

Contentment

Philippians 4:11 (KJV)

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

My last message here was about guarding what is allowed through the eyes and through the ears. This is because what we allow in, fills our heart. It is out of the abundance of our heart that the mouth speaketh. The world has no problem with filling its hearts with the sin of the world, but we as Christians are called to fill our hearts with the word of God.

There are several verses that lead up to Philippians 4:11 that are important to read, also.

Philippians 4:4–8 (KJV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice.

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

As we go through this message, you will find it easier and easier to understand that we will rejoice in the Lord!

Paul speaks here of being careful for nothing. We are in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests be made known unto God.

While God already knows what we have need of before we even ask for it (Matt.

6:8b), we show our faith in God when we do pray to Him and speak to Him and thank Him for all things. This pleases God.

As a result of this prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we not only receive those things we have need of, but the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Now, while this amazing, unprecedented peace in itself is amazing to us, the important thing I want to point out here and ask you to keep in mind is, that it is all through Christ Jesus. Please keep this point in mind, as it will come up again later in this message.

We then read of Paul's instruction concerning whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. He says, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, then think on these things. Paul is saying if our praise of God and our virtue received from God, is to mean anything, then think on those things. In other words, as we learned in our previous message, let these things fill your heart and only then will you speak of these out of the abundance of your heart! They will not be just empty words, but holy, spirit filled words that come out of your mouth.

Paul makes it clear that this is what he has done and continues to do. From the English used in the King James Bible, it would be said he doeth these things. Remember, grammatically, that 'eth' ending is used of verbs that the subject does on a continuous basis. It is the action done because of what is in abundance in his or her heart.

Philippians 4:9 (KJV)

⁹ Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

We began this message with a reading from Philippians 4:11. It began with "Not that I speak in respect of want." This is hear because of what Paul wrote in verse 10. He rejoiced in the Lord greatly for the care of the Philippians towards Paul was so great. Their desire to help Paul with his day-to-day needs was in such abundance in their hearts, but because they lacked opportunity at times, we not able to act on this desire.

Paul was grateful and rejoiced in the Lord greatly because of the church at Philippi. This was not due to him requiring or begging for their help, however. This is what we shall look at in some detail.

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. What a glorious statement! A glorious statement when you understand exactly what is being said!

Over the years as I read this portion of Scripture, I believed the meaning of the word content meant something akin to having that peaceful and happy feeling. When the Lord called me to teach and preach, however, that understanding had to be revised, if you will. After all, we who teach and preach are called to rightly divide the word of truth. There are no exceptions to this! Many times, our initial understanding of something is the result of quickly glossing over something. When we are dealing with God's word, however, I constantly remind those with me to slow down as you read, and especially slow down as you study God's word. It is meaningless to speed read the word of God. I do not care if you can say you have read your bible through five times in a year, or dare I say, even once in a year. Just reading it is fine, but we must take the time and expend the energy to study the word of God, and this must be done at a much slower pace. If you spend your time, studying, you will find yourself going through many various passages in Scripture that tie in with the verse or verses you are studying.

Content in Philippians 4:11 does not mean what I originally thought. Thank you Lord for slowing me down! Actually, the way the word content is used here, is the only time it is used this way in Scripture! I am speaking of the word itself. We shall see there are other parts of Scripture that help us with this word that convey the same kind of idea.

The word content, as used here in Philippians 4:11, speaks of being self-sufficient. Now, if you just looked up this definition of the Greek word used in the Textus Receptus, which is the underlying Greek text used for the New Testament, then there is a strong chance you would come to the wrong conclusion of what Paul is saying here. This is why I am outspoken about folks who just say, this is what the Greek says. We cannot just accept a definition we may find in some Greek dictionary or lexicon, we are to do what God told us to do and test those things to see if they are true.

Self-sufficient here is not speaking of the stoic perspective of the word. Being self-sufficient, in and of ourselves, and to be able to resist any need out of our own willpower is not what is meant here. We are not an island unto ourselves. Our self-sufficiency is not born out of our own will.

A while ago, I asked you to remember about what Paul said in Philippians 4:7. Specifically, the phrase, through Christ Jesus. Our self-sufficiency spoken of here comes because of our position in the body of Christ. It is the result of our believing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Because we are saved, and in Christ Jesus, we have self-sufficiency. It is born out of our trust in God that we spoke of earlier. When we by prayer and supplication make our requests unto God, we become self-sufficient. Nobody, outside of God, needs to take care of our needs. Certainly not that of the world. Our help does not come from the world, but through Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:4–5 (KJV)

⁴ And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

We, and I am speaking specifically of Christians, are completely intertwined with God through Christ, that there is nothing that can unwind us and separate us from God.

Now, while our salvation, or justification, happens once and for all, other aspects of our walk take time and effort. Paul writes, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned.” This means it took time for Paul to get to this point, and it takes time for us, also. It takes time to know we are self-sufficient in Christ. What did Paul learn? In addition to being self-sufficient, he learned to be this way in whatsoever state he was in. This is what Paul explains in verse 12.

Philippians 4:12 (KJV)

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

When we read this, we see Paul is speaking of need in the physical or material sense of need. He is also speaking of learning through experience. Paul has been abased and he has abounded. We read of Paul's imprisonments and times without the necessities for his personal health. However, we also see how Paul abounds as an apostle of Jesus Christ. In all things, he has through prayer and supplication made his requests known unto God. He has learned to be both full and hungry. He learned to be self-sufficient by trusting in the Lord and not being vain in his experiences. We see this same lesson in the Old Testament, too.

Proverbs 30:8–9 (KJV)

⁸ Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

⁹ Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

Paul learned to trust in God and not his experiences. We do see examples of those who did not. Consider characters in the gospels like the parable of a certain rich man spoken of in Luke.

Luke 12:16–21 (KJV)

¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, **The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:**

¹⁷ **And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?**

¹⁸ **And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.**

¹⁹ **And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.**

²⁰ **But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?**

²¹ *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

This man's self-sufficiency was of the stoic kind we contrasted earlier. God called him a fool. You cannot trust God if you are trusting in yourself for everything. We understand our self-sufficiency comes from God and not of ourselves. We must trust God to provide what we need when we need it.

Paul makes the statement after all this to bear out what we have been learning.

Philippians 4:13 (KJV)

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

I can be hungry and full; I can both abound and suffer need. In all things, I am content through Christ which strengtheneth me.