

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Contentment

Part 3

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.17-18.09

Every time we sing that song, “Strength Will Arise”, it’s a great message. Strength...our strength will arise when we wait upon the Lord. But my four-year old son, Jack, loves to sing. He has been singing since he was about two years old or so and, of course, we...we have this music in our home and when Michelle sings, you know, we’ve got the CD in the van and so he hears this, he’s exposed to this all the time. And...and so he picks up these songs and he sings and at night when he goes to bed, we’ve got this rule you got to go to bed, you got to stay in bed and you’re suppose to be kind of quiet and settle down and that’s the time when we can hear him through the monitor that he’ll start singing to himself and he’ll sing this particular song. And in fact, just a couple of nights ago, he was singing this song at just the top of his lungs and I snuck in and I watched him. He was laying there and his head was back and his eyes closed and he’s singing, “Strinkle risel we wait upon the Lord, we wait... And I walked in and I said what are you singing? And he said Strinkle risel. Oh...oh OK. So I don’t know. I mean I guess the Lord takes it from whatever but if that’s how you want to sing it, great. We’ll start singing it Strinkle risel from this point forward. But that’s the message that we’re going to talk about, not Strinkle risel, but we’re going to talk about the idea that our strength rises when we wait upon the Lord.

I want you to take your Bibles and I want you to turn now to that familiar passage we’ve been working through in Philippians, chapter 4. By now, you probably already have a taste of this passage and you understand where we’re heading. We’re moving very slowly to learn every aspect of this because really it’s teaching us a critical topic. And that’s the topic of contentment. When you think about it, I think all people in one way or another are pursuing contentment or peace. And they might be pursuing it trying to achieve it in some method or through some form or through some person or through some activity or through some substance or something. But we’re all working at trying to find a sense of contentment. And the more that I’ve been studying this, the more that I’ve been talking to people, there appears to be a common dominator in our concept of contentment. And the concept is that most of us think that true contentment comes when we’re free from problems...when we’re free from the daily concerns, the things that weigh heavy upon us. And we might even be thinking that as long as we can stay away from circumstances that drag us down, we will be content. Or we might even get a bit of escapist in our thinking and say: If I could just move some day to some Caribbean Island, sit there and listen to Jimmy Buffet all day long and not have any economic concerns or job concerns or relationship concerns or problems. If I can just get to that place, soak up the sun, then I’m going to be content. I’ll experience ultimate contentment. But the true reality is that...a time like that in your life would not lead you to contentment. Actually it would probably lead you to discontentment. We’re going to find that we experience contentment...true contentment in one of the most unlikely places.

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I want to take you back to the passage this morning and I want to read the whole thing, verses 10 through 20 to you just so it just kind of seeps in our mind where we've been and where we're going. I want to remind you this was written by the apostle Paul. He was under house arrest, chained to a Roman guard twenty-hours a day. Likely he did...he did not have his own personal needs met. He was in a terrible circumstance and yet he starts by saying: I rejoice. And we're going to come back to this. This tells us something about Paul's mindset. I rejoice 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. Now just as a reminder the church at Philippi...Philippi sent him...ah...some money, a financial gift not only to help him with his ministry but also his personal needs and this is kind of a...an apostolic thank you note to the church. He continues in verse 11, he says: Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, 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. Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 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. Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my need once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 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. And then verse nineteen which we're going to get to in just a couple of weeks, a great verse of promise. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and forever. Amen.

In this text, we are looking deep into the heart of a great man. We're looking into a heart of a man who has discovered how to be satisfied, how to be content. He calls it a secret and he's sharing that secret with us. Now just by way of reminder, I told you when we started, we're going to look at five principles of contentment. We've already looked at two so let me just back up and make sure we're all on the same page. Number one, the first principle, is contentment comes from trusting in a sovereign God. And number two, contentment comes from learning to be satisfied. That's where we're at so far. We've said the bedrock, foundational, theological premise in our life is that it starts by trusting not in our own resources but in a sovereign God. What follows next is that we must learn and he says this in not only in verse eleven but verse twelve; but we must learn to be satisfied. And the caveat is we must learn to be satisfied with very little.

Now that moves us into the third principle and actually this morning, we're going to look at principle number three and principle number four because they dovetail so well together. Principle number three, we're going to learn contentment comes from living above circumstances...that our contentment comes when we live above our

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circumstances. Another way to say this is that contentment comes regardless of the events that we might experience in our lives. Now I want you to hear me with this. Because we...we have to develop a new philosophy with circumstances. We have to think differently about circumstances. We have to think biblically. And I'm going to warn you. What we're going to learn this morning is going to cut contrary against the grain to what you and I know. It's going to cut contrary to even what you and I have experienced and many of us for what we even feel. But we're going to see the scriptures reveal something to us that I think will enlighten us about contentment. Because what does Paul say? He says look at the text, verse 11 and 12. He says I've learned...we looked at this last week...to be content in whatever situation. And then he says practically the same thing in verse 12 in any and every circum...circumstance, I've learned the secret...of basically saying...of being content.

Now what is it that steals our contentment? Isn't it when circumstances...life circumstances go awry. Isn't where we can feel absolutely at peace and content at one moment and then some circumstance befalls us...some difficulty and you might as well cast contentment out the window because suddenly we're having this feeling upheaval of lack of peace or we're wandering around...we're saying what happened? And where did it all start from? It started from a change in circumstance. And Paul is saying I am not going to be a victim of circumstance. I'm not going to let my contentment suffer because of circumstance. And if you think about it, the majority of our lack of contentment, comes when we allow our circumstances to dictate how we feel, how we think, how we're going to react. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you and I could have a sense of peace that surpasses all of our comprehension, all of our understanding...if we could have a deep sense of contentment regardless of the situation or circumstances flowing around us? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just kind of move through life, not staying totally un-impacted by circumstance but rather not allowing circumstance to dictate how you and I are going to perceive that and feel about it. That would be wonderful. That would change the way we could approach life. And I tell you, that's how the apostle Paul lived his life and that's what he's teaching us.

Now so far, he's already built a foundation for the Philippian readers to understand contentment in the midst of any circumstance. We...we haven't really looked at so I want to back up for just a few moments and I want to look at a few verses that kind of lays out the initial foundation to where we're going this morning. I want to give you four things that we need to know about contentment regardless of our circumstance. The first comes out very clearly in verse 4. In verse 4, Paul says: Rejoice in the Lord always. So what do we learn? First we must be people who rejoice. We must have a mindset of rejoice. What does that tell us? Now Paul starts in our thinking, in our mind towards our circumstances of life. He says, we're not going to allow our circumstances to destroy our joy so we're going to be people who rejoice in and through every circumstance. Which by the way, this is a major theology of the apostle Paul. In just about every single book,

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every letter that he has written, he talks about being people who rejoice. Just as an example, in Romans 5, he says: Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Later in Romans, he says: Rejoice in suffering knowing that suffering does something that produces endurance. I Corinthians 13, he says: Rejoice with the truth. Ah...Paul said he learned to be in II Corinthians 6:10 sorrowful yet always rejoicing. In I Thessalonians 5:16 he makes it a command. He says: Rejoice always. And that's exactly what this is in Philippians 4. It's a command. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Why does Paul want us to be people who rejoice? Because it sets us in...it sets up...it sets our minds up for being able to face any circumstance that we might have.

If we're entering circumstances rejoicing, it sets us up to be able to work through it in a logical way and place our trust in a God who is sovereign. But when we go into a situation and we're moaning about the situation and we're upset about the situation and we're allowing our emotions to get out of control and the next thing you know, everything in life seems to be bad. What happens? We put ourselves into a tail spin. And Paul says, don't go there. Be people who rejoice because when you rejoice it's a reflection that you don't need to always be in control of what goes on around you. That you're trusting in a God who is sovereign and you put your trust in him. And you've kind of put your hands out and said, God, you're in control. You told me to rejoice. I'm going to rejoice. Why? Well, one, I know it's leading me somewhere where you want me to go. Two, I know you're absolutely in control and I'm trusting that. And so it goes back to what we said in the very beginning. It...it speaks of our believe systems, our own theology when we say, we are rejoicing. Not this false sense of emotionalism but rather it's an intense feeling of saying I'm going to set my mind on trust in God.

And now you say, well, what's next then? Well, what's next Paul tells us in verse 6...he says, well then, if you're going to rejoice always, then you can't be anxious. So first we rejoice, secondly, do not be anxious. Often easier said than done, right? But what is anxiety? Think about it. What is worry? Is it that just kind of saying to God, I don't think you can handle this, isn't it? Isn't that what we're saying to God? God, you know what? I would rather just take that back from you. I'll take care of that. I'll worry about that. I'll handle it. I'll fret about that. You know, you just go on about your business. Isn't that what we're saying to God when we're filled with anxiety and worry? Paul says it in verse 6: Do not be anxious about anything, about any circumstance in your life. Don't be anxious about it. You see, alright, well, how do I do that? Well, he tells us. He says you have to replace it. And he says we have to replace it with prayer and asking. We pray and we ask. So we start by rejoicing, that's setting our mind right. We move to the idea of not allowing ourselves to be anxious and we replace those worries and anxious feelings with prayer and asking specifically. He says this in verse 6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. Supplication by the way means requesting an answer to a specific need. So the next time you're starting to feel a bit anxious, a bit worried,

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what do you do? You don't just blow it off. You don't just also internalize it and start worrying or feeling anxious about it. You go find yourself a quiet place, you get on your knees, you tell...you tell the Lord I don't want to carry this anymore—this is yours. You've told me not to be anxious so I'm replacing my anxiety by asking you to help me trust you. And be specific when you come to him with your requests. Remember we're laying a foundation of contentment, right?

And then the fourth thing we do is we get perspective. You get perspective on life overall. Paul tells us primarily in verse 12: I know how to be brought low, I know how to abound in every...in any circumstance. I've learned the secret in the face of plenty and hungry, abundance and need. What is that? That's perspective. He's saying it doesn't matter what is going on in my life, in my circumstances, my perspective is trust. Learning to be content, learning to be satisfied, in what? In every situation I might be in. Right now, do you know what you ought to be doing if you're tracking closely with me? You ought to be questioning...you ought to be saying, well, how do I go about doing that then?

It's one thing to say contentment comes from living above circumstances, but how do I live above circumstances? How can I solidify this in my life? Well, Paul tells us in this next verse, verse 13, and it's our fourth principle. It's where we're going to spend the rest of our time this morning. You ready? Principle number four: Contentment comes from depending not on our own resources, not on our power but on God's power. You want to know the interior secret of contentment in Paul's life? It's got to be banked on this concept right here. Because he says in verse 13: I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Now you got to be careful with this. Because you know what happens? We know this passage. If you've been in church for any length of time, you've heard this passage before. In fact, I would imagine probably a good portion of you probably could quote this passage. But familiarity can breed contempt. You...you can start to forget the text, the context, what this truly means. So we need to dive in deep. If principle number four is contentment comes from depending on God's power, we have to learn about God's power. So what is verse 13 saying? It's saying I can do all things through him who strengthens me. What...what is the essence of this passage? I think the essence...essence of this passage is that we are now connected to another source besides our own. Isn't that what Paul is saying? It's like what he says in Galatians 2:20: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. So...in essence he's saying because of that I have a strength beyond my own for every situation. He uses the word "all". He says, all things, every situation. I have a strength beyond my own.

What did Jesus say to Paul when Paul had a need? Do...do you think Paul ever had a need where it was beyond his own resources? Well, have you ever had a need beyond your own resources? Let me ask it this way. Have you ever had time in your life where you got up one morning and there was so much stuff going on in and around your life,

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you said I can't do it. I can't do it one more day. I don't even know if I can lift my head off...off this pillow right now. Have you ever been in a place where you've come to the end of your resources, whatever that might be? And you're just basically throwing your hands up and you're saying, I'm done. I...I can't take another step. I don't know if I can survive the next hour. In fact, have you ever been to the point where you're saying I don't even know if I want to survive the next hour? Life has become so difficult, circumstances are so hard, you are so low that you get to the point where you say I have nothing left. Have you ever been there? Think the apostle Paul had ever been there? Sometimes we read into scripture, we think about these men, we think they...they're so far beyond us...so far above us...that sometimes it's hard for us to relate. Would it help you to know that the apostle Paul himself had reached the end of his resources. He reached the end of his resources so much that he came before God and he says that he pled with God to take this away...to take these situation...these circum...to change the events of his life. And he came so much to the end of...of himself that he was begging...by the way, that's what that biblical word, pled, means. He was pleading before God. You say, when did this happen? Well, hold your place in Philippians. Come with me over to II Corinthians cause that's where we learn about it, II Corinthians, chapter 12. Paul had come to the end of his own resources. And I...I believe that he...he was just like that scenario I set up that many of us have lived for...through...not knowing if he could go even the next moment. He...he doesn't really tell us what it is. He just tells us it was some thorn in the flesh and there'd been all kinds of speculation of what that might be. Maybe he had some kind of eye problem or maybe he had some kind of malaria...I think it was much worse. When you really read in to the text and you start studying through the verbiage that he uses, this is a broken man. He was hurting...pain...during his...his life because of the circumstances around him. And he's pleading verse 8. It says he's pleading with the Lord that this should be removed and he's waiting for an answer. And finally an answer comes. And the answer comes in verse 9. And it is answered directly from Jesus. Jesus says to him: Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. And there we go again. Here's another one of those passages we've heard so many times we have to be careful...we're tempted to just slide right past it but there is so much in this. Jesus is saying to Paul at his lowest moment when he's out of his own resources, he says, my grace is sufficient for you, Paul, for my power is made perfect when you are at your weakness. Now for some of you, you might be thinking that seems awfully cruel. You'd think that Jesus would step down and take this away from him. You would think that he would move it out from...but no, what is Christ doing? Somewhere Paul must have figured it out because the very next word, he says: Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses...why? So that...right...so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Paul's saying...if I...I didn't have this weakness he's coming to realization...if I didn't have this circumstance...if I didn't have this time where I reached the end of myself, I wouldn't be dependent upon him. If I wouldn't have gone through this, I wouldn't be now depending, experiencing the strength that he offers.

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And verse 10 which by the way is really the crux of this whole passage, he says: For the sake of Christ, then, I am...what's the word? Content. Do you hear what Paul is saying? He says: For...for the sake of Christ then all that this I'm experiencing, I am content with weakness, I am content with insults, I am content with hardships, I am content with persecution, I am content with calamities, for he says, when I am weak, he gets it...he says then I'm really strong. I have to be honest with you. If you would have come to me even just a week ago and you would have asked me how you find contentment, I probably would have left this critical element out because I didn't know about it. I mean if you would have come to me and said, well, you know, I'm having these problems, I would have given you the standard, well, you know, if you're having problems, really, pushes forward creates endurance in us and gives us a sense a hope, builds our character. I understand...I've understood that for years...but I would have never guessed what the text is revealing to us.

Do you see what the text is revealing? The text is telling us that contentment is really a byproduct of difficult circumstances. In other words, we cannot learn contentment any other way except through difficult circumstances. That it's not running off to some Caribbean Island where we have nothing to do but hang out in the sun and the sand. That's not going to bring us contentment. Real contentment for the follower of Christ comes when we've reached the end of our self and we have no other resources and we finally drop down and push them across the table to Christ and say, you have it. I have no more strength. What do we begin to experience? That transfer gives us not only his power but we get this byproduct that we so desperately have been searching for in everything else. Peace, contentment that rises above any human comprehension. And so rather than praying to God that we might escape our circumstances or escape our problems, we ought to be saying, God, don't...don't let these even...these difficult times end until your work is complete in me. Do...you realize what's going on here is that painful circumstance..hurtful circumstance...emotional draining circumstance...pain...physically painful disabling...all these circumstances cast us upon Christ. When we come to the end of ourselves, there we receive his power.

John MacArthur in his commentary says it this way: Contentment comes when you experience the sustaining power of Christ in those times when you have no human strength left. Strength...power. It's...it's the song, right? It's not Strinkle rise...it's strength will rise when we do what? When we wait upon the Lord. That word strength...wonderful word. It can be translated overpowered like Acts, chapter 19 or...or prevailed or effective like James 5:16. Paul is saying I can do all things because of the overpowering, prevailing strength of Christ, which by way, he says: I can do all things...all things is in the emphatic position...when the Greeks wanted to emphasize something they would change the word order. And so literally you could read this text, all things I can do because of his power. It kind of has a yoda ring to it...all things. All

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things I can do because of his power. You hear it? The emphasis all circumstances of life, I can do because of not my strength...I've reached the end of my strength but because of his strength, his overpowering, prevailing strength and so when you've come to the end of your own resources, when you can't solve your job problems, when you can't solve your enemy problems, when you can't solve your relationship problems, when you can't solve your marriage problems, when you're ought to of your own human resources, then you experience God's power.

And what's the byproduct? It leads you right into contentment. Isn't the word of God amazing? Would you ever have guessed that we could be people on the receiving end of contentment in the midst of some of lives' most horrific circumstances and yet that's the promise that comes out of scripture. I can do all things, Paul says, who strengthens me. You can do all things...you can do all...you can survive all circumstances...not on your own strength but through his strength. That's the God we serve. Amen. Amen.