

CONTENT IN ANY SITUATION

If you want to live a contented life in Christ Jesus then as Paul the Apostle would say, "I beseech you...", to read, reread, and then read again and then meditate on Philippians Chapter 4. Then after that John Chapter 15. Then hopefully your response in the end will be one of, "ok Lord, my life is in Your hands, what would You like me to do today."

Paul stated, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content," and that is in whether being well fed and living in plenty or in being hungry and in want. He then says the much quoted but perhaps somewhat misunderstood, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (verse 13).

What I've experienced in the past is in using that verse it has led me to a battle in the mind. An "I will overcome" way of looking at it. In a (now somewhat dated) Seinfeld episode, George's father picks up a technique to overcome circumstances by saying, "serenity now, serenity now!" Kramer adopts that as well only they both discover that ultimately it doesn't work and just leads them into even more frustration.

What we find then is the verse, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" isn't just a mantra that can be recited to wave away our doubts, frustrations, or fears. It starts with what Paul says in the earlier verses of Chapter 4. Beginning in verse 5 he says, "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Once again, it is not some form of incantation that wards off evil and ushers us into a state of bliss just by merely quoting it. The backing behind that verse can be found in Proverbs 3:5-6 that says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

It is ultimately a state of your being. It starts with recognizing that the earth is the Lords, and all its fullness (1 Corinthians 10:26) and that your life is not your own. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." We were created for God's glory (Isaiah 43:7) and His desire (Colossians 1:16). And as Paul stated in Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey,

whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

What that brings us to is what preachers typically call a need for surrenderedness. Surrendering our will for God's Will. Once we accept that this is ALL God's thing, that He has a plan and a purpose for ALL things, and that ALL things do indeed "work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28), then when we do go to God in prayer and give all of our cares and concerns to Him, He really does give us a peace that surpasses all understanding. It is what Jesus spoke of in John 15 about abiding in Him. We are created for God's glory and to abide in Him for eternity. That is why He wants us to forsake sin, live in His righteousness, and trust in Him through all of our circumstances. Covid 19, Hurricane Sally, our family concerns, our finances and all of the other crazy things that are swirling around us are not a surprise or a worry to God. When we realize that with each circumstance and situation God has a perfect plan in that, when we abide in Him, surrendering our will for His we can truly overcome since "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Our trusting in God and surrendering our will for His Will does not make the circumstances confronting us to all vanish in a puff of smoke. Some times by His great mercy He will remove things that haunt us and most other times He takes us THROUGH the storm or fire, or as David said in Psalm 23, "the valley of the shadow of death", and many times we experience grief, suffering, and pain in going through it, but as David said in another Psalm (27), "Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!" We have to trust that in ALL things that God is taking you through are for your good and His purpose. Life is not always easy or pleasant but we can find His perfect peace and know in our heart that God is good (ALL the time)! This message is for me and all those who want to overcome this world as Christ has overcome-

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:3-5)