The Secret of Enough

Philippians 4:10–13

Big idea: Contentment isn't having everything I want; it's discovering that Christ is enough in whatever I have.

Contentment defined: *Contentment is a settled confidence that Christ is enough, so that my peace no longer rises and falls with my circumstances.*

Three points:

1. **Paul had it all** (and it wasn't enough)
2. **Paul lost it all** (and found Someone better)
3. **Paul learned the secret** (and so can we)

INTRODUCTION: The Trouble With Secrets

Let me tell you about the best-kept secret in my family. Every family has one. Ours is my grandma Aurelia's gorditas.

Now, I grew up in Texas, and I'm going to try to describe these to you, but I'll warn you: I'm going to fail. It's been twenty years since I've had one.

Picture a flour tortilla, but thick. Soft and pillowy, the kind that bends instead of cracking. A little sweet, like it couldn't decide if it was breakfast or dessert. She cooked them on a comal, and she didn't pull them off until the edges had blistered and burned in a few spots. Little dark freckles. That's where the flavor was.

She'd stack them in a basket under a dish towel. You'd lift the towel and the steam would hit your face. Warm. Toasty. You'd tear one open, and the butter would just *disappear* into it. You ate the first one standing up in the kitchen. You ate the second before you made it to the table. Nobody counted, because there was always another one in the basket.

I can still smell it. Twenty years, and I can smell it.

And here's the problem. I have *tried*. I've bought tortillas from restaurants, from tortillerías, from a lady at a farmers market who swore hers were "just like grandma's." Close. Never hers.

Because grandma Aurelia never wrote it down. Not on a card, not on the back of an envelope. It was all in her hands. And when she died, the recipe went with her.

That's the best-kept secret in my family. And no matter how badly I want it, I can't go get it.

Here's what I've noticed about secrets. There are two kinds. There are secrets that are hidden on purpose: the formula, the password, the surprise party.

And there are secrets that are hidden **because they're hard**. Nobody's hiding them. They're just difficult to find, and harder to keep.

The secret of a good marriage isn't hidden. The secret of raising kids, of real friendship, of finishing well: none of those are locked in a vault. Most of us have been *told* the answer. We just haven't *lived* it. The secret is hard because it can't be handed over. **It has to be learned.**

Paul uses that exact word in verse 12. Listen: *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation."*

The Greek word for secret is *mueo*. It's the language of initiation, of being let in on something. It's what you'd say about someone who had been taken behind the curtain.

And notice what he says: **"I have learned."** He didn't wake up content. He wasn't born with it. He's a man who had to be *taught*, and the tuition was expensive.

Now, we've spent several weeks in this series talking about giving, about how much is enough, about open hands. You've heard good teaching. So tonight I'm not going to give you another list of reasons to be generous.

Tonight I want to introduce you to a man who *lived* it. I want to show you his résumé, and then his scars, and then his secret. Because if anybody had a right to say "I know what it's like to have everything," it's Paul. And if anybody could say "I know what it's like to lose everything," it's also Paul.

And he says: *Christ was enough in both.* Let's go meet him.

POINT ONE: Paul Had It All *(And it wasn't enough.)*

Let's talk about what Paul actually had, because I think we skim past it.

Paul tells us himself in Philippians 3. He gives his résumé, and it's staggering. But let me slow down and unpack it, because I want you to find yourself somewhere in it.

He had pedigree. "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews." That's not a throwaway line. That's *family name*. That's "my people have been in this for generations." Some of you grew up with a last name that opened doors. Some of you grew up with a last name that closed them. Paul had the first kind.

He had education. Acts 22: he studied "at the feet of Gamaliel." Gamaliel wasn't a local unknown pastor. He was the most respected rabbi of his generation, a grandson of the great Hillel, according to tradition. Studying under Gamaliel was the first-century equivalent of an Ivy League doctorate *and* being mentored by the most famous professor in the building. Paul wasn't just smart. He was *credentialed*.

He had reputation. Galatians 1:14: "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age." Translation: *I was the rising star.* He was on the fast track. When Paul walked into a room, people made space. Letters of authority from the high priest. Doors opened.

He had public praise. People listened when he spoke. He was a gifted teacher, a sharp mind, a man with a future. He had applause, and he knew what it felt like.

He had status and security. A Roman citizen, which in that world was like holding a platinum passport. Respect from the Jewish establishment. Access to the powerful.

Now stop for a second. Which of those is yours?

Maybe you're not the pedigree person. Maybe you're the **credentials** person: the degree, the license, the title. Maybe you're the **reputation** person: you're the one people call, the one who "has it together." Maybe you're the **applause** person: you light up when you're appreciated, and you quietly collapse when you're not. Maybe you're the **security** person: the savings account, the retirement number, the house paid off, the plan.

Here's the thing: Paul had every one of those. And what does he say about them? Philippians 3:7: *"Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."*

Do you hear it? Paul doesn't say, "I had a rough life and found comfort." He says, "I had **everything** the world says makes you enough, and I wasn't."

Paul knew something most of us won't learn until it costs us: **you can have everything you want and still not have enough.**

Because "enough" was never a number. It was never a degree, or a title, or a reputation, or a bank balance. If it were, Paul would have found it in Jerusalem. He'd have been the most content man alive. Instead, he was the man dragging Christians out of their homes, **certain he was right and empty inside.**

That's the first thing the secret teaches us. **Having never made Paul content.** And if having didn't do it for him, it won't do it for us.

Which sets up an uncomfortable question: *What if the problem was never how much I have?*

POINT TWO: Paul Lost It All *(And found Someone better.)*

Then Paul meets Jesus on the road to Damascus, and everything he held changes hands. Let me read you the cost, because it's easy to say "he gave things up" and not feel the weight.

He lost his standing. The Pharisees who admired him now wanted him dead. The man who carried letters of authority became a man who was *hunted*.

He lost his comfort. Listen to 2 Corinthians 11. Five times he received thirty-nine lashes. Three times he was beaten with rods. Once stoned. Three times shipwrecked, a night and a day adrift at sea. "In danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own people." Sleepless nights. Hunger. Thirst. Cold. Exposure.

He lost his reputation. The rising star became the scandal. People who once respected him now whispered about him. Even some *Christians* doubted him at first.

He lost his security. He's writing this letter, remember, from **prison**. He doesn't know if he'll get out. Some of you have had a bad month. Paul is chained to a Roman guard writing a thank-you note.

And *that's* the context for verse 10. The Philippians sent him a gift, and he says, "I rejoiced greatly." Not because he was desperate. Verse 11: "I am not saying this because I am in need."

Think about that. A man with nothing, a man in chains, says, *"Don't feel sorry for me. I'm not saying this because I need anything."*

Either Paul is in denial, or Paul found something the rest of us haven't. So what did he find?

Go back to Philippians 3:8. It's the verse right after "I consider it all loss." Look at what he says: *"I consider everything a loss* ***because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord****, for whose sake I have lost all things."*

He doesn't say he *lost* and was left with nothing. He says he lost things and **gained Christ.** Paul didn't stop wanting. He changed what he wanted. His appetite got a new object.

And here's where I want to connect this to something Jesus said, because I think it's the engine under the whole thing.

Mark 10. Peter, who is always the one who says what the rest of us are thinking, blurts it out: *"We have left everything to follow you!"* You can hear it: *So… what do we get?*

And Jesus doesn't scold him. He says: *"No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age… and in the age to come, eternal life."*

A hundredfold.

Now, I'll be honest. For years, I read that and I thought: *Is Jesus offering a trade? Is this a spiritual stock tip?* But look at Paul. Paul is the walking proof of what Jesus meant.

Paul lost a synagogue. He gained a family spread across the Roman Empire: Timothy, Titus, Lydia, Priscilla, Aquila, the Philippian church that sent him a gift in prison. He lost a seat in the Sanhedrin. He gained a seat at the table of the King. He lost the applause of men. He gained the "well done" he'd hear in eternity.

And here's what that does for the soul. When you *know* that what you lose for Christ is not lost, you can hold everything with an open hand. You can **give** without panic. You can **lose** without despair. You can **wait** without bitterness. Because the ledger isn't closed. The best accounting hasn't been done yet.

That's why Paul can say it. He's not stoic. He's not suppressing his feelings. He just genuinely believes the math of the kingdom. **What he gave up, God keeps. What he lost, God multiplies.**

So the question for us isn't just "Can I live with less?" It's "Do I believe Jesus is telling the truth about what's coming?" Because open hands aren't the result of **willpower**. They're the result of **confidence.** You can only open your hands if you believe the Giver has more.

POINT THREE: Paul Learned the Secret *(And so can we.)*

Now we're back at the verse. Verse 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."

Look at the structure. Paul isn't saying, "I got good at poverty." He's saying, "I've been in **both** rooms." Hungry and full. Chains and freedom. Respect and ridicule.

And the secret works in **both.** That's important. Because most of us assume contentment is for people with too little. But the truth is it's just as hard, maybe harder, to be content with *plenty*. Plenty tempts you to think you've *earned* it, or that you *need* it, or that you need *more*.

So what's the secret? Verse 13, the verse we put on coffee mugs:

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Here's what's wild. We've all quoted this at a basketball game or a job interview. "I can do all things!" But in context, what's "all this"? **Being content.** *Being hungry and being full.* It's not a promise that you can win the game. It's a promise that you can **lose** the game and still be okay.

Paul's secret is not a technique. It's a **Person.**

Which means contentment isn't something you *achieve*. It's something you *receive*, daily, from Christ. It's not "I can do all things because I'm tough." It's "I can face all things because **He's with me in it.**"

So let me make it practical. Three habits of a content heart. Take these home.

1. Remember what you've been given.

Contentment starts with memory. The discontented heart has a short memory. Paul's letter is full of "remember." Do you want to know the quickest way to become content? Take ten minutes and write down everything God has done that you did not earn. Salvation. Family. The people who stayed. The prayer you forgot you prayed that He answered anyway.

2. Loosen your grip on what He's given.

Open hands, not clenched fists. Practically, that might mean giving something away that you actually *want*. Not leftovers. Something that costs you. Generosity isn't the *result* of contentment only. It's also the **practice** that trains it. Every time you give, you rehearse the secret: *I don't need this to be okay. Christ is enough.*

3. Rest in the One who is enough.

Don't just stop wanting. **Replace** the wanting. If you try to kill desire, you'll fail. Paul didn't kill his. He *redirected* it to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. So ask yourself: Where do I run when I'm anxious? Where do I go when I'm bored? What's the first thing I check when I want to feel okay? Redirect that to Him.

HEART QUESTION & RESPONSE

So let me bring it home with the question we started with.

Could I be content even if God doesn't give me more?

Not "if God gives me enough." Not "if God gives me what I asked for." If **He doesn't give me more**, if the raise doesn't come, if the diagnosis doesn't change, if the relationship doesn't heal, if the thing I've been praying for stays just out of reach.

Could Jesus still be enough?

Paul says yes. And not as a theory. He says it from a prison cell, with a résumé he burned and a future he couldn't see.

Some of you came in tonight carrying a longing. You're not sure you'll get what you want. Let me tell you something I've learned the hard way: **the things we chase to feel "enough" were never big enough to hold us.** Only Christ is.

Big idea: Contentment isn't having everything I want; it's discovering that Christ is enough in whatever I have.

Let's pray, and I want to invite you to do one honest thing. In the quiet, name the thing you've been saying "if only" about. *If only I had this. If only they'd change that.* Name it. And then, with your hands open on your lap, say to the Lord: *"Jesus, even if You don't give me that, You are enough."*

You don't have to feel it yet. Paul said he *learned* it. Ask Him to teach you.

Closing prayer:

Lord, we confess we've been looking for "enough" in all the wrong places. Teach us Paul's secret. Open our hands. Be our portion. And when we have little or when we have much, let us say with Him, "I can do all this through You who give me strength." Amen.