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PRESBYTERIAN
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Preaching
Today—
Dr. Geoff
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Pastor of
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Church

Apply The Word of God This Week:

1. Since Divine Providence has you where you are, realize that to be discontent is to be ungrateful to God Your Father & so repent this day in prayer before God;
2. Since Divine Providence has you where you are, but where you are may be oppressive, can you still obey the Lord in that situation? Ask for Jesus Christ to strengthen you to be content, knowing that contentment of soul leads to obedience in life; ask for God the Holy Spirit to help you learn to follow Him and “do hard things” for His glory at the point of the pressure or outside force that seems unchanged daily; believe His Providence!
3. If Divine Providence has blessed your Christian brothers with more than you have, will you now rejoice over their blessings contentedly, rather than resent them for this?
4. Decide to read & meditate on this passage for 7 days;
5. Contentment & passivity are not the same. Reflect on this.

What Paul Learned Is What God Offers Us for His Great Glory In Our Contentment

Philippians 4:11, 13—“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content...I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me.” What did Paul learn? He learned the theology of a divine Christ & a divine Providence. The only way I can think of that the apostle Paul learned how to be content no matter what the life situation in which he found himself, was this: he had to *learn* Who God is and to *learn* something about the hand of God’s Providence. Paul came to the realization that all things work

together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His will & purpose (*Rom.8:28*). He learned this, yes; but He **believed** this. So when he finds himself in prison, it’s not by some random act of chance. It’s God! Paul knew he was there by sovereign reason & plan, by the sovereign Christ Who strengthens him.



There is no such thing for the Apostle Paul.

Bellefield Presbyterian Church

Worship
04/19/09

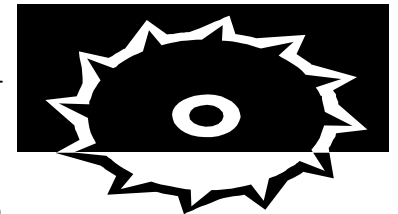
Connect with Today’s Sermon

Philippians 4:10-20

A Mark of Godly Leadership— The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

God desires His glory manifested in the *integrity* of His leadership.

His Word presents us with a great leader in the Apostle Paul who declares, “...I have **learned** in whatever situation I am to be content.” So



Life’s wheels can cut deeply into us

Philippians 4:10-13 shows us that this is a **learned** activity of his soul. Contentment should particularly shine from God’s leaders, but really should mark all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Word of God is for *all* of our edification and strengthening so that men and women of God may be *competent* (*2 Timothy 3:17*). Godly contentment is part of godly competence. So, do we have this contentment? Does it guide our discipleship? Why do we want it? **Because Christ is glorified in & by our contentment.**

Discontentment Impugns His Glory

How about this for a definition? *Discontentment* is never having enough of what you

really don’t need? To be discontent is to want more of what we never really even needed

in the first place. In the truest deepest sense: we have Jesus Christ *forever*. He is enough.

Sermon Series:
God’s Passion
for His Glory
in *Philippians*—
Part 14 Today

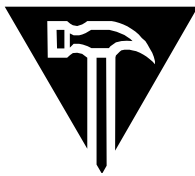
**Quick Look
at the Sermon
Moves**

- **Contentment is a mark of leadership;**
- 1. **Define these “all things” that Paul can do in Jesus Christ;**
- 2. **Pascal’s paradox of being human and Paul;**
- 3. **Paul is content in a bad situation;**
- 4. **Stoics, Epicureans & Paul;**
- 5. **Paul was content because Paul learned His Providence & a Sovereign Christ.**

“Obviously Paul didn’t mean that he could do anything through Christ Who strengthens him. He couldn’t fly through the air unaided like a bird. He couldn’t swim under water, live under water, like a fish.”

What Are “All These Things”?

Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Him Who strengthens me.” I remember seeing that on a college quarterback’s towel. His team was winning. I wondered, *Is that what this verse means?* At that time I really didn’t understand that verse. Much to my relief, I had it wrong back



Life hammered Paul in prison....

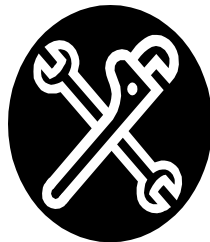
then, because I didn’t know the concept of an ellipsis. That’s the omitting of a word that is implied. Here it’s, *I can do all [these] things through Him Who strengthens me.* Paul’s referring back to the above verse. So what are “these” things?

Blaise Pascal

17th century France. He’s most famous for Pascal’s wager that if there is no God and you bet there was, no harm, no foul. But if there is a God and you bet there wasn’t, you’re toast. So you’ve got everything to gain by believing in God & nothing really to lose.

More on Pascal in Connecting to Phil. 4

He’s also important because of his *Pensees* where he gave an analysis of the nature of human beings saying we are the most paradoxical of all creatures. 1] We can think about our own existence & this is a greatness squirrels don’t have; but 2] this thinking is the basis for our deepest misery—for we can always contemplate a better existence. And we also know we can’t quite get all we want.



Unfulfilled dreams can wrench us.

What About Paul with Pascal?

“Paul says, I ‘know’ how to be brought low; I ‘know’ how to abound; I ‘know’ how to be empty; I ‘know’ how to have a lot. So Paul’s talking about knowledge. But about this he says earlier that he has ‘learned’ how to abound; ‘learned’ how to be content. But what would we have learned in his shoes? The key question is, Why did Paul learn contentment?”

Philippians 4:12—“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.” But then a verse earlier: “for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content” (vs.11). Where was Paul when he

wrote this? In a prison cell; cut off from friends; eking out a subsistence level of life; the target of hostility; abased every minute; in a state of physical & emotional deprivation. Good grief!



Stoics & Epicureans

These 2 Are Not Dead

These are the only 2 competing philosophies of Paul’s day explicitly mentioned in the Bible, Acts 17. They agreed on 1 main point: that the goal of human life was to achieve *atarachia*, a sense of well-being. For the stoics this meant imperturbability; to the Epicureans, it was to maximize pleasure & minimize pain.

The Stoic and Epicurean outlooks assail us daily in our culture. Stay cool; don’t be rocked by anything. Don’t let anybody perturb you. Or, grab all you can get; the one with the most toys, the most feasts, wins. But all of this is not for pleasure for its own sake. No, it’s the pursuit of *happiness*. So Paul uses their same Greek word, but he’s talking about something altogether different: joy in Jesus Christ.



Spock as the embodiment of the Stoic ideal.