

“I can do all things through Him”

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

Philippians 4:10-13

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This is one of my favorite passages in the entire Bible. I’ve quoted it since I was a teenager. We see Paul’s gratitude and joy *“in the Lord”* for the response of his friends in Philippi. I’m not a tattoo guy but verse 11 (contentment) and verse 13 (I can do all things...) would meet my approval.

Johnny Cash sang, *“I’ve been everywhere, man. I’ve been everywhere, man.”* Paul could have said, *“I’ve suffered everywhere, man, I’ve suffered everywhere.”* His suffering starts in Acts 9 and doesn’t end until he dies. He suffered in Damascus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus. He was executed in Rome. As he wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28: *“Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three 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; on 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; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”* Paul didn’t exactly have it easy. His prayers didn’t go as he requested when he asked the Lord to remove “the thorn” from him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). However, he remained joyful. This week we read he learned the secret of being content. Our theme of the week, **CONTENTMENT**, is an acquired trait. Watch a child—contentment is not our natural state. There will always be things to complain about, but we can learn contentment, too. While Paul was content, he also lived with a godly ambition. He wanted to accomplish great things.

APPLICATION: Memorize verses 4:11-13 this week: *I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* What has the Lord laid upon your heart that you should do? Living in a simpler way could save us many headaches and create more opportunities. Do we really NEED more, bigger, and better? Will having more stuff add quality and satisfaction to life or will it simply cause more anxiety and stress? Instead of consuming more, could we give more? We must remember Paul’s secret: *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* “Him” is Jesus, of course. He is the secret. What do you learn from Paul in this passage both about contentment, and giving and receiving from others?

In Philippians 4:1-7 Paul said to do 4 things to have peace: Rejoice, be reasonable, have no anxiety, and pray. Now he tells us 2 more ways to have peace - think about these things and practice what you’ve seen in him.

I read Philippians 4:8-9 (Pew Bible #1166)

SLIDE #1 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.* Concentrate. Focus. This is our mindset, our attitude. Don’t be distracted.

“Distracted” is from a Latin word meaning “to drag away.” Think about what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellence, praiseworthy. Many of the things we think and worry about that keep us up at night don’t ultimately matter. Our lives are what we pay attention to. Our attention is the most valuable resource we have. We “pay” attention and we “spend” time like what we do with money. We pay and we spend. We only experience what we pay attention to. What we pay attention to may not seem like a big deal in the moment, but we become the sum total of what we pay attention to. Our focus is deeply consequential. How we spend our times is how we spend our lives. If we give attention to someone else, it is the purest form of generosity. Some of our most cherished moments we had when we were children involved an adult who chose, out of all the things in the world, to pay attention to us. (Me going fishing with my dad/grandpa, playing cards with my grandparents). If we habitually direct our attention to things that upset us (alarmist

news headlines) we will experience the world as alarming and upsetting. We can only pay full attention to one thing. We can't read a book and listen to the news. The mind can't have two things at once. Since we cannot split our attention, we must choose what we will focus on and what we will not focus on.

SLIDE #2 ⁹ *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me* Paul had credibility. We need examples and mentors

*—practice these things, and the **God** of peace will be with you.*

Think about the right things and have this behavior. Practice what you have learned, received, heard, and seen in Paul and the result is: love (vs. 1), joy (vs. 1, 4), and peace (v9) (the fruit of the Holy Spirit)

John leads the congregation Philippians 4:10-13 Pew Bible #1166

SLIDE #3 *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.*** Paul had tremendous ambition. Being content is not the lack of ambition. He was on a mission to Help Others Follow Jesus. He wanted the whole world to know Christ.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income*

The problem with money = we never have enough. George Carlin said in a monologue: *"Your house is nothing more than a place to keep your stuff...while you go out and get....more stuff. 'Cause that's what this country is all about. Trying to get more stuff. Stuff you don't want, stuff you don't need, stuff that's poorly made, stuff that's overpriced. Even stuff you can't afford! Gotta keep on getting more stuff. So you keep getting more & more stuff & puttin' it in different places. In the closets, in the attic, in the basement, in the garage. So now you got a houseful of stuff. And even though you might like your house, you gotta move. Gotta get a bigger house. Why? Too much stuff.* The Bible tells us that if we don't have a spiritual life all we have is "stuff." We want more stuff because we believe the lie that having more stuff makes us happy. It CAN make us happy, but it won't make us content.

Before the Industrial Revolution, people were paid for what they produced. A cobbler was paid for the shoe he made. But when factories took over, workers were paid by the hour, not by what they produced. For a factory to make more money meant they had to produce more goods. Then they needed to sell what they made. To help sell it, they needed advertising to convince consumers that their product would bring happiness. But people could not buy stuff without money, so they had to work for it. If they didn't have enough money to buy it, then they had to borrow money or put it on a credit card. We tend to compare what we have with what others have and believe that we never have enough. This becomes the cycle —/Buying stuff = happiness. But we can't get satisfaction by doing this.

Instead, there's a different way. That is about having relationships: 1.) With the Lord. 2.) With others We seem to be living in a desert of loneliness. Paul said, "the Joy of the Lord is my strength." "Joy is CONNECTION." Something called "The Grant Study" tried to determine what factors helped people age well. Specifically, who aged well from the time they were 50 until they were 80. We presume the biggest factors were genetics, personality traits, intellectual ability, money, or fame – but they concluded the #1 thing was how satisfied they were in their relationships. Those with good relationships lived longer and reported higher levels of satisfaction and suffered less cognitive decline. "Good relationships not only protect our bodies, but also protect our minds."

SLIDE #4 ¹² *I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the **secret** of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.*

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 *with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three 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; on 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; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

SLIDE #5 ¹³ *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* This is Paul's secret: *through him*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

1:14 *having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment*

2:19 *I hope in the Lord Jesus*

2:29 *So receive him in the Lord with all joy*

4:1 *Stand firm in the Lord*

4:2 *Agree in the Lord*

4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord*

4:10 *I rejoiced in the Lord greatly*

Andrew Klavan is a famous author who writes crime and suspense novels. He tells his story in his book, The Great Good Thing. It is subtitled, "A Secular Jew Comes to Faith in Christ." Andrew had a terrible relationship with his dad. Andrew became an atheist, then an agnostic, but slowly opened to faith in Christ. His conversion story is at the end of his book. As he drew closer to faith at 49, he was lying in bed one night thinking about all those he loved. He said 3 words: "**Thank you, God.**" Then he fell asleep. The next morning when he woke, everything had changed in him. He described it in one word: "JOY." He felt God's love supremely and he felt joyful in response. He began to pray daily. Then he felt he need to be baptized. Then he wanted to take communion. His is a wonderful story of a person coming to Christ, kind of like Paul.

Have you come to Christ? Jesus is eager to meet us wherever we are. The Lord is extravagant and generous in grace. We need something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to. If you have Jesus, you have all three. We will never find contentment in our stuff. Open your hearts to Him. It's not complicated. In fact, a child can do it.

SLIDE #6 The 4 C's: "Stay Calm. Stay Connected. Stay the course. Stay in Christ."