

Generosity, Abundance, Lack and Contentment

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[0 : 00] Your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4. By the way, I didn't probably do a good job of, usually when we do that we'll dismiss the kids to the class for those kids who are going to go to their class.

What is the ages for that, by the way? It's usually like 4 to 10 or something like that in general. It's kind of up to the parents, but I think that's the target age for the kids class.

And by the way, kids of any age, whether in that age range or not, are welcome in the service, but we have that option available. Alright, so I want to start this morning, before we jump into the scriptures, with a couple of questions, just to get our minds thinking.

A couple of questions. So, just thinking about, really, money. Is there something that you can think about right now that you wish that you had?

Some material possession you wish you had, that would make your life just easier, more comfortable, more satisfying in some kind of way? What is that thing that would make your life just a little bit more comfortable or easier?

[1 : 20] And then another question. Thinking about your income. You know, some people have an income from a job. Some people have a retirement income. Some just make money every once in a while doing chores around the house. But, thinking about how much money you have or make now, what would be an income that would make a substantial improvement to your life?

That you could enjoy life better if you had that different income, if you had that higher income. What would that value be? What would that income be?

With that in mind, you know, there was a study on money and happiness years ago. I'm not sure when it was.

I think probably maybe about 15 years ago. And they asked people to, they were doing a study that was asking people about their level of happiness and their enjoyment of life.

And how much money they made. And one of the questions that they asked was, based on how much money you make now, what would be the amount that you would make that would make you sufficiently happy?

[2 : 33] Sufficiently happy. And it was interesting because, really, that value changed depending on each person. Not just the person, but based on how much money they made now.

So, someone who made about \$30,000 a year, they said that kind of the general consensus or the average was, if I was to make \$75,000 a year, then I would be comfortable, happy with that amount.

But those who made \$100,000 a year, the value that they gave was an average of about \$250,000. So, in both cases, about two or two and a half times the amount that they're making right now.

And so, for most people, the amount of money they make, there's always opportunity. There's always something to chase further out, right?

To provide that happiness, that contentment, that joy. And you know what? Money is not completely inconsequential in our satisfaction or enjoyment of life, is it?

[3 : 47] There are certain problems that money solves. But, the question is, is money enough? And that's the topic today of the passage that we're going to read in Philippians chapter 4.

I'm going to read this passage. We're in Philippians chapter 4. We're going to look at verse 10 through 20. I'm going to go ahead and read through the whole thing. But we're just going to focus on just a few scriptures or a few of the verses in that passage.

And then next week, we're going to look at the rest. So, Philippians chapter 4, starting in verse 10. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now, you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving, but you only.

For even in Thessalonica, you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed, I have all and abound.

[5 : 26] I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. So, in chapter 4 here, Paul has been giving kind of a series of short admonitions, exhortations on living the Christian life.

He talked about anxiety and getting rid of anxiety, and he talked about things that we ought to meditate on. And now he's actually kind of wrapping up his letter to the Ephesians, and he wants to express to them his gratitude and his joy regarding the gift that they gave him.

Now, so he starts off here by saying, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care for me has flourished again, though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

Now, we'll look more at this in detail next week, but according to Paul here, the Philippians had helped him out years ago, he says, at the beginning of the gospel.

[6 : 54] So, in the very beginning of his ministry, they were quite helpful. In fact, he says they were really the only ones that were helping to financially support him, the only church anyway.

But for whatever reason, some time had passed, and now they are sending a gift again. They had sent it through a man named Epaphroditus, and he's kind of sharing his gratitude about that.

But he's also sharing, more than his gratitude, is his joy. And why is he rejoicing? Well, when you get a gift from someone, one of the reasons to rejoice is because, well, you're getting your needs met.

You're having some kind of financial relief. And that can bring joy, right? When you're in somewhat dire straits, when you're really struggling, and somebody gives you a gift, that can bring joy into your life.

But he wants to actually make it clear, that's actually not the reason why I'm expressing joy. In verse 11, he says this, Not that I speak in regard to need, and he's talking about his own need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

[8 : 10] So, he's talking about this, the generosity of the Philippians, and why he is joyful about it. And then, he goes on a little bit of a tangent.

We'll call it an aside. And he talks about why his meeting his own needs is not actually that important to him. Why his focus more is on the value of their generosity to the Philippians themselves.

And you see this a lot in the scriptures, where there is some kind of a tangent, and sometimes it can cause confusion in trying to understand the flow of the ideas that are going on.

So, sometimes it can be helpful. What we're going to do today is we're going to look at mostly verse 11, 12, and 13.

And then next week, we're going to look at verse 10, and then we're going to kind of mostly skip over 11, 12, and 13, and skip right into verse 14. And that's because, like I said, those three verses are kind of an aside about Paul's contentment in his Christian life.

[9 : 21] But sometimes those kinds of asides that we find in the Bible can cause confusion. Sometimes you'll find those asides in a single sentence.

You'll see a sentence, and Paul likes to have what we call run-on sentences. He'll have sentences that last 5, 6, 7, 10 verses, sometimes a single sentence.

Every once in a while, you'll see a parentheses in a sentence. We call that a parenthetical phrase. Now, the parentheses weren't there in the original language.

That's not a part of Greek grammar. But the translators will sometimes add it. It's not always in every translation to try to help you understand, hey, this is a little bit of a tangent.

But if you find those things, if you find those kinds of confusing things, and you want to help yourself remember in the future not to get derailed, you can actually do something like writing in your Bible.

[10 : 17] Does anybody write in your Bible? Good. I think it's healthy and good to write in your Bible. Now, for some people, they might think that's sacrilegious, right? Writing in my Bible. I'm desecrating God's Word.

But you know what? God's Word is not an artifact that we're supposed to revere. We'll put it at a prominent place in our house, and then we give homage to it every once in a while. The Bible is God's Word meant for us to do what?

To read it, to study it, and to understand it. And so anything that you can do with God's Word to help you understand it better is fair game.

Amen? So one of the things that you can do if you find one of these asides in the Bible is you can draw an arrow. Anybody ever done that in the Bible? Anybody draw arrows?

And you can draw an arrow from where kind of the one idea goes off to an aside or some other idea, and then connect the dots.

[11:18] Use that arrow from the end of one verse, and maybe in this case, I would draw an arrow from verse 10, or maybe partway into verse 11, and then on to verse 14.

So here, Philippians 4, he says, at Philippians 4, 11, not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

And then you could skip to verse 14. Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress. And so that helps to convey the idea that Paul is rejoicing in their gift, but not because his need was met, but because of some other reason, which he'll get to in verse 14 and later.

So let's continue on. We're going to, again, focus on Paul's aside here regarding contentment. So these verses in verse 12, sorry, am I getting that right?

Really verse 11 through 13, he's giving the reason why he's not so concerned about their gift meeting his needs. Even though it's beneficial, that's not what his primary concern or his rejoicing is all about.

[12:49] So again, verse 11, not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. He's saying, the reason I'm not so concerned about or rejoicing because your gift met my need is because, hey, I've learned to be content financially, regardless of what degree my needs are met or not.

And then he goes on to elaborate on that. I know how to be abased, he says, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things. So not just financially, but in everything, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Let's talk briefly about what contentment is. And I want to look at two definitions. One is the English definition of contentment, and the other is looking at the Greek word.

Sometimes translations are not always easy to do, they're not always one-to-one. I think contentment is a great word used here in the English. In the English dictionary, it says that contentment is a state of happiness and satisfaction.

A state of happiness and satisfaction. Being satisfied with whatever it might be. And general contentment is just being satisfied with your life.

[14:16] The Greek is pretty similar. It's actually a compound of two words. The first is, it means self. It has to do with the inside of you.

And the second has to do with satisfaction. Something being sufficient or a person being satisfied. And so this word is very similar to our word contentment.

And that it's about from the inside being satisfied. Now I want to talk about two categories of contentment.

And ask a couple of questions. Because when it comes to being content, there are certain things in our life that we can change. Right?

And if we have opportunity to change things in our life, should we? Or should we just be content with how things are?

[15:15] And then, on the other end, the other category, is there are things in our life that we cannot change. Right? And then, in that case, well, what other option do we have?

Right? So let's ask this question. Does contentment mean that we should never have any ambition in life?

Is that what contentment means? That we should never pursue getting ahead in life, improving our station in life? Is it wrong, for example, to ask for a raise at work?

Is that something we shouldn't do? Should we just be content with what we're making right now?

And just, oh, I'm not going to ask for a raise. I'm just going to keep that same salary. I'm, you know, we're making it.

Is it wrong to go find another job if you don't think that they're paying you well enough that you're current one? Should Christians seek to start a business and be successful financially in that business?

[16 : 25] Is that okay for a Christian to do? You know, I think that every person has some kind of internal motivation to be successful in some kind of material way in life.

And here's my question. Where does that motivation come from? Is that a demonic thing that we get from Satan and the demons? Or is there an internal motivation in us that was put there by design from God?

Well, like with many questions about who we are and what we're like, we go back to the book of beginning. The book of Genesis. And what would, there's a passage, we won't turn to it because I think most of us know it, in the very beginning, where God gave the first man and the first woman a mandate.

Many people call it the dominion mandate. And God told Adam and Eve that he wanted them to do something. He wanted them to be fruitful. He wanted them to multiply.

He wanted them to fill the earth and he wanted them to take dominion over it. Now that's going to require some work.

[17 : 42] It's going to require some motivation. It's going to require some level of ambition to bring those things about. And so, I think very clearly that the Bible teaches us that this internal drive to be successful in life is something that we get from God that he put in us, that he designed us for.

And it goes beyond just money, by the way, right? Even looking at this dominion mandate. To be fruitful and to multiply, what does that require? Well, it requires finding a wife, right?

And having children. Growing a family. People have other ambitions beyond just money to have some kind of influence in the world. You know, we see a lot of things that are wrong in the world and we want to have an influence.

We want to be able to change things. We have ambitions for just a healthy life, even physically, right? People have, they exercise and they try to eat right so that they can feel healthy and have a healthy life.

But at the same time, right, there can be pitfalls to our ambition. It can lead to temptation. And it's important that we live a balanced life, prioritizing what is most important.

[19 : 06] In the book of Proverbs, this is Proverbs 23, verse 4, it says this, do not overwork to be rich. Right? You need to put your priorities right.

Hey, getting some additional finances is good. Some more financial security is good. But hey, don't work too much. Because of your understanding, it says, cease.

Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven. Riches isn't everything in life. Now, it has value, but there are certain things that are more valuable, that we ought to give our time and attention to.

Also, ambition can lead to temptations that we ought to be careful about. In 1 Timothy, chapter 6, Paul is giving a warning about the ambition specifically for money.

He says this, 1 Timothy, chapter 6, verse 6, Now, godliness with contentment, he says, is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and is certain that we can carry nothing out.

[20 : 16] And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

And so, some might read this and think, well, hey, he's saying we just need to be satisfied as long as we've got food and clothing. That should be sufficient.

He doesn't mention a house, by the way. I don't know, maybe Paul didn't think that housing was important. But what he's saying here is, hey, your contentment needs to be in the basics.

Not necessarily that you can't pursue other things, but there is a temptation when you put too much emphasis in pursuing wealth or riches that you're going to fall into a snare.

[21 : 23] These harmful lusts which will drown you in destruction if you're not careful. And the love of money is a root, it's not the root, but it is a root of every evil, no, not every evil, but many kinds of evil and causes some people to be led astray in greediness.

Does that mean that only wealth has its temptations? What about poverty? Does that have its temptations? Well, let's go back to Proverbs here. Proverbs chapter 30 verse 8 says this, Remove falsehood and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with the food allotted to me lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord?

That's one of the temptations, right, of riches that you will forget God. Or he says, lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

That's another temptation, right? when you don't have a lot and there is a temptation to cheat, to steal, to do things, to get ahead, to even meet your basic needs.

I think about actually Jesus. When was Jesus tempted the most? What's the, what's the, that pivotal point in his life where he was tempted? Was it when his belly was full?

[22 : 46] No, it was when he had been fasting for 40 days. When, when the needs in his life, the need for food was felt very strongly.

That's when the temptation came. And so, another thing I want to talk about is because ambition is good but you know, everybody is different and some people, their ambitions in life are just different than others.

Some people, it's just hardwired into them, it seems, to start a business and, and be hugely successful. Employ lots of people, take over an industry, whatever it, it might be.

But for other people, that's just not what motivates them. They're satisfied with just a healthy income, with just basic financial security and there are other things in their lives.

Maybe it's, maybe it's just their family. They want, they want enough, income in order to provide a stable living for their family but then, beyond that, they're just fine.

[23 : 56] I think about Paul. Was Paul, was he highly ambitious to make money? No. No, he wasn't at all. What about some other things?

Was Paul ambitious to get married? No, he wasn't. Was he ambitious to start a family? No. His ambition was the gospel itself, getting the gospel out to as many people as he could.

And we might think, I mean, we're looking at Paul's contentment, right? And so we might think, well, this ought to be our primary and only ambition as well.

We should follow Paul. Our only ambition should be to get the gospel out. So we should not be interested in making a good living or starting businesses or things like that because that's not what Paul did.

But is that kind of life, let's say every Christian did that, is that sustainable for the Christian community? For just everybody to go into ministry full time? That is not sustainable at all.

[24 : 58] And you know what the Bible teaches? That God gives different gifts and callings to different people for different things. One of the things that Paul said, he said, woe unto me if I preach not the gospel.

Because he had a very specific calling from God that this is what you're going to do full time. And so for him, if he did not do it, he was being disobedient against God.

So each of us has our different gifts and interests and motivations. And so we need to understand understand that and use the gifts and the calling and the personality that we have to serve God in our own way.

One of the themes of the book of Philippians is what? Rejoicing in the Lord. And so when we look at the things that we're pursuing, we're trying to pursue more financial security for our life, or maybe we're pursuing a husband or a wife, or building a family.

Those are all things that we might look forward to and be pursuing, even very good things. But even then, even in pursuing those things, we can still have and rest in a general contentment.

[26 : 24] And a contentment of what? Well, I think that contentment, that satisfaction, right, is in the Lord. We have to ground our joy, our boasting, our pursuit in knowing Him.

You know, is there any satisfaction when it comes to getting that pay raise? There is, right? You feel satisfied. Like, hey, sometimes that's a hard thing to do.

Go to your boss and ask for that raise. And when you get it, you feel good about yourself. Or maybe you applied for another job and hey, they're going to, I've seen people, they've doubled their income because they went and they pursued a different job.

Wow. That brings some satisfaction in life. But many times, and I've seen this over and over again, somebody meets some tremendous goal and that satisfaction comes welling up within them and it lasts for a little while.

And then, you're just looking for the next hill to climb. We need to find our satisfaction, our deepest satisfaction in knowing the Lord.

[27 : 39] You know, back in the previous chapter of Philippians, Philippians chapter three, Paul speaks about his fleshly success. you know, he was an ambitious person, Paul was, and he had

lots of success.

He was, he quoted, he's quoted as saying, sorry, excuse me, Paul said, I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, that's talking about how he was born, and then I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, like he was, he was one of the top, at the top echelon of being a Pharisee.

He was ambitious, he pursued that goal and he attained quite a degree of success. But what did he say about that? Well, let's read it. You can go ahead, since you're right there, turn back to chapter three, look at verse seven, Philippians chapter three, verse seven.

But what things were gained to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

[29 : 06] He's saying, listen, I find the deepest part of my satisfaction in knowing him and having my righteousness be in him, in knowing the power of his resurrection, knowing the power of the forgiveness of the cross, and the satisfaction of looking forward to a day in which I will be raised from the dead to live with the Lord forever and ever.

and that is the, that is the kind of satisfaction that doesn't go away. You know, our transition here, we talked about some things that you can pursue and change, getting a new job, getting a raise, getting married, but you know, there are some things in life we just can't change.

So for some, really, ambition isn't even part of the equation. Sometimes circumstances in our life just mean there are some things that we will never have. Some people have, they lack abundance not because they lack ambition, but just because they lack opportunity.

I think about times during the Great Depression in this country in which the economy was just in shambles. There are those who live under oppressive governments. They're not allowed to start their own business.

sometimes Christians live under persecution or other forms of injustice. Sometimes people just have health issues and they're not able to work that job that they may want to.

[30 : 46] And even for those of us who have that ambition and want to continue to make more, we're kind of limited by our own normality, what I call it, are just being typical of everyone else.

Most of us, we make a certain amount of money and we just kind of plateau, right? No matter, you know, if you want to be a millionaire, that doesn't mean you're going to be one, right? Some people seem to have a gift.

It just seems they don't, they don't have to do much. They have, what do you call it, the Midas touch or everything that they touch turns to gold. Some people just, just have that gift, but not many of us. And then you might have other ambitions that fail, not because of any fault of your own necessarily, but one of your ambitions might be to have a healthy, godly marriage and then that marriage might fail because of adultery or some other kind of sin.

Or maybe you have a desire to have a growing family and that desire is crushed because of a diagnosis of infertility. You can't have maybe what you wanted to have.

[32 : 02] Or you want to be a healthy person, maybe you exercise all the time, you eat right, but some kind of sickness or disease comes and takes that away. Or maybe it's just old age, right?

Many of us want to be healthy for all of our lives, eventually our bodies start to decay and get older. And despite all the work that we do, our bodies are impacted by the effects of age.

Paul speaks to things that we cannot control in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. This is actually a chapter on marriage and whether believers should get married or not.

And the big idea he gives is, hey, if you want to get married, go ahead and get married. But don't feel like you have to get married. Some of you can be like, me. You can be single and do a lot for the Lord.

But he says, hey, if you want to get married, definitely get married. Don't not get married if you want to be married. It's kind of his point. But in this, he talks a little bit about calling and where you find yourself at in your life when you become a Christian.

[33 : 10] This is 1 Corinthians 7. You can go ahead and turn there. Keep your finger in Philippians. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. And this is verse 20. He says this, let each one remain in the same calling

in which he was called.

Were you called while a slave? Wow, he's talking about slavery. Do not be concerned about it, he says. But if you can be made free, rather use it.

For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise, he is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of men.

Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called. Now he's saying this, when he says that each one should remain with God in the state in which he's called, I don't think he's saying at all that, hey, if you were born a slave or you were a slave when you were a Christian, you should never pursue getting your freedom.

He's not saying that. Why? Because he specifically says, hey, if you can get your freedom, then get it. Right? But is that an opportunity that everyone has? Right?

[34 : 22] If you can escape from communist Russia, then do it. Right? But, if you can't, you can be content with where you're at.

So if you can make yourself more financially secure, then go ahead and pursue that. If you want to get married, find a husband or a wife.

He who finds a wife finds what? A good thing. If you can solve those health issues that you've been having, then do that. But you know what?

If you can't, and many are in that kind of position, and it's an opportunity to lean heavily into the sufficiency of Christ's being satisfied, finding all of our satisfaction, the depths of our satisfaction in Him.

And you know what? Even if you can accomplish those things, making those millions, finding the wife or husband of your dreams, having that family you've always wanted, even then, we still need to find the depth of our satisfaction in Jesus.

[35 : 45] He goes on, and this is the last verse that we'll look at, in verse 13. He says this, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Now we're going to talk in a second here about how this fits in to the context, but this is one of those verses that many times you will find, right, up on a poster or a t-shirt that is posted without any context, and so many people might misuse it, might use it in the context, for example, of winning, having a winning season for your football team, right?

We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Or maybe you're starting that business. You're saying, hey, we're going to start this business and we're going to look to the Lord, and through the strength of the Lord, we can succeed.

We can do all things. You know what? Sometimes people's businesses fail. Is that because they weren't trusting the Lord? Sometimes your football season is a total disaster.

Is that because the Lord made sure that you lost the season in football? One of the ways that people have quoted this verse, by the way, I've heard, is they've quoted it intentionally the wrong way.

[37 : 10] No, quote it this way. I can do all things through a Bible verse taken out of context. Anybody ever heard that before? Right? And so, you know, is it wrong to look to the Lord for strength no matter what we're doing?

If we're trying to win a, you know, the season, you know, a football season or a football game or we're trying to be successful in business, is it wrong to look to the Lord for strength?

No, not by any means. But we need to understand the context of what Paul is saying here. Here, if you look at this very literally, right, Paul says, I can do all things.

So if you took this woodenly literally, you're going to say, hey, Paul, through the Lord, can experience omnipotence. He can just do everything. You know what? Maybe Paul could even fly. Or he can bound over skyscrapers or buildings with a single bound. He can be like Superman. But is that what Paul is getting at? Is that what he's saying?

[38 : 16] You know, this phrase, all things, is used, I think, hundreds of times in the Bible. In fact, as I was doing this study, I looked for that phrase, all things.

Old Testament, new times. Just hundreds of times that phrase, all things, was used. Now, how many times of those hundreds of times did it literally mean every single thing that you can imagine? Close to zero. Close to zero. Now, there are, I think, some cases where it's talking about literally everything. But, sometimes it means most things.

Sometimes it means something. Sometimes it just means a few things. I'll just read a few examples just to kind of make the point. Some of these are famous passages. Therefore, this is 2 Corinthians 5, 17.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away and behold, all things have become new. Did you get a new body when you believed? Did that, you know, some of the, you know, the toe fungus that you had, did that become new?

[39 : 20] It doesn't, right? So, you have to understand what he is talking about when he's talking about all things. Colossians 3, 20.

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. So, parents, or children, you know, if your parents tell you that you need to go steal some candy from the store, should you obey your parents in that thing?

I'm seeing some shaking of the heads. Correct, that's right. There are some things that you shouldn't obey your parents in. But in everything else, right, when it comes to issues that are morally acceptable, then you should always obey your parents.

1 John 2, 20 says this, you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things. So, that means once you become a Christian, you become omniscient.

You just know everything. Is that true? No, it's not true. But, there are things that God wants us to know that is readily available to us and that is what he is talking about.

[40 : 32] this is an interesting one. Mark 1, 5 talks about the baptism of John the Baptist. John was baptizing people out in the wilderness and it says this, Mark 1, 5, then all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River confessing their sins.

Did every single person in all the land of Judea and Jerusalem go out to be baptized by John? No. Was it most people? Probably not even most people. It was actually probably very few.

In fact, we know specifically that he didn't baptize the Pharisees. Jesus rebuked them and he says in Luke 7, 30, but the Pharisees and the lawyers, they rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him, speaking of John.

And so, many times, you know, the word all is used in a hyperbolic fashion, just as an exaggeration, and this is just a normal part of language. We use that kind of language every single day.

So we shouldn't treat the Bible as some kind of mathematical textbook where we take things too woodenly literally. We need to understand the context and apply things appropriately. And so, this verse that says, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

[41 : 58] what does all mean? Well, he's talking about the difficulties that he just described. The suffering of needs.

When he abounds, he can do all things, and when he suffers need, he can do all things. In all of those things, he can do them.

And really, that term do, that word do, is actually not quite the best translation. I like to use, there's a translation called Young's Literal.

If you want to know the literal understanding of a word, or how things are phrased, it's not easy for just your regular Bible reading because it doesn't come across very naturally. But Young's Literal translation says this, translates that verse this way, for all things I have strength in Christ's strengthening me.

For all things I have strength in Christ's strengthening me. Because that word do is actually the word strength. I have strength because Christ strengthens me, and I have that in everything.

[43 : 12] And that applies to everything in our lives, right? But especially Paul's point here is that regardless of what kind of difficulties I'm going through in life, I have strength in Christ.

What does it mean to be strengthened by Christ? I'd like to consider just three more passages and then we'll wrap up here. Paul tells an account in the book of 2 Corinthians, his letter to the Corinthians, his second letter to the Corinthians.

He talks about something he calls a thorn in his flesh. And we don't know what that was, he really doesn't tell us. Some people think it might be some kind of illness or disease or maybe it was an eye problem that he had.

But he prayed and he asked the Lord to take it away from him three times. And the Lord Jesus himself appeared to him and said, I'm not going to take it away. And he finishes up that description with this, this is 2 Corinthians 12, 9.

And he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. weakness. And then Paul responds, that's what Jesus said.

[44 : 23] He said, my strength in you is made perfect in your weakness. Paul says this, therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

When I'm weak, then I am strong. We can experience God's strength in us, even in times of weakness, in times of suffering, when our ambitions don't go the way that we want them to.

The next passage is from Psalm 46. David describes how God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble.

It says this, Psalm 46, 1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore I will not fear, even though the earth be removed.

[45 : 23] Now that's a pretty big problem, right, when the earth is removed. And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling, God will be my refuge and strength, he says, no matter what's going on in my life.

love. And the last one I want to look at, another psalm, Psalm 73. Psalm 73, verse 25. The psalmist says this, I believe it's David.

Whom have I in heaven but you? Whom have I in heaven but you? He's speaking to the Lord. there is none upon earth that I desire besides you.

He says this, my flesh and my heart fail. And that happens so often in our lives. Our flesh, our pursuits, our ambitions, many times they fail.

We're trying to get healthy and our health fails. But he says this, but God is the strength of my heart and he is my portion forever.

[46 : 40] Through it all, you know, the things of the flesh will fail us. There is satisfaction in the ambitions of life, the material ambitions that we have, material success.

There is some level of satisfaction. But there is nothing, nothing that compares to the satisfaction of finding our strength and our hope in the God who created us.

That is what he created us primarily for. We looked at the dominion mandate in the beginning and God created us for those things. He created us to take dominion over the earth.

But that's not the primary thing that he created us for. The primary thing that he created us for is to know him. To know him.

And so like Paul, I'm going to count everything else as loss. As nothing. And the number one thing that I'm going to put my satisfaction and my focus and my joy in is in knowing Christ.

[47 : 45] Having my righteousness in him and looking forward to the day that we get to enjoy him forever. We'll finish off there. We'll finish with a word of prayer and then we'll finish up our service with our new members.

Father, we love you. Thank you so much for your word. Thank you so much for what you gave us through Jesus. I think about the psalmist and he said even back during the times of David, he said that there is nothing greater in this life than knowing God.

And how much more so in these days of grace in which we have God made flesh. Jesus Christ, God the Son, who died for our sins and reconciled us to him.

Put our sins out of the way so that they are no longer a barrier between us and knowing you. We thank you for that. We pray that you would continue to work on us. We don't always do it.

We fail many times. But help us each and every day to put all, to put the depth of our satisfaction, the core of our satisfaction in knowing you.

[49 : 01] We ask for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.