

BROKEN CHAINS
The Philippian Series #16
July 23rd, 2017

TEXT: Philippians 4:10-13

CONSIDER THIS: Do you realize that more money, more energy, more relationships and more time have been spent on the quest for contentment than on any other facet of human existence? Even though God says “be content with what you have” (I Timothy 6:6-8) the vast majority of commercials are designed to make you discontent with what you have as they simultaneously promise that they can provide what you need in order to be content. The plague of addictions that are destroying families and corroding our culture exists because of the false hope that the object of the addiction (pleasure, drugs, alcohol, gambling, other people, etc ...) can deliver contentment. Christian, today’s text invites you to join the most exclusive club in the world. While it is open to all Christians, many never join it. Let’s call it “the Contentment Club”. Those who join it experience **BROKEN CHAINS**.

GOD’S WORD TEACHES US ...

I CONTENTMENT IS ...

- A) This is an amazing word (autarkés) and you might be surprised to learn what it actually means.
- 1) Autos = **self**, as in automatic, automobile, autofocus
 - 2) Arkeó = **suffice**
 - 3) When combined the two words mean **self-sufficient**. To be self-sufficient means to not need something from the outside. Think of the family farm of old: They grew their own crops, raised cows, chickens and pigs for milk, meat, eggs, butter and poultry. The farmer was also a mechanic, a carpenter and a plumber. His wife could sew clothes and can food. They were **self-sufficient**, not needing to import goods from the outside.

But wait a minute! Isn’t an attitude of self-sufficiency an act of rebellion against God? Aren’t Christians supposed to totally depend upon God and reject the proud and stubborn attitude that says to God, “I don’t need you”?

- B) Paul did rely on God (please read II Corinthians 1:9 and Acts 18:9-11). **KEY:** The self-sufficiency (contentment) of Philippians 4:11 is directed against circumstances. Paul is saying that he has learned not to depend on his circumstances for his joy and his peace. He doesn’t need his circumstances to change or conform to his desires in order to be happy.

For most people, joy comes and goes depending upon whether their current circumstances are pleasant or difficult. Their joy is not autarkés/self-sufficient, it is dependent on their external circumstances, and no one can fully control their circumstances (although some people try mighty hard).

C) If you look for contentment in a certain set of circumstances such as:

- “if I could just have my health back ...”
- “if I just had an extra \$30,000 ...”
- “if my spouse would just change his/her mind ...”
- “if only I had married a different person ...”
- “if I could just have a different job ...”
- “if I could just make the team ...”
- “if I could just find someone ...”
- “if my child would just make better decisions ...”
- “if I could win that award ...”
- “if I could just buy that house ...”

... then you have failed to learn the right lesson about circumstances. Yes, you should be thankful for your blessings and it is okay to pray about your circumstances, but true contentment/joy/peace are not based on external things. God wants your joy/peace/contentment to be self-sufficient (independent) from your circumstances.

II LEARN THE SECRET (4:12)

- A) “I have **learned**”. Do you understand the significance of this? Even the great Apostle Paul was on a learning curve. There is a continuing process of learning that God, who is a full-time teacher, wants His children to experience. God will lead you to a Red Sea moment to grow you and to teach you (Exodus 14:9-12). Are you a good student?
- B) “the secret” ... this term means to be initiated into something others do not know. Through the diverse circumstances of his life, Paul had been initiated into the special club of people who are content. Have you been initiated into the Contentment Club?

III CHRIST STRENGTHENS ME (4:13)

- A) The “I can do all things” is a specific promise regarding your circumstances = “I can be content no matter what my circumstances are because Christ will strengthen me to face my external circumstances, learn from them, and grow to be more like Him. He will help me do this.”

Remember, throughout the letter to the Philippians
the call is to exalt Christ, imitate Christ
and draw near to Him, for He is near to you.

- B) A passage that parallels the theology of Philippians in concise form is II Corinthians 4:16-18. It reminds us of the big picture, the eternal perspective of who we are in Christ and what awaits us. You can't help but see your circumstances, but contentment is found by fixing your eyes on Christ!

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