



THE WORD *Alive*

The Preaching Ministry of
Ashley River Baptist Church

THE CONTENTED CHRISTIAN Philippians 4:10-13

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned *before*, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 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. 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I. CONTENTMENT IS INDEPENDENT OF EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

11 "...for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances (state) I am."

Paul refers to people who through discipline had become independent of external circumstances and who discovered within themselves resources that were more than adequate for any situation that might arise...

Content: self sufficient; sufficient for oneself, strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support; contented with one's lot, with one's means; independent of external circumstances

A. The Acquisition of independence comes through discipline.

1. **Disciplined learning:**

Learned: discipline – "I have disciplined myself" directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect; learning through instruction or inquiry; to be taught; come to realize; comprehend; understand; ascertain or discover through practice or experience;

2. **Initiation** after a difficult process: v.12 "... I have learned the secret..." "... I am initiated..." (Darby Bible 1884)

Secret: a religious technical term for initiation into sacred mystery religions; Be instructed how to do something; "to be initiated into" the secret.

Paul has been initiated into the secret of contentment.

B. The Demonstration of this discipline is in all circumstances. V.12

1. **The Downside:** "humble means" "in need" – low or beaten down until one is low; hunger to the extent of pain; crave with desire; to be devoid of; be inferior; suffer want;

2. **The Upside:** prosperity; filled; abundance; To overflow; to abound in; fed to the point fullness; satisfied; (force feeding of cattle until gorged and fattened) well fed;

II. CONTENTMENT IS DEPENDENT ON THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST

A. The **Scope** of dependence on Christ is in all things. V.13 poverty or plenty; prison or free

B. The **Strength** of that dependence is to prevail over and master circumstances. "strengthens me" – an enabling strength to overcome resistance and face down and master circumstances

C. The **Source** of that dependence is the infused strength of Christ. "through Him" Strength comes through a union with Christ, not independent self sufficiency.

CONCLUSION

Facing "real world" circumstances and extreme difficulties, Paul teaches us that the Christian can not only cope but find contentment in the midst of life's challenging circumstances through Christ.

True contentment comes regardless and independent of the circumstances of the day. It comes not in independent self-sufficiency but only through the strength found in dependency on Christ.

Have you "learned" the true source of contentment in life? Will you today admit and accept Christ as the sole source of sufficiency and strength to overcome your life's circumstances?