The Secret to Life

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast. A podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. You see it on coffee mugs and picture frames, T-shirts, written on the shoes of basketball players, on the glove of a pitcher, framed on a wall in a living room, one of the most known verses of the Bible.

Even among those who don't attempt to memorize Scripture, they likely know it. Even those who rarely attend church are likely familiar with it.
I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. For some, it's taken as a guarantee that they'll pass every final exam.
For others, they take it as a promise to win the game. Or as a guarantee to have a problem and challenge work out in a favorable way.
But, as is true with all biblical promises, context is key. And while a careful reading of Philippians 4 reveals in verse 13 a very different promise than most considerate to be, it is, when rightly understood, a most precious promise for sure.
[2:19] Many times, people get frustrated with God because they say, you have not done what you promised to do. And the promise is so often abused or twisted that the deficit is not that God has not done what He promised.

It's that people have not understood what God has revealed. And so, as with all things, we must very carefully consider the context and the meaning behind Philippians 4.13 as we would every verse that we study.
Look with me here in chapter 4 as we make our way to near completion of this New Testament letter. Verse 10 says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.
You were indeed concerned for me, but had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.
I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret to facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.
[3:49] I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Let's consider in this paragraph, this promise here, verse 13, as well as what comes before it.

First, there's concern for God's people in verse 10. There's concern for God's people. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.
Now, Paul understands that as this church at Philippi has expressed their love and their kindness and compassion, he receives it ultimately as a gift from the Lord.
It's the church who has demonstrated their love. It's the church who has been generous with him in giving this gift. But the Lord sees the kindness and the compassion of the body of Christ ultimately as a gift from God Himself.
I want to encourage you to think that way about our congregation. This is a gift from God to you. To be a part of a church that loves the Lord, that believes His Word, that cares for each other, nobody pretending that we've got everything figured out, no one pretending that we're perfect in any way, at anything, but where there is a genuine love for Christ and an honor for His Word, we receive that as a gift from God.
[5:20] It may be a member of your Sunday school class that has brought a meal to you. It may be someone on the ministry that you serve with that has provided care for you. It may be a member of our prayer team who has sent a card to you.

But ultimately, this is a gift from God. This is Him using His body to care for you. He says, I've rejoiced in the Lord greatly that you have revived your concern.

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The kindness of the church leads Paul to rejoice in the Lord. It's so easy for us to take the blessings of God for granted.
That's true within the church. It's so easy to take the ministry of the church for granted. You just assume there's going to be a teacher in your kid's classroom. You just assume there's going to be lights that are on.
You just assume there's going to be someone there to be the sponsor for your kids when they go to camp. You just assume there's going to be workers and volunteers for VBS.
[6:28] It's easy for all of us to take the blessings of God through His church for granted. But I think one of the great ways to stay thankful and grateful and joyful is to fight against taking the blessings of God for granted that He gives us through His church.

It really is a... If you just want your heart to be grateful, just start to rehearse in your mind all that has to happen through the goodness and kindness of the body of Christ every single week for our church to do what we do.
A couple of hundred people that teach Sunday school every Sunday. In the school year, just about that many that are involved on Wednesday nights with our kids' ministries.
And you just go down the list of all the ministry that takes place in our church. All the service. All the preparation.
All the behind-the-scenes work. This is a massive facility the Lord has given to us. And it requires so much work and care and attention. And for all of the people who faithfully use their gifts in whatever way it may be, one of the ways to fight against being disheartened or discouraged is to be grateful.
[7:49] And the quickest way to be grateful is just to stop and think about all the ways God has blessed us through this local church. Paul says, You have given great concern to me, and that causes me to rejoice in the Lord, because I know that every good and perfect gift comes from God.

Be thankful for the people God uses to bless you. Specifically, what Paul refers to here is this Philippian church has sent Paul a financial gift.
He is under house arrest, but he has to pay for his own expenses. And so, the church sends to Paul a gift through a member of the church, Epaphroditus.
The church in Philippi loved Paul and loved to give. Now, you may be tempted to think, well, it must be a wealthy church, but it's not a wealthy church.
And not by any standard. But it was a generous church. It was a church that loved to worship and loved to serve and loved to give.
[9:00] It's not because they had so much. It's because they were so thankful that they were generous. One of the marks of a faithful church is it's a church that loves to give.

It's always so tempting for us to think, if I had somebody else's money, I would be generous. If I had somebody else's resources, I would be generous. But the fact of the matter is, as you well know, generosity is far more a condition of the heart than it is a condition of how much you have of anything.
And Paul says, I've received your gift. It showed your concern for me. And I rejoice in the Lord because I see this as a gift from God. And the reason why he has joy is because the church was such a faithful, generous, giving church.
This is what marks gratitude, is generosity. The fact of the matter is, those who are the most generous are the most grateful people.
And those who are the most grateful people find themselves being generous. The problem is, we so often think, I would be generous if things were different. But the truth of the matter is, the pathway to joy is marked with gratitude.
[10:23] And the quickest way to be grateful is to be generous in giving. Not just simply through the church, though including that, but just in your love and compassion with each other.

You have revived your concern for me. Then he goes on and clarifies, you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. What Paul is saying is, I received your gift, and it shows your love and your compassion.
And I received this as ultimately a gift from the Lord through you. And I'm so grateful that you've shown this revived concern. And he says, it's not that you weren't concerned before, but you had no opportunity.

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Now, we don't know exactly what Paul means by that. It doesn't say any more than what we see. He may be saying that the church wasn't able to give before.
Maybe that there were just no additional funds they could give. It may be that he's saying that you've loved me, but you weren't aware of my specific need before.
[11:27] And you've been made aware of my need, and so now you've been able to help. It may be that they did know what his need was, but didn't know where he was. In the world of the first century, you don't just send off a quick text and say, where are you?

Where are you going to be? What's your address? Paul had no Venmo to make this easy. And so it may be that the church was aware of his need, but didn't know how to connect with him.
We don't know all the situation. Here's what we do know. When the church was made aware of the need, the church came through. And Paul says, you've revived your concern.
That's been demonstrated through the gift you've given to me. And I'm not saying that you weren't concerned before. It's just such a blessing that you've been able to help me in this way.
And what a statement about any church. When the need was made clear, the church came through. I pray that would always be true of us.
[12:35] We would come through in our financial giving, just as Philippians 4 mentions, in our willingness to serve and to teach, in our willingness to provide for ministries for our children, in our willingness to be involved in missions around the world.

Whatever the need that would be presented to us. What an amazing statement just to say that the church was made aware of the need and the church came through. Let that be true of us.
Over and over and over again. It says, you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Whatever that was has changed as they now know his need.
And specifically in Philippians 4, what they do is they provide for him financially to help meet his needs. This is the church being faithful to give, not because they were wealthy, but because they were generous.
I pray that our church would always have a generous heart. That we wouldn't be selfish. That we wouldn't look to say, how much can I keep all for myself?
[13:47] But that we would love to help each other, love to serve each other. That we would give to each other in our prayers, give to each other in service and support, give to each other in friendship and encouragement, and including being faithful to give financially to the Lord.

One of the things we learn in Philippians 4 is that there is great joy for the body of Christ when the people of God give. You see it in verse 10 again. I rejoiced in the Lord.
This is worship. This is the response of joy to God because of the faithful service and giving of the local church. Let me be very, very clear as we try to be every single Sunday.
In terms of giving of our church, we never ask our guests to give. We do that for a few reasons. One is we don't want people to think we just want your money, and so we try to make that very clear. Two, I never want someone to think that just because they give an offering that somehow that makes them right with God as if you could somehow buy His grace.
[15:02] And so if you're not a believer, or if this isn't your church home, we would never ask you to give financially at all. That's not what this is about. For those who are a part of the family, who do know Christ, who are a part of our church, I do absolutely want to encourage you to be faithful to worship through your giving.

And it's not because the church is trying to fundraise. It's because biblically, this is a path to joy. And for those who are generous, and I'm not talking about dollar amounts, I'm talking about the condition of the heart.
For those who are generous, you understand the joy that comes from giving. Here's the challenge. For most people who aren't faithful to worship through giving, they don't have joy in giving, and their thought is that there would be more joy in keeping it to yourself.
And so you're always going to do what you find the most joy in. And if you think the things of the world possess the greatest joy for you, then you'll never become generous because you're always chasing what the world offers.
But the Bible gives us here a very, very different perspective. Here is a church who is not wealthy at all, but is generous, worshiping God through giving because they've been made aware of a way to serve God's people and to be a part of the work God is doing.

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[16:46] And they give freely, and Paul receives it, and he rejoices in the Lord. And now, because of the generosity of the body of Christ, the work of the gospel continues and goes forward.

And in that, we find an invitation to true, lasting joy. So we trust the Lord to meet our needs here. We're not going to twist arms. We're not going to give, you know, stories to make you feel guilty about. That's not what this is about. Honestly, when it comes to giving in the local church, it's an invitation to joy.
That's biblically what this is. It truly is. This is an invitation to joy. This is an invitation to worship. This is an invitation to be a part of what God is doing. This is an invitation to bless people around you. This is an invitation to be a part of ministries our church does right here locally as well as all around the world.
[17:46] And what I would long for all of our church to do is to live in all of the joy God has for His people. It's far more than just giving, but it's never less than that.

You were concerned before, but you had no opportunity. But something has changed. Now they've been made aware of the need. Now they've been made aware of the opportunity. And they are faithful.
And because they are, they are blessed. The recipient is blessed. And most importantly, the work of the Lord goes forward. And they get to be a part of it.
Concern for God's people is more than just using your spiritual gifts or just being faithful to give. But it must include those things.
And it's not because you were made to feel guilty or manipulated. It's because you wanted to be a part of what God is inviting you to do. This is your invitation to be a part of joy.
[18:53] The road to joy is paved with generosity. It's concern for God's people. And it's demonstrated in the faithful giving of the church.

So, with the authority of God's Word behind me, I invite you to be a part of finding joy through giving to God through the local church.
Be a part of it. Not heroic giving, not waiting to be recognized, not just occasional, but giving that's faithful and generous over and over again on purpose because your heart longs to find the joy the Lord has for you.
Second, we see not just concern for God's people. We see a contentment with God's plan. Contentment with God's plan.
Verse 11, not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.
[20:07] The phrase that just jumps off the page to me here is I have learned. This isn't something that always comes easy. This doesn't always come naturally.

This isn't something that's true of everybody. This is something that we have to learn. I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Written by a man under house arrest.
Oh, that you would have the freedom that Paul had even though Paul is in chains. I've learned, he says, that in any situation I can be content.
This is the joy of resting under the sovereign providential hand of God. And what you really see is this entire passage is all an invitation for your joy.
But it's different than what your natural mind might assume. He says, it's through faithful giving that you have joy, not by keeping.
[21:23] And it's through learning in any situation you're in how to trust the Lord. Not just finding joy when every circumstance is how you want it to be.

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. How often do we say if I had a different job I'd be content?
If I had a different situation in my life I'd be content. If I lived in a different neighborhood I'd be content. If I had a bigger salary I'd be content.
If this problem would just go away I'd be content. We feel that way all the time if we're not careful. But Paul says joy is not by what you keep it's what you give and be a part of that with the church and Paul says that true contentment is not in your circumstances being a certain way it's in your view of God being a certain way.
I have learned he says this is a learned skill. You need to know what the Bible says about contentment. Know what the Bible says about peace.

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[22:45] Know what the Bible says about joy because what the world will tell us is the exact opposite of what is true. Contentment is not about having everything your way.

Contentment is trusting in a sovereign God. There's a lot of people who know how to build a business and they've learned how to make money but they've not learned how to be content.
And Paul says I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. There are people who have learned how to sing beautifully about trusting in God and there are people who have learned how to speak and teach and communicate about rest in the Lord but they themselves have not learned how to be content in God.
This isn't about circumstance. This is about faith and about trust. I have learned to be content.
Contentment is much less the result of your circumstances being a certain way.
It is much more the result of a settled trust in the providence of God. That's where contentment comes. A settled trust in the providence of God.
[24:16] We're going to study Lord willing this fall from the book of Nehemiah. One of my favorite parts of Nehemiah is in chapter 4. They're rebuilding the wall and for their safety and Nehemiah says we posted a guard and we prayed to our God.

He said there's enemies coming after us and we're going to do two things. We're going to pray because we trust God and we're going to get a guy with a really big gun who knows how to use it.
That's paraphrase. We posted a guard and we prayed to our God. Lord willing my plan this fall is to take an entire Sunday where all we do is wrestle with that tension.
We posted a guard and we prayed. We locked our door at night and we prayed. We turned on our alarm and we prayed.
we put in our seatbelt and we prayed. We saved for retirement wisely and we prayed.
[25:37] This tension of the believer of what it means to walk in wisdom and do what is best while recognizing ultimately our trust and our hope is in God.

That's where contentment comes from. contentment is not saying I trust God I won't study for my final exam I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
You can you can flunk out to the best of your ability and you'll get what you deserve if you live like that. Well I'm not going to get a job I'm just going to sit at home and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
You can. You can fail to provide for your family. That's not the kind of contentment we're talking about. We're talking about being faithful being diligent whatever your hand finds to do do it with all of your might.
That's posting a guard but we pray to God ultimately where our help comes from. God we've got to be found faithful to do what we were called to do all the while our hearts are resting in the providence of God and there are some questions that come from that and there are some struggles and difficulties that come from that here's what I know if someone in my family is sick I'm going to take them to the doctor that's posting a guard and I'm going to pray to God because he is the one who is the great physician and there are some challenges to try to understand from that Lord willing this fall we're going to take some time and just wrestle a bit with what that means and how that looks but Paul says I've learned to be content I've learned to say God your sovereign hand your providence guides me and even if circumstances never change
[27:49] I can be content I've learned it and if you have to learn it it tells us he didn't already on his own habit this is something that takes wisdom and experience and a trust in God look at verse 12 I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound he says I know how to respond when I've been given much and I know how to respond when I lose can you handle success in a way that honors God can you handle disappointment in a way that honors God look at the next phrase in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret to facing plenty and hunger abundance and need now this is fascinating to me because he says

I've learned the secret here and just look at half of the equation he gives us in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret let me just read half of it here I've learned the secret of facing plenty!
and abundance that's interesting to me because he says the other half too but that part makes more sense to us but it seems strange maybe for Paul to say I've learned the secret of how to be happy when I've got everything I need and you got to stop and say why would you have to learn that he says I've learned the secret to being content when I've got everything I need and wouldn't be able to

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do that and the answer is most every person most every person in this sanctuary this minute by any reasonable standard has plenty and abundance and there would be many in this sanctuary who are not content
I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content including how to abound including what to do when I have plenty and what to do when I have abundance and most people in our culture have not learned the secret to being content when they have plenty the reason is because they have not learned to be grateful if you have a car you could be grateful for that car or you could look around and see someone who has a nicer car and you're no longer content if you have a home and you're warm and safe and dry you could be content until you see someone who has a bigger home and you're no longer content he says
I've learned how to be content when I have plenty and when I'm in need when I'm hungry or when I have abundance it's not the circumstances that drive his contentment it's his rest and trust in God so be careful because if you're not careful you're going to tend to think contentment is just one changed circumstance away but it's not contentment is a settled trust in God and don't miss the connection here in the context of verse 10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that is the answer to the secret that he's learned when he says twice I have learned the secret here it is it's to rejoice in [32:50] God that's the secret that's how to be content to find your joy in the Lord contentment does not mean you don't work hard contentment does not mean that you're not diligent and the Bible is very clear on this one is Nehemiah 4 we posted a guard we were diligent but we prayed to God because we were trusting in him or the Old Testament says the horse is prepared for battle that's our diligent work but victory belongs to the Lord that's resting in his providence or the New Testament says one waters!

one plants that's the work but God gives the increase that's the trust in his sovereignty so contentment should not make us lazy quite the contrary contentment says God is at work God is using me God is using our church with all of our might let's strive to give everything we can to the Lord and trust in him knowing that the Lord is at work in ways far beyond what we can see what greater way to spend our lives than doing what God has called us to do contentment biblically does not make you lazy it makes you restful and there's a huge difference in those two terms don't be lazy do be restful there's concern for
God's people there's contentment with God's plan and that brings us third to this promise of confidence in God's power confidence in God's power before we read verse 13 let's remind ourselves of what we've seen in 10 to 12 he says I've been in need verse 11 I'm not trying to manipulate you because of my need because he says I've learned in any situation to be content including how to be brought low and how to abound in any and every circumstance I've learned the secret I've had plenty and I've been hungry I've had an abundance and I've had need here's the promise I can do all things through him who gives me strength I can with faith and strength abound and be brought low
I can do all things I can be hungry and have plenty I can do all things I can have an abundance and I can face need I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength I can be content in any circumstance this is not a guarantee to make an A this is not a guarantee to be first string this is not a guarantee to be promoted this is not a guarantee to have everything work out this is a reminder that with the power of God there is a way of contentment and rest regardless of what happens better understood rather than going to the free throw line and saying Philippians 4 13 tells me
I can make this free throw better understood is to say Philippians 4 13 tells me if I make this shot and I get the praise of people I can handle that by giving all glory to God and if I miss this free throw and everybody boos me I can be content because my identity is found in Christ not what people say about me this is not a guarantee of anything to do with where the basketball goes this is a promise that says as a child of God whether people applaud me or hate me I can be content because in Christ I've got the strength whether it is in abundance!
[37:29] or need so you don't need to go home and throw your coffee mug away but you might read it differently next time of what that promise is I can be content in the Lord no matter what comes my way and the Lord has given me an invitation to joy to give to trust in him to experience the highs of abundance and plenty and the lows of being brought down and being in need and through any circumstance I know the secret to being content and the secret is to say I trust the Lord which is what you're saying every time you give to God through the local church I trust the Lord through this which is what you're saying every time you teach that

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Sunday school class Lord I'm trusting you to do something with this which is what you say every time you minister to somebody else God I'm trusting you to use this to help them and to glorify the name of Jesus Christ all of our ministry is saying I'm asking you to do God what only you can do it doesn't make us lazy it makes us diligent it doesn't make us selfish it makes us trust him and when we live like that and think like that rightly can we say I can do all things through him who gives me strength I can do all things including being affirmed and praised and being rejected and hated I can do all things including handling seasons where there is visible fruit from ministry and things are going well and seasons where it's hard and frustrating
I can do all things including seasons where you've got so many friends you can't figure out where to cut off the party invitation and including seasons where you look around and say I'd give anything for someone to talk to I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength including when your family is healthy and strong and vibrant and near and including when the body breaks down and you spend more time hurting than you do sleeping I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength he says I've learned the secret I've learned the secret and the secret is to trust in God at all times I wonder if you know that secret this isn't about repeating magical words this is about trusting in a faithful
God any hardship any difficulty any victory any gain I can do all things through him who gives me strength I rejoiced greatly he says I had some struggles you weren't able to help me but now you are able to help me and you have and because of your generosity you were willing to give faith now you have joy and I rejoice in the Lord because he has met my need through you and together he says while we are striving to honor him we labor together we work together and some seasons we have more than enough and some seasons we're in need and
God provides through his people I've learned the secret he says and he says I invite you to live by the secret to rest in the Lord in your circumstance All of them!
[42:18] Don't wait to be rich to be generous because if you do that you'll never think you have enough to give you're going to go through your whole life missing the joy of giving and don't wait until your circumstances are different to you do you're going to go through your whole life never being grateful because there's never everything that's going to be perfect so just be generous today and just be thankful today and you can just hear Paul anticipating the objection to this well I would be thankful if things were different I would be grateful if circumstances were different he says there's a secret here and the secret is to be content in all circumstances start being generous today start being grateful today and there is the secret to contentment!

prepare your horse for battle but victory will be of the Lord post your guard but pray to your God plant and water but trust God to give the increase and in any circumstance you're in be diligent to be found faithful while being content under the watchful care of your faithful sovereign God strident with love fathers or other without bring und their eyes or their eyes can tell us do as they they can take them that they can help some things they get their learn can where they people start their into their mult fathers fathers going now as them fathers fathers fathers fathers made feel fathers call fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathersvest babies fathers fathers■ babies fathers consequences fathers
Thank you.

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