

Living the Good Life  
Philippians 4.10-13

**Intro:**

I have truly enjoyed this summer in Philippians. I'm finding over and over that Paul's letter is re-shaping the way I think about how I live this Christian life! God has made a way for us to exist in communion with him, and we can truly have a joyous existence with Him! Most of this series has been about how to live this life. In recent weeks, it's been about how to live in the now and with a forward focus, not dwelling in our past successes or failures, but moving on. Then, we talked about Living Up as citizens of Heaven in the "already but not yet." And last week, we looked at the quite famous passage concerning God's peace, and we hopefully realized that a peaceful life is possible, and how to have that!

Well, it's interesting to me this week, I've entitled the sermon "Living the Good Life," and there is a huge market for books dealing with how to live a good life: "Your Best Life NOW!" "Love Your Life" "Reposition Yourself: Living Life Without Limits" "The Secret" "Awaken the Giant Within You" "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" "The Power of Positive Thinking" "Change Your Thoughts, Change Your Life: Living the Wisdom of the Tao." Even the theme of Oprah.com is "Live Your Best Life."

We are hungry for a good life! None of us want to live life in despair, depressed, broke, unhappy, sick, or in constant conflict! So it's no wonder there is such a strong niche for these types of books and other mediums to help sooth our souls! The problem is, all of these "Helps" inevitably leave us wanting! Though all of these books are out, though Oprah is chanting the mantra of "Live Your Best Life," people still want a better life!

I regularly subscribe to a podcast entitled "The White Horse Inn," and their most recent podcast was entitled "Boredom and Entertainment." First of all, I highly recommend this podcast! These guys are great. Anyway, the thesis of this podcast is basically that in spite of every type of entertainment, every gadget that is supposed to make life easier, we are still wholly discontented and bored!

The books aren't doing it, the gadgets are satisfying, the overwhelming amount of OPTIONS in every circumstance, does not create in us a deep sense of contentment, or peace, or satisfaction! Targeted marketing may sell us a product promising to ease our needs, but in the end, the product is inadequate to deal with our human desire for more.

### **Transition:**

Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians having endured more in his Christian life than any of us could even hold a candle to. Imprisonment, literal chains, beatings, starvation, shipwrecks, snake bites, persecution by fellow believers, plenty, prominence, wealth, religious clout, "righteousness" under the law. But in all of that, I believe that he realized that life is empty outside of Christ! Additionally, I think we'll see that Paul relinquishes his own power over circumstances when he boldly confesses that he indeed is dependent on the power of Jesus to exist and to survive!

**CP: The Secret to living a good life is not found in the acquisition of various things: money, job, status, the picturesque wife & kids. Rather, the secret to living a good life is in learning to be content in whatever place God has you!**

### **Read: Philippians 4:10-13**

**\*Precursor – V. 10 is a setup for next week's sermon. Paul is establishing his thanks for the generous heart that the Philippians had for him and his ministry. In fact, v.11-13 are parenthetical thought. But that where we focus this week, in the parenthesis. V.10 will return as part of next week.**

### **I. We *learn* to be content: v.11-12**

- **Content – this is the only place in the NT which uses this term.**
- **Contentment is more than just satisfaction in situation. It is a deep sense of knowing that Christ is our sufficiency! It's a sense of serenity dependent on Jesus Christ, not on the acquisition of stuff or the rise of status.**

- **This is an active discipline. Paul didn't become content through osmosis, rather he LEARNED TO BE content!**
  - **Martin: "He has learned the secret of deep peace based on detachment from his outward circumstances. In whatever conditions of life he finds himself, he discovers the will of God for his situation."**
- **Contentment does not come upon us, rather we learn to be content.**
- **My kid does not understand the value of contentment! She knows that if she asks, she gets. If she doesn't get, she asks again, and louder. She hasn't LEARNED that her contentment is not based on something she can hold in her hand. In truth, within 5 minutes, she is wholly *discontented* again.**
- **This contentment is learned in every situation of life!**
  - **Paul: *I know how to be brought low, how to abound***
  - ***I have learned the secret of facing plenty and in hunger, abundance and in need.***
- **White Horse Inn: In our technological age, with everything available in an instant and getting faster, we are thirsty in the rain! While water is all around us, we can't seem to get a satisfying drink!**

**We depend on an internal feeling of "a good feeling" to prove our contentment, but everything that provides that good feeling leaves us wanting for more, and requiring another fix to feel good again!**

**\*\*\*Music, media, over-indulgence of food, money, stuff, even church (that's why we seek out bigger better best...)**
- **This is an active discipline, and a learned position for us! We don't become content, but we learn to be content!**
  - **Patience**
  - **Process**
  - **Trial & Error**
  - **Success & Failure**

## II. We learn a "SECRET": v.12

- This is also the only place in the NT that you will find this phrase.
- Paul is harkening to our pagan propensity to look for a secret way of finding happiness!
  - Martin: “This turn of phrase uses a technical expression of the pagan mystery cults which employed it of the initiation of their adherents.”
- Such is the quest of man! **WHAT IS THE SECRET?**
  - We love to ask these man-centered questions so that we have a sense of input and power in this entire story – between us and God!
- But Paul is saying that there *IS* indeed a secret to be learned, but it’s not found in your inner self! It’s found completely in contentment in Jesus!

This takes us to the other highly quoted verse of Philippians.  
 V. 13 – “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

### III. The Secret is Jesus! v. 13

- The secret to facing every situation in your life is your wholly contentment in your faith and relationship with Jesus Christ!
- While all of the modern world wants to sell you on a false hope of security for life circumstances, Paul says that the only way to face life is in Jesus!
  - “I can do all things through *Christ* who strengthens me (gives me strength to live through it all)
- I’ve never heard this verse taught or quoted to give precedence to Jesus! Rather, it’s always used to give priority to us! **I can do all things** (oh yeah, Jesus will help me do all things)
- But what Paul is telling us is not that Jesus has made a way for us to be super-human, but that our source of strength and power to survive famine and plenty, highs and lows, (notice the merisms – the polar extremes meant to include the entirety of everything in between) that our strength to live

- through all of that is learned in our contentment in Jesus Christ – (who strengthens me)
- The preposition *through* gives merit to this view of Phil 4:13 – to say “through Christ who strengthens me” give emphasis on this half of the statement.
    - Replace “I can do all things” with any statement:
      - I can love my wife
      - I can read my Bible
      - I can love my neighbor
      - I can endure suffering
      - I can handle wealth
    - The fact that Paul uses these merisms, and that he concludes with the term “I can do ALL THINGS” gives a broad stroke to situations, but leaves the emphasis of this passage as: *THROUGH JESUS!*
  - That is the secret to be learned!
    - It’s not a list of 7 steps to the Life you want
    - It’s not adherence to Oprah’s book club, magazine, and religious commitment to reading her website.
    - It’s not the practice of the Tao, or found in meditation or Zen.
    - We don’t DREAM more and confess more contentment!
  - We LEARN THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT – That in EVERY situation, we are content because we can do all things, we can be in every situation THROUGH Jesus Christ who strengthens us to do so!

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**\*This is living the Good life! The life that is content in the place God has you, whether good or bad, tough or easy! God’s got you there and HIS strength brings you through it.**

## **Conclusion:**

God help us not humanize the message of the Cross! I don't preach that Jesus died so that I can claim gold out of Heaven. I don't preach that Jesus died so that you can have a perfect existence before He returns. I believe that in the "already but not yet," in the here and now, there are times of great need and times of great plenty. There are times of great joy and great pain. I believe that for some, there seem to be more severity on either side of the coin – some always seem to have more struggle while some always seem to have more abundance.

But what Paul is challenging us to do is to LEARN that in every situation, our contentment is not to be wrapped up in the present, but to LEARN that our contentment is in knowing that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, that we can live through each of those situations through the power of Jesus! Regardless of our situation, we find that **inner peace**, that **deep source of strength** in knowing that God has us right where he has us and that he is helping us right then!