

This morning is my final sermon in Philippians; next week will be a summary and testimony time. Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a church in Philippi that he had started. This morning, I will be in 4:10-20, but before we read, let me ask you a question:

What if I told you that it is easier than you think to be a millionaire? What if there were six simple steps that you could follow that would bring you in seven figures in income? And what if I told you that you could achieve this while only working 10 hours a week from home? Just read my book (real book titles): How to become a millionaire: Easy proven methods to rocket your income to the next level. How to become a millionaire online. How to become a millionaire in 12 months. How to become a millionaire (subtitle: If a black guy can do it, so can you). The automatic millionaire: a powerful one-step plan to live and finish rich. And How to become a multi-millionaire.

What's that? You're too spiritual for that kind of get-rich-quick scheme? Don't worry – I can give you the Christian version too. Pray this prayer – Lord, enlarge my territory – and God will bless you. Speak out your “I am's” and good things will come your way. Claim Proverbs 10:22, that the blessing of the Lord makes a person rich, and just see what God does for you. Repeat these promises after me and believe in faith that great wealth will soon be yours. Read my books: Becoming a Millionaire God's Way. Or the ever popular “You need more money.”

(slide) Does this line of thinking sound familiar? Take a step back and think with me: what is underneath all of these promises and messages? The obvious subtle message underneath all of these books is that **your life will be better if you have more money**. And it's not just the world that is chasing after riches. The church often buys into it, with prosperity gospel teachers spinning the message that you will be rich if you just believe and claim the promises of God.

And this doesn't even take into account all of the other ways our world is trying to convince you that you need bigger, better, and more. We are continually being marketed: diets where you can eat tasty food and lose weight. Foolproof ways to a better marriage and the best sex of your life. Technological device that will transform the way you live. Think of how we are wired to be dissatisfied with our lives by advertisers – you need this car or this beer or this gadget to make your life better.

What is all of this marketing doing to you? Think of the dissatisfaction, the depression, and the envy that is breeding inside of us.

Proverbs 14:30 - A heart at peace gives life to the body, but **envy rots** the bones.

Here we are, living in the wealthiest nation in history, and so many of us are depressed, envious, running ourselves ragged and never feeling like we have enough or even that we are enough. **And think about what this does not just to individual people but to our world.** Marketers are creating a world of consumers who can not stop accumulating more while people around them live in poverty.

But what if there is something better than being rich? What if the answer is NOT in having a higher paying salary and more money in the bank? What if there is a way to not be forever consumed by an insatiable need for more money or the latest and greatest stuff? What if it is possible to create a world of givers and not takers?

The good news is that it is possible, and the passage today is all about how to live in that place. Listen to Paul's words to the Philippians:

Philippians 4:10-23 - *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength. ¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. ¹⁸ **I have received full payment and even more;** I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ **And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. ²² All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*****

What if the thing your heart really needs is not more money, not the latest “get rich quick” scheme, but contentment? What if what you really need is not to chase after

money but to learn the secret of being content in every situation, whether well fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want, whether you are a millionaire or living paycheck to paycheck?

This passage is very similar to last week. Last week was when Paul told the Philippians: Do not be anxious about anything. Tie your emotional life to the Lord, not to your circumstances. He is near. Rejoice in who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised. Lift up your anxieties, your requests, to him, with thanksgiving. And He will give you peace.

And in this passage, Paul goes on to tell them that there is a way to be content in every circumstance. There is a God, and His strength will enable me to face whatever comes my way. And He will meet all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

So let's look at three reasons from this passage why pursuing contentment is better than pursuing riches:

1) You can do everything with God's strength in you

Philippians 4:12-13 - I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

I hear this verse and I immediately think of how most of us have been led to believe that the secret to being content is just having enough money: I can do everything through money that gives me strength and freedom. As long as I have a little more, I will be able to rest contented and have the freedom to do whatever I please. But money may allow you to do more things, but it can not give you contentment. In fact, it often just gives more headaches and problems. Paul says that the secret to being content is knowing that he can do everything and face every challenge or situation through God's strength in Him.

Philippians 4:13 is of course best known as the motivational verse of athletes everywhere. But the verse is not really about playing QB in the NFL. In the context it's about being able to be content no matter the circumstances. To not be anxious for more or less, not be depressed or envious, but to be okay with one's situation in life. Now, being content is not the same as being complacent. Remember Philippians 3 and how Paul said that he is pressing on with all his might to know

Christ more. He is never satisfied with where he is spiritually. And being content is not the same as being lazy.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 - *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a **burden to** any of **you**. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."*

But he is content in his circumstances. He is not motivated by money, but by knowing Christ. He can do everything through His strength, not on the basis of his bank account.

Paul also talks about contentment in another letter:

1 Timothy 6:6-11 - *But godliness with **contentment** is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. We have so much, and so many choices, but we are miserable as a country. Meanwhile, many poorer countries are much more content and happy, despite not having much. Why? Because money does not deliver on what it promises. It will not give contentment. But godliness with contentment is great gain – mega-wealth in the Greek. Pursuing God and being content with what you have and what you own is great gain. It is worth more than any amount of money. Money will not deliver on its promises, but God's power can do more than we could ever imagine in us:

Ephesians 3:20-21 - *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory*

in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Do you believe this? True freedom and peace is not found in having more money or more stuff. It is found in knowing God and going after Him, not money.

2) God will meet all your needs

Philippians 4:10-20 - *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances... I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Paul wants them to know that he is grateful for their gifts, and he encourages them that God will meet all of their needs. Some of you are parents. My children do not need to worry because they know they have parents who will meet their needs. They do not worry that there will be food on the table and clothing on their back and transportation to school or other activities. How much more can we rest, knowing that we have a Father in heaven who owns everything.

Ephesians 1:3 - *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

When we are adopted into God's family, we become heirs. All that is His is ours. The one who owns heaven loves us and will care for us. I belong to a good and loving Father, the God of the universe, who owns everything and loves me. He is all-powerful, and owns everything. And so I have everything I need. Not everything I want, but everything I need.

Romans 8:31-32 - *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

He gave us His Son when we were His enemies, rebels against Him. Now that we are His children, we can trust that He will give us all we need.

3) It is better to give than to receive

What happens when you are content, trusting that God will strengthen you for every circumstance and meet all of your needs? You are freed up to be generous. In fact, it is the generosity of the Philippians that gives Paul such great joy in this passage:

Philippians 4:10, 14-17 - *I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it... Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.* ¹⁵ *Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;* ¹⁶ *for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.* ¹⁷ *Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.*

Paul is thrilled that they are generously taking care of his needs. Not because he is in need, but because of what it means for them. He references how they have taken care of him in the past, something that he talked about in 2 Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 - *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.* ² *Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.* ³ *For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,* ⁴ *they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.* ⁵ *And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will*

I want you to be generous, not because I need or want your money, but because I want you to be generous people, because life to the full is found in being a giving and generous person, not in being a taker, and few things are more beautiful than a community of givers who take care of each other and look out for each other's interests. We have already seen how it is God and not money who will take care of our needs, and that we have a good Father in heaven who will strengthen us to meet every challenge that comes our way. And now we see that their generosity is **credited to their account**. What does that mean? What kind of account is he referring to? I think he is referring to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21:

Matthew 6:19-21 - *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.* ²⁰ *But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where*

thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You are content with what you have because your eye is on the world to come. You are accumulating true riches that can not be destroyed. If this world is all there is, then by all means get all you can. But if God is real, and heaven is real, then no treasure of this world can compare with the treasure to come. So live generously.

When you know God cares for you, you can be generous. What a testimony it is when people go beyond what is expected in their giving, when people are extravagantly generous. As Jesus said, it is better to give than to receive.

*Acts 20:32-35 - "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more **blessed to give than to receive.**'"*

It is better because you see that God will meet your needs. You can rest content in His love for you. You make a difference in the lives of others. You get the gospel of God's grace. And as you give, He will provide what you need so that you can give more.

*2 Corinthians 9:6-15 - Remember this: Whoever sows **sparingly** will also reap **sparingly**, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; **his righteousness endures forever.**" ¹⁰ Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. ¹² This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of **thanks to God.** ¹³ Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone*

else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

The world is trying to convince you that contentment will be found when you have enough money. But it is a lie. It leads to dissatisfaction, envy, and depression. Contentment is found in trusting that you can meet every challenge with God's strength in you and knowing that you have a Father in heaven who will meet all your needs. It comes from knowing that you are an heir and will enjoy heavenly treasure for all eternity. The more you trust this, the more you will be freed up to be generous. Let's be the most generous community around, that He might receive the glory that He deserves.