’s charge in:

**Ephesians 4:28**

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Don’t steal, that should be obvious. But look, he’s saying work hard, so you have resources to be generous with.

Making a lot of money is not a sin, it’s where your heart is in the process and how you manage it.

The holy are generous.

Next,

The holy are content in current or any other situations God has ordained:

This is what we’re looking at overall tonight, so let’s take this opportunity to read another clear teaching from our Lord under this point. Turn in your Bible to:

**Matthew 6:25-34**

**25**“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26**Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**27**And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **28**And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29**yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30**But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31**Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. **34**“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This passage continues to teach what we are getting at tonight.

God is in control of your circumstances, and has a plan for each of His elect that is good. Based on these realties, there is no need for anxiety and we are commanded to not be anxious, instead we are to be content in the Lord.

Finally, in our quick consideration about holiness on these matters we have,

The holy treasure Christ above any stuff or circumstances:

Look carefully with me at this, this is the foundation to all we are seeing tonight.

Our foundation is in God because of the gospel that reconciled us to Him.

Job displayed contentment and treasuring God over circumstances or temporary things this way:

**Job 23:12**

**12**I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.

“I have **treasured** the words of **his** mouth **more than my portion of food**.” That’s it. The secret to contentment is knowing we have the highest treasure, the sweetest gift, the eternal joy of Christ Jesus. If I live from that reality and knowledge, then I can say with Paul “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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

The psalmist expresses this beautifully in one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture:

**Psalm 73:26**

**26**My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

“My flesh and my heart may fail?” How can you rightly live through pain, suffering, hard times, hunger, broken-heartedness, illness possibly leading to death? When like Paul, like Job, like the Psalmist, “God is the strength of [your] heart and [your] portion forever.”

Look, contentment….Christian contentment…true, lasting contentment is not some monkish thing, or some new age “spiritual” thing, or something for really self-disciplined people, or whatever else the world might try to do with it….no…..it is founded in and lived out from trusting in the sovereign God and treasuring Him as the highest treasure all because of the gospel of grace. Any other kind of contentment doesn’t last or glorify God. But this Christ-like contentment is done in joy—we can see how this topic fits right into this letter— this letter’s theme is joy. A truly content heart, is a joyful heart. The it’s a necessary connection!

Let us grow in this true contentment.

Back to your Bible. Let’s see now how Paul continues in tonight’s Philippians passage, picking up from verse 13 for connectivity:

**Philippians 4:13-18**

**13**I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**14**Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. **15**And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. **16**Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. **17**Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. **18**I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Let’s pause there and highlight what’s happening.

God uses “means” as a way of carrying out His plan, and that’s what is going on here. Paul was in need, more than once, and God used these believers to attend to those needs, more than once.

Having a robust understanding of God’s use of means within His sovereignty is very helpful. Means do not cancel out or replace God’s sovereignty, rather they are an outworking of it. Means that are used have been ordained by God to accomplish what He has decreed.

So, in this Paul lifts up his gratitude for their kindness and generosity, he knows it’s God ultimately providing for him, and he wants to make sure they know their goodness to him glorified God; it is “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.”

Now, don’t miss verse 17, Paul said “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.” He’s making clear he’s not doing what he does for worldly gain of any kind, rather he seeks “the fruit that increases.” His aim in all of this is the gospel being preached, people being saved and sanctified, and God getting the glory! That’s the fruit he speaks of!

He’s not looking for the focus to be on what he can do; he wants them to know they took part in making it happen (as a means) (he says “to your credit”) and as we’re seeing and will see as we continue into verse 20, its all for God’s glory:

**Philippians 4:20**

**20**To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul’s rightfully reminding everyone what they need to hear, we need to hear, and he needs to hear…everything should be and is for God’s glory. Let’s not ever forget that.

As we get to his conclusion, Paul ends the letter in the very same fashion he opened it with in Philippians 1.

Look at it with me to remember his personal touch from the opening, Turn in your Bible to:

**Philippians 1:1-5**

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:**2**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**3**I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **4**always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, **5**because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Now look at the closing in chapter 4:

**Philippians 4:21-23**

**21**Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. **22**All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.**23**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

As we’ve seen tonight and all through these MidWeek lessons, Paul is very affectionate for these believers and the believers around him are likewise. This is such a beautiful picture of Christian love and community even with those you don’t walk with daily. There is a real unity in Christ and His truths that goes well beyond simple cordial-ness. Paul cares for these people deeply and they him…enough for everyone to serve one another and support one another. Unity in truth on display here. So good.

Let’s wrap up the lesson with one last instruction related to our main focus of contentment:

Does contentment mean we cannot or should not ask the Lord for things? No, certainly not, but we must not ask from the wrong heart as we’ve seen tonight.

The Apostle James makes this point about a right heart in:

**James 4:3**

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

The Lord Jesus modeled and taught that we must go to God in dependence with our requests.

**Matthew 6:11**

**11**“Give us this day our daily bread”

…let us take our requests to God, express our dependence on Him, and trust His plan for our lives. He will give us what we ask for when it aligns with His will, and yet, when the answer is “no” or “later,” we joyfully trust Him all the same.

It may be that God has ordained, as we see in Church history, that illness or starvation comes about for some believers, even leading to death. But let us realize that our call in those times (as also when we have much) is to be content. That is the point. Each of us are to be content in any situation God has ordained for us.

He does not promise us riches, or even, just enough to stay alive. He’s promised something much better: Himself for all of eternity. So then, a Christian dying from illness, starvation, etc, can say with Scripture, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21.

That is true contentment. I have Christ forever, I have all I need. Whether I am “facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need” “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Jesus is enough. Amen?

Let’s pray.