

I would like to remind you of the challenge to memorize and apply Philippians 4:4-8 to your life on a constant basis. When we read the Word of God, one of the techniques we should employ is to be watching for eternal truth that we can apply to our lives. We are to think on what is true. These are principles and promises that apply to everyone in every age. They are timeless words of wisdom that when applied bring the promised results. The world says there are no absolutes. The very statement is silly because it contradicts its own claim. It is claiming there is one absolute, that there are none, and if there are none, then it is not one. The world is rapidly losing its sense of reason.

In the verses I challenged you to memorize, we saw a promise of God. If you refuse to let anxiety take hold of your heart and mind by taking your requests to God, then the peace of God will guard your heart and mind! That is truth! Do you believe it? Even if you don't, if you diligently apply it, you'll discover that it is true!

Paul goes on to explain that we should capture our thought life (2Corinthians 10:5) and think on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praiseworthy. He tells them to follow the pattern of life they saw in him, which I understand to be what he has just described, and repeats the promise. (4:9) The God of peace will be with you. Do you believe it? If you really do, and you desire to live a life free of anxiety, abiding in the peace of God, then you will, by the Holy Spirit's enabling power, live what Paul taught and exemplified.

You certainly can't do it on your own. You must be surrendered to Jesus and willing to obey the leading of His Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:13) The world tries through sheer grit and determination to think positive thoughts. That is helpful, but it doesn't bring the peace of God. It may settle a disturbed mind for a time, but it doesn't invite the God of peace to be with them. Paul told us in the letter to the Romans that we are controlled by the flesh or by the Spirit. If you are controlled by the Spirit, you are a son of God and the power that raised Christ from the dead gives life to your mortal body! (3:10) He goes on to say that because we have this power of the Spirit we can put to death the misdeeds of the body. (Romans 8:9-11) We can, if we will to do so, because we have been enabled to do it. That is the declaration of Romans 8. Do you believe it?

So, let me ask, can you have the peace of God? "Well, Pastor, you don't understand, I have this and that and a long litany of things that are exactly what Philippians 4:8 tells me not to think about... and I take it to God in prayer but I just don't have peace." What that tells me is that you refuse to leave it with God, for the promise is that if you do then you will have His peace. Could it be that in those times we trust self more than we trust God? After all, it shows we feel the need to continue to worry about it instead

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 4:4-8 (ESV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;
⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Commented [Paul2]: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Commented [Paul3]: Philippians 4:9 (ESV)

⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Commented [Paul4]: Romans 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Commented [Paul5]: Philippians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Commented [Paul6]: Romans 8:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.
¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

of letting God deal with it. Believe the Word of God! It is His love letter to you! It will guide your steps and give you life! It never fails. (Proverbs 30:5)

Commented [Paul7]: Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)

⁵ Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

The passage for today follows along with the same thought about living in the peace of God, following Paul's example. It speaks to every believer since it was written. 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.* The Philippian church was a source of support for Paul's ministry. Epaphroditus had brought the financial gift to where Paul was incarcerated because people who Rome imprisoned had to pay for their own food. Paul rented the house where he was held prisoner. (Acts 28:30)

Commented [Paul8]: Acts 28:30 (NIV)

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

In the letter to the Corinthians, chapter nine, he explains that those in fulltime ministry should be supported by those to whom they minister. (1Corinthians 9:11) Yet, in the case of the Corinthian church, he felt it would stumble the Corinthians. So, he refused to let them help him financially. Instead, he worked while in Corinth to support himself. (9:12) Paul's trade was tent making. He received support from some of the churches he founded because he had apparently spent his family's wealth financing his own missionary journeys. (2Corinthians 8:1-5)

Commented [Paul9]: 1 Corinthians 9:11 (ESV)

¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 9:12 (ESV)

¹² If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

We are a mission minded church and help to support a number of mission works. The Connors in Mongolia are just about to finish their translation of a Bible study from Genesis to Revelation.¹² They have also provided gers (Mongolian house tent) for needy families. Ken Holcomb told us last week of his efforts helping Spanish speaking churches reach out as short term missionaries. The India Evangelical Mission is one of my favorites. It has a free Bible College to train native Indians from the various states of India to be pastors and evangelists. It also has a childrens' home of 150. We help support someone who came from this church that leads part time missions around the world, Clair Loungevan, as well as a pastor of a small Canadian church. We also give to the Walker's mission in Botswana that trains up local missionaries and oversees their outreach to unreached villages. We give to Wycliffe translators who are trying to finish translating the Bible into every dialect by the year 2025. In addition we give locally to Sonshine Rescue Mission outreach to the homeless in Flagstaff, Young Life's outreach to the Jr. and Sr. High locally, and Pastor Ed's work of chaplain for the police department and counseling those who cannot afford to pay.

Commented [Paul11]: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (ESV)

¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,

⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints. E

⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

Commented [Paul12]: Firm Foundations by New Tribes Missions

All of these mission endeavors are reaching people with the good news of Jesus Christ. As the Philippians partnered with Paul to make his ministry possible, so we partner with all of these different ministries, to advance the kingdom of God locally and around the world. By sharing in their support, we make what they do possible, and that means sharing in the heavenly reward. We look for opportunities to help where our financial

support can do the most to advance God's kingdom and show the love of God around the world. That means occasionally adjusting whom we support and one-time special gifts where there is a need or opportunity, like our recent gift to get Bibles into a country closed to the Gospel.

Paul 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.* Paul wasn't joyful merely because he had the finances to pay for his expenses, but for the fact that it showed their love for him and spiritual health. (4:17) He was content as he was.

Paul write in another passage, ⁶ *Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.* 1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV) Paul learned the secret of contentment. Sometimes he had nothing and even went hungry. Sometimes he had a large gift to take to others in need. Either way, he trusted in God for His physical necessities and found his heart's longing, and need for security, met in Christ. (2Corinthians 11:24-27)

There is one main reason for the discontent we see in the world around us and in our own hearts. **It comes from trying to fill the void in our heart with something other than Jesus.** When we haven't found a deep and satisfying relationship with Jesus that fills our hearts with joy like a fountain that never stops gushing, we will look for something else to fill the emptiness. Nothing else will. Everything else leaves us in a state of discontent. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

The problem was stated clearly by Jesus. If any man will save his life, he will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, will find it. (Matthew 16:25) That relationship begins with abandoning yourself to Jesus. We give up control of our life and surrender to Him. It is a death to the old self and self-rule. It's a leap of faith. But **you can't remain lord of your life and accept Him as Lord** too. No man can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24) And so we writhe in this state of discontent, trying to fill our hearts with the creation rather than the Creator. Every man and woman's heart will be discontent without the presence of the Creator.

Even believers that have known the life of Christ within can experience a lack of contentment. The world keeps telling us we need this thing or that thing and we start to focus on those things to the neglect of our relationship with Jesus. Just like a couple that can grow apart because busyness, or lack of expressions of love and times of intimacy, so believers can grow apart from God. (Ephesians 5:32) The solution is the same in both cases. Repent and restore what has been neglected.

Commented [Paul13]: Philippians 4:17 (ESV)

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

Commented [Paul14]: 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 (ESV)

²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;

²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Commented [Paul15]: Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Commented [Paul16]: Matthew 16:25 (ESV)

²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Commented [Paul17]: Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

²⁴"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Commented [Paul18]: Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)

³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Some believers even allow a sense of discontent to sneak in because of the particular calling God has given them. Numerical success is a worldly standard. We hear testimonies of “successful” believers and wonder why we aren’t used to accomplish more. I think the vast majority of pastors struggle with the size of their congregation. We want to be successful and respected for our efforts, but what we need to realize is God’s version of success is faithfulness, not numbers. Fruitfulness is not measured in numbers.

The Stoics of Paul’s day boasted of contentment but it was contentment of independence rather than total dependence. They would have never been content with humiliation, which was first on their list of things to avoid.¹⁹ But Paul could say that he, like Christ, could be content in humiliation. (2:8)

Independence is taking things into our own hands instead of trusting God. Faith is all about dependence upon God. It doesn’t matter what type of job you are given, work can be worship. (Play the video clip – Work as Worship) When we are experiencing a deep and abiding relationship with God we trust that, our station in life, our particular calling, our relationship with others, is all in God’s hands. He can change it or direct us clearly to something else if He chooses.

We are content in Him, knowing that success is faithfulness to Him. By faithfulness I don’t just mean doing what He asks, which is part of it, but also faithful as in the faithfulness of a wedded partner to love Him alone.

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. Paul trusted God completely for the circumstances in His life. He could be bobbing in the ocean for a day and a night, beaten and in stocks in a prison dungeon, carrying a large financial gift to the needy in Jerusalem, or seeing a church form in a place that never heard the Gospel. As long as he knew He was being faithful to the lover of his soul, he was content.

If anyone had the right to question God’s dealings and wonder why God didn’t intervene, it was Paul. He was stoned and left for dead. His most effective years for the kingdom were in prison where he wrote these letters that are encouraging us. But even there he saw the situation through God’s eyes and saw the opportunity to reach the palace guard. (1:12-14) He could be content because he looked for what God was doing, and even when he didn’t understand, he trusted God. He trusted right up to the day of his beheading and at that moment he saw the One he had seen once before on the road to Damascus, the risen Lord, saying, “Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.”

Commented [Paul19]: Cf. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word*, Chapter 21 Content in Christ

Commented [Paul20]: *Philippians 2:8 (ESV)*
⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Commented [Paul21]: *Philippians 1:12-14 (ESV)*

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,

¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

He could say from personal experience, ¹³*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* This is one of those verses that we use out of context quite frequently. It's not that it doesn't apply to other things God calls us to do, but here it is specifically about going through anything God allows to come our way. It is recognizing that whatever life throws at us is really what God has allowed for our good. So instead of whining about it, he looked for what God was doing through it and took it as being from the hand of God. He received the power of God to face each situation. (Colossians 1:28-29)

Why could he face all the things that we cringe at just reading about? Someone strengthened him. (2Corinthians 12:9-10) That power I spoke of earlier, that he had written about, was not some abstract theological idea but a reality in his life. **Resurrection power was enabling him to face the abundance and the depravation with contentment.** (2Corinthians 6:4-5) God always gave him food and clothing, and we are promised that as well, if we seek first the kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:33-34) He faced times of hunger, but God always came through or we wouldn't have this letter. (1Corinthians 4:11-13)

Food and clothing are all a physical body really needs, right? That is a profound thought! What else to you really need? **Our body needs food and clothes and our soul needs Jesus.** So can you be content with that? Food and clothes for the body and Jesus for the soul is the sum total of our needs. Most of us have so much more. How generous we should be?

Just as important as contentment in poverty is contentment in abundance. It may be even more difficult to experience contentment that doesn't demand the abundance continue but can just enjoy it as a temporary physical gift of God. It takes the power of God to not let abundance capture our hearts.

Now, so that you don't misunderstand the message, I'm not criticizing profitable business or savings or insurance. How else do we have the finances to help the missions like those who helped Paul. I'm not saying that becoming wealthy is evil. It is all a matter of the heart. (1Timothy 6:9-10; Psalm 62:10)) Some are called to be successful financially so that they can give. We are all called to work to support our family and to give to those who have needs. (Ephesians 4:28) We are told to look to the state of our herds and consider the ant that stores up for winter. (Proverbs 27:23; 6:6) The issue is whether or not we are trying to make those physical things our security and the source of our contentment. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

The physical will never satisfy the heart. People have spent their whole life trying and die unfulfilled. Drugs only provide a temporary counterfeit feeling. Some realize it is a

Commented [Paul22]: Colossians 1:28-29 (ESV)

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Commented [Paul23]: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Commented [Paul24]: 2 Corinthians 6:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;

Commented [Paul25]: Matthew 6:33-34 (ESV)

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Commented [Paul26]: 1 Corinthians 4:10-13 (ESV)

¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.

¹¹ To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless,

¹² and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure;

¹³ when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Commented [Paul27]: 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Commented [Paul28]: Psalm 62:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Commented [Paul29]: Ephesians 4:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Commented [Paul30]: Proverbs 27:23 (ESV)

²³ Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds,

Commented [Paul31]: Proverbs 6:6 (ESV)

⁶ Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.

Commented [Paul32]: Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

spiritual need and begin seeking out a spiritual path. Jesus said, "I am the way." He's the way to God who fills that longing in our heart. He put that longing there to lead us to Him. **The secret to contentment is abandoning ourselves in love to our Savior and being faithful in our relationship to Him.** Then, it doesn't matter what comes our way, what happens to our society, whether we have millions or are penniless, our heart will be content.

Buddhists call it the lack of all desire, but for Christians it is being engulfed in one great desire, to know Jesus more intimately today than yesterday. We long to see His face and hear His voice say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into my joy!"

Questions

- 1 What should we look for when we read the Bible? Why?
- 2 Why was Paul grateful to the Philippians?
- 3 How do we do the same?
- 4 What was Paul's secret?
- 5 Why are we discontent?
- 6 How did Jesus state the problem?
- 7 What is the difference between Stoic contentment and Biblical contentment?
- 8 Why do believers lack contentment?
- 9 What is Paul's example of contentment?
- 10 Is wealth evil? What's the focus?