

***>>>>>>    Philippians - Lesson 11    <<<<<<<***

1) To start with, let's jump back in at 4:4-7 for a moment ...

***Philippians 4:4–7 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentle *spirit* be known to all people. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

2) One final question before we leave these verses.

3) Paul says in v7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

***How do I know when I have the peace of God “that surpasses all comprehension”?***

***Perhaps a better (or additional) question might be what is the difference between “peace” and the peace of God “that surpasses all comprehension”?***

- a) Being in a state of mind and heart where nothing bothers us?
- b) Being able to deal with any situation and know that God is in control?
- c) Being totally calm at all times?
  - i) In my first management job one of my co-workers put a cartoon on the wall behind my desk.
  - ii) It was a picture of a little duck with the caption – “The Secret to success – remain calm cool and collected on the surface while peddling like Hell underneath.”
- 4) Paul is going to give us another way we can have the peace – actually the God of peace in a couple of verses.
- 5) One further comment here – if one thinks about this – if we have the peace of God that surpasses all comprehension it will be much easier to display a gentle spirit.
  - a) Conversely, if that gentle spirit is missing, in all likelihood we do not have the peace we need.
- 6) In other words, all this – not being anxious, trusting God, praying properly – all lead to rejoicing and being at peace and being gentle.
- 7) Sometimes this is difficult because we are missing part of the things we need – **not because of God but because of us.**
- 8) Next, I think Paul addresses at least one other way that would help us rejoice always and have a gentle spirit.

***Philippians 4:8–9 (NASB 2020)***

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers *and sisters*, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

- 9) Psychologists and Psychiatrists have a method they use.
  - a) When a person is having issues with thoughts they should not have, they sometimes have that person put a rubber band on their wrist.
  - b) When the bad thoughts come, they are to pull the rubber band away and pop themselves with it reminding them not to think that way.
- 10) What Paul is suggesting here is far better than a rubber band snap.
- 11) The pain felt from the rubber band is distracting.
- 12) I am sure it helps but it does not substitute anything positive for the negative thoughts.
- 13) The obvious fact is that what Paul is suggesting is actually overcoming whatever the potential bad state of mind is with positive and good things – not just a distraction.
  - a) Paul just finished speaking about being anxious and having a gentle spirit.
  - b) Perhaps those are the things he has in mind here.
  - c) Now, I do not mean that this is the way to deal with every problem we have.
  - d) Paul is not saying that at all.
    - i) What he is saying is that many times we have within us the ability to pull ourselves out of some situations simply by adjusting our thinking.
  - e) Sometimes this may seem like the hardest thing in the world to do.
    - i) Sometimes it is almost impossible and sometimes we fail miserably.
    - ii) But we should never stop trying.
- 14) One thing that stands out here is how Paul covers so much in his list of things to think on – true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, commendable, things of excellence, things worthy of praise.
- 15) It is hard to imagine anyone who could not find at least one thing in their lives that fits in one of these categories.
- 16) And, by the way, the term “think about” used here in the NASB isn’t indicating just a passing thought.
  - a) There is a deeper meaning here – it really is indicating that one should think deeply or dwell on these things.
  - b) Again, pushing out anything negative and inserting something positive.

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17) Paul then gives them something to think about that fits at least some of these categories.

<sup>9</sup> As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

18) This harks back to 3:17 where he tells them to follow his example and observe and follow the pattern found in others.

19) As we discussed then, his example and the pattern he speaks of are in this letter:

- Being a bond servant
- Being thankful
- Being confident in Christ
- All about sharing Christ
- Rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness
- Not selfish, always looking to the interest of others
- Rejoicing in all circumstances
- Consider everything a loss in comparison to knowing Christ
- Pressing on to be like Christ

20) A clue here is to think about things that you are personally involved in for the Lord – that might be our first line of defense so to speak.

21) In fact, he closes with the admonition to “practice these things.”

### **Philippians 4:10–14 (NASB 2020)**

#### **God’s Provisions**

<sup>10</sup> But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked an opportunity *to act*. <sup>11</sup> Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever *circumstances* I am. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along with little, 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. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, you have done well to share *with me* in my difficulty.

1) I think he begins by talking about the gift that he refers to later in verse 18.

2) However, the key word here in this passage is contentment.

3) Contentment is an elusive state, especially when we try to find it on our own.

4) Paul speaks of many outward circumstances in this passage.

a) Being in need, having a little, living in prosperity.

5) He then makes one of those “simple yet deep meaning” statements:

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in any and every *circumstance* (lit. thing) I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

- 6) I think we would all agree that the secret to his contentment in verse 13 when he says ***he can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens him.***

**Let’s take a stab at something. How does “being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need” come into your life?**

- 7) The truth is however that his contentment really comes through being in a right relationship with God.

- 8) One can consider verse 12 as a string of secrets – a string of circumstances in which Paul has learned how to live contentedly despite the hardships that sometimes occur.

- 9) The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs spoke of contentment in this manner:

“Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”<sup>18</sup>

- 10) To have such a relationship takes one thing above all – faith.

- 11) Even though he wanted the Philippians to know all that and see where he was coming from he still wanted them to know that their gifts were appreciated and helped with his difficulties.

**So, having said all that – what do you think? Is contentment something we pursue or is it simply the result of our relationship with God?**

**Can we bring about any real contentment without God in our lives?**

**Another question might be – is contentment the key to rejoicing or is rejoicing the result of being content?**

**So, can we truly rejoice if we are not content?**

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<sup>18</sup> (*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* [Reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964], 19).