

July 2, 2023

Overflow 6-The Secret of Contentment

How many of you think that discontentment in America has been on the rise?

You aren't the only one that thinks this. There are many articles and studies about how America is dropping on the happiness index while other countries are rising. But why is this happening?

- Is it the rising costs of essential goods and services?
- Is it the growing political distrust and polarization?
- Is it the eroding trust in authority—whether government leaders, or corporations, or news media, or even church leaders?
- Is it the growing **health crisis ... and mental health crisis?**
- Even though we score so high on an economic index with more wealth per capita, America does not score well on the happiness index for so many reasons.

I know it sounds like a lot of bad news. But we did not come to hear bad news today! I have good news for you today.

We can learn the secret of contentment!

Paul explained how to be content even in a bad news world.

Would you like to learn how to experience more contentment? Of course you do. So let's begin.

Today we cover a short paragraph in Paul's letter, (Philippians 4:10-13), but I want to begin at the last sentence of this paragraph, first.

I will read it from the Bible my dad gave me on my 17th birthday... a long time ago in a galaxy far far away...

***Philippians 4:13 (NASB)** I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

At age 17, I was into weight lifting. I used to quote this verse to psyche myself up in the gym to achieve new goals on the bench press for example. I'd quote this verse when attempting a new "max" –that's weight room talk for achieving a new maximum, or personal record.

At age 17, I never really thought to ask myself this question:

Question: Does this verse really mean that through faith in Jesus I can do **anything**?

If I really believed that, and that is really true, why did I not put on two more 45 lbs. plates, and go for my High School record. Actually, why didn't I go for a world record?! That would be pretty cool at age 17! It would be all over the news. Actually, if I believe that, why not go to the Cottonwood Rec. Center right now at my age right now! That would be bigger news still. **63 YEAR OLD PREACHER BREAKS THE WEIGHTLIFTING WORLD RECORD!**

I DO believe God CAN do that through me if he wanted to, BUT I BELIEVE this verse is not talking about something like that at all!

I wish when I was 17 I had access to the same great tools we have access to now for free!!! For example, the YouVersion Bible app is free. You can do a quick translation comparison that can be quite helpful.

Philippians 4:13 (NIV) I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

“All this” what!? You sense something a little different from this translation. It isn't about doing “Anything” I can think of. The word “this” refers back to something in context!

Context controls the meaning of words. What is context? A word in a sentence is used for a particular meaning that fits in the sentence, that fits into the paragraph, that fits into the whole letter, that fits with the rest of the Bible. We don't just cut out words, or a sentence out of context and get it right.

Context is how something fits in the flow of thought.

A sound bite clipped out of context can be misleading.

So let's take a look at the immediate context (the paragraph it fits into).

Philippians 4:10–13 (NIV) 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. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I 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. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

“I can do **all this** through him who gives me strength”. Again we ask. **All this** what?

The paragraph is talking about **the secret of contentment** that works whether we have a little or a lot!

It's not talking about whatever goal Paul could think up. It's talking about how God is completely trustworthy to give Paul everything HE needs to serve God well!!

So, this verse does NOT mean that through faith in Jesus I can do **anything** I can imagine or think up and believe God has the power to do, ...

IT MEANS: CONTENTMENT is the result of trusting in Christ's sufficiency to meet your deepest needs regardless of your circumstances.

I. The secret of contentment is TRUST

The GREEK word Paul can be translated: **Content, self-sufficient, satisfied.**

SELF-SUFFICIENT? That is weird. Paul was actually using a very familiar word for Greek Culture (Philippi is in Greece). He used two keywords that STOIC Greek Philosophers used. The word "*Secret*" and the word "*Content, Self-Sufficient, Satisfied.*"

What he is doing is flipping the GREEK PHILOSOPHY on its head! For true "*contentment, self-sufficiency, satisfaction*" you need to trust the **ALL SUFFICIENCY of JESUS CHRIST!!**

This was easy for the new believers in Philippi to understand and get a hold of.

II. Contentment does not come from CIRCUMSTANCES

Philippians 4:11 (NIV) ...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

What does Paul mean by "whatever the circumstances"?

He defines what he is talking about in the next verse.

Philippians 4:12 (NIV) I 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.

- You cannot buy this kind of contentment.
- You cannot find this kind of contentment in a pill or bottle.
- This kind of contentment does not come from money or possessions

III. This kind of contented trust is LEARNED

Philippians 4:11–13 (NIV) ... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² ... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation...

What did Paul learn?

- Paul was...Criticized YET...Content!
- Paul was...Chained YET...Content!
 - Paul LEARNED that God was using his imprisonment to reach the whole palace guard, and the church was becoming more bold.
 - **He trusted God's sovereignty! He trusted God's care for him!**
- Paul was often...Hungry YET...Content!
- Paul knew he might be executed YET...he was Content!

HAVE YOU LEARNED to live in this kind of Contented trust?

I have NOT YET learned it, as if I know how to, and live there consistently all the time, but I am LEARNING this.

All the time? ... Any and every situation? These also are tricky words.

Question: Are we supposed to be CONTENT about everything?

I was thinking and praying about this question early Tuesday morning while on my early morning desert hike, when suddenly I became aware of a sharp irritation on my foot inside my shoe—a piercing irritation with every step. It felt like a sticker buried itself in my sock inside my shoe.

If there is a sticker in your sock, or sin in your soul, don't be content with that!

No. Stop and deal with it! Then go on. It's true there is such a thing as HOLY CONTENTMENT.

Here, I'll prove it to you by zooming out for greater context.

CONTEXT controls the meaning of Paul's words.

- Paul was not content with division in the church (chapter 1, and 2).
- Paul was not content with those false teachers (chapter 3).
- He was not content with any believer living as if they are enemies of the cross (also chapter 3).
- He was not content to sit back passively in his race taking it easy (also chapter 3)!

The SECRET OF CONTENTMENT Paul learned is to trust in the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ for the overflowing provision and blessing he provides. Trust him!

If you do this ...

- You can REJOICE.
- You can experience PEACE.
- You can continue to strain forward to the finish!
- You can take hold of the one who has taken hold of you.
 - Yes, it's a battle.
 - Yes, it's hard, but you can still rejoice, you can still experience peace, you can still experience deep and abiding CONTENTMENT!
 - How? Through Jesus who gives you strength! Trust him. Walk with him. Follow him. Love him. Lean upon him!

This is learning how to experience the **overflow**: We are blessed to be a blessing!

OVERFLOW

(Week 6)

The Secret of Contentment

SMALL TALK

1. Has any outside situation or circumstance ever knocked over your cup of contentment? What happened? How did you feel?
2. Have you ever felt contentment even during difficult circumstances?

VIEWPOINT

3. **READ Philippians 4:10-13.** What were Paul's circumstances while he was writing about how he had learned the secret of contentment (1:13-14, 20)?
4. How does Paul's expression of contentment in this passage challenge the prevalent mindset of seeking worldly possessions and success for our happiness and fulfillment?
5. According to the context, what kinds of things does Paul have in mind in 4:13 even though he says, "all things"? All things pertaining to what?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. What are some challenges you face in maintaining contentment in your own life? How do you usually respond to those challenges?
7. In what ways can you cultivate contentment in your daily life, despite the pressures and expectations of the world around you?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. This week, what will you “do...through him who strengthens you” (4:13)? What might this look like?