

# Texts from the Cell

8-30-10

## Week 9: The Secret to Contentment

***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. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:12-13***

1. Paul doesn't seem to be talking about happiness the way the world thinks of it; what does he mean by this "secret"?

- ✓ First, go back and re-read Philippians 4:4-8.
  - If Paul was actually living the way he was encouraging the Philippians to live, what words would you use to describe his attitude?
  - From what you are seeing, how would this kind of perspective on things allow Paul to be content even when things were hard?
  
- ✓ Read Hebrews 13:5-6
  - The Hebrew believers had experienced having their money and property taken from them as a form of punishment for being Christians, varying forms of persecution. How would they have responded to this pressure on the church if they had loved money?
  - What is the most important material thing that you possess? How would you feel if it was lost or stolen from you? Compare that to knowing you have God on your side and life in Christ -- which can't be taken from you!

For Christians, this secret of contentment can bring the greatest joy. While the world depends on money and all it can buy to bring happiness, Jesus reminded His followers that earthly treasures will be destroyed by time or stolen (Matt. 7:19-20). The blessings and security of having a relationship with Jesus can bring us contentment through the times when we don't seem to have anything else, and this relationship can never be taken from us against our will.

2. How can I use the strength that Paul talks about to tackle every challenge?

- ✓ Read 1 Chronicles 29:10-14, an account of the great King David's prayer before his death.
  - David begins His prayer by coming to God with an attitude of worship. What kinds of things does David say to describe God?
  - What does God do with what is in His hands in v. 12? Have you ever thought about the God in control of everything in heaven and earth offering to share that with you? What situations would you approach differently if you really had a sense that you could use His strength and power to take it on?
  
- ✓ Please read the prayer in Ephesians 3:16-21
  - How many times do you see the word "power" in this prayer? What do you learn about power here?
  - The word for power in the Greek language that the Bible was written in is, "dunamis." It means the power that lives *inside a thing* because of its nature. Where exactly does Paul pray that power will be active? How does it get there?
  - If we've got a source of power inside us, like the electricity in our house, what do you think you'd need to do to flip the switch and experience it? What kind of things does this passage, or other examples from the Bible, suggest?

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The Good News of Jesus Christ contains all the power of God. The power of God raised Jesus from the dead in victory over sin and death, and this resurrection power of God transforms us into new creations with a new life that is victorious over any circumstances. We can rejoice that we have this power living inside us in the form of the Holy Spirit, who is not just our comforter and teacher as we've studied before, but MIGHTY within us!

3. So if I have a powerful secret as Paul says, what am I supposed to do with it?

- ✓ After receiving the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the apostles were able to heal a crippled man as a sign of the powerful good news. Read their prayer after being threatened for testifying of God's grace and power in Acts 4:29-33.
  - What did the apostles ask God to do?
  - What kind of example does this set for what we could be doing with the power of God to share the joy of the Gospel with a world crippled by sin and death?
  
- ✓ Read 1 Corinthians 4:18-20, which is written by Paul about returning to visit the Corinthian church
  - What does Paul say the arrogant ones in the church do a lot of? Have you come across people like this?
  - What does he say will really demonstrate the kingdom of God? How will the world see this demonstrated in our lives – what could it look like?

Because of our relationship with Christ we have every sure promise of God, who is always for us and our good. This knowledge brings joy and contentment no matter what situation we find ourselves in. How can we *contain* this good news that gives us access to the power of Almighty God? In fact, God gives us this power so that we can show Him to the world – by the way we face every challenge with “power like the working of His mighty strength” (Ephesians 1:19), or are used by God to defy the schemes of Satan and perform miracles or mighty acts.

Close this week in a prayer based on Ephesians 3:15-21. Ask God to help you understand how true riches are found in Christ and how you can share the power of God with a world that desperately needs His transformation.