

Tonight is part two of our series. Last week we looked at the first lie, namely, **“My unbelief is justified because of how difficult my life is.”**

And we talked about the natural tendency we have to view our circumstances and our temptations as having some kind of unique or powerful control over us.

To believe that our temptations and difficulties are exponentially greater than everyone else’s.

That what we’re experiencing is atypical, extraordinary, it’s far worse than what others have to face, and therefore, the spiritual obligations and demands placed upon us are not as binding as they otherwise would be.

And to address that lie, we primarily looked at 1 Corinthians 10:13, **“13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”**

This passage confronts the lie head on as it demonstrates that God’s faithfulness ensures you are never in a situation or set of circumstances where your only option is to sin.

No, He has ordained those very challenging circumstances, not with the goal to get to you sin, but to sustain you and give you grace to righteously endure them by faith.

Well, tonight we’re going to look at a second lie women believe, and this is the lie behind discontentment.

It sounds something like this: **“I need God to change this about my life in order to be satisfied.”**

And I’m actually going to restate this one by changing one word because it is often included as well.

“Not only do I need God to change this about my life, I deserve for God to change this about my life in order to be satisfied.”

Every time we are discontent in life, we are believing this lie.

I want to begin tonight by talking about what contentment is.

In the New Testament, the word group for “contentment” or “content” (αὐτάρκης) in a literal sense means “self-sufficient.”

We hear the term self-sufficient and we immediately associate it with something that should not be true of us as believers.

But this isn't referring to the type of self-sufficiency that is sinful because we are depending on ourselves and not the Lord.

Rather, contentment means self-sufficient in this sense: I am satisfied *independent of external factors*. Independent of what's going on in my life.

In other words, to be self-sufficient in a good sense, means that I am not dependent on circumstances, or life going the way I want it to, in order to be satisfied, in order to be content.

And when we define it that way, we can understand why Puritan preacher Jeremiah Burroughs authored a book entitled, "The *rare* jewel of Christian contentment."

It's rare to experience contentment, true satisfaction in life, that is *independent* of one's circumstances.

Instead, what is far more common is to experience the never-ending frustration of a *better life* which always seems to remain *just outside of our grasp*.

What we desire when we are discontent does often seem *just outside of our grasp*, doesn't it?

In other words, we don't typically take large leaps when it comes to what we want God to change about our lives.

Rather, it's typically adjustments in life that seem realistically attainable.

I don't need to be a millionaire, I just need to make a *little* more. I don't need to have perfect health, I just need a little relief in this area.

I don't need perfect kids, I just need my kid to be normal.

I don't need a super spiritual husband, I just need him to have some kind of spiritual depth.

Then, I will finally be satisfied. Then I'll be content.

That's the snare of discontentment. The never-ending, vicious cycle of striving after better circumstances that always seems to remain *just outside of our grasp*.

And it is a never-ending vicious cycle, because you've probably noticed in your own experience, when you do end up getting what you were desiring, it only provides temporary relief until you move on to the next area of your life that needs to improve.

Discontentment is fueled by unmet desires. It is a human lust, and lust, by its very nature, can never be satisfied.

That is why a discontent person remains discontent no matter how much their circumstances change, even for the better.

John Calvin said, “Our covetousness is an insatiable gulf, if it be not restrained; and the best bridle is, when we desire nothing more than the necessity of this life demands;”

Andrew Davis in his book, “the power of Christian contentment,” says this: “though we cannot say that every misery in this world begins with human discontent, we may safely say that all the suffering of the world is *exponentially intensified* by the failure to find genuine contentment in the midst of any and every circumstance.”

That is right on and very helpful for us to consider - What is really the hardest part about that area of your life that you desperately want the Lord to change?

Andrew Davis is arguing, and I believe rightly so, that the hardest part of your difficulty is the unwillingness to submit to the Lord in that area.

Which in turn, intensifies your difficulty.

I will allow John Newton to weigh in as well: “The trials of yesterday are gone — to return no more. Those of tomorrow — are not yet come. The Lord mercifully parcels out to us our 'lot' of afflictions by minutes and moments — that we might not be overburdened. But we, foolishly looking back to the past, and forward to the future — load ourselves with an unnecessary and unprofitable weight! It is no wonder, therefore, that we are often weary!”

Now, listen to this because he’s saying the same thing that Andrew Davis just said: “The heaviest part of our trials is owing, not so much to the painful dispensations which cause them — as the self-will and unbelief of our hearts. And our relief depends more upon the cure of our wrong inward dispositions — than upon any change of our outward circumstances.”

What’s the hardest part about your life? Your answer is the same as mine. We all share the exact same answer as to what the hardest part is about our lives. What is it?

Our own heart’s response to life’s difficulties. Processing life’s difficulties through our own wisdom and unbelief.

If only this, if only that, I just need this, I just need that. And in so doing, we aggravate and worsen our trials.

Now, as I mentioned, very closely related to this lie, is another one that sounds just like it.

Not only do I *need* God to change this about my life in order to be satisfied, I actually *deserve* for God to change this about my life. I’m entitled to better treatment from God.

So we can see that discontentment is the fruit of a high view of self. It is the fruit of a self-entitled spirit.

Pastor Jerry Wragg: *To be discontent is to have some level of unrest that drives you to imagine you deserve something better.*

That's spot on. We're only to complain or be bitter or discontent in circumstances where we feel an injustice has occurred.

I need and in fact deserve better treatment from you Lord.

Contentment then, is the death of our self-entitled spirit.

As one author said, "It is to crucify your sense of personal entitlement as it relates to your needs and your wants."

What does it look like when those things have been put to death? It results in the satisfaction, peace, and rest with *what we have, who we are, and where we're going*.

I really like Sinclair Ferguson's definition: (Presbyterian minister in SC), "True contentment means embracing the Lord's will in every aspect of His providence *simply because it is His providence*."

Jeremiah Burroughs, contentment "is that sweet inward quiet gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."

Now, every genuine believer wants to be there. I've never met or heard of anyone who likes to be discontent.

Who prefers feeling dissatisfied and constantly uneasy, no peace, no rest, just a frustrated, unfulfilled existence?

No one prefers that, but why is the alternative so rare? Why is true contentment so rare if everyone would prefer to be like that?

One reason is because we don't want to go through the pain of the kill. The death to our self-entitlement.

It's rare because even though we may profess the total depravity of man on paper, in practice, we don't really believe we're as bad and unworthy as the Scriptures say.

And therefore our discontentment in this life is revealing that not only do we not deserve to go to hell, we also deserve for God to up the comfort level here on earth, on our way to heaven.

How do we put to death the vicious, frustrating cycle of ever-seeking for the better life just beyond our grasp?

Let's turn over to Philippians 4. **As we go through this passage, we're going to look at 4 principles to combat the lie of discontentment.**

Four principles to help crucify the mindset that says, "I need/deserve God to change this about my life in order to be satisfied.

The first principle: In God’s providence there are no mistakes.

Notice Philippians 4:10: “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.”

Notice here in verse 10 that Paul’s rejoicing because the Philippian church was finally able to send financial support for him.

And if you’re wondering, “where is the idea about providence in this passage?” Notice the end of verse 10 again, **“indeed, you were concerned before, *but you lacked opportunity.*”**

That is to say, in the providence of God you were not able to support me.

Again, I’ll turn to author Andrew Davis for a definition of God’s providence:

“providence is the direct activity of God toward the universe he created, moment by moment sustaining its existence and overruling its events to cause the unfolding story of history to occur according to his will.”

And I would add, down to each and every individual and the specific details of their lives.

Paul was in need of financial support. He was suffering in life due to not having his needs met.

We’re not going to get into all of the details this evening, but basically for 10 years, since Paul had established this church, there had been no missionary support for Paul from this church.

But it wasn’t a lack of desire or willingness on their part. Rather, they were a persecuted and poor people. Two factors that would obviously limit their ability to support Paul.

But notice how he had guarded his heart from becoming frustrated, or discontent about their ability and the timing of their support.

First of all, he assumed the best about others. Discontentment assumes the worst about others, and assigns impure motives to their actions.

Why? Because for the discontent person, other people stand in the way of your covetous desires and they become threats. So you can’t think well of them, you’re in competition with them.

Discontentment *personalizes what is not personal*. It is hyper-sensitive to the actions of others because it has such a high view of self.

Paul, on the other hand, believed the best about this church. He says here in the text, “you’ve always been concerned, and the reason you haven’t provided for me until now is that you simply lacked opportunity.”

That is to say, in the providence of God, you were prevented from supporting me. But as soon as you were able, you sent Epaphroditus with a financial gift to me and “I rejoiced in in the Lord greatly.”

Paul’s response demonstrates that he firmly believed that behind the actions of other people is the sovereign working of God. *Both in the delay of this gift, and the receiving of this gift.*

This is demonstrating a recognition of God’s hand in all things. If he was not believing that, think about how he would have potentially responded:

“Finally, you got your act together and sacrificed for me. It’s about time you thought of my needs above your own. Besides your church wouldn’t even exist if it weren’t for me.”

Or he could have responded this way: “This is it? This is all you are giving me after 10 years. I was expecting much more from you.”

What guarded his heart from these temptations was a firm trust in the Lord’s providence. Both the timing and the amount Lord, are in your hands.

It’s believers that as believers, we are quick to critique the worldview of unbelievers. Especially atheists.

And while we know theologically there is no such thing as an atheist, and we know theologically why people suppress the truth in unrighteousness, there are still times where we might think to ourselves:

How could anyone deny that there is a God? That’s so ridiculous, it’s absurd, it’s irrational. And to be sure, it is all of those things.

But ironically how often do we respond to our circumstances like a consistent atheist would? As if God didn’t even exist or wasn’t sovereign or had no purpose in it.

What does it look like to be a practical atheist? No gratitude and joy in God when his providence *smiles* upon us, because after all, He’s not responsible for doing it, and frankly, we deserve these better circumstances.

And then there’s complaining and a bitter spirit when his providence *frowns* upon us, because frankly, I don’t deserve this, I deserve something better. And there’s no one behind these unpleasant circumstances anyway.

So we can see that discontentment is an ugly mix of a self-righteous and a godless approach to our circumstances.

And so, first base when it comes to genuine contentment is knowing that in the providence of God there are no mistakes. His providence always delivers what is best for me.

Now, before we move on to the next principle, when we talk about contentment and providence, there is a question that inevitably gets raised and I figure I will get ahead of it here and not wait until the end.

What about seeking to change my circumstances?

If I'm supposed to joyfully trust the Lord's providence, what does it mean or imply about me if I attempt to change my circumstances, to get relief, to get improvement in this area over here? Am I rebelling against God's providence in my life?

Let me answer that with a helpful illustration I came across in Andrew Davis' book. I'm not quoting it verbatim but it's close enough where I need to give him credit.

What do you do when you are driving on 2-lane road and there is a dump truck in front of you going 20 miles below the speed limit?

Do you reason within yourself, "if I were really content with God's providence, which obviously put that slow truck in my way, I would stay behind that truck, patiently waiting for it to turn so that I can go on my way?"

Or, could you reason to yourself, "even though God's providence put this slow truck in my path today, there is a dotted yellow line on the road permitting me to pass when such situations occur. Lawfully, I can freely pass this truck and go on my way."

Well, we obviously practice the second mindset, not the first.

And that helps to illustrate the truth that contentment is not *complacency*. Contentment is not *passivity*. Contentment is not *fatalism*. What will be will be because God is sovereign, not me.

When we get hot in our car, we turn the AC cooler.
When we get hungry we eat. When we get tired we sleep.

We strive to become more holy, to not remain as we are. We preach the gospel to the lost.

These are not acts of rebellion against God's providence. Every day we are constantly seeking to improve our physical and spiritual lives.

Whenever we can wisely and lawfully change our circumstances for the better, we do it. And there's nothing ungodly or unspiritual about that. That's not the danger.

The danger is dishonoring God in our attempt to change our circumstances, or dishonoring God when we can't change our circumstances.

So, back to our outline, **The first principle: There are no mistakes in the providence of God.**

That brings us to the second principle to combat the lie of discontentment: circumstances are irrelevant when it comes to contentment. This will be verses 11-12.

Notice verse 11, **“Not that I speak from want for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”**

Although Paul appreciated their gift, and surely benefitted greatly from it, he wants to make it clear that he did not feel neglected.

And he wants to address a potential objection to his words here, which may have sounded like this:

“It’s easy for you to now talk about contentment Paul, after all, your needs just got met. You have provisions now. Of course you are satisfied.”

So in verse 11 he is clarifying this: “I’m not rejoicing because, once I was poor but now I have money, now my needs are met and that’s why I’m content and happy.”

No, look at what he says, *“Not that I speak from want.”* I’m not writing this from the perspective of someone who has had actual needs that have gone unmet. I don’t speak from want.

That’s a remarkable statement from a man who did appear to live at times without his needs met.

For example, listen to 1 Corinthians 4:11, **“To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless;”**

So how can a man who is starving, without proper clothing, suffering persecution, homeless, with no financial resources, how can he say that he is not speaking from want?

I would expect verse 11 to read this way: **“Not that I speak from want *for God has supplied everything I need.*”**

“Just when I thought I was going to starve God came through and provided for me a hot meal. Just when I thought I would be homeless, somebody reached out with shelter.”

But that’s not what he says because that would mean that contentment involves your circumstances changing for the better.

So notice what Paul actually says in verse 11 because it’s crucial to note this, **“Not that I speak from want, *for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*”**

The reason I don’t speak from want is not because I get all of my wants, but because I’ve learned.

You see what he’s saying there? I have learned that if I have something God has determined that it is good and necessary for me to have it.

And I have learned that if I don't have something God has determined that it is good and necessary that I don't have it."

So it is impossible for a Christian to ever speak from a position where they don't have what they need to be satisfied.

Look over for a moment at Hebrews 13:5, "***Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"***"

How can the writer of Hebrews say that? How can he say that the ground of your contentment is that God will never abandon you?

Because if you're familiar with the book of Hebrews, just two chapters earlier, in chapter 11, this same author had just detailed the lives of faithful saints who were tortured, killed, homeless, imprisoned, in severe affliction.

How can he then turn around and say, "be content with what you have for God will not abandon you" when it seems like he abandons believers all the time by failing to provide the basic necessities of life?

Well, the Bible can say this not because a believer has never died from hunger. Not because a believer is guaranteed to never be homeless.

It's not because a believer is always given every physical need they have in the timing they desire.

It's rather because in those circumstances there is no such thing as a believer who could truthfully say: "God has not provided me with everything I need to be satisfied in Him."

That's what we're promised. We are never lacking what we need to be satisfied in Him and glorify Him.

Back to Philippians 4. That's what Paul learned. Namely, that your position in life, your circumstances are irrelevant when it comes to contentment.

If I don't have what I think I need, then I can know without a shadow of a doubt that I don't need whatever it is to be satisfied in Him.

Imagine how that could transform your value system in life, your focus, your preoccupation in the midst of your difficulty?

What are my goals, what are my chief desires in the midst of these circumstances?

We talked about this last week as we evaluated the difference between a *desire* and an *idolatrous desire*.

As author Paul Tripp puts it: “The problem with desire is that in sinners it very quickly morphs into demand. Demand is the closing of my fists over a desire.”

So how do I know when my desires for something Scripture says is appropriate for me to desire, how do I know when it has become a demand?

Well, we know the answer: When I can’t be content unless I have it. I’ll sin to get it or sin in response to not getting it.

But notice how Paul demonstrates the opposite of that here. He knew that if he really needed something he would already have it. And if he didn’t have it, that means he didn’t need it.

That’s why Paul could say, “I can be satisfied *independent of my circumstances*. No matter what my life looks like, I believe what the Lord says about my circumstances.

And now he elaborates on that idea, notice verse 12, “**I know how to get along with humble means...**”

That is to say, I know how to be brought low with regard to having very little. I know how to live in a state of poverty. I know how to be content in these kinds of circumstances. There’s one end of the spectrum.

Then he says, “**and I also know how to live in prosperity;**” That is to say I know how to live in a state of abundance, when my desires and wants are fulfilled. I know how to be content in those kinds of circumstances as well.

Why does he give us two ends of the spectrum here? When things are really bad and when things are really good?

Because we are equally vulnerable to discontentment when things go your way and when they don’t go your way. Whether poverty or prosperity, sickness or in health.

In bad times you’re prone to seek contentment in relief and prosperity. In good times you’re prone to trust in your relief and prosperity and depend on your material abundance and long for even more.

Agur knew the vulnerability of both poverty and prosperity. Proverbs 30:8-9, he said, “**Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion, 9 That I not be full and deny You and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God.**”

He knew he was vulnerable when he abounded or when he had nothing. You’re vulnerable to discontentment in either scenario.

Paul now amplifies his prior comment, notice the middle of verse 12, **“in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”**

That word for “I have learned the secret” is actually a passive verb. It’s the idea of being taught.

As in, the Lord has taught me through good times and bad how to cope not only with hunger and need, but with plenty to eat and an abundance.

He has taught me to cultivate contentment. He has given me what I want, He has taken away what I think I need, so that I would learn how to be satisfied in Him alone.

Last week we looked briefly at Deuteronomy 8. Turn back there for a moment because it is a great example of the Lord teaching us via his providence to be satisfied in Him alone:

8:2, “You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart,

“whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand (that he might teach you by your experience) that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

God’s Word is your ultimate need. Not the physical necessities of life.

The Lord is saying, “I want you to learn to trust me to provide everything you need to be satisfied.”

That means trusting my promises and my provision as it unfolds via my providence.

Now, how can I know if I have learned contentment or am learning contentment? If I am passing God’s class on contentment, if I’m allowing him to teach me to respond to his providence in this way?

Here are a few ways:

You look at something or someone else, or a position someone else has, and you would really love to be in their shoes, they have exactly what you’ve always longed for, but you battle it by believing that that *it is good for them to have it and not good for you to have it.*

It’s loving and wise of God to give it to them, and loving and wise of God to not give it to you.

When you ask this question to yourself: Why does he always seem to bless others and not me in the way I want to be blessed?

You recognize it wouldn't be loving of him to give you that because you would turn it into an idol so you affirm that God has lovingly and wisely withheld it from me.

Contentment says this: if I don't have something, I don't need it because God and his providence ultimately determine what I actually need.

And the very fact that I don't have something *is the proof that I don't need it to be satisfied in God and to do His will.*

**In God's providence there are mistakes.
Circumstances are irrelevant when it comes to satisfaction.
Now the third principle: Contentment is a supernatural work.**

What we're going to be looking at in this principle is this question: What is true about a person who is discontent?

There are two possibilities:

First, they're not a believer. They're not in Christ. And therefore, they are seeking to be satisfied in idols. Counterfeit gods. The things that are of the world, things that are merely earthly.

The second possibility, they are not yielding themselves to the Lord, and thereby not experiencing His power to produce contentment.

This is what Paul speaks of in verse 13, **"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."**

Paul is now answering the question of *how this is possible?* How can a person, whose circumstances are constantly fluctuating from poverty to prosperity and anything in between, how can that person die to self-entitlement and rest peacefully in their heart with God's providence?

Verse 13 is the answer. Divine power is sufficiently supplied. It's a supernatural work in the life of the believer. If contentment is independent of circumstances it must be dependent on Christ.

In fact, "all things" in the original is actually at the front of the text and thus it is being emphasized. **"all things I am able to do by the one who is continually strengthening me."**

As you are probably aware, verse 13 is one of the most abused passages in the church and the world today.

But hopefully we can see here in the context that it has nothing to do with being empowered to change your circumstances or be successful at your job or succeed in some activity. Or win the game, pass the test, or whatever triumph it might be.

No, “all things” is governed by the context here and therefore is restricted to all kinds of circumstances and life scenarios.

Verse 12 is what “all things” is referring to. How to be brought low, how to live in prosperity, being filled, going hungry, having abundance and suffering need.

So it is completely misreading this verse to mean “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” to be saying, “I can by God’s power be wise enough and strong enough to change all the negative things going on in my life.”

No, this is a verse about relying on Christ so that you no longer *need* pleasant circumstances, you don’t *need* your desires met in order to be content.

It’s relying on Christ, not to give you the power to change your circumstances, but to change *you* in the midst of circumstances *you can’t change*.

Pastor Jerry Wragg said this: Whatever your life currently looks like, with all of the difficulties and challenges, *it is sufficient to secure your satisfaction and spirit of submission.*”

And you say, “but I don’t experience that power. I continually feel defeated, overwhelmed, backed into a corner, taken captive by hard circumstances.”

“It seems impossible, frankly unfair. Why does everyone have such an easier life than me, why does everything seem to work out fine for everyone else but my life is always more difficult?”

If your heart reasons like that, you need to identify it and call it what it is. That is the language of unbelief. That is the language of self-entitlement. That is the language of pride.

And God is not in the business of blessing proud people. In fact, we know from passages like 1 Peter 5:5 that **God is opposed to the proud.**

God is opposed to those who say, “my wisdom and my perspective is superior to yours. I know what’s best for me and if you don’t give me what’s best for me, you’re in the wrong.”

God is opposed to those who say, “if you’re not going to give me what I want, I’m not going to trust you or follow you the way I ought.”

God is opposed to the proud. And the proud make themselves unfit to receive this strengthening Paul talks in verse 13.

Verse 13 is not the automatic experience of every Christian. It is those who are *humble* who experience this.

Let’s finish that verse now: God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Who are the humble? Those who say and wholeheartedly affirm: the only thing God owes me is hell. And everything outside of that is mercy.

God gives grace to people like that. What is grace? It's not just an attitude God has toward you. It's more than just a *disposition of favor* toward you.

I love Abner Chou's definition of God's grace. He defines it this: His unrestricted, omnipotent power invading the most helpless situations to produce results that only God can produce.

Let me show you an example of this grace in Paul's life. Look over at 2 Cor. 12:7, **"Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!"**

Notice that: the Lord may be afflicting you or preventing you from having your desire, not because you are proud, but to *keep you* from becoming proud. To keep you from great harm.

8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

There's Paul's desire. That's what he wants.

Verse 9, **"And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'"**

Notice the connection there between grace and God's power. The power of sustaining Paul and causing him to be content even when his desires go unfulfilled.

And say, where is that? Keep reading, **"Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the *power of Christ* may dwell in me."**

That sounds just like Philippians 4:13, I can do all things through the one strengthening me."

When the power of Christ dwells in me, what is the result? Verse 10, **"Therefore *I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*"**

When he was most conscious of his own weaknesses and inadequacies he became most aware of Christ's power resting upon him.

He knew that anything God calls me to, any obedience to his will, any circumstance, whether pleasurable or painful, I can faithfully endure and be content.

Because contentment is learned when we come to the end of our own resources, the end of ourselves, and we exhaust all of our mere human wisdom and thinking, and in that desperate moment, that desperate season, we turn to God in submission and faith and experience supernatural strength to be satisfied in Christ alone.

The humble receive grace, God's power invading the most helpless situations to produce results that only He can produce. In this case, satisfaction in Christ alone no matter what your life looks like.

Back to Philippians 4:13, this isn't about giving you power to succeed and change your circumstances. It's about enabling you to be content in any circumstance.

Now, if you hear yourself trying to convince yourself that you can't obey, that you can't be faithful in this circumstance, just remember, anytime we are saying *I can't* is merely the flesh saying *I won't*.

And this is the relationship with our topic tonight and what we looked at last week. I did these two messages back to back for this very reason.

Once again, let's turn over to 1 Cor. 10:13, "**No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man;**"

If you feel as though your situation is unique, you have been singled out for particularly difficult trials, here is a statement to put that lie to death.

It is common. The temptations, the lies, the tendencies of the flesh, the battles you are facing, are common.

You have to reject the lie that your life scenario is the *one scenario* that God didn't account for when he gave us his Word.

Next Paul says, "**and God is faithful.**" If you feel like the Lord has ignored you, been less than good to you, has withheld something profitable to you, has slept on the job, so to speak.

Crush those lies with this clause, "**God is faithful.**" He is not capable of being anything but faithful. God is not the one that needs to change, it is me who needs to change.

Next there in verse 13, "**who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,**"

"It's too hard, it's too difficult. This is too much to handle." No, not according to the Word of God. The Lord would never allow you to reach that point. You're living by feelings, not faith.

And he ends with this: "**but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**"

Do you trust that God never backs you into a corner where your only option is to sin? Where your only option is to manipulate circumstances, take matters into your own hands, because if God's not going to move on this, then I have to.

And is your goal to *change* your circumstances, or *to be changed* in the midst of those circumstances, and *endure*, as the text says?

Back to Philippians 4, in order to be content, you have to be convinced that no matter what your life looks like, you have everything you need to secure your spirit of submission and satisfaction in Christ.

Let's look finally at a fourth principle - **Get lost in the needs of others.**

In other words, be preoccupied with the needs and benefit of others.

Notice where Paul's attention turns now in verse 14, **"Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction."**

Paul is again wanting to be careful not to send the wrong message.

This was a poor church, a faithful church, who had sacrificially raised money to support Paul in prison and he just got done saying, "I don't speak from want, I've learned to content in any situation. I don't have any needs that have gone unmet. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

So the Philippians might read that and think, "I guess we didn't need to make that sacrifice after all. I guess Paul doesn't really need our partnership in the gospel. Paul's not really thankful for our gift."

So Paul deals with this potential mindset. Even though I'm content in whatever season and circumstances God's providence brings into my life, **"nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction."**

You've done a good work. A noble work. He's highlighting their sacrificial service as commendable.

And we won't have time to get into these verses in detail but notice what he goes on to say in verses 15-17 as he expands on this idea:

"You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account."

"It's ultimately not the gift, not my benefit I've concerned with, but rather the profit which increases to your account."

This is similar to what we saw in verse 10, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, but the ultimate focus of my joy was not my easier circumstances, but rather the opportunity you had to sacrifice to for the sake of gospel ministry."

Now, I love this about Paul and it comes out several places in this letter. Even when he was in affliction, significant difficulty circumstantially, the preoccupation, the focus of his life was on *the spiritual benefit of others*.

Sin and discontentment is self-focused, it turns away from God and away from others. That is the natural direction, the natural tendency of the human heart.

One of the things we can do to help crucify discontentment and self-centeredness is to get lost in the needs of others.

When we're busy serving others and ministering to others, all of sudden we don't have the time or energy to devote to our longings for a better life.

We don't have the time or energy to focus on what we think we desire or desire to change in our lives.

Again, just think of the abundance of the one anothers in the New Testament and the wise design of the Lord to constantly be turning our attention off of ourselves and on to the good of others.

Isn't it interesting that you don't have any verses in the New Testament that say make sure you look out for #1, make sure you're good and all your needs are met before you go and serve someone else.

I suppose another way we could say this: show me the person who is a servant, always considering others above themselves.

Show me the person who is committed to the local church. attending regularly, engaged in body life, using their gifts to build up the body.

Show me the person who is praying on a regular basis, in the Word of God on a regular basis.

Show me the person who is fellowshiping regularly with mature believers.

And if all those things are true, most likely, I'll show you a content person.

4 principles to combat the lie that I need or deserve for God to change this about my life in order to be satisfied.

The first principle: there are no mistakes in the providence of God

Second principle: circumstances are irrelevant when it comes to satisfaction.

Third principle: contentment is a supernatural work.

And finally a fourth principle: Get lost in the needs of others.