

The Key to Contentment (Phil. 4:10-20)

Preston McGee - Sept. 3, 2017

Good morning. It's great to be with you this morning. My name is Preston McGee. I'm a partner here, I also serve as a Deacon and as the Director of Operations on the church staff, which basically means I am responsible for all the boring stuff. So, if you've got questions about the website, events, schedules, I'm your guy.

So, we've been looking at Philippians this summer and today is our last Sunday. We are finishing the book today. You've probably seen the signs and the graphics that say 'Philippians: The Key to Contentment'. And that is here at the end, where we find ourselves. They call Philippians the book of Joy. But if you've been paying attention you've noticed a lot of, let's see... Imprisonment, affliction, death, suffering, fear and trembling, destruction, conflict, crooked and twisted people, mutilation of the flesh, circumcision. These are just some of the words you could highlight. So, why on earth is this the book of Joy? How are we supposed to find contentment and joy amidst this setting? Well, we've seen over and over again, three things that God provides that cause us to trust that there is indeed an unending source of joy and contentment for those who are in Christ Jesus and we see them here again today. God provides the strength to be content in any and every situation, the opportunity to bear fruit for our growth and one another's good, and he provides exactly what we need.

So, we'll look at three things God provides:

- **strength to be content,**
- **opportunity to bear fruit,**
- **exactly what we need.**

Ok, point #1 - God provides the strength to be content in any and every situation

You know, I'm kind of a simple-minded person. I don't get too carried away with thoughts of existential angst very often. So, I really like memes. You know internet

memes, just simple images that people place text over to make a joke. My favorite meme is **'I literally can't even'**. Here's a basic example (see image). Then sometimes you get a clever twist when a meme really gets big. Our data scientists worked on this one. Or my favorite, someone wrote a book - 'How to Even'. I love the look on the guys face there. But let's define this before we get too far. To quote from urbandictionary.com 'cus you know - memes.

I literally can't even is defined as -

The complete, sudden onset of the cessation of brain activity, brought under the presence of acute stress, which fully affects the person only a short time after it strikes them. Said person, under the duress of the symptoms, demonstrate their affliction by alerting to others that they can't even, in reference to their inability to deal with the symptoms, or their inability to perform simple actions which have been made impossible by their afflictions.

You know, this meme is funny because it's infinitely adaptable and relatable. I mean **you could 'literally can't even' about anything**. But, it's also a reflection of where many of us often find ourselves. Think about it, why does this meme exist? We live in the age of the 24-hour news cycle, social media, live streaming, and the unrelentingly accessible world of the smart phone. For example, we pretty much have the ability to push a button and get anything we want, whenever we want it. - Uber, you push a button, you get a car. Instacart, you push a button, you get your groceries. Amazon Prime Now, you push a button you get... I don't know a giant inflatable swan if you want. I would be surprised if within a year I was not able to from my phone order a taco from Whole Foods that was then delivered by drone to my paddleboard on town lake and automatically updated Instagram with a selfie - hashtag taco-copter.

I joke, but this is life, things are fast and they are plentiful. And we live in a city that puts the pedal to the metal on all of these things that vie for our attention, our affection and our hope. We are inundated with opportunity to be overwhelmed and we dive right in. We might dive in to avoid pain or boredom or to search for relevance. I mean, if I don't

invent the next taco-copter what am I even doing with my life? That's why this meme exists. We have to come up with something to release the tension, some way to make fun of ourselves because sometimes it's just too much. We throw our hands up and say, "I can't even."

Here at the end of his letter to the Philippians Paul says, I got it. I've learned how to do this. I know the solution.

vv.11-13 I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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.

Notice he does not say the secret of contentment is being more informed, or being more relevant, or being more successful. He doesn't say, if you just knew a little more and worked a little harder, you'd get that promotion, then you'd be able to afford that house and that new car and you'd finally be happy.

In fact, he says if you are successful, relevant and informed, your contentment comes from the same place as the person who doesn't have enough food to eat. Did you see that? **Your contentment comes from the same place as the person who doesn't have enough food to eat.**

The writer of Hebrews in chapter 13 tells us:

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," ... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Don't be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace,

Scripture teaches us that strength for contentment comes through Jesus and Jesus in this ever turbulent world is SOLID. He is the very manifestation of grace. And **It is good**

for the heart to be strengthened by grace. In a world where earning and achievement is the norm, It is good for our hearts to receive the grace of God. So, you see, the meme is right. We can't even. We don't have the capacity to find our own contentment, to deal with the various circumstances of life. To deal with the onslaught of heartbreaking news on a daily basis. To deal with barely making ends meet, or the temptation of wealth. But, guys the good news is we are not told to be joyful and content on our own. God strengthens us through the work of Christ and the ever-present ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So, ok, you say. Does that mean that the plan for life is to just hold on through the thick and the thin? Are we strengthened just to "Cling to Jesus" and ride it out till we make it to heaven? No, we couldn't come to this text and forget the previous 3 chapters of this book. Where Paul speaks of fruitful labor, striving side by side, suffering for Christ's sake, looking to the interest of others before ourselves, being poured out as a drink offering or pressing on for the upward call of God. He doesn't set that table just so we can come here looking to make it through the chaos and the tough stuff of life. No, there's more to suffering and sacrifice than just weathering the storm.

Point #2 -

We see there and we see here that God provides opportunity to bear fruit for our growth and one another's good.

In vv.14-19 Paul writes:

14Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15And 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. 16Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17Not 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.

Paul takes the opportunity to thank the Philippians for their gifts and support and at the same time remind them that giving and sacrifice is **built into this life by God. - It is built into this life by God.** He almost seems dismissive of their gift because he doesn't want them to miss out on **the greater truth, the bigger picture.** That their sacrifice is not just a blessing to Paul, but it's a blessing to them as well. And its pleasing to God. A fragrant offering, he says. Alluding to the sacrificial system of the old testament. The Philippians' gift was sent to help their friend, their pastor, their brother Paul, **and** because they wanted the Gospel to go forth, but it was also a visceral sign of trust placed in a trustworthy God. **Are you trusting God with your life? With the resources, gifts and abilities he's given you, even when its tough or an inconvenience?** There is no lack of opportunity to pour out your time, your talent and your treasure in this city or this world. Just look around. It doesn't take long to find a need, but it takes faith and trust in God to step into those opportunities especially when our mind is set on just hanging on. And some of those opportunities might seem costly. I mean, let's not forget that this is being written by a man in prison who for all he knows may very well be on the way to execution. The sacrifice we see in the book of Philippians is not a sacrifice of convenience if there is such a thing. But it is a sacrifice filled with Joy. Don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not asking you to empty your bank accounts and trust that God will fill them back up 10-fold. That's not what Paul is saying here. These verses are often twisted in that way, but let's not be so distracted by the false teachers that we miss the truth here. **There is blessing in a trusting obedience.** And he is calling us throughout this whole letter to trust and obey. God provides the opportunity. Maybe its serving somewhere, some particular skill or ability you have. I'm not just talking about here at City Life, though there are ample opportunities. You know the people in your life, your neighbors, your City Group, your extended family, your children (talk about an opportunity for sacrifice that I often view as an inconvenience). You know what the needs are, you know where the opportunities are. It doesn't always have to be some majestic rescue effort or a massive financial donation. **Most of the time its the little things.** Returning kindness, when you've been dissed by your coworker. Inviting your lonely neighbor over for dinner. Taking time to talk with your kids when you really just want them to go to bed. Speaking the truth in love to a friend when you know it might

be uncomfortable. Are you heading the call, to look past yourself and trust that God will work through your sacrifice? Trust him and step into those opportunities. God is providing them for your growth and benefit and for others good.

And finally we come to the end and we see that we can be content and trust in God because he provides exactly what we need.

vv.19-20

19And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Lord doesn't owe us a thing. And yet he has given us far more than we could ever imagine. You see, he knows us. He knows you and he knows me, and he knows what we need. In fact, he knew us and what we needed before he formed the foundation of the world. He knew that we would betray him. He knew that we would choose false gods over him. He knew that we would not be able to pull ourselves up out of the hole that we had dug. It was impossible. So, he made a way. But in making a way, God doesn't just send some resources from his infinite power, he sends his son Jesus, **the King of Kings**, rich in glory to take our place, to deal with our mess, by his death on a cross to make us clean forever so if we are in Christ, we can stand before God and all he'll see is the Glory of Jesus shining.

And what does he ask in return? – **'Trust me, put your faith in me'**You want to know the key to contentment? **He's right here.** And he knows you. And he knows what you need. Trust him. Trust him when it all seems like too much to handle. Trust him when you really don't want to step out of your comfort zone. But most importantly, trust him with your life. Put your faith in him. Not in your ability, or your wealth or your position.

Well, maybe you are thinking you've forgotten how to trust God.

Look to him - **Psalm 34:5 says "Those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed."**

Look to God. Read God's promises. Remind yourself of the Truth. We just read some right here. "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ." "I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you." The Bible is full of God's promises. Look to him. Remind yourself of who God is. Remind yourself of what he has done.

Speak to God. Pray.

Phil. 4:6-7 - The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

Talk to God, tell him what's on your mind. We have a good father, we have a glorious savior who knows exactly what we need and has given us everything, not just so we can make it to the end, but so we can love others like he's loved us, so we can care for the orphans and the widows and the hungry when we might be in need ourselves.

So we can work hard at our jobs even if we don't get that promotion.

The key to contentment is not in a system or an ideal. Its in the person and work of Jesus Christ.