

Living with Contentment PT 2

Philippians 4:10-13

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As a teenager, Joni loved life. She enjoyed riding horses, loved to swim. One summer in 1967, however, that all changed. While swimming with some friends, Joni dove into a lake not knowing how shallow it really was. She broke her neck, paralyzing her body from the neck down. For the next two years during her rehabilitation Joni struggled. She struggled with life, she struggled with God, and she struggled with her paralysis.

I think back to those darker days when I was in the hospital, so depressed, so discouraged. I said, "I wanted desperately to be healed." When friends would come into the hospital to visit me and we asked, "Should we read anything to you from the Bible?" I would always, always ask for John chapter 5, "Please read to me from there." When I read it here, you'll understand why.

"For there is in Jerusalem near the sheep gate a pool which is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades, here a great number of disabled people used to lie, the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years when Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition or a long time," gee, if he thinks 38 years is a long time, I wonder what he thinks of 46?

He asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' Jesus said to him, 'Get up and walk.' I cannot tell you how many times I would lie in that bed, straining to make my muscles move, and I would sing a hymn that I had learned as a child, 'Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, Jesus do not pass me by.'" But I never got up out of that bed and walked. And it seemed back then that Jesus had passed me by.

I was released from the hospital. My sister J.K. invited me to come and live with her on our Maryland farm. And one morning while she was doing my get-up routine, bed bath, toileting, exercising, we flipped on the bedside television and there was an advertisement, "Kathryn Kuhlman was coming to Washington D.C."

How many here remember her, Kathryn Kuhlman? Yeah. Well for those of you who might not, she was like her Benny Hinn of the day, okay? Well, my sister and I got into the station wagon and we got to the Washington Fulton Ballroom early. We wanted to have a good seat. We were escorted, however, over to the wheel-chair section where I was sitting with a number of people, crate, crutches, canes, walkers, wheel chairs. We all waited in anticipation. The lights dimmed. A spotlight came on the stage and there comes Miss Kuhlman, sweeping out onto the stage in her long white gown and with a crescendo of organ music, there are songs and hymns and before you know it, after some time, the spotlight moves to the far corner of the ballroom and we can tell something's going on over there, like people getting healed. Are they getting healed? Are they getting healed? And so we're just waiting for the spotlight to come on the wheel-chair

section, like, “Hey, come over here where all the hard cases are.”

Before the service ended, ushers came to escort us all out of the wheel-chair section and to the elevators so as to not clog the hallways. And I could hear the organ music on the other side of the wall still playing as I sat, number 15 in a line of 35 disabled people at the elevator. We were all very quiet. And I looked up and down that line and I thought to myself, “Something is wrong with this picture. What kind of Savior? What kind of rescuer, what kind of healer, what kind of deliverer would refuse the prayer of a paralytic? When I got home that night in bed, I thought, “Okay then, if I can’t be healed, I’m just not going to do this, I’m not going to live this way.” And soon a bitter spirit, a mean a real complaining spirit began to take hold. Nobody anything... nobody that...nobody did anything that was good enough. Every...every hurdle became an excuse to feel sorry for myself. If something didn’t go my way, it was off with their heads, Queen Johi I was.

Most of all, in that bitterness, Jesus the healer seemed so far and so distant. And if I could not be healed, I said to my sister, “Just leave me in my bedroom draw all the drapes, turn out the light, shut the door and just leave me alone.”

But even in that dark bedroom, hymns would come back up to the surface of my heart and I would comfort myself in the loneliness that I was experiencing and just, (singing) “Abide with me, fast falls the even tide, when darkness deepens, Lord with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless, I’m so helpless, O abide with me.” And somewhere in that dark bedroom days later, I cried out to God, “If I...If I can’t live this way, then somebody else is going

to have to. Jesus, You're going to have to do it for me. I can't do this thing called quadriplegia. Please show me how to live."

Paul's life was marked by suffering and persecution from the time he was saved on the Damascus road until he arrived in Rome. This was all in fulfillment of what was spoken by Jesus to Ananias when He said of Paul, "he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). In addition to what is recorded in the book of Acts, Paul tells us of more sufferings he endured:

(2 Cor. 11:23-28)

Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—
more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments,
beaten times without number, often in danger of death.
Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.
Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned,
three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have
spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in
dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers
from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles,
dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers

on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.

Paul-3 Paul knew suffering like few others in this world. His suffering was the result of his service for Christ, as one who boldly preached the gospel message and taught others from the Scriptures. Paul experienced hostility primarily from his own people, the Jews, but also from Greeks and Romans. Apart from the external hardships Paul faced throughout his life, he also had “the daily pressure...of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul was often internally distressed over the church because he knew that Christians were in real danger of false teachers who might lead them astray from Christ and from sound teaching (Acts 20:18-32; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 2:4-5; Phil. 3:2). In addition to all that he suffered during his time of ministry, there was a special form of suffering that came to Paul, a “thorn in the flesh” as he called it. Regarding this special form of suffering, Paul said,

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it

might leave me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

Was Paul Persecuted? Did He Indeed Suffer as a Christian?

1. 2 Corinthians 4:8-12 – “. . . 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you.”

2. Galatians 5:11 – “And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.”

3. 2 Timothy 3:10-11 – “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,
11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

4. 1 Corinthians 15:30-32 – “And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? 31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
32 If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

5. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 – “We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,
5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;
6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Galatians 6:7 – “From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

Romans 9:1-2 – “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.”

2 Corinthians 11:23-28 – “. . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I

was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness --

6. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 –

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The evidence of Paul's success in ministry was the power of the gospel to transform lives that led to the churches he founded and built up. They were a monument to his faithfulness and to God's power working through him. To see any of those churches being led astray by false teachers was a painful, humbling experience for Paul, yet one that he needed. Twice in verse 7 he emphasized that God allowed his thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting himself. Though he was the noblest Christian of all, Paul was not impervious to the normal struggles of life. Certainly, because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations he had experienced (Acts records six visions apart from the one related in this passage; he also received the gospel he preached by revelation [Gal. 1:11–12; cf. Eph. 3:3]), pride was a constant temptation. Therefore, to keep him humble, Paul was given ... a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him.

The identity of that thorn in the flesh has been much debated. Paul did not describe it in detail, indicating that the Corinthians knew what it was. Most commentators assume it was a physical ailment, such as migraines, ophthalmia, malaria, epilepsy, gallstones, gout, rheumatism, an intestinal disorder, or even a speech impediment. That such a wide range of possibilities has been put forth indicates a lack of specific support in Scripture for any of them. (Even if Paul's words in Gal. 6:11, "See with what large letters I

am writing to you with my own hand,” indicate an eye problem, there is nothing in that verse that connects it with the apostle’s thorn in the flesh.) Skolops (thorn) could be better translated “stake,” graphically indicating the intensity of the suffering it caused Paul; it was not a small thorn but a large stake.

The apostle acknowledged that the thorn in the flesh ultimately was given to him from God. (See Job 1 and 2, where God permitted Satan to afflict Job for His own purposes; cf. Gen. 50:20.) The phrase in the flesh could also be rendered “for” or “because of the flesh.” Flesh should be understood here not in a physical sense, but in a moral sense as a reference to Paul’s unredeemed humanness (cf. Rom. 6:19; 7:5, 18, 25; 8:4–9). The Lord allowed Paul’s intense suffering to impale his otherwise proud flesh; to humble the one who had so many revelations.

It is best to understand Paul’s thorn as a demonic messenger of Satan sent to torment him by using the deceivers to seduce the Corinthians into a rebellion against him. At least

four lines of evidence

support that interpretation.

First, in the overwhelming majority of its uses in the New Testament (including every other occurrence in Paul’s writings), angelos (messenger) refers to angels.

An angel sent from Satan would, of course, be a demon.

Second, the verb translated torment always refers to harsh treatment from someone (Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65; 1 Cor. 4:11; 1 Peter 2:20).

Third, the Old Testament sometimes refers metaphorically to opponents as thorns (e.g., Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13; Judg. 2:3; Ezek. 28:24).

Finally, the verb translated leave in verse 8 is always used in the New Testament to speak of someone departing. Likely, then, the demonic messenger was tormenting Paul by being the indwelling spirit in the leading false apostle (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15; 1 Tim. 4:1). Again, this is consistent with Paul’s testimony that his severest suffering came from his concern for the church (11:28–29).

Review

1. Confidence in God’s Providence v.10

2. Satisfaction with Little v11-12

Here is another secret to **contentment** from Paul’s life: “Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity” (Phil. 4:11–12).

He appreciated the revived generosity of the Philippian church, but wanted them to know he hadn't been coveting it. He kept his wants or desires in check, not confusing them with his needs. "Not that I speak from want" is another way of saying, "I really don't have any needs that aren't being met." Our needs as human beings are simple: food, clothing, shelter, and godliness with contentment. Scripture says to be content with the bare necessities of life.

That attitude is in marked contrast to the attitude of our culture. People today aren't content—with little or much. My theory is that the more people have, the more discontent they're apt to be. Typically, the most unhappy people you'll ever meet are very wealthy. They seem to believe their needs can never be met. Unlike Paul, they assume their wants are needs. They've followed our materialistic culture's lead in redefining human needs. To protect yourself, pay careful attention to whenever you attach the word *need* to something in your thoughts or speech. Edit any use of it that goes beyond life's bare essentials. Paul did, and you can too. Thankfully regard any surplus as a blessing from God. You will be satisfied with little when you refuse to depend on luxuries the world redefines as needs.

NOT THAT I SPEAK FROM WANT: ouch hoti kath husteresin lego (1SPA1):

I am not saying this because I am in need (NET)

I do not say this because I have lacked anything (NJB)

Not that I am implying that I was in any personal want (Amp)

What Paul is doing in this introductory phrase is reminding the Philippians that his thankfulness for their' giving was not because he was needy (though he was needy), but because it was good for them to be givers. He wants them to know he was not

depending on their gift to meet his needs. Paul shows the right balance - we ought to appreciate and rejoice over other's gifts to us; but we shouldn't rely upon them as the basis for meeting our needs.

Want (5304) (husteresis from the verb hustereo = hustereo, fall short, be deficient, be destitute) is a noun which means being in need, being deficient, suffering need or being in poverty. Hustereo describes the condition of lacking that which is essential.

Even though Paul was in by the world's standards "in need" (he was in prison as he wrote this letter), he was content where he was, for he was free in Christ!

The only other NT use of husteresis...

Mark 12:44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

3. Detachment from Circumstances

v11-12

The one thing that steals our **contentment** more than anything else is trying circumstances. We crumble and lose our sense of satisfaction and peace when we allow our circumstances to victimize us. No doubt Paul was human and suffered that way too but then he learned a different way: remaining content no matter

what his circumstances were. “I have learned to be content,” he said, “in *whatever* circumstances I am” (Phil. 4:11, emphasis added). He really meant *whatever*, for in the next verse he ran the gamut of extremes from great poverty to great wealth. It’s possible for us as Christians to learn to be content in facing any situation in life. And we don’t have to wait for the next life to be able to do this. We do need to keep one foot in the next life, however. Paul said it this way: “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:2). “Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17–18). Paul endured many horrific circumstances (note his summary in 11:23–33) but through them he learned to be content by having an eternal perspective. Realize any circumstance you face is only temporary. The energy you’re tempted to expend on it by getting anxious isn’t worth being compared with your eternal reward. Learn to be content by not taking your earthly circumstances too seriously.

FOR I HAVE LEARNED HOW TO BE CONTENT IN WHATEVER CIRCUMSTANCES I AM: ego gar emathon (1SAAI) en ois eimi (1SPAI) autarkes einai (PAN): (Php 3:8; Ge 28:20; Ex 2:21; Mt 6:31, 32, 33, 34; Lk 3:14; 1Ti 6:6, 7, 8-note, 1Ti 6:9-note; He 10:34; He 13:5,6)

Only genuine believers can be truly, fully content, for in the final analysis, contentment is not a natural attainment but a supernatural gift from our heavenly Father to His children! To say it another way, a believer's degree of contentment in this world is a reflection of their degree of contentment regarding the world to come! The more the invisible, eternal things above grip our heart, the less will be the power of the visible, temporal things of the world to cause us discontent.

Have learned (3129) (manthano [word study]) means to learn by experience, to discover and so to genuinely understand and accept a teaching as true and to apply it in one's life. Manthano indicates that one directs his mind to something which produces an external effect. In the present context the idea would be that Paul learned through his experiences and came to know and experience the contentment he describes. His spiritual contentment was not something he had immediately after he was saved. He had to go through many experiences, easy and difficult, in order to learn who was the Source of true contentment.

Content (842) (autarkes from autos = reflexive pronoun = self + arkeo = be sufficient, suffice) means literally "sufficient to self" (self-sufficient and competent) and so to be independent of external circumstances and independent of all people. One secular writer used autarkes in reference to a country that supplied itself and had no need of imports. True contentment comes only from our Lord, and enables believers to be satisfied and at ease in the midst of any problem. Autarkes therefore describes the man who needs nothing externally to be satisfied in life for all he needs is within. the believer who has Christ dwelling within.

Barclay adds that

in order to achieve content, the Stoics abolished all desires and eliminated all emotions. Love was rooted out of life and caring was forbidden. As T. R. Glover said, "The Stoics made of the heart a desert, and called it a peace." We see at once the difference between the Stoics and Paul. The Stoic said, "I will

learn to be content by a deliberate act of my own will.” Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ Who infuses His strength into me.” For the Stoic, contentment was a human achievement; for Paul it was a divine gift. The Stoic was self-sufficient; but Paul was God-sufficient. Stoicism failed because it was inhuman; Christianity succeeded because it was rooted in the divine. Paul could face anything, because in every situation he had Christ. The man who walks with Christ can cope with anything. (Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press)

Theodore Epp makes a good point that writing...

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that we should be content **with** unsatisfactory conditions. But because of our personal relationship with Christ we can be content **in** them. As different situations arise and we learn our lessons one after another, we will also find it possible to be content in every situation.

Contentment is one of those concepts that is easier to define than to experience. This is probably because the tendency is to seek contentment in possessions rather than in a person.

We assume that contentment comes from having things, but it is possible to have deep contentment without things.

So often we think contentment would be ours if we were promoted to the next higher position or if we were able to buy that object we think we need so much or if we could be accepted in a certain circle of friends.

But as we advance in these areas, we discover that contentment is elusive because we are seeking it in the wrong places and in the wrong way.

Contentment does not depend on what we have; it depends on who we are. It is a spiritual attainment, not something that results from purchasing power. As someone has said, "Contentment is a state of heart rather than a statement of account."

Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Ti 6:6-

Calvin Comments

"Whatever my condition may be, I am satisfied with it. "Why? because saints know that they thus please God. Hence they do not measure sufficiency by abundance, but by the will of God, which they judge of by what takes place, for they are persuaded that their affairs are regulated by his providence and good pleasure."

I KNOW HOW TO TO BE ABASED AND I ALSO KNOW HOW TO ABOUND

: oida (1SRAI) kai tapeinousthai (PPN) oida (1SRAI) kai perisseuein (PAN): (1Cor 4:9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 2 Co 6:4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; 10:1,10; 11:7,27; 12:7, 8, 9, 10) (Macarthur on Php 4:10-12 Secret of Contentment)

I know (1492) (eido, oida - eido is used only in the perfect tense = oida) literally means perception by sight (perceive, see) as in Mt 2:2 where the wise men "saw His star". The meaning of eido is somewhat difficult to convey but in general this type of "knowing" is distinguished from ginosko (and epiginosko, epignosis), the other major NT word for knowing, because ginosko refers to knowledge obtained by experience or "experiential knowledge" whereas eido often refers to more intuitive knowledge, although the distinction is not always crystal clear.

How to be abased (5013) (tapeinoo - see also study of related word tapeinos = humble) which literally means "to lower," as one would lower the level of water behind a dam, or the height of a mountain or hill (Luke 3:5 records "every mountain and hill shall be brought low" = tapeinoo).

Tapeinoo figuratively means to be brought low or to be abased - a going down into deprivation. The English word "humble" is derived from the Latin "humilis" which in turn is derived from "humus" meaning "earth"! The Greeks saw humility as shameful, whereas the NT sees humility as condition bringing man to right relation to God

(how to abound) (4052) (perisseuo from perissos = abundant, exceeding some number, measure, rank or need, over and above) means to cause to superabound, to be superfluous, to overflow, to be in affluence, to excel or to be in abundance with the implication of being considerably more than what would be expected.

carries the idea of exceeding the requirements, of overflowing or overdoing. It means to exceed a fixed number of measure, to be left over and above a certain number or measure. It means to have or to be more than enough, to be extremely rich or abundant. To exceed or remain over (as used in loaves left over after feeding the 5000 [Mt 14:20]! When Jesus supplies there is more than enough so that some is even left over! How quick we are to forget this basic principle!) The idea is to overflow like a river out of its banks!

IN ANY AND EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET: en panti kai en pasin memuemai

(1SRPI): (Dt 32:10; Neh 9:20; Isa 8:11; Jer 31:19; Mt 11:29; 13:52; Ep 4:20,21)

Learned the secret (one word in Greek) (3453) (mueo = root word for mustes meaning "one initiated" which in turn is the source of "mystery" or musterion) means to be initiated. It was used by the pagan religions with reference to their "inner secrets." Paul is saying in essence "I have been initiated, I possess the secret".

Mueo was the common term used to describe the initiation rites required of anyone seeking to enter into the secrets of the ancient mystery religions. Mueo means to learn the secret of something through personal experience or as the result of initiation. In those mysteries, it was only the "initiated" who were made acquainted with the lessons that were taught there. Paul's initiation was not a secret affair for he learned from the hard experiences in life.

OF BEING FILLED AND GOING HUNGRY: kai chortazesthai (PPN) kai peinan (PAN):

Filled (5526) (chortazo [word study] from chortos =grass, hay) was used of force-feeding animals for the purpose of fattening them, of birds gorging themselves on their prey (Rev 19:21), of satisfying the needs of a hungry crowd (Mt 14:20) Paul's point here is that he had times in which he had plenty of food.

Going hungry (3983) (peinao from peina =hunger which is related to penes the poor man who has to work for his living) means famished, starved. Paul is saying he at times was continually in circumstances of want without murmuring or complaining. Instead he learned to bear all this without discontent, which is no easy lesson to learn.

BOTH OF HAVING ABUNDANCE AND SUFFERING NEED: kai perisseuein (PAN) kai hustereisthai (PPN):

Having abundance (4052) (perisseuo from perissos = abundant, exceeding some number, measure, rank or need, over and above) means to superabound (quantitatively or qualitatively) and so to be in excess.

Suffering need (5302) (hustereo from hústeros = last, latter, terminal, hindmost) has the basic meaning of come to late (in time) or to come after (in terms of space) and thus it means to fail in something, come short of, miss, not to reach. Hustereo has the basic meaning of being last or inferior. It means to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end, to lack. It means to come late or too tardily. Figuratively as used in this verse hustereo means to lack or be in need of. This word pictures someone in a company marching together with others who march faster than he can. He cannot keep up, so he falls behind.

1. Confidence in God's Providence v.10

2. Satisfaction with Little v11-12

3. Detachment from Circumstances

4. Being Sustained by Divine Power

Paul could face any earthly circumstance with this confident assurance: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). He had learned that no matter how difficult things get in this material world, every Christian has a spiritual undergirding.

In saying he could do all things through Christ, Paul was referring to endurance, not miraculous provision. He didn't mean he could

go on forever without eating or drinking. He couldn't be battered 5,000 times and still survive. There's a limit to the physical hardships any human being can endure. Instead Paul was saying, "When I have come to the end of my own resources, then I experience the power of Christ to sustain me until a provision is made." He believed in the promise of **Isaiah 40:31: "Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."**

Contentment is a by-product of distress. It comes when you experience the sustaining power of Christ when you simply have run out of steam: "To him who lacks might He increases power" (v. 29). We do well to experience enough difficulty in our lives to see Christ's power on display in us.

Therefore **we can "do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Eph. 3:20).**

You'll learn **contentment** when you've stood in the valley of the shadow of death, when you've been at the brink, when you can't resolve your problems, when you can't eliminate the conflict, when you can't change your work environment, when you're unable to fight the disease that's wracking your body. That's when you'll turn to God and find the strength to get through the situation.

To add an important qualifier, however, if you've been living a life of sin and you're now at the bottom of the pit where sin has led you, don't expect the Lord to step in, put on a dazzling display of His power, and make you feel content. What He's more apt to do is add chastening to the pain that your circumstances have naturally produced. There's no quick fix for a sinful pattern of living. Just like health is the result of right living in the physical dimension, so is power from God the result of being obedient in the spiritual dimension.

I CAN DO ALL THINGS: panta ischuo (1SPA1): (Jn 15:4,5, 6,7; 2Co 3:4,5, 6) (Macarthur on Php 4:13)

Literally this verse reads...

“I have strength for all things in Him Who strengthens me.”

Can do (2480) (ischuo from ischus = might) means to be strong in body or in resources. Ischuo can speak of physical power (Mk 2:17, 5:4, 9:12). It can speak of having the required personal resources to accomplish some objective as here in Php 4:13 or conversely with the negative speaks of that which is good for nothing (Mt 5:13-note). Ischuo is the equivalent of to have efficacy, to avail or to have force.

The NAS renders ischuo as able(5), am strong enough(1), been able(1), can(1), can do(1), could(8), good(1),healthy(2), in force(1), means(1), overpowered(1), prevailing(1), strong enough(2), unable (2).

THROUGH (in) HIM ("in Christ") **WHO (continually) STRENGTHENS ME:** en toi endunamonti (PAPMSD) me:(Take a moment to ponder the following Scriptures to amplify the meaning of this great principle = 2Co 12:9,10; Ep 3:16; 6:10; Col 1:11; Isa 40:29, 30, 31; 41:10; 45:24)

Strengthens (1743) (endunamoo [word study] from en = in + dunamóo = from dúnamis which means to be able or to have power Click for in depth word study of dunamis) means to enable one to do or experience something. Endunamoo in simple terms means "to put power in" (like a car needs gas for power) and so to make strong,

vigorous, to strengthen, or to be strengthened, enabled or empowered inwardly. This word is found only in biblical and ecclesiastical Greek. The idea is to cause one to be able to function or do something. It can refer to physical strengthening as in (He 11:34-note) but more often *endunamoo* refers to spiritual or moral strength

Warren Wiersbe

All of nature depends on hidden resources (cp "in Whom" = Christ in Col 2:3-note). The great trees send their roots down into the earth to draw up water and minerals (cp Col 2:7-note). Rivers have their sources in the snow-capped mountains. The most important part of a tree is the part you cannot see, the root system, and the most important part of the Christian's life is the part that only God sees. Unless we draw on the deep resources of God by faith (2Co 5:7, cp Ro 10:17-note), we fail against the pressures of life. Paul depended on the power of Christ at work in his life (Php 1:6, 21, 2:12, 13, 3:10 - see notes Php 1:6, 21; 2:12; 13; 3:10). "I can—through Christ!" was Paul's motto, and it can be our motto too. (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor)

JC Ryle

Would you be holy? Would you become a new creature? Then you must begin with Christ. You will do just nothing at all and make no progress until you feel your sin and weakness and flee to Him. He is

the root and beginning of all holiness, and the way to be holy is to come to Him by faith and be joined to Him. Christ is not wisdom and righteousness only to His people, but sanctification also. Men sometimes try to make themselves holy first of all, and sad work they make of it. They toil and labor and turn over many new leaves and make many changes; and yet, like the woman with the issue of blood, before she came to Christ, they feel "nothing bettered, but rather worse" (Mark 5:26). They run in vain and labor in vain, and little wonder; for they are beginning at the wrong end. They are building up a wall of sand; their work runs down as fast as they throw it up. They are baling water out of a leaky vessel; the leak gains on them, not they on the leak. Other foundation of holiness can no man lay than that which Paul laid, even Christ Jesus. Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is a strong but true saying of Traill's: "Wisdom out of Christ is damning folly; righteousness out of Christ is guilt and condemnation; sanctification out of Christ is filth and sin; redemption out of Christ is bondage and slavery."

Do you want to attain holiness? Do you feel this day a real hearty desire to be holy? Would you be a partaker of the divine nature? Then go to Christ. Wait for nothing. Wait for nobody. Linger not. Do not think to make yourself ready. Go and say to Him, in the words of that beautiful hymn,

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling;
Naked, flee to You for dress;
Helpless, look to You for grace."