

July 26, 2020

**Protecting Our Hearts in the Midst of Spiritual Warfare
Part – 4 Finding Our Contentment in Christ Philippians 4:11-13**

Once again I find our God truly amazing in the message He wants to share with us this morning and I'll share why in a minute.

Before I go there I wanted to say that I hope you know blessed we are to have several young men who not only are not hesitant to step into the pulpit but do a great job when they do so. We appreciate Ray stepping up and stepping in last week and it was a good word about shining our lights.

Christ is the light which exists inside of us and He is placed there, not so we can let Him lay dormant inside of us but so we can allow His presence shine brightly through us in a world that seems to be getting darker and darker in certain places throughout the United States.

We know we are blessed to live in the Midwest, in small town America. We know we don't deal with some of the issues and violence that is occurring in places as close as Denver. But we must also realize that the darkness that is occurring out in the world can create a darkness within our own hearts in different ways.

This is part 4 of a series on protecting our hearts in the midst of spiritual warfare. Protecting our hearts from the attacks of a dark master who would pull us down and do everything within his power to keep us from shining the light of Jesus through our lives. Please always keep this thought in front of you. What is happening in the world, in this nation is not a battle of flesh, people are just the pawns in a bigger battle that exists between light and darkness, good and evil, Jesus and Satan.

Remember the passage that says our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the wickedness in the spiritual places. And we are encouraged by the Lord to take up the full armor of God so that we will be able to resist in the evil day, having done everything to stand firm.

One of the most powerful things we can do is to come to God's Word for teaching on how to stand firm. That is what we want to do this morning.

Let's begin by reading our passage this morning found in **Philippians 4:11-13**, **"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; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me."**

As I mentioned I am amazed that as we are going through Philippians, actually this is the closing sermon I will do from Philippians, I am amazed at how relevant this passage is to where we find ourselves today.

This passage speaks of contentment. I think most of us would probably say we are at least partially content in this life. But I wonder if we have come to the place of contentment Paul is speaking about in this passage.

I want to challenge our thinking about contentment because I wonder if we allow so many things in this world steal our contentment.

Let me give you a simple example of how easily this can happen. When Michal and I went to Oklahoma last week, we drove 9 ½ hours on Thursday and 9 ½ back on Sunday to attend my father's memorial service. 80 % of our travel was on interstate 70 and 35.

Now, I'm normally not one to speed much, I set the cruise control a 3-4 miles over the posted speed limit and have been content to do this for years. But this last trip we noticed something that we have never seen before. Because my family lives in Oklahoma, just off the interstate and we have family in Denver we have spent a lot of time on the interstate system.

But the thing that occurred on this last trip that we have never seen before is at least 80% of the people on the road were going 85-90 mph or more even though the posted speed limit was 75. I mean traffic was flying like we had never seen it before. And guess what? It wasn't long before I bumped up the cruise control to 83 and Michal did the same when she was driving.

Because the traffic around us was moving so fast, somehow we justified breaking the law ourselves. It happened so easily and so quickly.

When we returned home it made me question why I was so willing to go somewhere I had never gone before and do something I knew was wrong. I came to the conclusion that I was not content to go so slow while everyone around me was willing to go so fast.

This is what happens I think when we lose our sense of contentment to stay within the law.

Loss of contentment takes us to a place where we are willing to go where we never thought we would go and we are willing to do things we never thought we would do.

This is what is happening in the world around us. And this is what can creep into our hearts if we, as followers of Christ, are not careful. We can easily begin to lose our contentment with the laws of God that are in our hearts, laws of love, forgiveness, being peacemakers and promoters of God's kingdom principles.

Paul says he has learned to the secret of being content in many different circumstances. If he is poor he is content. If he is prosperous, he is content. If he is hungry, he is content and if his belly is filled, he is content.

I think a lot of us could agree with the last statement. If my belly is full than I am content. I think we could also agree that when we are living in prosperity, when your bills are paid and there is money in the bank, when we have an abundance, then we are content.

But what about the times when we are lacking, lacking in finances, lacking in health, relationships, in marriage and even following the law, going the speed limit when everyone else is speeding, are you content?

I think I know how most of us would answer this second part. Our contentment is normally based upon our outward, physical circumstances. If this is the case then what happens when our physical circumstances are disrupted?

When Paul speaks of the mysterious, secret “contentment” or gladness or rejoicing, he is not speaking of the natural, unmysterious human pleasure that is based on pleasant circumstances. He is speaking of contentment based on Christ. Gladness grounded in Christ. Joy resting on Christ. And that is why

1. Contentment in plenty or lack has to be learned. It is not natural. It is supernatural.

So I thought it would be good to examine ourselves as Christians by asking...

2. Where does our contentment come from?

In order to answer that question we will need to start with the basics of our life.

a. Why am I here? Why do I exist? Why was I created?

As we look for the answers to these questions let's begin with the best starting point and that is with Jesus.

Colossians 1:15-16, "For He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For...all things were created through Him and for Him."

All things in the heavens and on earth were created by and for Jesus. Just how Jesus was involved in creation we really don't know but we do know they were created for Him.

Hebrews 1:3, "He (Christ) is the radiance of the glory of God and exact representation of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the power of His word."

I think we can surmise from these passages that Jesus created the universe and us, you and I, to show us the nature of His Father and of Himself. Everything Jesus created was to show us Their glory, Their majesty, Their love, Their wisdom and every other part of Their godliness.

I don't know if you saw the many rainbows yesterday but they were stunning. All of creation shows the majesty of Jesus doesn't it? And if you and I were created by Jesus then we too were made to show the majesty and the glory of Jesus.

b. You were **created** to show the majesty and glory of Jesus

So many times we are concerned about what we can do for Jesus. But Jesus, the most powerful force in the universe doesn't need for us to do anything for Him. He is satisfied, more than that, thrilled, when all you do is show His glory and majesty by the way you live, talk and have your being.

c. Contentment comes from being who God called you to be, a representative of His Son Jesus

Even as I say this I think, boy, how high of a calling is this? How will I ever be able to reach that lofty call? And my answer is, you can't. It is not within your ability to even come close within your own power. That is why Paul says...

Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

It is important for us to understand this following verse from the gospel of John.

John 15:16a, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain..."

Jesus was speaking to His apostles and now to us. What fruit do you think Jesus is speaking of here? Being a Billy Graham and winning thousands of souls for Christ? Starting a big ministry that feeds the poor? Doing Kingdom Kidz, youth ministry or something else like that? He may be calling you to do these things but what do we know about fruit? What does scripture say about fruit, fruit of the Spirit?

3. Fruits of the Spirit are... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Write these in your outline. If don't do anything else in this life but exhibit these fruits it is enough. It really is all that Jesus is asking you to do. Go and be fruitful in these things. Out of these fruits ministries may be birthed but that is secondary. This is your call, be who you were created, re-created to be. A fruit bearer. Showing the majesty and glory of Jesus.

But know this. You cannot do this in your own power. Jesus said,

John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches; the person who abides in Me and I in them, they will bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

Without Jesus you cannot bear spiritual fruit. No matter how hard you try you do not have the power. It is only I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. And when this occurs in your life, contentment takes over.

- 4. When we are fruit-bearers for Jesus, contentment is one of the many rewards**

What are some action steps to becoming and staying in a fruit bearing position?

Action steps:

- a. Begin with prayer. Pray for Christ to become your all in all. Pray for surrender. Pray for Jesus to come and make Himself known in great and mighty ways.**

Remember, you can't even surrender in the power of your own will. It takes a supernatural move of the Holy Spirit to bring you to that place of surrender.

- b. Pray for a hunger for God's word. Start searching the scriptures for Jesus.**
- c. Lean on the strength of Jesus**

Beginning next week we are going to start a new study on the Gospel of Matthew. It will take us through the life and teachings of Jesus.

I know we will be blessed as we seek Him. You can start on this study yourself.

Not fulfilling your purpose in this life leads to a lack of contentment and a lack of contentment can be a trap of all kinds of attitudes and even sin.

This is not the life God wants for you. This is not the reason Jesus died on the cross for you. He died so that you could show the world His majesty and His glory. In this and this only will you find contentment.

Let's pray