

Philippians

Book outline

1:1-2 Greetings (A Community of Joy)
1:3-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer (The Christian Journey is a Partnership)
1:12-18a The advance of the Gospel (Joy in suffering)
1:18b-30 To live is Christ (The Christ-centered life) (*Unity through suffering*)
2:1-11 Christ's example of humility (Unity through Humility)
2:12-18 Lights in the World (Unity through Obedience)
2:19-30 Timothy & Epaphroditus (Examples of Godly character)
3:1-11 Righteousness through faith in Christ (Joy Comes in Knowing Christ)
3:12-4:1 Straining toward the Goal (Joy Comes in Striving for Christ)
4:2-9 Exhortation, Encouragement and Prayer
4:10-23 God's provision and Final Greetings

Major Themes:

Unity

Joy

Tone:

Joy

"The Truly Satisfied Christian" **4 Characteristics of being satisfied** **Philippians 4:10-23**

Big Idea:

Introduction:

Outline:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) The Satisfied Christian chooses contentment | vs 10-13 |
| 2) The Satisfied Christian thinks of others above self | vs 14-17 |
| 3) The Satisfied Christian trusts in God's provision | vs 18-20 |
| 4) The Satisfied Christian depends on God's Grace | vs 21-23 |

Conclusion:

Manuscript

Who recognizes these lyrics?

I can't get no satisfaction
I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

And a man comes on and tells me
How white my shirts can be
But, he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't
smoke The same cigarettes as me

When I'm driving in my car
When a man come on the radio
He's telling me more and more
About some useless information
Supposed to fire my imagination

I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey
That's what I say
I can't get no satisfaction
I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

When I'm watchin' my TV

Rolling Stones, 1965. If you can believe it, we're finishing Philippians today. We've worked through this tremendous letter, we've seen Paul's stress on unity, joy and peace. What better way to capstone such themes than the topic of true satisfaction. I submit to you, from the text, four characteristics of true satisfaction.

So, if you're ready say: "go".

¹⁰ I rejoiced 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. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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.

The first characteristic of the satisfied Christian is: contentment.

Point one: The satisfied Christian chooses contentment.

This is Paul's "Thank you!" section. One of the reasons Paul wrote Philippians was to thank them for the monetary gift they sent him through Epaphroditus. At first glance, it might seem Paul's comments are less than genuinely grateful. Do you write "thank you notes" this way?

¹⁰ I rejoiced 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.

Kinda sounds like it but no. "Thank you for finally thinking about me." Is that what he's saying?

Interestingly enough, relationships in the first century were tricky. There were certain cultural expectations between people. Giving gifts or doing favors for someone often placed obligations on the receiving party. If you gave someone a gift in the first century, it was expected they would give something to you in return. Also, there were appropriate and inappropriate times and ways to say: "Thank you". Social status was big in the first century. If you were given a gift from someone on "equal standing" with yourself, saying "Thank you" was actually inappropriate. Whereas, if someone of a higher social standing gave you a gift, you would bestow honor on that person through praise or giving thanks.

So, Paul is given a monetary gift by the Philippians which means he has to navigate his expression of thanks so that he doesn't miscommunicate. Paul does not want give the impression that he sees them as superior to himself, but neither does he want to imply any kind of offense by saying: "thank you". So, Paul has to say: "thank you" without quite saying: "thank you"!

¹⁰ I rejoiced 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 it wasn't that the Philippian church had forgotten about Paul and then suddenly remembered him. In fact, in the first century, complaints about not having communication from someone was actually taken as a sign of affection! That's the way they wrote in the first century. To say something like: "Hey, I haven't heard from you in a while," was their way of saying: "I miss you!"

He does acknowledge that they had always been concerned for him, but they "had no opportunity". In other words, they didn't have a way to express their concern. We don't know why. Paul's imprisonment could have had something to do with that. For whatever reason, there was no an opportunity to express their concern by supporting him financially.

He acknowledges them in verse 10, then he goes on to say:

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

Now, his attitude is not: "I didn't need your gift." Again, he's careful with his words here. He's expressing thanks but not in a way where he implies that he wants more from them. He is also being careful not to place himself in their debt. He's making it clear that he appreciates their gift, he's not in expecting more nor is he communicating that he's under any obligation to "pay them back" as the culture of the day would have dictated. He's keeping himself in a very neutral place here as far as the gift goes.

He's navigating his words well, but he also wants to point out a truth for Christian living, the necessity for contentment. Paul's a preacher. He can't simply say "thank you" without turning it

into some kind of sermon. There is a scriptural truth he wants to impart to them. He builds up to it. Look at verse 12:

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.

He's delicately expressing his thanks for the gift then he assures them that he can live in any type of circumstance. He says, "I know how to be brought low" that's living in poverty- having nothing but dirt. Then, he turns around and says: "I know how to abound" that is, to live with all my needs met. And for Paul, knowing where his next meal came from was abounding by the way. Paul's form of an abundant life was: "hey, dinner's covered". "What about tomorrow?" "No idea, but dinner's covered for tonight." That was an abundant life for Paul.

Paul knows God will provide. He has learned the secret to facing plenty and hunger. Do you? Facing hunger would be hard and I'll bet almost no one in this room truly knows what it's like to go without food. Maybe some of you do. Maybe some of you have fasted for a couple days or more. That's awesome by the way, not saying anything negative about that. But there was food in the cupboards. You had access to food. Anyone know how to really face hunger? Anyone? I think, "wow, facing hunger would be hard."

What about facing plenty? That's easy right? Is it? Is it easy to face plenty with the type of mindset we are called to as Christians? Think about it, which would be harder? To turn to the Lord when hungry when full? What does the author of Proverbs 30 say?

8 give me neither poverty nor riches;
 feed me with the food that is needful for me,
9 lest I be full and deny you
 and say, "Who is the LORD?"
 or lest I be poor and steal
 and profane the name of my God.

It's hard to be content when hungry, because we're in need. But it's also hard to be content with plenty because we're always wanting more! Where's the satisfaction? Facing hunger with faith in the Lord is tough. But facing plenty with that same trust in the Lord is just as tough, if not tougher. Because we easily resort to self-reliant attitude. We easily fall into a mindset that says: "I provided for myself, who needs the Lord?" Maybe we don't say that, but that's our attitude.

I've got to wonder if Paul's claim to know how to face plenty isn't more impressive than his ability to face hunger. Can you choose contentment when you have plenty? Paul did. How?

So, what is this secret? How'd you do it Paul? How'd you face hunger and plenty? How did you choose to be content in the worst and best of circumstances?

11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

It's about Christ. It's all about Christ. The secret to contentment is Jesus Christ. Paul didn't follow a "5 steps to contentment" plan. He didn't read the latest book on "Finding Contentment in a 1st Century world". He found it in Christ. Paul was in Christ. That word there "I can do all things *through* Him", really should be translated *in* Him. Paul had reached a place where he could be content in any situation because he was in Christ.

This idea, in Christ, is a common description of the believer in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is *in Christ* he is a new creation..."

Colossians 2:10 "and you have been filled *in him*, who is the head of all rule and authority."

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

13 I can do all things through (or in) him who strengthens me.

When you accept Christ as a your Savior, you are *in* Him. This means, you have the same secret Paul had. Paul was content in all circumstances. Now, the idea: "I can all things" is not a blanket statement for you to be able to do anything you want. It's a not the Christian's blank check to do anything simply because Christ is in you. The "all things" part means I can face anything God calls me to do.

It doesn't mean I can accomplish anything I *want* to do, it means I can accomplish anything *He* wants me to do. That's what the verse means, that's what being *in Christ* is all about. Christ strengthens me to accomplish *His* work. By the way, the key to contentment is yielding to Christ and that satisfies. Going after everything I *want* doesn't satisfy. It only feeds the cavernous void within me that constantly wants more! Only when I yield to Christ can I reach contentment and there I find true satisfaction.

Christ strengthens me to do *His* work. So, what's the work He's called you to do? Part of the work God has called you to do is the same thing our church is all about: making disciples. Harvest Decatur exists to glorify God by making mature disciples who worship, walk with and work for Christ. That's what our church is about and that's what your life is about. Now, how that plays out in your life might be different than how it plays out in my life, but the application is the same: God wants you to make disciples.

That's part of what God has called you to do. What are the other parts? I like how George mentioned last week that God's will for you is clearly laid out in scripture. George gave 3 passages that indicate God's will for you: 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, and 1

Peter 2:15 are the passages he mentioned that clearly lay out God's will for you. No, they may not be easy things to do or to avoid, that's why we lean on Christ who gives us strength.

¹³ I can do all things through (or in) him who strengthens me.

He strengthens, now what does that mean? Christ gives the believer inner strength. Ephesians 3:14-19 reads:

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We are strengthened, with power through His Spirit in our inner being. This is the place where the Holy Spirit works. This is the place that God wants to transform you. This is place where, as we talked a couple weeks ago, Christ wants to change your thinking. This is also the place where we fight against God striving for a satisfaction that constantly slips through our fingers. He wants to strengthen you in your inner being, so that you, too, can reach a point where you can say: "I am satisfied because I am content in whatever situation I face. I can do whatever the Lord calls me to do because I am yielding to Him."

So, how are you resisting God? That situation you are facing right now. That relationship that's causing you angst. That circumstance that feels overwhelming, that temptation you know you need to flee, that thing God wants you to do in obedience to Him, the answer is yielding to Christ and He will strengthen you.

Let's do this. I'm going to pause here. I want you, in the quiet of your heart, to take whatever it is that's got your mind and yield to the work of Christ.

(pause)

Amen.

We're looking at 3 characteristics of the satisfied Christian. The first one was choosing contentment. The second is this: the satisfied Christian thinks of others above self. with me:

¹⁴ Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

Paul returns to his “thank you” note. He responds how kind it was that they gave. Something interesting, remember, we’re in an honor/shame culture. To give a gift was supposed to bring honor to the giver. But Paul’s in chains. Their gift to him, being in such a lowly position, put them at risk of shame. The word for “kind” there is more than kind, it means: “to do what is right”. He’s saying “you did well and you share in my trouble by risking shame from those around you.” He goes on to say:

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

This verse harkens back to chapter 1 when Paul talked to the Philippian church about their “partnership”. Remember that? The church at Philippi had a unique relationship with Paul. There mutual giving and receiving unlike his relationship with the other churches. Now, we don’t know why Paul didn’t have that same kind of relationship with the other churches, but it doesn’t matter. Again, he is “thanking them” but very careful to word his thanks with respect to the cultural norms of the day.

He goes on to say:

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

Paul is stating clearly here that he is not in this relationship with the Philippians to get something out of it. He’s completely selfless in his relationship with them. There are all kinds of selfless acts going on here. The Philippians are selfless in their giving and support of Paul while Paul is selfless because he accepts their gift, but makes it clear- that’s not why he’s in this relationship. In fact, he is more concerned that their gift increases their fruit. That’s a reference to their spiritual growth. Paul rejoices because the giving of the gift is evidence that God is growing them. There’s evidence to suggest that the majority of those who attended the Philippian church lived in poverty. This being so, it would all the more cause Paul to rejoice because they are trusting God with their own needs and giving what they have to support Paul. They are thinking of Paul, Paul is thinking of them! They are supporting him, he is rejoicing that their gift benefits them spiritually!

The beauty of this friendship is their mutual concern for each other. True friendship does not seek what it can gain but what it can give. Think of others above self.

During my freshman year of college, I was in my room one afternoon and the phone rang. This was back when phones were connected to walls. I answered and it was my best friend from high school. I was delighted to hear from him, I kicked back, my feet up on the desk looking forward to an enjoying phone call with my best friend. That’s not what happened. A few sentences into the conversation, I knew something was wrong. He proceeded to tell me about his parents’ sudden divorce. Instead of the enjoyable phone conversation I was expected, I ended grieving with my friend. He needed me and I was there.

That's thinking of others.

Why do our small groups reach out to each other with prayer and support? Why do we bring meals to each other during a hard season? Is it to meet physical needs? Sure. No doubt. But you know what's even better? The love. The support. The reminder that God's going to provide, even in the small ways.

I want to leave this point with this thought: Be concerned for one-another's spiritual welfare. Yes, meet needs, be helpful, but be more concerned about spiritual growth. Pray that the fruit of the Spirit would ripen in each other's lives. When you share needs, share the physical needs- absolutely, but ask: "how is God wanting to grow me in this?" and share that. Ask for prayer for spiritual growth. Inquire of others about their spiritual growth.

When I was in Jr. High, I used to go to Camp- Camp Pearl in Louisiana. The director of that camp, he made an impression on me and he challenged us once to ask people how their doing and to specifically ask: "how are you doing spiritually?" That's a great question. It captures what Paul is saying here.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

We're looking at The Satisfied Christian...

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|----|-----------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) | The Satisfied Christian chooses contentment | vs 10-13 |
| 2) | The Satisfied Christian thinks of others above self | vs 14-17 |
| 3) | The Satisfied Christian trusts in God's provision | vs 18-20 |

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

The phrase: "I have received full payment" was a standard way of saying: "paid in full". What Paul is doing here is essentially giving them a receipt for their gift. Then he flips it from being a business transaction to being an offering. Paul uses Old Testament language to compare their gift to a sacrifice- an act of worship. In the Old Testament, to offer up an animal for sacrifice was costly. Animals were their way of life back then. To kill a perfectly healthy animal, just to throw it on an alter and burn it, didn't make any sense. Why do it? It was an act of worship. Acts of worship are pleasing to God. When we choose to think of someone else by giving up something costly, like money, time, energy, material things, that's an act of worship. And it's pleasing to God. That's what the Philippians did.

Paul wants to assure them their act won't be overlooked by God:

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

In verse 19, Paul assures them God will supply whatever they need. This was, no doubt comforting especially to those who were living in poverty.

Because of the cultural norms of the day, Paul, in a secular situation, would have been expected to somehow pay the Philippians back for their gift. But Paul is in no position to reciprocate. He's in prison! He can't reciprocate, so he assures them that God will provide for their needs. And, God's provision will far exceed any material gain. He will supply every need of theirs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. That's a reference to God's inexhaustible spiritual wealth. Of course, Paul's saying God will supply whatever physical needs they have, but so much more. So much greater. God will enrich them with His invaluable, spiritual wealth. Ephesians 1:3 reads:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,"

God blesses, not just with physical blessings, but, with things far more valuable: peace, joy, love.

God will provide. He will provide for our material needs. I'm not making light of material needs- we need things. We do. But we need to recognize the importance of spiritual provision. He will also provide our spiritual needs. We need to know we're loved. We need to know

We need to cling to chapter 4 verse 19 as a promise. Yes, it was a promise specifically to the church at Philippi, but it is a promise to us today as well. We can say that, because of other scripture declare God will provide.

Psalms 145: 15-16

15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.

16 You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Matthew 6:31-32 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

God will provide, so choose to be humbly expectant. This doesn't mean we should carry an air of arrogance. It doesn't mean we should neglect to provide for ourselves and our families and simply expect God to give us what we need. What I mean is, trust Him. We're talking about choices that reflect trust. Trust that He will provide what you need. Expect, humbly expect that

He will provide. When we have an attitude of humble expectation that God will provide, that reflects a heart that is trusting God.

In 2004 I found myself without a job. I had been working at a company on a temporary basis with the understanding that I would get be fully hired on but that didn't pan out. I found myself working three part time jobs, Heather was also working and things were tight. I was also exhausted working various schedules and sleeping when I could. Our situation was not sustainable. I can't say I was totally satisfied during that time, but Heather and I looked to God, knowing He would provide. He did. One phone call changed everything. Early one morning, I was still asleep. I got a call from ADM offering me a fulltime job with a steady schedule. God provided.

The satisfied Christian trusts in God's provision.

Let's read Paul's closing statements:

²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Final verses of our study. This is a standard closing, even in secular letters in the first century, such closings were common but there's something uncommon here. Paul sends his greetings to them, greetings from those specifically with him then from all the saints- probably those from the church of Rome, then a greeting from those specifically in Caesar's household- which reminds us of chapter 1 when Paul tells us the Gospel message has advanced even through the whole imperial guard. People within Caesar's own home are getting saved!

Lastly, Paul writes: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Now, that may seem like an easy verse to overlook. We read it, might even think: "that's sweet, but we should stop and take it in. **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.**"

I've got one final point: The satisfied Christian depends on God's grace.

We need grace like we need air. Grace is God's unmerited favor. It's completely undeserved. It is the resource that saints need, not just for salvation but for sanctification. Grace is the adhesive we must have, from God, yes, and also for one another or the Christian life falls apart.

John MacArthur writes:

"Believers are not only saved by grace, but also sustained by grace. They are governed by grace, guided by grace, kept by grace, strengthened by grace, sanctified by grace, and enabled by grace. They are constantly dependent on the forgiveness, comfort, peace, joy, boldness, and instruction that come through God's grace."

The satisfied Christian depends on God's grace because to depend on anything else would be trying to earn what cannot be earned, to work for what is freely given. Even in my

sanctification, if I am trying to earn God's pleasure then all I'm really doing is operating out of fear. If I am not resting in God's grace, then what drives me is not dependance on God but dependance on self. That does not lead to satisfaction, that leads constant anxious toil. Not sure if I've done enough, not sure if I've obeyed enough, not sure if I'm good enough. And, of course, the answer is, I have *not* done enough, I can't *obey* enough, I am not *good* enough. That's why I need God's grace. That's why it's His *unmerited* favor.

How is the Christian truly satisfied? Before He died, Jesus said: "It is finished". What was finished? Christ's work was done, sin was atoned for, prophecy fulfilled, the law satisfied, God's wrath appeased and Satan defeated. It all happened at the cross. Christian, your Savior did the work, rest in that.

I can't get no satisfaction? That's the theme of every human who doesn't choose contentment, who doesn't think of others, who doesn't trust in God's provision and who doesn't depend on God's grace. In short, the one who is not satisfied is not looking to the one who satisfies.

Lelia Naylor Morris, a Gospel song writer in the late 1800's, early 1900's penned these words:

Nothing satisfies but Jesus,
Bread of life to mortals giv'n;
May His presence now refresh us
Like the morning dew from Heav'n!

Since I heard the voice of Jesus,
Since mine eyes beheld the King,
All my love, my heart's affection,
All I have to Him I bring.

With His joy my heart is thrilling,
All my hope in Him I see;
Doubt and gloom and fear dispelling,
Christ is all in all to me!

Give me Jesus, give me Jesus;
Take the world, but give me Jesus;
To satisfy with every blessing,
His love and peace my soul possessing;
To all beside my heart replies:
There's naught but Jesus satisfies!