
OPERATING ON GOD'S RESOURCES

Welcome to week 10, our final week of study. It is my prayer that you have learned, grown spiritually and been challenged these past two and a half months. God's Word is "living and active and sharper than any two edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12) Isn't it amazing how it will change us when we let it!

Our verses for today are found in Philippians 4:12-13

"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 who strengthens me."

We've been talking about contentment this past week. What an important topic! Contentment seems to be a lost art in this generation. Everyone needs their desires met instantly. Everything is offered quicker and more often. Not many people practice patience or wait on God's timing, but God always has the perfect plan, doesn't He? He always knows what we need. He's never done with us, and as we saw in Philippians 1:6, He will be faithful to complete us! Let's take a quick look back at the principles we learned in verse eleven.

- 1). Learning is a prerequisite to contentment: Knowledge (of God's Word), wisdom (how to apply knowledge to circumstances) and faith (depending on God's Word) are the mechanics we need to gain contentment.
- 2). Circumstances are not the basis for contentment: Our contentment should remain despite our circumstances and in whatever circumstance we encounter.

3) Contentment is a sense of being satisfied without any need of assistance: Our contentment comes from God.

Now let's take a look at verse twelve, keeping in mind what we've learned about contentment.

"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." Philippians 4:12

Here are some things we can take away from Paul's experiences:

Contentment, in any form, comes through learning and applying doctrine. Paul says he has "learned the secret." The word used for that phrase in Greek means, "I have been initiated with the secrets known only to those in the organization." In this case, the organization he is referring to is the body of Christ, the Church. When someone is initiated into a Lodge, or another exclusive organization, he may learn certain language, special handshakes or signals. These things are known and understood only to those in the group. Outsiders may see the signals, but will not understand their meaning. We, as believers, know the things of God, the secrets of the organization, only because we are on the inside. According to 1 Corinthians 2:12-14, it is only when we are in Christ and have His Spirit teaching us that we will understand the things of God. To a non-believer, they might read Philippians 4:12 and come away thinking that Paul is crazy. But, as believers, we can learn from Paul's words. What do we learn from Paul's example?

1). Paul's contentment was present despite his circumstances. Learning to be content came as he depended on Bible doctrine through his circumstances. Those circumstances were humility, prosperity, hunger, abundance and needs.

2). Paul received doctrine (the secrets) by direct, divine revelation. As believers we receive doctrine through study of the Word of God in the canon of Scriptures.

In 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 Paul lists some of the circumstances he endured. It says:

“Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”

Wow! If Paul had to endure these things and was content, we should also be content in our circumstances! Paul applied doctrines in Romans 8:37 and Romans 5:3-5 to his circumstances. He knew the word of God and applied it to his life. It helped him not only endure his circumstances, but have contentment despite them.

Read and write Romans 8:37 here.

Does Romans 8:37 give you confidence to endure the circumstances in your life? How so?

Now Read Romans 5:3-5.

For us, knowing God's Word, and applying its truth is imperative for contentment. Often times we become dissatisfied because we either have too little, or too much. Paul wants us to be content regardless of what we have or don't have.

Despite the things that cause us sufferings, or the things we earn, or the things we experience, our contentment should come through knowledge of God's word, wisdom of how to apply it and faith in His promises. Contentment is a learned behavior which will manifest itself when we are faithful to God and His Word!

Now, let's move on to verse thirteen. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." What an amazing promise for us to rely on! In the previous verse, and in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul explained to us the circumstances he endured. He showed us that he learned to be content no matter what came his way! In Philipians 4:13 he assures us that those who are in Christ can have that same contentment. We have the strength to do ALL THINGS because we are in the sphere of the One who continually gives power. When we become Christians, we are put in the sphere of Christ. It is in Him and through His Spirit that we are given the power to do all things, to face all things and to endure all things.

Think about that. All things! We aren't talking about sin, but about everything that God has called us to do. There is nothing that God asks us to do that we won't have the power and ability to do. When we are trusting God and operating through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will lack nothing. We will have the power to say what He wants, go where He asks, and be the women God instructs us to be. What an amazing promise!

Explain a circumstance in your life when you felt like you couldn't accomplish what God was calling you to do.

How does trusting in the promise of Philippians 4:13 change your thought process?

Let's trust God's word and His promise that as long as we are in the sphere of Christ, we will have the ability and the power to do all things!

REVIEW

~ Contentment comes through knowing and applying doctrine found in God's Word.

~ Contentment has nothing to do with circumstances.

~ We can do everything God calls us to do when we are:

1. In the Sphere of Christ.
2. Under the control of the Holy Spirit.