

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life from the week ending 05/13/07

What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 59.

The Promises and Contentment from the One who strengthens us.

We are ready to continue with our study of Philippians, but first let's first review our translation of Phi 4:4-13, *“Keep on having perfect happiness by means of the Lord at all times; Once more I repeat the command, keep on having perfect happiness. Let your supergrace mental attitude be known to all men. The Lord is near. Stop worrying about anything, but in every circumstance through prayer and through supplication for personal needs after thanksgivings let your requests or petitions be revealed to the God. In fact, that spiritual peace and prosperity from the source of the God, which surpasses or rises above and beyond all comprehension, shall garrison your hearts [right lobes] also your motivation minds in Christ Jesus. From now on, members of the Royal Family of God, whatever is true [doctrinal], whatever is honorable [noble or worthy of respect], whatever is just [fair or right], whatever is pure [of proper motivation] whatever personal loves exist, whatever is commendable, if there is any virtue [and there is for the mature believer says the first class condition] and if anything worthy of praise [and there is for the mature believer says the first class condition], be concentrating on these things. These things [doctrinal principles] also you have learned [manthano - learned from a teacher under strict academic discipline] and received [or accepted through metabolization of doctrine] and having heard [under discipline] and have understood by means of me [Paul's teaching ministry]. Be putting these into action and the God of prosperity shall be with you, all of you [supergrace believers]. Now, I have received much inner happiness by means of the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your concern or thinking for me; indeed, you also were thinking about me, but you lacked the opportunity to express it. Not because I am speaking with reference to poverty or lack; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I have come to know how to be humbled and I have come to know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret or [I have been initiated into the mystery] of how to be filled, how to be hungry, how to be prosperous, and how to suffer need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

The One who strengthens us says in 1Ki 8:56 *“Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.”* The One who strengthens us says in Rom 4:21, all the promises of God are assured by divine ability, *“and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”* The One who strengthens us says all the promises of God are said to be grounded in Christ (2Co 1:20).

Let's next take a look at some of the promises of God. Unlimited blessings are promised to those who believe, Mar 9:23 *And Jesus said to him, “If You can! All things are possible to him who believes.”* Answers to prayers are promised, Mar 11:24 *“Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you.”* Removal of obstacles is promised to those who have faith as a tiny grain of mustard seed (Luk 17:6). In Joh 6:35 we have the promise of spiritual fullness and contentment, *“I am the bread of life, He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who*

believes in me shall never thirst.” We have the promise of brighter days and joy (Psa 30:5). Deliverance in affliction is promised, Psa 34:19 *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”* Divine care in sickness is promised (Psa 41:3; Psa 50:15). There’s the promise of the divine presence of God comforting the believer, Isa 43:2 *“When you pass through the water, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you, when you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you,”* We have the promise of an eternal home, Joh 14:1-2 *“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.”* We have the promise of all things working together for good for those who love God (Rom 8:28). The sufficiency of divine grace is promised in 2Co 12:9 *“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”* We have the promise of death which is really a beautiful promise of final deliverance from sorrow, crying, and pain (Rev 21-4). We have the promise to those that give liberally, with no strings attached, Psa 41:1 *“Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce.”* Pro 11:25 *“The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.”* Luk 6:38 *“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”* We have the promises to the backslider or to those who have regrets and sorrow (Psa 34:18; Hos 14:4). There are the promises to those who serve and honor God, such as the promise of the uniform of glory for winning souls (Dan 12:3). There’s the promise of rewards for those who serve in the so-called “little” areas (Mar 9:41).

So in our corrected translation of Phi 4:4-13 we saw certain commands: *“Keep on having perfect happiness”* (verse 4). *“Let your Supergrace mental attitude be known to all men”* (verse 5). *“Stop worrying about anything”* (verse 6). Paul is saying that it is possible to live a life of contentment. We do that by thinking virtuous thoughts, doctrinal, noble, praiseworthy thoughts. In other words, by concentrating on the One who wrote The Book, the God of prosperity! We have taken some time to consider Who this is who strengthens us. We visited the things this One says in His word; we soaked up the promises He has made to us. Those promises do not rest on anything that we have to do. He comes through for us, period! It is about time we give Him the glory He deserves by simply believing and enjoying how fantastic it is to have a God and Father who loves to do great things for us! The more He comes through for us, the more we believe. The more we believe and trust in Him, the less worry, guilt, fear, and condemnation we should have in our souls. It is then that we are free, and we discover that no matter what circumstances we are in, in our souls, we have found that precious thing called contentment. Paul can make the claim in verse 13 that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him because Paul had to first reach the point in verse 11; he had to learn something, Phi 4:11 *“Not because I am speaking with reference to poverty or lack; for I have learned to be **content** in whatever circumstances I am.”* Paul learned Who it was that made those promises; he knew that whatever affliction was coming his way, it was momentary and light and could not compare to the great glory that it was producing in heaven for him. He learned how to rest in God’s promises and he knew for a fact that this One would meet all his needs, and knowing that, he had the boldness to proclaim *“I can do all things.”* Whatever the plan of God called for him to do that day, or for the rest of his life, he knew he could accomplish, not because of anything great about him, but because He had come to know the One who strengthens him. He learned the secret that all the production from that branch called Paul depended not on the branch, but on the vine, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our passage in Phil 4:11-13 correlates fantastically with 1Ti 6:6-10; both deal with contentment. 1Ti 6:3-8 *“If anyone advocates, encourages, or teaches a*

different doctrine, and does not agree with sound doctrines, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, even with the doctrines pertaining to the spiritual life. He has received blind arrogance and understands nothing [of doctrine]; but he has a morbid obsession about controversies and verbal conflicts, out of which arise or originate jealousy, discord, speaking evil [SOT], evil speculations or presumptions, and constant friction between people of a distorted mind and devoid of doctrine, constantly presuming that gain is godliness or living the spiritual life. But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

Let's note some principles concerning contentment. Godliness or living the spiritual life that God has provided is a means of great profit when accompanied by contentment. Godliness means that you're in the place where God can train you, that is, residence, function, and momentum inside the spiritual life that God has provided. This is a means of great profit because it is the beginning of the development of perfect happiness, becoming occupied with Christ, and having personal love for God. Having perfect happiness, God then gives us the ultimate in suffering for blessing which is evidence testing. So contentment refers to perfect happiness, begun in spiritual self-esteem, continued in spiritual autonomy, and completed in spiritual maturity. Here is where we have capacity for life, and that's why it says in 1Ti 6:7 *"For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either."* We cannot take material things or relationships out of this world (1Ti 6:8). Being content with food and shelter means that if you're content with the basic things and you develop perfect happiness, then God can trust you with the most magnificent things in life which are your escrow blessings for time. 2Co 12:10 *"Therefore I am well content [the beginning of perfect happiness] with weaknesses [providential preventative suffering]: in insults or slanders [people testing], with distresses or pressures [thought testing] with persecutions [system testing], with difficulties or stresses [disaster testing] on behalf of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* The four types of testing mentioned in verse 10 are warm-ups for spiritual self-esteem in order to advance to spiritual autonomy. 1) People testing. 2) Thought testing. 3) System testing. 4) Disaster testing. These are warm-ups for momentum testing faced in spiritual autonomy. A believer passes these tests by having the beginning of perfect happiness. There is enough happiness in your soul from spiritual self-esteem so that you can be happy in all categories of providential preventative suffering. You can have fantastic blessing in the midst of suffering. Providential preventative suffering brings you to the point where you realize life and the devil are bigger than you, and that you won't be able to solve your problems on your own, your strength comes from the use of the problem-solving devices.

Heb 13:5 is another important passage about contentment, *"Let your lifestyle [not character but lifestyle] be free from the love for money, being content [+H] with what you have. For He Himself has said [Deu 31:6], 'I will never leave you nor will I ever forsake you.'"* There is nothing wrong with money; it is necessary, but when money becomes your master, you become a pitiful slave. Money was not designed to bring happiness. The promise in this verse is God's guarantee to you from the day of your salvation, based on God's perfect integrity that He will never leave or forsake you. This is both temporal and eternal security. However, this doesn't prevent God from disciplining you or allowing the law of volitional responsibility to function. Having things, acquiring things, collecting things, isn't going to change you, but, having doctrine in the soul, you'll have the capacity to enjoy life. One of the greatest signs of prosperity is maximum use of perfect happiness. This comes from going through the valley of momentum testing and passing them, advancing to spiritual maturity. Just as Paul learned in Phi 4:12 *"I have come to know how to be*

humbled,” we all must learn, because by nature none of us have it, and in humility you are objective. Humiliation is associated with arrogance; being humbled is associated with spiritual growth and understanding God's grace. What we cannot learn from Bible doctrine, we must learn from adversity and undeserved suffering. This suffering is a great teacher to the wise, but is bitter to those who resist Bible doctrine.

So Paul says Phi 4:12 *“I have come to know how to be humbled and I have come to know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret or have been initiated into the mystery of how to be filled, how to be hungry, how to be prosperous, and how to suffer need.”* This verse tells us that we must also learn how to be prosperous and be happy in prosperity; sadly, few prosperous people understand this. It is difficult for prosperity to successfully work in anyone because arrogance destroys capacity for life and especially capacity for prosperity. To be initiated means to learn the secrets of a fraternity and to endure the testing of that fraternity. The Church is the fraternity, and we are initiated through learning Bible doctrine and suffering for blessing. So circumstances make no difference if you have doctrine in the soul. You have capacity for life so the circumstances don't bother you for any length of time. Paul then tells us how this is possible in Phi 4:13 *“I have the power to attain all things through Him [God the Father] who makes me strong.”* Whether you are strong or not depends on you learning that God's power exists in three categories (omnipotence of the Father, omnipotence of the Son, and omnipotence of the Spirit), and is available to you, and then utilizing it through the perception of doctrine.

You can see how important it is for you to attain contentment and perfect happiness before you die. It's the only way to die, and the only way to live. Perfect happiness actually equates living with dying for the believer. So whatever the circumstances, you still have perfect happiness and can say as Paul said in Phi 1:21 *“For me, living is Christ and dying is profit.”* So in Phi 4:13 *“I have the power to attain all things through Him [God the Father] who makes me strong.”* The phrase *“all things”* refers to the three stages of spiritual adulthood, the problem-solving devices, and the tremendous invisible impact on history. Perfect happiness is increased at each stage of spiritual adulthood, but it must be learned. This same power that was available to our Lord in Hypostatic Union, God the Father now makes available to you. Capacity for life is related to how you handle undeserved suffering (2Co 12:10). Capacity is also related to your status quo in life or lifestyle (Heb 13:5). Capacity for life is related to learning how to be content with the circumstances of life (Phi 4:11-13). Capacity is related to prosperity and blessing (1Ti 6:6-8).

Let's look at some principles concerning true happiness: 1) You cannot build your happiness on the details of life, money, success, pleasure, social life, friends, relatives, health, sex, or status symbols. If you have capacity from God's happiness, you can enjoy these things to the maximum, but you cannot depend upon them for your happiness. 2) You cannot build your happiness on pleasant environment. This is one of the reasons why people travel; they think a change of environment makes them happy. 3) You cannot build your happiness on people, romance, marriage, friendship, children, or social activity. 4) You cannot build your happiness by changing the Devil's world through reform crusades, social engineering, violence, civil disobedience, or revolution. Of course, the Devil's world hasn't changed a bit, and your objective is not to change the Devil's world; instead, you should be executing the PPOG. 5) You cannot build your happiness on someone else's unhappiness. In that case, you are full of all the sins of the arrogance complex. You're jealous, bitter, vindictive, implacable, angry, full of hatred and self-pity, filled with guilt reactions that motivate you. This was the thinking of the legalistic religious crowd during the time that our Lord walked this earth; they thought they would be happy if they could destroy TLJC (Mar 14:10-11).

Back to 1Ti 6:6 *“But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.”* This is the true principle of prosperity from the divine viewpoint. It is a contrast to the false principle in verse 5 that said that anyone who is successful or wealthy or has prosperity is automatically a mature believer and has been blessed by God; this is untrue as we have noted. God's timing is perfect, and when you learn that, you learn to have patience even if you're a very impatient person. God has absolutely perfect timing and this includes great spiritual blessings being given to you first. The spiritual blessings are emphasized first because the spiritual blessings give us the capacity to enjoy the temporal blessings. No person can love the Lord apart from the consistent intake of Bible doctrine. People can say they love God, they can do things for Him, they can give graciously, they can serve but, without a consistent intake of doctrine it is totally useless! Remember that all believers are commanded to love God in Mar 12:30 *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”* However, if Bible doctrine or the words of Christ are not abiding in you, you do not have love for God, and this is according to the Bible. Remember you should never take the communication of doctrine for granted! You never know when such passages as Amo 8:11-12 may be true about your geographical location, *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, But they will not find it.”*