

# The Christian Arsenal

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## PHILIPPIANS 4:1-23

Today we conclude our study in the **Book of Philippians**. I hope we're all closer to learning the secret of "how to have joy no matter what" today than when we began this study.

You know, the older we get, the sweeter it is to have joy.  
We live in a rather joyless society, don't we?

Each one of us in this room has known heartache. **Heartaches come in different forms to different people.**

Some of us have heard the doctor say, "I'm so sorry, but it looks like you have cancer."

Or... "I'm so sorry, but the injury is so severe, he'll never walk again."

Or... "I hate to tell you, but your mother (or your father or your husband or your child) has just died."

Or...some of us have heard the court hand down a sentence that will separate us from our dear loved one for a long time.

Or...we've heard someone we love say, "I don't love you anymore...I don't want to be married to you any longer."

Or... "I don't want to be your friend any longer."

Or...we've heard a child say, "I'm going my own way. What you and Dad have taught me all these years...well, I'm not really into that anymore."

Or...we've heard an employer say, "We really don't need you here anymore."

**Or we've heard something equally as disappointing and equally as devastating!**

What do we do? How do we handle that? When the circumstances of this world come against us  
are we shaped by the pressures from the world?  
or are we shaped by the promises from the Word?

**In other words, what mold do we conform to?**

How it must grieve the heart of God to see His children running to and fro, here and there, looking for the answers when He's already given us the answers in His precious Word!

**Let's look at  
Philippians 4:1...**

Paul is saying, **"In light of all I've said...stand firm in the Lord."**

Notice in this verse the terms of affection Paul uses toward these believers...

**"my beloved brethren..."**

**"my joy and crown..."**

**"my beloved..."**

It's as though Paul couldn't say strongly enough **"I really care about you."**

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Paul was sitting in a Roman prison, yet his heart was with the Philippians. He loved them. He wanted what was best for them.

Having said that, let me say that sometimes love must be tough...sometimes love means having to say, *"There is a problem in your life, and you need to address that problem."*

## Verses 2-3...

Now, when I read these verses this week, I couldn't help but wonder how these two women felt when this letter was read in their church one Sunday morning.

I mean, think about it...news has reached the congregation that a letter from Paul has been received and it would be read the very next time the saints at Philippi gathered together...and here sat these two women, just soaking in this wonderful letter from Paul and suddenly, he addresses them...**by name!**

## *I imagine Euodia and Syntyche sunk a little lower in their seats, don't you?*

Paul didn't choose to tell us what the specific problem was between these two women...but whatever it was, it warranted an admonition from the Apostle Paul.

I believe the "true comrade" mentioned in **verse 2** was Epaphroditus. Paul sent the letter by him, and Paul wants Epaphroditus and Clement to help these two women to overcome their differences.

In fact, Paul wants the **whole** Philippian church...  
**all** the Philippian believers...  
**all** his fellow-workers whose names are in the Book of Life...  
to help bring harmony out of disharmony!

What a gracious man Paul was!

Paul didn't **beat these two women over the head.**  
Paul didn't **go into great detail about their disagreement!**

Paul **appointed others to help them**...and Paul pointed out that these two women had supported him...they **had shared his struggle**...and not only that,

Paul brought the attention of all those who were hearing this letter being read that **their names were written in the Book of Life!**

I believe Paul wanted them to remember that disharmony in the church isn't something to **gloat over**, or to **gossip about**...it's something to **get straightened out!** And he reminded them of their fellowship with Christ and with each other! All of them were written in the Book of Life!

These three verses of **chapter 4** seem to be at least **the beginning of a conclusion**... Paul seems to be drawing this letter to a close and suddenly, the Holy Spirit of God tells Paul to share a few more things...and it's these few more things that I want us to examine closely today!

**This chapter is so important.**

**This chapter contains a secret...and we all love secrets don't we?**

## Verse 4...

We've talked a lot the past several weeks about how to have joy no matter what! Paul tells us here to

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***“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.”***

When God tells us to do something, He also **enables** us to do it.

Think about it...

When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, He called Lazarus to

“come forth.”

Well, Lazarus had been dead four days! Don't you think Lazarus would have already come forth from the tomb if he could have?

But, Lazarus **did** come forth, because Jesus enabled him to do it!

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stretch forth his withered hand. Well, one think you can't do with a withered hand is stretch it forth! But, he did! **Because Jesus enabled him to stretch it forth...Jesus had healed him.**

Jesus told the lame man to arise and walk and he did! **Because Jesus had healed him!**

**When the Lord commands us to do something we should look upon that as a promise...**

Because we know God isn't going to expect us to do something that is beyond our capacity by His grace to do!

By the way, the fact that Paul rejoiced...**and we should also...**is mentioned no less than **9 times** in this book. And if God's Word gives us the **example** to rejoice and also the **command** to rejoice, then that must mean that He is also going to **enable** us to rejoice!

What are some of the sources of our joy?

**1)** We find joy in **just being alive**...we live, we breathe, we eat, we talk. Just being alive brings us joy!

**2)** We find joy in our **health**...even if our health isn't what it used to be, we still find joy in our health.

**3)** We find joy in **relationships...our families...**

Our children,  
Our grandchildren,  
Our husbands,  
Our parents...

All these relationships bring us great joy, don't they?

**4)** We find joy in **our jobs...**

Those of us who have a career find joy and fulfillment in doing our job well. Those of us who work at home...and that's our career...find joy and fulfillment in doing that well, too.

**5)** We find joy in our possessions...

Now, come on...you know you do...our home, our things...

I believe these are common sources of joy enjoyed by most people, don't you? I'm sure we could name more, but the thing all these have in common is that all of them are fragile...they could be here today and gone tomorrow.

**One phone call could destroy any of these sources of joy, couldn't it?**

So, wouldn't you and I agree that we need a more **permanent**, a more **long-lasting** Source of joy? Something not so temporary? Not so fragile?

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Let me hasten to say there's nothing wrong with finding joy in any of these things we just mentioned. God has given them to us to enjoy, but **God help us if that's the extent of our joy!**

***What is the source of your joy?***

David said, "***Delight yourself in the Lord...***"

Nehemiah said, "***The joy of the LORD is your strength...***"

So, our joy is found...not in our **circumstances**, or our **relationships**, or our **things**, or even our **lives...our joy is in the Lord!**

John Phillips: "The Lord is too wise to make any mistakes, too loving to be unkind, too powerful to be thwarted, and too involved in all that concerns us to be aloof. How can we think of the Lord, and not rejoice?"

***Verses 5...***

How do we **react** to folks around us?

How do we **respond** to folks around us?

We've mentioned this before, but the busy shopping season is coming upon us soon. I want us to covenant together to show forth our "forbearing spirit" to the clerks in the stores. When we shop and the clerks are weary and frazzled and on the verge of being "less than nice," try saying, "I know you must be so tired by the end of the day."

You know, I've done that and I've had folks look at me as though I was the first person all day long to sympathize with them. Let others see that you've been with Jesus. Why? Paul says, "...the Lord is near."

And I believe the hardest people to consistently respond to properly are members of our own family...

I've always intended to do in calligraphy this little quote...

**"The Lord is the Head of this house,  
the unseen Guest at every meal,  
the silent Listener to every conversation."**

The Lord is near! Do we really act like He is?

***Verses 6-7...***

Has it ever really occurred to you that worry is a sin? And it's probably the sin that believers commit more than any other!

God says, "**Be anxious for nothing!**"

Jesus said in **Matthew 6** that if God takes care of the birds of the air, will He not much more do so for us?

And I believe this is what inspired the children's rhyme that Elizabeth Cheney wrote so long ago...

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**“Said the robin to the sparrow:  
‘I should really like to know  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about and worry so.’**

**Said the sparrow to the robin:  
‘I suppose that it must be  
That they have no heavenly Father  
Such as cares for you and me.’”**

I think sometimes we live that way...like we have no heavenly Father who cares for us!  
And He cares so much for us that He has instructed us to let our requests be known to Him **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.**

When Brent was a little boy...around two or three years old, his favorite food was cookies. He called them “cookies”, with the emphasis on “coo.”

No matter where we went, Brent would always ask if there was a cookie around. One day, we went to someone’s home and I warned him strongly not to ask for a cookie. I told him I would see that he got a cookie when we got back home.

Well, when we got there, he didn’t waste any time getting the hostess off in a corner and whispering, “You got a cookie?”

I had to discipline Brent for that. See, I didn’t want him asking someone else for something that it was my pleasure and responsibility to provide. And I believe that’s the way God feels about us. God says, “If you need anything, you are to come to Me. I am your Father.”

**“Thou art coming to a King;  
Large petitions with you bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
You can never ask too much.”**

**Verse 7** is a summary. Paul says if you do all the above, then the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!

**“guard”** is a military term... **“stand guard at the gate...”**

God gives us a peace...**a peace we don’t understand at all...**to stand guard at the gate of our heart and the gate of our mind!

Have you ever felt that peace? Has that peace ever overwhelmed you and you simply couldn’t explain it? Well, that peace is available to all of us who are in Christ Jesus!

**Verses 8-9...**

God’s Word is so practical! We’ve said before that we can’t help ugly thoughts from coming to our mind, but we don’t have to invite them in for tea...we don’t have to entertain ugly thoughts!

I believe that we live in a day when there is more temptation than ever before. Dr. Ellenberg touched on this Sunday night. We hear of the decadence and debauchery of the Roman Empire, but I don’t believe it could begin to hold a candle to what goes on in the United States today!

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When we are bombarded on every hand by temptation of every sort...we must have **some way** to defend ourselves...

TV, movies, even our newspapers and magazines are full of temptations that make our thought life wander...

God knew we would have a problem with that...so He gave us this wonderful check-list and He has called us to **meditate** (and that word means "as a cow chews his cud), to **ponder**, to **dwell** on these things. **When a thought comes to mind I must "Philippians 4:8 it!"**

And if it doesn't meet the test of **Philippians 4:8**, I must replace it with one that does!

**That's why it's so important to fill our minds with Scripture. It's impossible to think of Scripture and to think of things that are contrary to Scripture at the same time!**

Oh, that we would live our lives in such a way that we could say,  
**"Practice the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me."**

**Verses 10-13...**

Paul had just received a gift from the Philippians and he thanked them for it.

But, Paul hastened to add that he was **content** even without it! "I appreciate your gift...your concern, but I could have done without it."

**And Paul said in verse 12, that he had learned a secret! Let's examine this secret!**

No one ever wants to take instruction from someone who doesn't know their subject, do they?

Well, Paul knew exactly what he was talking about!

Paul had lived in prosperity,  
Paul had also done without.

So, we can trust Paul as he instructs us in this secret he learned! This secret centers around "contentment."

## **1) The Secret of Contentment**

The word "**contentment**" is a very interesting word. It actually means "**self-contained**."

This word was used in ancient days of **cities that didn't need to import anything into their boundaries in order to exist.**

They had enough **food and water**.

They had their own **source** of those things.

**You can understand how vital this was back then. If an enemy wanted to capture a city, all he had to do was cut off the food and water supply and starve the people out and they would be forced to surrender.**

But, if the city happened to be a "**contented city**"...a "**self-contained**" city, then that city didn't fall to the enemy! They could hold out until the **enemy** gave up!

**EX: MASADA**

Paul applies this self-containment to the believer.  
Paul applies this self-containment to himself!

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Paul says, "I've learned something. I've discovered that I'm self-contained. I've discovered that within myself there is everything I need."

Paul is saying, "I've learned to live from the **inside out**."

Most of us live from the **outside in**, don't we?

As long as everything is all right on the outside, then we feel all right on the inside.

The peace on the **inside** is determined by the fragile circumstances on the **outside**.

To live that way is to live in absolute bondage. Why? Because we cannot **control** our circumstances. We **all** try, but we can't!

Peter said, "Whatever overcomes us enslaves us."

So, I want to ask you...are you overcome today with your circumstances?

If **my** joy and peace and if **your** joy and peace on the inside is determined by the circumstances on the **outside**, *we're always going to be a mess!*

Paul allowed what was on the inside or shall we say **WHO** was on the inside to dictate how he would respond to the circumstances on the outside.

Paul said, "I'm **content**. I'm **self-contained**."

But, let's see something else about this secret...

## 2) This Secret Must Be Learned...Verse 11...

Now, we aren't really that interested in learning, are we? Learning just sort of turns us off, doesn't it? **Learning takes time and effort and discipline.**

By the way, the tense of this verb "**learned**" is perfect...**continuous action verb**. And it means I **have learned**...I **am learning** and I **will be learning**.

**It's an ongoing learning experience.**

**To further complicate things, this secret can't be taught. I can't teach it to you and you can't teach it to me. We must learn it for ourselves.**

How? Paul said he learned contentment

- by having and by not having
- by abasing and by abounding
- by being filled and by going hungry

**We must experience both in order to learn this secret!**

We have to abound or enjoy prosperity and abundance or be filled so that we can learn that having all our needs met **still** won't take away all our heartache.

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And we have to be abased or get along in humble means, suffer and be hungry so that we can learn that **not** having all our needs met won't take away our joy!

Jesus said, "Even when one has an abundance, his life does not consist of his possessions."

Listen, folks, we'll never know that Jesus is all we **need** until Jesus is all we **have**!

Let's hurriedly see one last and the most important thing about this secret...

### 3) The Secret is Jesus Christ

**Jesus** was the secret of Paul's joy!

**Jesus** was the secret of Paul's contentment!

#### Verse 13...

The secret of our contentment is not that the **doctor never gives us bad news...**

It's not that our **kids never break our heart...**

It's not that our **financial situations never go bad...**

***It's not that our spouse never dies or abandons us...***

The secret of our contentment is that if any of these things happen Jesus Christ will give us the strength to face them! "I can do **all** things..."

**Contentment: Knowing that whatever life throws my way I can face because of the One who lives within me!**

#### Verses 14-18...

Paul goes on and he commends the Philippians for sharing with him.

Paul is more concerned about the blessing of giving that they will receive than he is about the blessing of receiving that he will enjoy...

#### Verse 19...

This is one of my favorite verses!

The Philippian church was probably not wealthy.

Perhaps Paul looked at the gift they had just sent him and he came to the conclusion that they had given out of their **want**.

Perhaps Paul already had been told that their gift was a **real sacrifice** on their part.

And Paul said, "You met **my** need, and God is going to meet **your** need. You met **one** need that I have, but my God will meet **all** your needs. You gave out of your **poverty**, God will supply your needs out of His **riches** in glory."

Warren Wiersbe:

"God hasn't promised to supply all our **'greeds.'** When the **child of God** is in the **will of God**, serving for the **glory of God**, then he will have every need met. Hudson Taylor often said, **'When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will not lack for God's supply.'**"

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## **Verses 20-23...**

Paul ends this great little epistle with his customary benediction and blessing and his greetings to all the saints.

My prayer again is that we have learned more about joy and contentment from this little epistle than we've ever known before. I pray that the secret that Paul had learned and shared with us will be one that you and I will learn as well.