



The Secret of Contentment – Part 2

We Could All Use Some Good News Series

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open it to Philippians 4. I have been looking so forward to today and Part 2 of this incredible passage in God’s Word on contentment—having perpetual joy and peace, no matter what situation we’re in. I so long for you to experience this, in this room or wherever you’re sitting right now, however you’re listening right now. I long for you to experience contentment in your life as a whole, particularly in the middle of a historic worldwide pandemic. I long to experience this.

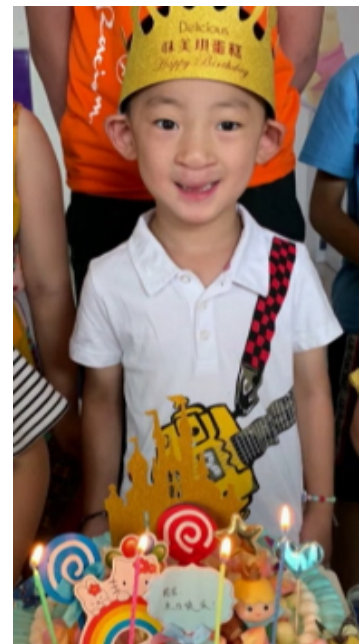
Yesterday was a bitter-sweet day in our home. Many of you know we’ve been in the process of adoption and in early February we were five days away from going to bring our son JD into our family when travel to this country was shut down. For the last six months I have been praying every single day for God to make a way for us to go to him. As a dad, I would do anything possible to make that happen, but God has not answered that prayer yet.

Yesterday was JD’s fourth birthday. He doesn’t really know who we are, but we were still able to throw him a party in a sense by sending gifts and resources for food. The orphanage sent us some pictures. Here he is with his cake and crown, with a little bit of icing on his nose, playing with gifts we were able to send to him.

So how do you have perpetual joy and peace when you’re separated from your son and can’t do anything to get to him? How do you have perpetual joy and peace when _____? Just fill in the blank with whatever challenges or difficulties you are walking through. It’s no accident that we’re in these verses right now.

Let’s start as we’ve done every other week with reading the Word of God out loud with one another. For those of you have taken up the challenge to memorize Philippians 4, close your eyes, and we’ll say this together. Others just read along with me. This is the Word of God:

¹ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.



² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Ah, this is such a strong word. Let's review what we saw last week, to catch you up to speed if you weren't with us. In the last part of this passage, verses 10-13, God is letting us in on a secret. That's a key word here—secret, something not everybody knows, something most people don't know. It's the secret of being content in any and every situation. For example, Paul says there's a way to be content when you face abundance and when you face need. You can have contentment in either or both.

I want to pause here to share our good news story for this week from Justin and Larissa at our Montgomery County location. They have faced need in the form of not one, not two, but three miscarriages over the last couple years. But this June, in the middle of this pandemic, they have abundance in a way that I'll let them share with you.

Justin: We are a family of four. We have two girls. Toward the beginning of 2017, I said, "Let's go for a son." Larissa was saying, "Absolutely no more kids. God's going to have to change my heart." We walked through most of 2017 thinking our family was complete, then God changed Larissa's heart. We conceived, but then had a miscarriage.

Larissa: After the third miscarriage, we pretty much thought, "We're done. We can't do this anymore. We can't continue to try and have it end in grief." I had bloodwork and labs done, trying to figure out if there any answers. We couldn't find anything, so we essentially closed the door on it. After that last miscarriage, I was in a very dark place, wrestling through depression, but I knew I still had to fight to hold on to truth, even if I didn't feel it.

Over the coming months I was on a journey of climbing out of this deep pit, learning to trust God again. I did eventually reach a place of knowing He was good, seeing how He had been with us in the midst of the darkness and coming to a place of peace where I could say, "God, whether or not You give us

another baby, I'm going to believe You're good. I can see it; help me to continue to believe it." The pain and grief were very real and never really went away.

Even today when I think about it or talk about it, I still cry. But there is also a peace and contentment knowing God is good. He's been with me and He sees me. I'm not forgotten. I don't understand, but He will help and He won't forsake me.

Justin: Larissa was very sick last fall; after the third appointment there still wasn't a heartbeat. She had been thinking, "Maybe it's twins." On the next appointment they found a heartbeat—and then they found two heartbeats.

I wasn't with her because I was at work in a high-profile meeting. I was antsy during the meeting, so I texted her, "Babe, I can't really talk." Finally she called and I told her, "I can't really talk, but are you okay?" She said, "It's triplets!"

Larissa: When the monitor found the triplets, I lost it. The technician found the boys first. "Oh, yeah, you're having twins." I wasn't shocked, because as Justin said I was halfway expecting to hear that. The Lord had put on my heart to start praying for the "babies" before I had my first appointment. I thought, "Well, I guess that happens when you pray in faith." I said, "Oh, twins—that's so sweet." Then the technician said, "Well, hold on. Let me look around." Then she found the third baby.

I lost it. I was laughing and crying. The first verse that came to mind was, "The Lord will restore what we've lost." That's exactly how it felt. It humbled us to see God's goodness. Throughout this whole journey of having these babies and new jobs and everything, there is the humility of, "Why us, God?" It's been very humbling.

David: They had need, then they had abundance. You heard Larissa talk about contentment. What is that? What is this secret that God is showing us right now? Last week we answered that question, seeing that contentment is the sweet inward state of perpetual joy, peace, gentleness and strength in every moment, regardless of our circumstances. This is the secret and it is possible to have this in this world.

Paul is writing these words from prison, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he says, "I've learned this. I've learned the secret of having joy, peace, gentleness and strength in any and every moment, regardless of circumstances." Who doesn't want this? Every one of us wants this. I can't think of anyone who doesn't want perpetual joy, peace, gentleness and strength.

This is so different from the way we often live. It's so foreign to the world around us. Picture the woman who is content, regardless of where relationships stand, how she is perceived by other people or what circumstances are occurring. Picture the man who is completely free from the constant temptation to compare himself with others. Picture the athlete who is content, regardless of whether or not he or she wins or loses. His or her joy does not hinge on winning. Picture the business person whose peace is not

dependent in any way on the ups and downs of the market. Picture the teenager who has total joy at all times, whose joy is not based on any measure of acceptance by others or achievement before others.

Picture the person—single or married, kids or no kids, school or no school, job or no job, health or sickness, pandemic or no pandemic—who can say, “It doesn’t matter. I am content. I have joy, peace, gentleness and strength.” We all want this.

We talked about how contentment comes from inside, not outside of us. It is completely free from dependence on circumstances. It’s not the kind of contentment that comes only when we get what we want, so then we’re content. It’s not what comes when we get what we think we need. This is a contentment that comes regardless of what we have or don’t have.

Last week we landed on this truth: contentment does not come from independence, but from total dependence on Christ. This is the last verse we read from Philippians 4:13, which is one of the most abused verses in all of the Bible: *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* How many inspirational speeches in sports have revolved around this verse, only to lead to defeat? This described me—a four-foot-nothing runt in eighth grade, trying to dunk a basketball, believing I could do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. Despite my best efforts to dunk the basketball, apparently that is not what “all things” in Philippians 4:13 means.

This is why, with any verse in the Bible, we always need to look at the verse within its context. What does “all things” refer to in this passage? The answer is clear in the context. “All things” refers to being brought low and abounding. Paul is saying, “I can be brought low through Him Who strengthens me and I can abound through Him Who strengthens me. I can face plenty and I can face hunger through Him Who strengthens me. I can face abundance and I can face need through Him Who strengthens me. I can do all things—brought low, abound, face plenty, face hunger, face abundance, face need—through Jesus Who strengthens me.” Contentment does not come from independence, but from total dependence on Jesus. That’s what we talked about last week.

We said this week that we would see, not just what contentment is—that was Part 1—but how we get it in Part 2. How do we learn contentment?

Paul uses the word “learn” twice. “I have learned the secret. I can do this.” How do we learn this and how do we do this? How do we experience contentment?

Let’s establish the first part—what contentment is. It’s a sweet state of perpetual joy, peace, gentleness and strength in every moment, regardless of circumstances. We want that, so how do we get it? To answer that question, I want to show you three steps that flow from one truth. We’ll start with the one truth, then based on that truth, I want to give you three practical steps to learn this secret—to get it, to do it, to experience this secret in your life.

The truth: Contentment in life comes from finding supreme treasure in Jesus.

Let me explain what I mean by “supreme treasure in Jesus.” I mentioned last week that in verse 13—*“I can do all things through him who strengthens me”*—this word “through” could be translated, and is normally translated, “in.” I can do all things in Jesus Who strengthens me.

Let’s think about Who Paul is talking about here, Who the Bible is talking about. Who is the “Him” that brings this secret of contentment? What is it about Him that makes it possible to have contentment in life? In answer to that question, I want to give you six pictures of Who Jesus is according to the book of Philippians. This is kind of bonus content, so we’ll go through them super fast. So Who is the “Him” that makes contentment possible? Who is Jesus, based on what Philippians is teaching, as well as the rest of the Bible?

1. Jesus is the fountain of never-ending joy. We’ve already seen this in Philippians 4:4: *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”* There is always everlasting, never-ending joy that is found in Jesus. Paul says the same thing in Philippians 3:1: *“Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord”* —in Jesus. Philippians 4:10, that we just read: *“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.”* So there’s a joy to be found in Jesus.

This is where we remember what Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:11: *“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”* His joy in you means full joy for you. In the very next chapter in John, Jesus is talking to His disciples about how they will experience sorrow in this world—how we will experience sorrow in this world. Then He says, *“You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy”* (John 16:20). You’ll have sorrow now, but *“I’ll see you again and your hearts will rejoice,”* and listen to this, *“no one will take your joy from you”* (John 16:22). No one, nothing, can take away the joy Jesus gives you. He is the fountain of never-ending joy.

2. Jesus is the well of other-worldly peace. We’ve seen this in Philippians 4:6-7: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* In Jesus you will have this kind of peace.

This is exactly what Jesus says to His disciples when He’s talking with them about difficulties in the world in John 14:27: *“My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives...”* —so it is other-worldly. *“Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* Then right after that in John 16:33 He says, *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”* Jesus is the well of other-worldly peace in a world of tribulation and trial.

3. Jesus is the giver of unexplainable gentleness. This is what we saw in Philippians 4:5: *“Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.”* We saw how this can be translated “gentleness be known to everyone,” even in the face of injustice like Paul was facing in prison for proclaiming the gospel. These are Jesus’ famous words in Matthew 11:28-29: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will*

give you rest....*For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*” —in Me. What a picture! Jesus is the giver of unexplainable gentleness.

4. Jesus is the source of supernatural strength. Philippians 4:13 states, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* Or check out this other passage where Paul talks about contentment. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul talks about difficulties he has walked through and is walking through. Here he tells us what Jesus said to him: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”* Paul goes on to say, *“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* The power of Christ! Then he says, *“For the sake of Christ, then, I am content.”*

There’s that word. “I am content with weaknesses. I’m content with insults. I’m content with hardships. I’m content with persecutions. I’m content with calamities.” Why? *“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* Why? Because I have the power of Christ resting upon me. So when I am weak, I am strong. Jesus is the source of supernatural strength in the midst of suffering.

Then two more pictures of Who Jesus is in Philippians and in the rest of the Bible.

5. Jesus is the definition of true love. Paul’s description of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-11 is one of the most majestic anywhere in the Bible: *“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who...”*—here’s the Who. He is the One Who, *“though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”*

Let me explain what this passage means, particularly to those of you who are listening right now who may not yet have put your faith in Jesus. The Bible teaches that we have all sinned against God. We have all turned aside from God’s ways to our own ways, so we all deserve death—not just physical death, but eternal death in judgment for our sin against God. But the good news of the Bible is that God has come to us. This is what Philippians 2:5-8 are teaching. God has come to us in the person of Jesus. Jesus has died on a cross to pay the price for our sins against God, so that anyone anywhere who trusts in Jesus and His love for us will be forgiven of all their sins and restored to relationship with God for eternal life.

So if you have never placed your faith in Jesus, or if you have questions about whether or not you have eternal life, then please text to 571-581-6297 right now or at some point today. You need to know the definition of true love is the God Who loves you. Jesus is the definition of true love, which leads into number six.

6. Jesus is the author of eternal life. He is the One Who grants eternal life to all who trust in Him. One of the most well-known verses in the book of Philippians, at the beginning of this letter from prison, is where Paul is talking about how he does not know if he’s going to live or die. He writes in Philippians 1:21, *“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* We’ll talk more about this one later, but basically what

he's saying is, "Christ is my life; Jesus is my life." It's why he says later in Philippians 4:3 what we read earlier, talking about people "*whose names are in the book of life.*" This is a reference to all those who have eternal life in Jesus.

Please hear this again, every single person in the sound of my voice: your eternity hinges on whether or not your name is in this book, whether or not you have trusted in Jesus for life.

If you put all this together, everything hinges on Who Jesus is. Not just eternal life, but contentment in this life, hinges on Who He is. When you realize Who the "Him" is in Philippians 4:13—when you realize this is the One Who is the fountain of never-ending joy and the well of other-worldly peace and the giver of unexplainable gentleness and the source of supernatural strength and the definition of true love and the author of eternal life—when you realize Who He is and all of these things you have in Him, that totally transforms your perspective on any and every circumstance.

When you realize He is in you and you are in Him—you're united with Him—you can now move to the practical. Here are the three steps to get this contentment in your life; three steps to get this sweet inward state of perpetual joy, peace, gentleness and strength in every moment, regardless of your circumstances. Once you realize this truth—that contentment in life comes from finding supreme treasure in Jesus—then what do you do?

Step One: Believe Jesus is better than the best things this world has to offer.

To get contentment, believe that Jesus is better than the best things this world has to offer. Believe this. Look at this brief list. We could spend all day, all week, looking at all kinds of other ways the Bible describes Who Jesus is. But if you look at this list describing Who Jesus is, you will realize there is no one and there is nothing in this world that can compare with Him. Even all the best things of this world put together cannot compare with Jesus.

I think about the best things in my life in this world. I love my wife in ways I cannot put into words. I love my kids so much. I love my family. I love my friends. I love this church. I love my job. But here's the deal. As great as all these things are, as great as my wife is, she is not the author of eternal life. She is not the source of supernatural strength. She just is not. My kids are not, neither are my family, friends, church, job, house, car, anything. Everything this world offers me does not compare with Jesus. He's better than the best things this world has to offer.

This is exactly what Paul says back in Philippians 3:5-6. You've got to see this. There he makes a list of the good things he had in this world. Let me read it to you: "*Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless.*"

Let's think about the things Paul just mentioned here. What are the good things Paul is talking about here? Start with the beginning: "circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin.” Paul is talking about his strong family heritage. When Paul talks about his family, he is a proud man. His roots are strong. He wasn’t just born into the people of Israel, but the tribe of Benjamin, from which the first king of Israel came—whose name, by the way, was Saul, which is what Paul’s parents originally named him. If you want good family heritage, you can’t beat Paul.

And not just family heritage. He was a “Hebrew of Hebrews,” in the upper echelon of Jewish life, with all that entailed. Let’s add social status to what Paul had. He was at the pinnacle of the Jewish social structure. Then he writes, “As to the law, a Pharisee.” We hear the word Pharisee, particularly in light of what we’re reading in the Gospels right now, and we might have negative stereotypes. But remember, in the first century Pharisees were extremely well respected for knowing God’s Word in the Old Testament and for interpreting it and teaching it. What Paul is saying here is, “I had biblical knowledge like few other people.” He knew God’s Word. And not just biblical knowledge in his head; he goes on to say, “As to zeal, I was a persecutor of the church.” Paul was not superficial in his faith; he had serious devotion to God. So let’s add religious devotion.

This is the list of things Paul is giving us here. He was serious in his devotion to God. On top of all that, one more thing, “As to righteousness under the law, I was blameless.” In other words, Paul had a clean moral lifestyle. He was a good man who did good things. He was respected and honored on all accounts by the people around him.

Now, based on Philippians 3:5-6, look at this list of things Paul just said and let’s ask what do all those things have in common? Think about it with me. Family heritage, social status, biblical knowledge, religious devotion and a moral lifestyle. What do they all have in common? Those are all good things, right? Family heritage—that’s not bad. Social status is definitely not bad in and of itself. Biblical knowledge? That’s good. Devotion? That’s good. A moral lifestyle? That’s good. I’d say all those things can be great things, right?

But then listen to what Paul says next in Philippians 3:7: “*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss.*” In other words, all these good things in the world he just counts as loss “*for the sake of Christ.*” Loss. What all these good things mounted up to is loss for the sake of Christ. And just in case we do not get it the first time, he says it again: “*Indeed, I count everything as loss.*” Everything. That’s an all-encompassing word. “*I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*”

Then he says it a third time: “*For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.*” Now, we need to feel the weight of that last word. The word for “rubbish” is literally dung. You can think of other words that would be inappropriate to use in a sermon. Yes, that’s the way this word just jumped off the page in Scripture. That’s what Paul just said. He took all the good things in his life in this world and called them rubbish compared to gaining Christ and being found in Him. He said, “I gladly lose

all these things—everything, all that is gain—in order to know Jesus. For His sake. To gain Christ. To be found in Him.”

For Paul, it’s almost like he draws two columns on a piece of paper. On the left he lists all the best things the world has to offer. Above that list, he writes the word “Loss.” Then in the column on the right, he writes “Jesus” and above that column he writes “Gain.” He really believes that the best things of this world—all the things in the left column—are like dung in comparison to Jesus. This is a very different way to think. This is a very different way to live.

And that, I would submit, is a very different Christianity than the one that is so often practiced in our culture. This is so dangerous. Follow this. You can have all these things on the left and more, all these things in this world, and still not have Jesus. You can have a good family life. You can have good social status. You can have a nice house, a nice car, a nice job and nice vacations. You can have biblical knowledge and religious devotion on top of that. You can be a good, moral, decent, upstanding person. You can have all those things and still not have Jesus.

That’s why I never ask you, “Do you go to church? Have you prayed a prayer? How moral is the life you are living? How much biblical knowledge do you have? How successful are you in this world?” Get through the rubbish. Get through the dung. Is Jesus your life, such that you would say, “Of all the best things in my life—from family to finances to possessions to pleasures to comfort to health to wealth to success in this world—none of these things compare. All of these things together do not compare to the treasure I have in Jesus”? Is that how you would describe your life?

This is Christianity. To be a follower of Jesus means to die to yourself and live in Him. You say, “What does this have to do with contentment?” This has everything to do with contentment. Contentment starts with believing that Jesus is better than the best things this world has to offer. Jesus is the fountain of never-ending joy, not this or that person, or this or that thing in this world. Contentment starts with believing that Jesus is the well of other-worldly peace, in a way that no one or nothing in this world can come close to.

Contentment starts with believing that Jesus is the giver of unexplainable gentleness, the source of supernatural strength, the definition of love and the author of life—and nothing in this world compares. Even the best things of this world combined do not compare with Him, because Jesus is better. When you believe this, when you realize Who He is and when realize Who you have in Him, then you are no longer dependent on the things of this world for joy, because you have never-ending joy in Him.

Make the connection. You are no longer dependent on circumstances in this world for peace because you have other-worldly peace in Him regardless of what circumstances you’re facing. You have unexplainable gentleness, supernatural strength, true love and eternal life in Jesus. So believe this. Believe that Jesus is better than the best things this world has to offer.

Step Two: When you face abundance, exalt Jesus as the giver of that abundance.

Let's keep going and get more practical here. Step two toward learning, getting, experiencing contentment is that when you face abundance, exalt Jesus as the giver of that abundance. When you face abundance in this world, see Jesus as the giver. Worship Jesus as the giver. Love Jesus as the giver of that abundance.

Isn't it interesting that when Paul talks about the secret of contentment, he describes how you can be content when you face abundance? We think, "Well, when I have abundance, of course I'm content, because I have these things." But remember, as long as your so-called contentment is found in your abundance, then it is not contentment. You're like children who cry until they get what they want, then they are content. But that's not true contentment, because that kind of contentment is dependent on outside circumstances. It's based on getting what you want or what you think you need.

Paul is talking here about the secret of having abundance, but not finding contentment in your abundance. Remember, Paul told the Philippians Christians, "I'm thankful for the gift you sent me here in prison. But I was content without the gift—and I'm content with the gift." It's what he also said in Philippians 4:1: "I have rejoiced greatly in the Lord—not in your gift. My rejoicing is in the Lord." He says this because he knows that any good gift ultimately comes from the Lord.

So the key to contentment when you face abundance is exalting Jesus as the One Who gives that abundance. The key is never ultimately rejoicing in the gift, but always ultimately rejoicing in the Giver. That is where idolatry comes in. Every one of us—myself included—is prone to exalt the gift and ignore the Giver. The essence of idolatry is to exalt good things, while ignoring the Giver of those good things. Contentment is found, not in looking to these things for peace, joy, gentleness, strength, life and love, but looking to Him as the One Who gives these things.

He is the well of other-worldly peace and the fountain of never-ending joy and all these other things we've seen. So, yes, I can say, "I love my wife, but she is not my life and my ultimate love. Jesus, Who gave her to me, is my life and my ultimate love. Yes, I love my kids, but my life does revolve around them. My life revolves around Him Who gave my kids to me. Yes, I am thankful for all kinds of good things in this world, but I do not find my joy or my peace in them. I find never-ending joy and other-worldly peace in the One Who gives these good things to me."

Do you want contentment? Then when you face abundance, make sure to guard your heart by exalting Jesus as the Giver, not the gifts.

Step Three: When you face need, cling to Jesus as the goal.

Then the third step to learning, getting and experiencing contentment is that when you face need, cling to Jesus as the goal. You might say, "What does it mean to cling to Jesus as the goal?" What I mean is

exactly what Paul said in Philippians 3:7-8. Listen to those verses again and you tell me what Paul's goal is according to these verses?

"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake..."—for whose sake? For Christ's sake, *"I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that..."* That's a purpose clause. Why, Paul, do you count all the best things this world has offered to you as rubbish, as dung? It's so *"I may gain Christ and be found in him."*

What is Paul's goal? His goal is to gain Christ, to know Christ. That is his clear goal. You know, it's interesting how earlier in this book Paul used similar language in Philippians 1:29, when he talks about suffering and about being in need. Listen to this verse. It's quite a verse. *"It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ..."* That's the same language we saw in chapter four. *"For the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."*

Let's think about what that verse just said. *"It has been granted to you..."* When you're granted something, you're given a gift. So for the sake of Christ, it has been granted to you that you *"should not only believe in him..."* Believing in Jesus—that's a gift? Yes, absolutely, that's a gift. Believing in Jesus, experiencing eternal life in Him—yes, that's a gift. But not only believing in Him, there's another gift. The next gift is this: *"...But also [to] suffer for his sake."*

At which point we're thinking, "What kind of gift is that?" Did you ever receive a gift you didn't ask for or didn't want? Suffering is a gift that is granted to you. How in the world can you see suffering as a gift? Follow with me real close because this is the heart of contentment. Think about what suffering is. Suffering is when the things that we want, the things we love, the things we enjoy—often really good things—are taken away from us. When we lose somebody we love, we suffer.

Today just so happens to be the anniversary of my dad's sudden heart attack and death years ago. I so wish my dad was still here. There are so many things I would love to talk to him about. None of my kids ever got to meet him. Suffering is when you lose someone you love—through death or maybe through divorce. When a spouse is no longer there, or a spouse no longer loves, we suffer. Suffering is when we lose health. When we're struck with disease or physical pain, we suffer. Maybe it's a financial crisis. When we lose money or lose a job, we suffer. There are so many examples we could list. When good things are taken away, we suffer.

But go back to what we talked about earlier. When you have already taken the best things this world has to offer and you've put them in a column over here under "Gain," then when these good things are taken from you, it's not easy. I want to be clear. I'm not saying—the Bible is not saying—that suffering is easy. You heard Larissa say this earlier. Losing good things in this world—people we love, our health, on and on—is not easy. The pain is real and the tears are many.

But when Jesus is your life and these things are taken away from you, in the end, suffering—the taking away of these things—only drives you more to Jesus. When Jesus is your goal, then suffering becomes a gift. Let me say that again. When Jesus is your goal, then suffering becomes a gift. Suffering and your perspective on it will be totally different. It's a gift. This is such a different way to look at life. Some would say this is a crazy way to look at life. Think about Paul writing this from prison.

I think about a conversation I once had with a brother in Christ who had been in prison in another country for proclaiming the gospel—just like Paul. This brother shared with me that in prison he had nowhere else to turn, so as a result prison had made him a man of prayer. It made him a man who loved God's Word more than he ever did before. Prison made him a man of faith, trusting God in deeper ways than he ever had before. Prison caused him to cling to Jesus in a way he had never experienced before.

Now can you see the gift here? Suffering becomes a gift when Jesus is your goal. If you think it's crazy to say suffering is a gift, think about the verse we read earlier, where Paul took it to a whole other level, saying, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Dying is gain? How can you say that? Is dying good? Well, think about what we've seen. When everything—even the best things in this world—are in one column marked "Loss," and Jesus is in the column marked "Gain," and then everything is taken from you—your family, spouse, children, possessions, job, health, your very breath—when it's all gone, then what will you have? You will have Jesus like you've never had Him before. You will have Jesus more fully, more finally and more perfectly than you've ever dreamed. This means that when Jesus is your goal, then suffering becomes a gift and dying becomes gain. Don't miss this.

Yes, on this day, years ago, my dad breathed his last breath all of a sudden. It took 60 seconds. But at that moment, when his breath was gone and his heart stopped beating, he experienced never-ending joy, other-worldly peace, unexplainable gentleness, supernatural strength over the grave, true love and eternal life in ways he had never experienced before.

Do you see it? Jesus has taken the worst thing that could happen to any one of us—death—and He has turned it into the best thing that will happen to every one of us. So now we get it, right? At least I hope we get it. Do you want contentment in life? Then contentment in life comes from finding supreme treasure in Jesus. Contentment in life comes when you believe that Jesus is better than the best things in this world, in such a way that when you have good things, you praise Jesus as the Giver of those good things. In such a way that when those good things are gone, you cling to Jesus as the goal, because you are content in Him.

So I ask you, have you trusted in Jesus as your supreme treasure? The answer to that question will determine your contentment in life forever.

I want to ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes, wherever you're sitting right now—in your home, or wherever you might be. I want to ask, "Have you trusted in Jesus as your supreme treasure? Is Jesus your life?"

Just answer that question honestly before God. If your answer is not a resounding, “Yes!” in your heart, then I invite you to say to God right now, “God, I want to trust in Jesus as my life. I want to trust in Jesus in all these ways we see in Your Word. Today, O God, I trust in Jesus to forgive my sins through what He did on the cross and to give me life based on His resurrection from the grave. Today I put all my hope and trust in Jesus as my Savior and as the Lord of my life.”

And for all who can say, “I have put my trust in Jesus, but I’ve lost sight of Jesus as my supreme treasure,” just pray right now, “Jesus, help me trust You like this. Help me see You like this, believing that You are better than the best things this world has to offer.”

In prayer right now, think about all the good things in your life and see Jesus behind every single one of those good things. Praise, adore and worship Him as the Giver. Then as you walk through difficulties and think about things that are not going as planned right now—the way you’re facing need and hunger, being brought low, struggling in various ways—just lay those things before Jesus, saying, “You are my goal. I want to know You. I want to cling to You. I want to trust in You. I want to experience Your joy, peace, gentleness, strength, life and Your love in deeper ways than I ever have.”

Jesus, we praise You as the One Who is better than the best things this world has to offer, the One Who gives good things. We say together as Your people today, “You are our goal. We want to know You. We want to glorify You. And we trust that as we do, we will experience all these things in You. We will experience joy, peace, gentleness, strength, life and love, then ultimately we will experience contentment in You.” God, I pray this over every single person listening right now. I pray for Your contentment in their lives as they find supreme treasure in You. In Jesus’ name we pray, for His sake we pray. Amen.

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