Wilderness/Promise #13 Pastor Rick Baker

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The Promise that “**I Can Do Everything**...”

*From the wilderness of discontent into the mystery of contentment*

Phil. 4:10-13

Has contentment completely leaked out of the hydrogen-filled balloon of your life this past couple of years or so and you find yourself or have found yourself seriously emotionally sagging and saying, “*I can’t do this”?*

*“I (you) can do everything through him who gives me (you) strength.” (4:13)*

What does “everything” encompass here? What did Paul mean when he wrote this available promise to the Philippians? [comic] – *it’s popular use is not so much its accurate meaning!*

*Let’s do some investigation into the background and context of this promise that Paul was embracing...*

The apostle Paul received word that the first church in Europe (Philippi 51AD), 11 years later had been facing an extended period of time under stress, and the possibility of discontent was threatening to undermine their usefulness to Christ. Opposition/conflict (Phil 1:28-30), poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-2), disunity (Phil 2:14; 4:2)

Paul was in “lockdown”, Roman house arrest but productive (1:12-14; 4:22)—“insula”—disease-infested/ fire traps

[picture –insula dell’ara coeli 2nd C (island of heavenly/sky altar)—in the shadow of the Vittoriano (1885-1935)]

**None of the apple of God’s eye, neither his church, nor his apostle were in comfortable settings and situations...**

**Into this moment the Philippians send Paul a gift to support him...** *THANK YOU, but (teaching time)—that’s not what makes me content (I was entirely content before I received this generous, sacrificial gift) concerned that the critics might think he founded churches to support his life!!!*

*WHY CONTENTMENT (satisfaction, joy) MATTERS, HOW IT RELATES TO THE PROMISE PAUL COMMENDS TO THEM AND HOW WE CAN HAVE IT...*

Paul says, “*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances*...” (4:11) How about you? Want to know how?

Rock solid truth foundation🡪 Phil 1:20 – “... *that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always,* ***be exalted*** *in my body, whether by life or by death.” Col. 1:16 – “...all things have been created by Him and for Him.*

1. You have been made for Christ, not for comfort and convenience.

In fact, “*I have learned the* ***secret*** *of being content in any and every situation...plenty or in want.”* (4:12)

No secret to being content with plenty! Or is there? Perhaps the hardest contentment of all?

**KEY CHALLENGE**: so many earthly niceties in the modern west in competition with contentment in/with Christ—imperils our spiritual lives to be in proper shape to accept hardship

Paul had reconciled, “*whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”* (3:7-9)

The centre/ secret of Paul’s teaching here on contentment isn’t found in plenty, because he has a “secret” stash in his life that doesn’t have any connection to the material at all.

*To live is Christ; to die is gain.* (1:21)

1. You have been saved to desire and value Christ more than anything and find and enjoy fullness of contentment in Him alone—communion with Him—"He has made me consider every other thing a net loss in my life compared to the gain I have by having Christ.”

**Here’s the miracle promise**—you have the same enabling power in you as I have in me to give you the power to have your contentment in life completely disconnected from your situation or circumstance—*“ I can do (am empowered) all things through Him who gives me strength/strengthens me.”* (4:13; cf. Col. 1:28-29)

1. You are divinely empowered to do the things God calls you to do (what He wills; He enables), and particularly to be able to have consistent contentment regardless of the situation or circumstances.

Freed entirely from material ambitions so that you can glorify God with your unshakeable generosity—to loose yourself from any other affections than Christ IS THE MYSTERY OF CONTENTMENT that Christ empowers to happen—you can do the impossible; be content with or without!

Further evidence that God is really at work in us 🡪 our sanctification—our progress toward “pure and blameless” filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ to the glory and praise of God (1:9-11)

* Paul refused to find contentment in the gift.
* The Philippians refused to allow the material to have a hold on them and found their contentment in investing in the gospel.