

Joy in Learning Contentment

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Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] things out so that they're not so tiny afterwards and my wife doesn't have to replace them as often.

Okay, so what is contentment? What is it? How would you define it? So I was asking myself that question. I see this word content contentment. So I think I know what that means, but what does it mean? So I looked it up.

I've got some different definitions. Contentment is a state of satisfaction. It is being at ease with the situation.

Acceptance of where we are in life. And a sense that I have all that I need. Okay, I put that together. I think acceptance is a big part of contentment. Accepting what's going on to be content. But I like that last phrase, a sense that I have all that I need.

[1 : 12] Because I think that fits what Paul's talking about. I'm content. He has a transformed view of his needs. What do I need? What do I really need? So last week, you know, Delinda's running out of Hallmark movies to watch, right?

So we were watching It's a Wonderful Life the other day. Great classic, Jimmy Stewart, right? And in A Wonderful Life, George Bailey, who's the main character, is not content.

He is stuck in this little town, right? He has big dreams and goals and he wants to see the world. He wants to do other things, but he's stuck in this little town.

He's scraping by. And then, of course, the day happens when they lose the money and now we're in crisis. Now we might go to jail, all that kind of stuff.

And so he's in despair. So he goes to the bar, he's praying to whoever's up there, right? And then he goes out to the bridge and maybe he's thinking about suicide, we don't know.

[2 : 26] But the angel guy, I forget his name, Clarence, Clarence, yeah, jumps in ahead. So George goes in to save him and you know the story then. Then he gets his wish of, I wish I was never born and seeing what life was like if I had never been born.

And so you see all the dramatic changes. The town is different, his brother's different, you know, all these things are different. So he gets that gift of seeing what really mattered and seeing what he really had.

And so the movie ends on a high note, right? It's a good ending. They're singing around the tree, they're singing, and all the people are generously giving, right?

And all this great, great, good feeling stuff. And so he learns contentment in a sense in those moments in, oh, what do I, I don't have all my dreams, but what I do have really matters.

I have family, I have friends, I have this little, these little children, I have my wife, and I have, you know, this town, and my friends, and all of that. Okay. So that's a movie with a happy ending.

[3 : 34] So I think, you know, that's great, I love it, you know, tears going down on my face, and all that. Then you begin to wonder, is it lasting?

You know, it's just a movie, so it has a happy ending, so you're not supposed to think any further, right? But I think, well, what about in real life? What's that in real, because we all have those moments.

We might even have those moments every year at Christmas where we, oh yeah, we're reminded. It's really about family, right? It's really about giving, it's really about, you know, gifts, and peace on earth, and all those kind of things.

And so for a while we might feel, okay, content. But then real life comes back. And you go back to work. And you turn on the boob tube, and you see the news again, more bad news, more bad news, more bad news, oh, more rioting, more, you know, this and that, and this politician and that, and we're discontent again.

We have all these issues going on. We have an epidemic going on. We have racial tensions going on. We have political tensions going on. We have all kinds of issues that are unsettled and not likely to be settled soon when everyone's talking and no one's listening.

[5 : 05] So how do we find contentment in our life that lasts? How do you stay contented? I don't want just a little message that gets me okay for today. I want to learn what Paul learned.

I want to learn the secret of contentment in whatever situation I'm in. So how do I learn that? And Paul gives two promises, two verses in here that we recognize. Verse 13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

I mean athletes write that on their shoes. Right? Celebrities use that. All kinds of people use that. And then verse 19, my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in Christ Jesus. That's a great promise. We know, we hear those promises. We hear those verses. Typically though, we hear those verses ripped out of a context. And so I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me becomes the motto for whatever I want to do.

[6 : 19] And my God shall supply all your needs in Christ Jesus becomes he'll give me everything I ever wanted because we redefine what needs is.

And it becomes greeds. He shall supply all my greeds. That's what I hear on TV and the preachers. So, what does this all mean?

Well, remember in the context where we've been looking at this wonderful little book of Philippians, only four chapters, and yet 16 times in these four chapters, Paul brings up the word rejoice or the word joy.

He keeps talking about joy. So in chapter 1, he talked about how he prays with joy when he thinks of this church because they participate with him in the gospel.

He rejoices over them participating with him, being partners with him. They don't just send a check. Oh yeah, our missionary will send you a check, hope you do well. No, they're fellowshipping.

[7 : 24] They're partners. They're, yeah, we're in this with you. We're your backers. And so he rejoices over that. In chapter 1, he rejoices about his being in prison.

Imagine that. And prison in the first century is not like prison today where you get a nice semi-clean cell, right, and you get three squares a day, maybe an hour sunshine.

Now prison then was a dungeon, dark dungeon. And Spurgeon talks about going to the dungeon where Paul was and it's, there's a dungeon and then there's a hole in the middle of the wall, of the floor and then there's the deep dungeon.

And that's where Paul would have been deep, deep down. And no three square meals. Your, your life depends on whether you have friends or not outside that prison.

And so people like the Philippians are keeping him alive. They're sending supplies for him. He has, that's what it was like then. There, there's no prison reform act going on in Rome in the first century.

[8 : 35] So, understand. So in that, even in that, he's rejoicing. He's rejoicing even in the hardship. He's rejoicing that, that even while he's in prison, there's the gospel that's going out.

We just read in the last, almost the next to last verse in Philippians 4 here, that there's people in Caesar's household who send greetings to the Philippians. People in, in Caesar's household.

How do people in Caesar's household become believers? Well, because Caesar is sending guards to be tied up to Paul every day.

And what does Paul do with those guards? Hey, you know where I've been? Have you heard about Jesus? The guards are getting converted. The conversion is leading to Caesar's household.

Now, Caesar's not going to get saved. Don't worry about that. Nero at the time. It was not real reasonable about those things or other things. So he's rejoicing.

[9 : 38] He's rejoicing about his uncertain future. He's sitting in prison. He doesn't know if he's going to live or die. But he says, for me to live is Christ. To die, that's gain.

I can go home. That's good. I rejoice either way. He talks about joy in chapter two. Complete my joy by being of the same mind. Keeping treating each other as more important than yourselves.

That gives me joy. He talks about joy in witnessing. Joy in servants. And then in chapter three, we spent more time in chapter three because there, there's really a heart of Paul that talks about who he used to be and now who he was now.

How he had all of these great things. He was from the right family. He was in the right Jewish theology school. He had a future.

He was rising in Judaism. He was going to be a top rabbi. And then Jesus met him, right? And blinded him and turned his life upside down.

[10:46] And Paul says in chapter three, I rejoice in the Lord always. Because what I had, all that earthly success that I had is nothing compared to knowing Jesus Christ for whom I'll suffer everything.

And so he talks about his glad glorying in Christ. And then in chapter four, we saw a few weeks ago, he talks about rejoicing in people.

He talks about how they are his joy. He talks about the difficult relationship in verse two, four, two, about these two ladies who are not getting along, right? And difficult relationships going on in the church.

Does that sound normal? It's very normal. It was normal then too. People in church sometimes don't get along. And so, learn to get along.

And so he talks to them about joy. And he talks to them about agreeing together in the Christian things that matter. So he talks about joy in difficult relationships.

[11:52] He talks about joy in anxiety, verse six and seven. And now verse 10, he talks about joy in contentment. In all things. So here's where we are.

How do we learn contentment? Not just a momentary, not just a, oh yeah, a reminder, these are the things that matter, you know, and then Monday comes and I'm back to regular life again.

So how do I have contentment? How do I learn that? So that when I come to the rough times and when I come to the things that are disappointing and I come to the times of emptiness or neediness, I know how to handle that.

I know how to cope with it. So this is what we're going to look at today. Learning contentment in Christ. And in both of these, there's two things here I want to share with you, two promises that Paul makes.

Verse 13, there's a promise of power. I can do all things through him who strengthens me or empowers me. So there's a promise of power. And then verse 19, there's a promise of supply.

[12:56] My God will supply all your needs. So a promise of provision. So the first promise, verses 10 through 13, Paul is talking about himself. I have learned the secret.

I have learned this. I am rejoicing. I can do all things. So he's talking about himself, verses 10 through 13. And there it's a promise of power in relation to contentment.

So he's talking about I've learned contentment. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. So that promise, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, relates to contentment. All things, all things in relation to contentment.

And then the second promise is relating to giving. He's talking in verses 14 through 19 about the Corinthians, the Philippians. He talks about how you gave, I rejoice in you, I thank you, you have done well, and my God will supply your needs.

Okay, so it's a promise of provision for those who are givers. So, promise number one, promise of power in learning the secret of contentment.

[14:10] The promise of power in learning the secret of contentment. So what is he rejoicing about? Verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

Now he's not complaining to them, he's not saying, oh, you've taken so long, but thankfully you finally have given to me. He's not saying that. Because he goes on and says, you were indeed concerned, in fact you have been concerned for me all long, but you had no opportunity.

So he's rejoicing that finally you're able to do what you wanted to do all long. Remember back then, you can't just FedEx overnight.

Right? You can't just even send snail mail. You can't do the, what are they, they have things on your phone now where you can just pay automatically, right? I haven't learned that stuff yet.

I know you can do it, I've heard about it. Right? You didn't have that. So Philippians, Philippi's over here in Macedonia, and Rome is way over here, right?

[15:20] In the, well, here, Italy over here, right? Macedonia's way over here, 800 miles apart. So in those days, traveling by foot, even maybe by donkey, it's going to take a while.

It's going to take months to go 800 miles. So it's going to take a while to get there. And these are not rich people that have all kinds of savings accounts going on where, yeah, we'll just send that over there to Paul. Takes a while to save up, and then they've got to send it, and they're not going

to send Epaphroditus all by himself because he could be robbed.

They're going to send him with others to go, and then we learned in this letter that Epaphroditus got sick on the way, so that delayed it, and so there's all of these things. By the time it got there, and I'm sure it was one of those God things.

When Paul got it, it's kind of like just when he needed it. And that's how God tends to supply for us, right? It's kind of, oh, I'm in need. Boom, here it comes, just when I need it.

And I'm sure that's how it happened. So he's great. He's rejoicing in the Lord working through others. And then he clarifies in verse 11, it's not that I'm speaking about being in need.

[16:32] Now watch what he's saying there, verse 11. It's not that I'm speaking of being in need. What does he mean? He was in need. They're supplying his need. He lacked.

Paul has a whole different view of needs. Because he's going to explain that in a moment. Not that I was speaking. He wants them to know, you know, I know you were concerned.

I know you were upset. You're sending this. You're anxious about it. I want you to know that even when it wasn't here, I was okay. Even in my need, I was okay.

Even in my need, I wasn't needy. See? It's not about the gift. I'm grateful for the gifts, but I'm transformed in the way that I look at it.

So how does he explain it? Verse 11 and 12. Not that I'm speaking of being in need. Why? For I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

[17:29] I know how to be brought low. And I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I've learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

So he gives the two extremes. I know how to be humbled and I know how to be lifted up. I know how to deal with hunger and I know how to deal with plenty.

By the way, which is harder? Is it easier to learn how to cope with hunger? Or is it easier to cope with plenty?

Well, when I'm in hunger, what's my attitude? I need, I need, right? Help me, Lord. I'm looking to be dependent upon the Lord. Hopefully I am, right?

Or I could go steal or I could go grumble. But hopefully it's, humbling is usually bringing me back to the Lord. But if I have plenty, what do I normally, naturally do if I got plenty?

[18:41] I'm good. I'm good. I don't need God. Right? My temptation then is to boast or to forget God and, see, so which is easier to handle?

Paul's saying, I've learned how to cope with hunger and humility. I've also learned how to cope with when I have plenty, not to get arrogant about it or not to get self-sufficient about it, not to get forgetful of God about it.

It's like the prayer in Proverbs 30. Right? I pray, Lord, that I don't have so many riches that I forget you and I pray that you don't make me so poor that I steal.

You know, give me just what I need so I'm still depending on you and walking with you. So he's learning how to cope. Spurgeon always says it so well.

Let me share with you what he says about this secret. I've learned a secret. Spurgeon says, was Paul not a true master of arts? He had mastered the art of being hungry without murmuring, the art of being full without boasting, the art of suffering need without impatience, the art of abounding without setting his affection on worldly things.

[20:05] There is nothing in hunger or thirst or nakedness or peril to invite our contentment. It's not natural to be content in those situations. If we are content under such circumstances, it must be from higher motives than our condition itself affords.

Hunger is a sharp thorn when in the hands of stern necessity. But hunger may be voluntarily endured for many an hour when conscience makes a man willing to fast.

When men have too much of God's mercies, strange that we have to say this, and yet it is a great fact, it often happens that they have but little of God's grace and little gratitude for the bounties they have received.

They are full and they forget God. Satisfied with earth, they are content to do without heaven. Rest assured, it is harder to know how to be full than it is how to be hungry.

To know how to be hungry is a sharp lesson, but to know how to be full is the harder lesson after all. So desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God.

[21:20] As soon as we have a double stock of manna and begin to hoard it, it breeds worms and becomes stench in the nostrils of God. So how does Paul learn this?

Obviously it's a process. He didn't just learn it. It wasn't a gift. He had to learn. I learned through humility, I had to learn to deal with humility. Through plenty, I had to learn how to deal with plenty. Excuse me. So how does he learn to be content with it? Well, the secret is verse 13. What have I learned? I've learned that I can do all things through Him who strengthened me.

I haven't learned to be self-sufficient. I've learned to be Christ-sufficient. See? I can do.

That sounds like a phrase that our world would love, isn't it? I can do all things. Well, Paul is literally saying that.

[22 : 25] I can do. I'm able. I'm strong enough. I'm powerful enough to do all things. Well, what are the things? What are the all things? Can I do extraordinary things?

What can I do? What does he mean? In the context, what Paul has just been talking about is I can do humility, I can do hunger, and I can do plenty.

And then everything in between. I can learn contentment. I can do it by strength of God. I can do whatever God calls me to do. He is not saying I can do all things like, oh, I have a dream to go do this wonderful, great thing for God.

Well, if God calls you to do that, then yes. But if it's simply your dream, and I've been there, I've had my dreams, and had God say, nope, I don't think so.

I was thinking it was God's dream because he seemed to be leading a certain way. And then when I pursued that, God said, no. You will learn a different kind of dream.

[23 : 44] Paul went through that as well. So it's not a relying in self.

It's a relying in the one empowering me. It's in relationship to Christ. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

How does that work? I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That means my doing, is in connection to Jesus. He's strengthening me as I'm leaning on him, as I'm holding onto him, as I'm talking to him, as I'm trusting him, as I'm relying on him.

Do you trust that he can give you the power in your need? Do you seek his strength?

And what does that look like? By the way, how many times when you're looking for God's strength does he give it right now? He doesn't do it.

[24 : 59] When you're a new, brand new believer, yeah. Right? He doesn't, when you're a baby, but when you've grown for a while, it's like, yeah, you need to learn some. Every time Jesus talked about prayer, it was about persisting, right?

Keep knocking, keep seeking. God wants to see our dependence. We don't pray to give God information that he didn't know. He already knows what we need.

We pray to have a relationship with him, to talk with him, to depend upon him. That's what he wants. And that we exhibit our faith in him to provide what we need when we need it.

So how do we learn to be content? Well, we learn it from the Lord. We learn it in weakness. I mentioned how Paul understood learning this process and his dreams being changed and shattered.

Here he talks about it in 2 Corinthians 12. Remember the thorn in the flesh? You ever heard of that section, the thorn in the flesh? Why did God give Paul a thorn in the flesh?

[26 : 04] Right here he explains it in 2 Corinthians 12. He says, to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations.

So Paul was getting a big head because he had big revelations. He had seen and heard things from God that no one else was getting.

So it might tend to make you a little bit, I'm special. I'm unique. I'm kind of like Moses.

So, to keep me from being conceited, a thorn was given me in the flesh. How did that thorn come?

It was a messenger of Satan. Oh, wait a minute. God's sending a messenger of Satan? Yep. A messenger of Satan to do what?

[27 : 03] To harass me. To keep me from becoming conceited. Do you think that was Satan's desire to keep Paul from becoming conceited? No, that was God's desire. God is using Satan to work on Paul.

Interesting. So, what did Paul do? Well, I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. In fact, I pleaded three times with the Lord to take this thorn away.

But he said to me, so did Paul get an answer? Paul got an answer. I've heard some people say, oh, Paul didn't have enough faith.

He needed to keep praying until God removed it. Well, I say no. God said he got an answer. He got his answer. God said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.

There's your answer, Paul. Can you remove this thorn of Satan? I don't, maybe I need more faith. Maybe I need to speak to that thorn. That's what we hear on TV.

[28 : 10] That's not what, Paul's not there. But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for my power is made perfect in weakness. I want you weak. And I don't want you conceited so you're going to keep the thorn.

You're going to keep it. Because I know you, Paul. Paul. I know you. My grace is sufficient for you. My power is perfect in weakness.

Therefore, I will boast, Paul says, all the more about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then I am content. I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities.

And calamities. You want to rethink that, Paul? Are you sure you're content with those things? Because people aren't content with those kind of things. No, I'm good.

I'm okay. Why? Because when I am weak, that's when God shows up. When I'm weak, then I'm strong.

[29 : 24] I can do all things through him who empowers me. When does he empower me? When I'm weak. When I'm in calamity.

When I'm in persecution. When I'm in affliction. When I'm in hunger. When I'm in plenty. Can you imagine that? Do I need power of God to deal with plenty? Apparently I do.

Because when I have plenty, I'll be thinking, I don't need God. I don't feel the pressure of praying. And yet Jesus said, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Which, remember, the disciples were amazed by. What are you talking about? Yeah, rich man. Because he thinks he's okay. He thinks he just needs a little help. He believes in that American doctrine.

God helps those who help themselves. Right? Isn't that what God does? He helps those who help themselves, right? Eh, fail. He helps those who can't help themselves.

[30 : 37] I did not come for the healthy. I did not come for those who need a little bit of help. I came for the sick. I did not come for the righteous. I didn't come for the nice, good people who just need, you know, a little guidance.

I came for who? Sinners. Sinners. The ones that can't fix themselves. The ones that are so broken. That's who I came for.

I didn't come for the Pharisees and the religious frauds. They don't need help. I came for the people that know who they really are and know who I am.

That's who I came for. So note Paul's mindset in this whole thing, the thorn in the flesh. His mindset is God is sovereign. God is in control. His will is that I endure through this difficulty.

It's his will that I have the thorn. It's not wrong that I've prayed for the thorn to be delivered and God hasn't delivered me from the thorn. It doesn't mean I don't have enough faith.

[31 : 49] It means God says, no. I want you weak. I don't want you healthy, wealthy, and prosperous.

I didn't make my son healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. I didn't make the apostles healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. Okay? Let's be sane about what Scripture says.

So, are you content with that? I have learned contentment. Are you content with that? Can you trust the Lord to show you power in your weakness?

So, first promise Paul talks about in reference to himself is power in learning the secret of contentment. The secret of contentment is trusting Christ to strengthen me through every situation. Then he comes to a second one. In verse 14, now he turns the subject to them and their giving. he wants to talk about their kindness and supplying for his need.

[33 : 02] So, it's the promise of supply. We see in verse 19, my God will supply all your needs. So, there's a promise of supply for the sacrifice of giving. He's going to talk about these folks how they give.

And he's kind of going to go out of his way. He's going to set them apart even from other churches. There's no church like you guys. which is really fascinating. If you remember Paul's perspective on ministry, Paul had the right for churches to pay him for ministry, right?

Jesus taught that, right? The laborer's worthy of his wages. This isn't a sermon about giving. Don't worry about it. But Paul said, I'm not, I have the right but I'm not going to take it.

I don't want to charge churches. I'm going to do my tent ministry so that when I preach it's totally for free because I don't, I don't care.

I don't, I'm fine. I want them saved. I don't want any obstacle. I don't want money to be an issue for these folks as they hear the gospel. So that was his own personal choice.

[34 : 12] Okay, so he didn't ask churches for support. He didn't. And here's the one church that insisted on giving to him.

I don't know if you remember. Remember how this church started in Acts 16? Remember Paul, Paul comes and he finds a bunch of ladies by the river having a prayer meeting.

And he shares the gospel with them. And they receive it. It said God, one of the ladies' names was Lydia. It said God touched her heart, right, and opened her up to hear what Paul said and she got soundly converted.

And then Lydia was this businesswoman, right, in Philippi. She's like this, she does fabrics and stuff like that. She's apparently pretty successful at what she does. She's an extraordinary woman because she actually convinced Paul to come to her home and be supported by him.

In fact, Paul says she, he uses a really unique Greek word that talks about, she impressed it on us. [35 : 20] to go. It's kind of like you could tell he was resistant. It's like, she's stronger willed than he is. You will stay at my, you ever met someone like that?

You know, they're really well-meaning, they're generous, and they're like, you can't say no to him.

Like, no, I will help you. No, that's all, I'm, no, I will help you. You will come to my home and stay.

Right? And so Paul, so Paul does. And, and it's kind of like, he doesn't ask the Philippians for help, but I think Lydia and these women and whatever's going on in that church, there is a generous spirit in there that's just like, no, Paul, we will help you.

No, I'm good. No, we will help you. Really, I'm fine. We will help you, Paul. So that's kind of what's going on. So here he talks about it, verse 14.

It was kind of you to share in my trouble. And that word share that means to fellowship with. It's, it's not just means, it doesn't just mean that they gave him a check or they gave him, they're actually partnering, they're actually invested, they're actually backers of Paul.

[36 : 24] It was kind of you to share in my trouble. And you Philippians, you yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership, this agreement, this fellowship with me in giving and receiving except you only.

They're the only church that supports him. Okay? Even in Thessalonica, verse 16, you sent me help for my needs once and again.

He's saying at the beginning of the gospel, all the way back in Acts 16 when the church started, the little church with Lydia and the other ladies and then remember the Philippian jailer and that family got saved, right?

So this little tiny church got started. The next place Paul went after Philippi was over to a place called Thessalonica, 95 miles away. And he says, even then, you started sharing with me.

You were just a brand new church. You didn't know about, you weren't even supposed to know about that kind of stuff yet. You're just brand new. Not about giving, but you wanted to get.

[37 : 29] He said, you've been doing it all along. They have a pattern of generosity. And then Paul, I think he wants to emphasize their generosity because he talks about it in two ways in verse 17 and 18.

Verse 17, he says, it's not that I seek the gift because I, you know, I know how to get along. I'm content. It's not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

He actually uses an accounting metaphor here. I seek the fruit. I seek the, so he's like saying, I seek the compound interest that accumulates to your account.

Where? Is he talking about money? Is he talking, see, the health and wealth guys would say, oh, Paul's saying, you know, when you give, you plant a seed and then you get rich. Right?

No, he's not saying that. He's saying, I seek the profit. I seek the interest, the fruit that accrues to your account in heaven.

[38 : 32] Remember Jesus talked about put your treasure in heaven? Store up your treasure in heaven, not on earth? Yeah. Every time you do, you give genuinely and generously like that, it accrues and it's building interest in your account in heaven.

And then he talks about another metaphor in verse 17. He says, verse 18, I have received full payment and more. I'm well supplied. Having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you send. Now watch how he describes the gifts. A fragrant offering, a sacrifice, acceptable and pleasing to God. Not only, not only was it fruitful to your account, but it's actually a sacrifice. It's sacrificial language here. This is the language we see in the Old Testament. A fragrant aroma. By the way, guys, have you ever come home and there's just an aroma in the house? It's like something's cooking in the crock pot. I remember coming in and there's just like this beef stew or something. It's like, oh man, you know, you actually have a physical reaction when you smell the aroma, right?

[39 : 46] So he's saying it's a fragrant aroma to God. The sacrifices that we give when we give away and it costs us this sacrifice, that becomes like a, I don't know, what's your favorite aroma smell of food, right?

It's like that to God. It's that aroma. Oh, that smells good. It's a fragrant aroma, a sacrifice to God. Paul's saying you're given to me but I see it as you're given to God. When you give to support the needs of the church, you're actually giving to God.

When we support one another, that's why I said at the beginning, the food that folks from the church brought to us, yeah, a fragrant aroma, a sacrifice pleasing to God.

And you think, no, it was a gift. It took time, it took money in some cases. It's an aroma, it's a sacrifice to God.

[41 : 00] And in that context then he says in verse 19, my God will supply every need of yours. Notice the word is need. He will supply every need.

That's different from want. When I do premarital counseling, we talk about setting a budget and talking about needs versus wants.

Do you remember that? No, don't remember that? That was a long time ago. We talk about needs and wants. There's a difference. Well, I need.

Really, do you need it? I need want. So, understanding that. And here's the other thing. When he promises, my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. What does that really mean? Does that mean that I will never go without a meal? Well, in this context, Paul has just talked about I have learned to deal with hunger.

[42 : 09] hunger, which means there are times he has gone without food. Well, didn't God promise? Yeah. But sometimes my needs aren't about fulfilling that pang of hunger, it's about my need to fast.

fast. See, sometimes fasting chooses us. In fact, in Scripture, usually, it's fasting comes by the situation.

I've lost somebody, I'm mourning, and so what do I do? I don't want to eat, I have no interest in eating, I'm mourning. I'm fasting. I don't think about it as fasting, but that's what I'm doing.

I'm skipping. I don't want to eat. Other times, I'm dealing with spiritual crisis. I don't need to eat. Honey, you need to eat. No, I don't need to eat right now. I don't want to eat. I need to go pray about this.

See, maybe there's times in our lives where, hey, I'm learning to be content in hunger. That doesn't mean God's not fulfilling his promise to supply every need.

[43 : 21] Maybe I need to redefine what my need is. But what it doesn't mean in this context clearly is it doesn't mean you will never go hungry.

Because we say, wait a minute, aren't there Christians in other parts of the world that are in famine? Yeah. What about them? Isn't God supplying them? He will.

But God also brings times of famine upon his own people. Doesn't he? Remember the whole book of Ruth was based on there was a famine and they had to, so what did they do?

Well, there wasn't food in Bethlehem. We got to go find food in another place. So sometimes I got to move for God's supply. But understand, we can't look at it as, well, God will supply all my, I just need to sit home and God will take care of me.

Right? No. That doesn't flesh in the Bible. Yeah, he will take care of me. Jesus teaches me to pray. Give me this day. My daily bread.

[44 : 25] So it's a daily dependent. Is he going to give me everything I want that day? Most days, yeah. Well, my fridge is full.

So how do I pray for food for every day when the fridge is full for the next week? When these people keep bringing food over and I got all kinds of food coming out of my ears, right? Well, no, Zach eats up most of it. But, Dad, do you want the rest of this? No, you got it. Are you with?

You understand? I think our issue is more dealing with I have plenty. And do I know how to be content with that?

I have found, in just a confession, I have found when I was a lowly youth pastor, didn't make enough to make ends meet. You know, felt like I needed more, right?

[45 : 22] I can't pay my gas bill. And then, when I was a solo pastor for the first time and my income went up really big to me, it was still, anyway, it's like, oh, man, what happens when your income goes up?

oh, my level of, eh, now we're eating out more, and blah, blah, blah. And so, how do I, am I learning to be content when I have plenty?

Or am I learning to, nope, that's not enough, I want more. that's us naturally. We don't naturally feel content. And so, I have to learn to trust Christ for that.

He supplies every need. How? My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

There's the key. Who is that promise to? If the promise is in Christ, then the promise is to those who follow Christ. The promise is to those who are in Christ.

[46 : 31] Are you in Christ? Do you know you're in Christ? How do you know you're in Christ? What does it mean to be in Christ? It means to be united with him.

Well, how do you get united with him? And why do I even need to get united with him? Well, this is what the gospel comes to tell us.

The gospel tells us who God is, first of all. God is loving, forgiving, merciful, right? Abounding in mercy.

But he also defines himself as just, righteous. So, how is, how can God be forgiving and he's also just and holy?

How does he do that? If he's holy and just, then he can't let sin go, right? If he just lets sin go, then he's no longer just and merciful. He's not a good judge. So, how can he be just and holy and also be what he is, forgiving and merciful?

[47 : 39] How can he do that? Well, so there's God. So, then there's man. Well, who am I? Well, I'm defined by who God is and God is this and I am not, right?

I have fallen short of him. I have, if I'm really honest, I've rebelled against him, right? I've dismissed him. I've ignored him. I've put him off or I've suppressed the truth about him and actually believe, oh, I don't really think there is a God or I don't know if there's a God.

That's actually a foolish statement that's, because we all know God's given plenty of evidence that he is real.

And so, who am I in relation to him? Well, am I honest with him or am I seeking to rebel against him? So, how does God then take care of us? How does God, how is God merciful to a sinner, to somebody who rebels, to someone who doesn't care about him?

How can God show mercy to him? You got this holy God, how do I get the forgiveness? Well, here it comes in the cross. He sends his son to take care of the holy part, the just part, the righteous part, to pay the penalty for us.

[48 : 54] And so, he's able to give us mercy and be holy and righteous by taking all of that debt in Christ. And so, I become in Christ by becoming the person who says, yeah, I need someone to take my debt.

I can't pay it. And I believe Jesus did that and so I come to him and I begin to ask him, take me. Take me. Change me. Change me. I don't want to be like that anymore. Change me. And I keep asking that, I keep seeking and I keep knocking until I know for sure he's answered me.

I don't pray one prayer and think, oh, he's answered the prayer. because I can testify to you that after how many years did I do that? 15 years, he never answered that prayer until someday I changed.

And I know he didn't answer the prayer because I wasn't different. And I still hated him and I still hated his law. I knew I was a sinner.

[50 : 03] I knew I needed Jesus and I asked him and my pastor used to say, just come down and pray the prayer and you'll be saved. Yeah, I did that hundreds, literally hundreds of times. And he didn't do it.

And one day, I don't know. I didn't cause it. See, I think that was God's point. Yeah, you think you can change? You change when I say you change.

God and I have a good relationship now so it's okay. I can joke about that. And I knew I was saved because now my desires were changed. Now I actually didn't hate him anymore.

I actually saw how lovely he was, how merciful he was. And I didn't hate his commands anymore. I actually saw, oh, they're good for me and I want to please him.

It wasn't about guilt and shame anymore. Now it was about, man, I'm just so grateful. I'm so grateful. And like Paul, I can understand, man, all those things of the world, all those great accomplishments of the world, boy, that used to be attractive to me but now I could care less.

[51 : 14] I'm happy in a little tiny church. Hmm? I was happy serving God in any way I can. So we trust in him.

We become in Christ. And as we walk with him, we learn to trust him for all our needs. So what are the needs that he supplies? Let me read just one more passage to you. 2 Corinthians 9.

Paul says, God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

So his grace is abounding so we can abound in good works. As it is written, he has distributed freely, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving for God. Why don't you just notice one thing in those verses.

[52 : 24] He says, you will be enriched. God will supply, richly supply to you. He will supply riches to you to do what? To be generous to others.

I keep seeing that over and over again in Scripture. Why does God give us what we need so that I can accumulate wealth? Well, I do need to take care of my family.

Yeah, there are those things Scripture talks about. But generally, He gives you, to you generously so that you can what? Give generously to others. not so that you hoard it up.

I'm giving to you. I will keep supplying to you. I'll keep supplying generously to you so that you can be generous to other people because I want you to be like me. See what He's saying there?

So He enriches us to be generous, not for ourselves, but to give it away. He desires to increase our harvest of righteousness, not our harvest of money.

[53 : 23] that we may abound in good works. So, do you know the secret of contentment?

Are you with me? Like, I'm still learning that. I'm kind of working on that. Really want to have that.

Are you learning how to handle hunger and plenty? How do you view what your needs are?

When you go to God and you say, I have a need, do you let Him look at that need with you? It's the same mindset of joy.

Joy is not a feeling. Joy is a mindset. I rejoice in the Lord greatly, not because I have a feeling of gratefulness. Sometimes we do. But joy and rejoicing is a mindset.

It's a recognition that the Lord is in control. It's a recognition that to live is Christ, to die is gain. It's a recognition that He matters and the gospel matters. Nothing else matters.

[54 : 28] That's joy and rejoicing when that mindset is there. Contentment is the same.

Contentment is about I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I'm content. I can wait upon Him. I can find joy in this hunger because He's behind all this. He knows what's going on. He knows what I need.

I will trust Him. Now, that sounds simple, but it's not simple. Well, it's simple, but it's not easy. That's what I wanted to say. Trusting in Him, relying upon Him, fixing my strength in Him.

So why is all this important? Verse 20. To God, to our God and Father be glory forever and ever.

Amen. My God will supply all your needs. Why? To God be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. So let me end with this. every Christian is able to do all things through Christ who empowers you.

[55 : 34] and our God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in Christ Jesus. Let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your Word.

We thank You, Lord, for Paul's perspective. Again, we pray that You would pierce our hearts, first of all, to convict us of what is true, renew our minds to think rightly, and Father, we pray that You would revive our souls.

In this time, Lord, it's so easy to be anxious. It's so easy to be discontent. In fact, it's so natural to do that. So transform us, change us. Father, help us to trust You, to be convinced of how great You are and how worthy You are.

These things we pray in Christ's name. Amen.