

To Die is Gain

THE PATH TO JOY, A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

LESSON 8 (4:10-4:23)

“[Paul’s] joy in the Lord was not heightened by prosperity or diminished by poverty. His concern for the welfare of others was not distracted by living in plenty or in want. His contentment in prosperity did not lead him to self-indulgence or self-aggrandizement: having material things did not become his reason for joy; acquiring material things did not make him greedy; protecting material things did not make him anxious.”ⁱ Paul was content because his concerns were not of this world.

“Whatever state I am in,” Paul declared, *“I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me.”*ⁱⁱ *“I can do everything God asks me to do”* (TLB). *“Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am”* (MSG). *“I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency]”* (AMP).

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23.

1. What is the difference in lacking concern and lacking opportunity?
2. Considering Paul’s relationship with the Philippians, what may have resulted if his needs became his focus?ⁱⁱⁱ
3. Define contentment.

4. List Paul's varying states of living. (v.12) In which of these positions would you find it most difficult to be satisfied? Why?

5. What do many believe they need to achieve contentedness?

6. What was Paul's attitude toward the following? (Think back on Philippians 3:3-8.)
 - a. Possessions

 - b. Status

 - c. Situation

 - d. Person

7. How did Paul learn to be content?

8. What is the cause of discontentment? Consider the following passages: Genesis 3:6, Proverbs 30:8-9, and 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

9. The Stoic philosophers of Paul's day defined contentment as self-reliance and fortitude; a calm acceptance of life's pressures. How does the contentment Paul is speaking of differ?^{iv}

10. Verse 13 is often quoted as a declaration of one's abilities as a Christian. Based on its context, what is Paul seeking to convey?

11. Reconcile Philippians 4:13 with John 15:5.

12. How did the Philippians share in Paul's distress? (vv.14-16) (Physically, emotionally, relationally, socially? Also consider 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.)

13. What was Paul's greatest concern—his wellbeing or the eternal state of others?

14. How is verse 19 an encouragement to give to the needs of others?

15. Based on verses 21-23, what fruit was born on account of Paul's imprisonment?

16. How does Matthew 16:25 summarize Paul's message to the Philippians?

ⁱ Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (pp. 313–314). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

ⁱⁱ Phillips, J.B.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Paul’s statement that he *learned to be content* is his way of claiming that his friendship with the Philippian believers is true friendship, not a friendship based on utility; he was not looking to his friends with self-interest, depending on them to meet his needs, for he had *learned to be content*.” (Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (p. 311). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.)

^{iv} “The word ‘content’ actually means ‘contained’. It is a description of the man whose resources are within him so that he does not have to depend on substitutes without” (Wiersbe. W. (2001). *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament* (Vol. 2, p.97). Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications.).

^v “Even the Thessalonians had contributed little to his maintenance; this is not spoken to their credit” (Clarke).