

Ministry of The Holy Spirit
Prison Letters
Philippians 4:10-23

Last time...the peace of God in a world gone mad

Ps 37:37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that* man *is* peace.

Who is that man Who is perfect and upright?

Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace

1 Tim 2:5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

We have peace with God and the peace of God “in Christ” as we

- get along with each other, lay our lives down for each other to be in unity
- rejoice in the Lord always
- be Christ-like!
- pray instead of worry
- think on Jesus
- do what the Holy Spirit has taught us

Last Monday morning, I was running errands with Eloise

She had the hiccups

Pretty sure I could not explain any of the old wives tales about how to stop hiccups, I prayed, “Lord, please do for herself what she cannot do for herself.”

Within 10 seconds her hiccups stopped

If the Almighty God sustaining the universe in all its vastness and who holds in His hands the breath of over 8 billion people in a world reeling in madness hears and acts on something so relatively “insignificant”, do you trust Him and that He will hear and act upon your cry to Him?

Ps 5:1-3 Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

Every morning, a VERY important start to having a peace-filled day is to spend quiet and focused time with the Lord in prayer and in the Word.

Such “quality time” settles, establishes, and strengthens our hearts and minds with the peace of God in preparation for the day He has given us; protect this time!

This time...contentment, something very elusive in a discontent world

v10 Transitioning from the peace of God to contentment,
which goes hand-in-hand with the peace of God,
the Apostle Paul, as he had exhorted the church at Philippi in v4, rejoiced in the Lord
greatly for the church at Philippi
because the last, the most recent occurrence (in a long line, we shall see) of their care for
him i.e. their thoughtfulness, consideration, and provision for his needs

They cared for him in his spiritual needs (encouragement)
and in his material needs (daily food, water, clothes, etc since Rome provided
nothing for its prisoners).

This last time in the person of Epaphroditus, Ch 2:25

This most recent “care package” flourished/revived/blossomed again their previous care
for him ; this was not the 1st time they did

And they would have also cared for Paul at other occasions as well if they had had the
opportunity to do so

Perhaps they were not able to, given their financial situation

Perhaps they did not know how or where to send their “care package”

v11-12 Paul is very quick to point out that he is not mentioning their care for him with an
ulterior motive in mind

This is not a subtle hint to get more money or support,
he is not conducting a fund-raising project,
he is not begging or telling people to “dig deep” for him

Because he has been instructed and has learned by experience to be content,
no matter his situation

He knows by experience how to

- be abased...to have nothing, to be destitute
- abound...to have excess

He has been instructed (by the Holy Spirit, our Teacher) how to

- be full, satisfied
- be hungry
- abound...to have excess (“too much”)
- suffer need...to be wanting/lacking (“too little”)

Walking in the Spirit and following Jesus, Paul has learned contentment, to be content
with whatever God provides.

His life was in God's hands

Paul recognized and acknowledged that, and was content to be in God's hands

Our lives are in God's hands

When we recognize and acknowledge that, we also learn to be content with whatever the Lord provides.

And if He provides only a little, we are still content because, since our lives are hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3), we know our Father is going to take care of us one way or another.

And along the way, He will teach us some valuable lessons about His faithfulness.

A young pastor with a young family
Only food in the house was a couple of hot dogs
In despair, bolted out the front door, crying out to the Lord
Tripped on bags of groceries left on the porch by a woman in the church

I believe we all have testimonies of God's faithfulness to us, Monica and I do!

Contentment is not natural, it must be learned

Contentment is a condition of the heart

Contentment is part of "being civilized" in the kingdom of God
just as children must "be civilized" to live in human societies

Contentment, the opposite of covetousness, comes with spiritual maturity

And contentment is accompanied by

- peace (vs worry and stress)
- joy (vs an emotional roller coaster of ever-changing circumstances)
- liberty (from the snares and bondage of the things of the world)

Discontentment

- natural, an expression of the flesh, our carnal nature
- Self-inflicted misery from the pursuit of insatiable lusts
- never having enough, never having good enough, never pleased
- spiritual strife
 - wanting something now and not what the Father wants for us for our eternal good (I know best, the Father does not know best)
 - I want something I cannot take Home with me (Phil 3:20)
 - a form of murmuring and complaining

Our society stimulates discontentment

Materialism and consumerism fueled by "more", "better", "different",
"new and improved"

The Lord teaches contentment

"Enough"

We are instructed to be content

- Prov 15:16 Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.
- Prov 16:8 Better *is* a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.
- Prov 16:16 How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!
- Prov 30:7-9 Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.
- Luke 3:14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages (not whining and complaining, moaning and groaning).
- 1 Tim 6:5b-8 ...corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.
- Heb 13:5 *Let your* conversation *be* without covetousness; *and be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (i.e. Jesus is enough!)

Ecclesiastes is a study in discontentment ending with a testimony of learned contentment

- Ecccl 5:12 The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.
- Ecccl 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole ~~duty~~ of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

So instructed, we must learn contentment...by experience, not just theory

- being content when we have too little
- being content when we have too much
- a calm and trusting heart of “Whatever”, knowing
 - Ps 24:1
 - we are in God’s hands

which is contrary to our nature but right in line with God’s nature,
not possible by in the flesh but possible in the Spirit.

Therefore...

v13 I can do...v9 in words and in deed, without murmuring and disputing (Phil 2:14)
all things...without exception, regardless of whatever “state”
through Christ...*en* / “in”, by Jesus
which strengtheneth me...

John 15:4-5 *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

2 Cor 12:9-10 And he said unto me, *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Ps 39:4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know how frail I *am*.

Martyn Lloyd Jones: Thank God my salvation does not depend upon my frail hold on Him but on His mighty grasp of me.

Same can be said of our “daily bread” by the hand of God our Provider

1 Cor 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

v14-16 That said, Paul tells the church at Philippi that they have done good by sharing in his temptation/trial/needs, just as they have on other occasions

For example, after he left them to take the Gospel to Thessalonica then Berea then Athens and then Corinth on his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 17), they were the only church to share materially in the ministry for Paul's daily needs, and they did so multiple times

That generous church had a history of having “an open hand”

Deut 15:7-11 If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry

unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

with the Father's heart

Ps 81:10 I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

faithful to their spiritual gift

Rom 12:8 he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity

This church has that history, the heart of the Father, and the gift of the Spirit too!

v17 Paul repeats himself – he is not bringing up with some ulterior motive of getting more money/support for himself

He is NOT asking for another gift from this generous and fruitful church,
he motive/desire is that which is in their best spiritual interest – more fruit to “deposit” in their rewards account in heaven

1 Tim 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Matt 6:19-21 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

v18 As mentioned, the church at Philippi had recently sent Epaphroditus to encourage Paul and to provision his material needs in prison

Paul gratefully received the gift as it was offered – a sweet smelling sacrifice of the saints in Philippi, a love offering approved by and pleasing to God
His current “state” is full, he abounds

v19 Paul knows his life is in God's hands
Paul also knows that "what goes around comes around"...sowing and reaping

Gal 6:7-10 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

2 Cor 9:6-8 But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

Prov 28:27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Prov 21:13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Prov 11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Now Paul "signs off"

v20-22 Greetings all around among the Family of God...who are everywhere!
even in

the Biden Admin
the Trump campaign
the Trudeau gov't (Canada)
the Macron gov't (France)
govt's of Brazil
Norway
UK
Israel
Iran
Egypt
Russia
China

because

Dan 4:17 ...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

Ps 47:7 God is the King of all the earth
John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus
 answered, *Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I
 born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should
 bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth
 heareth my voice.*

v23 Last word: grace
 2 Peter 3:18

We are instructed to be content

- godliness with contentment is great gain
- *be* content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Now, by experience, let's learn contentment, KNOWING that our life is in God's hands...
the very best place to be always!

There is no want/lack for those that fear the Lord
Those that seek the Lord shall not want/lack any good thing
None that trust in Him will be desolate

Believe it!
Bank on it!