

# Christ Our Strength

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Sorry.

Be anxious for nothing. Sorry, guys. Powerful scripture this morning, so bear with me. 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 comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have received your concern for me.

Indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am in.

[ 1 : 2 6 ] I know how to get along with the humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and of suffering need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. And my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

This is the reading of the Lord's word. Thank you, Chelsea, for reading scripture today.

I guess I'm the one who always cries up here, so it's good to see someone else cry every once in a while.

We're talking about Philippians. And we're looking at Paul writing from a prison. He's been unjustly accused.

[ 2 : 3 6 ] He's about to be killed. And yet he writes and he talks about contentment and peace and being assured that everything is going to be all right, that everything is going to be good.

And I ask questions as I hear that. How does he do that? What is going on in his mind? How? Because he asks us to invite. He invites us into this experience with him. He says that we can do it also, that we should be doing it.

And I ask myself, how does he do that? What does it look like? How do you experience that type of contentment, that type of peace, especially in the crazy world that we live in today?

I mean, it seems like as I look around, I don't see contentment or peace at all. It seems like my life often is characterized by a lack of contentment.

This story, I think, speaks to me as I read it. I laugh every time I think of it. But the story goes like this. A boat docked in a tiny Mexican village and American tourists complimented the Mexican fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch it.

[ 3 : 56 ] Not very long, answered the Mexican fisherman. Well then, why didn't you stay out longer and catch more, said the businessman. The fisherman explained that his small catch was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family.

The American asked, but what do you do with the rest of your time? And he said, I swell, I sleep late, I fish a little, I play with my children, I take a siesta with my wife, and in the evenings I go into the village and see my friends and I play the guitar and I sing a few songs and I have a full, contented life.

But the American interrupted, and he goes, wait, wait, wait, wait, I have an MBA from Harvard and I can help you. You should start by fishing longer every day. I mean, you can sell the extra fish you catch and with the extra fish you can put that revenue back in and you can buy a bigger boat.

And eventually you'll buy another boat and another boat and another boat and you'll have this entire fleet and instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you can negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open up your own plant.

And then eventually you can leave this little village and move to Mexico City or Los Angeles or New York or wherever you want to run your multinational business. And you can direct your huge operation there. The fisherman asked him really thoughtfully, well, how long will all this take?

[ 5 : 11 ] And the American businessman said, well, maybe 20, 25 years. And the fisherman said, so, and after that, what? After that, well, that's when it really gets interested and the businessman said, when you get your business really big, you can start selling stocks and make millions and millions and you can have an incredible amount of money.

And the fisherman looked at him and said, millions? Really? And after that, what? And the fisherman said, well, I mean, the businessman said, well, after that you can retire.

You can live in a tiny village near the coast. You can sleep late. You can play with your children. You can catch a few fish. You can take siestas with your wife. And you can spend evenings drinking and enjoying your friends.

Uh-huh. Now, some of you don't get that. Especially if you're from Hong Kong. So if you're not from Hong Kong, please go by and tap the person on the shoulder and try to explain to them what that story is all about.

But it's the story that Paul is talking about. It's part of it. He's talking about contentment and how we can be happy and fulfilled in that peace. And I said in other words earlier that when I look at Hong Kong, I don't see this played out at all.

[ 6 : 27 ] I mean, the divorce rate in the marriages in Hong Kong is the highest in any civilized country in the world. Did you know that? I mean, there's no other civilized country that can compete to the divorce rate of Hong Kong.

There's surely not contentment in our marriages. I mean, in the workplace, the latest statistics came out through the Government Happiness Index that the workplace satisfaction is at all-time low right now. People are more unhappy and discontent in their work than they've ever been in Hong Kong.

I mean, people are showing their discontentment in their newspapers. They're showing their discontentment as a shop. You know, yesterday or last week, we had this blender. It was about 10 years old and it was falling apart. So Christina's gone.

Yes, Christina's gone. Some people asked me that already. They said, well, it looks like I let the kids dress themselves today. So obviously, Christina is not here. And yes, you're right. When Christina's not here, I let the kids dress themselves.

And so she's back in Dallas. But I was looking at her house. I was thinking of something nice to do with her, for her, and I bought this blender. And so I bought this blender and I felt really good about the blender. And as I walked out of the store, the lady said, oh, be sure to come back in next month because we have a new version coming out.

[ 7 : 34 ] Well, I was content just to have the blender that I had, but now I'm totally discontent because there's a new one coming out and I didn't even know that. But as we shop, we see discontentment.

We see it in our relationships all around us that people aren't meeting our needs. They're not coming through for us. They're not asking us enough questions. We see it at Leng Kui Fung.

As people hop from bar to bar looking for something that could fill them, we see it in our education system all around us. In Hong Kong U, there's this huge sense of discontentment.

We see it in the racetracks on Thursday and Saturday nights. We see it outside the gambling halls as people are placing their bets. We see it everywhere.

I was talking to a doctor yesterday, two days ago, Friday. And they said that what they see in the healthcare system is amazing.

[ 8 : 33 ] But now as a doctor, he is prescribing antidepressants to 10-year-olds and 8-year-olds because they're just coming in with full of anxiety and fear and a lack of peace and totally discontent.

He said he never thought he would see that in his practice. But now he has 10-year-olds coming in asking for the equivalent of Prozac. So they can feel happy because their life is not good.

It's not good. Sometimes we see discontent even in churches, don't we? We see people go from church to church to church. I like this about this church. I like this about this church. This church, I don't like this. The message was a little too hard today. You know, I realized even as I was thinking about this message today that it's probably gonna be pretty hard for some of us.

It was hard for me to write it and read it and think about it and ask the Holy Spirit to examine my life and say, am I really living this out? Or are my words just hollow?

Paul is sitting in a prison covered in filth and excrement. And he hears all these things going on about different churches he's planted and some of them are doing well and some of them are not doing well.

[ 9 : 52 ] People are using his name. People are misusing his name. He's about to be executed for something that he shouldn't be executed for. And he writes these amazing words. Be anxious for nothing.

In all things give thanksgiving. And I ask myself, how does he do that? How does he do that? I mean, I'm anxious sometimes just going into the office.

And some of you tell me you're anxious just you're medicating just to get to work. And you're meditating, medicating just to get home because your lives are so out of control.

And here Paul is in the middle of the worst situation possible. And he's talking about contentment. And so what I wanna briefly, briefly look at is I wanna look at contentment. I wanna look at what it is. But maybe more importantly, what it's not.

I wanna look at how we get contentment. Maybe more importantly, how we don't get contentment. And I wanna look at the secret. And I'm gonna do all that in just an incredibly short time. But I've been praying about this because when Paul spoke these words of contentment, the words actually had this meaning in his culture that meant self-sufficiency and independence.

[ 11 : 03 ] And so the minute he shared those words, everybody listening to Paul would have thought, well, I hear that every day all around me. The Stoics and the philosophers, they're saying that to us. They're saying if you want to be happy, you need to be content.

Contentment was the highest virtue in Paul's day. And everybody tried to attain for that. Everybody went to that. And the Stoics said you can do it. The Stoics said you could do it through your ability.

If you tried hard enough, if you put aside your desires, if you just, you concentrated, the power was within you, you could do these things. If you just name it, it's gonna be yours. Practice meditation.

Deny yourself. Detach yourself. Detach yourself from people. Detach yourself from your feelings. And if you do all these things, you're gonna be content. And your life will be happy and you'll have inner peace. But when Paul uses this word, he doesn't use it in that way at all.

When Paul talks about contentment, it's a word that basically says that you cannot be content unless you recognize that you cannot do it on your own. I mean, what he's saying to the people is that the only way that you can be content is to realize that I can't be content.

[ 12 : 10 ] I need help. I need somebody to step in to make me content. The word was this image of this city with all these high walls and it's surrounded by this massive army. And the army's trying to break in and destroy the city.

But inside, everybody was peaceful. And everybody's happy. Because they know that everything they need, everything they need is within the walls of the city and they don't need to worry.

So when Paul uses this word, he would basically have meant something like this. Contentment is an inner sense of rest and peace that comes from a right relationship.

A right relationship with God. Contentment was being able to say that God is enough. That no matter what else happens in my world, that God is enough.

Can we say that? I mean, today, could you say that God is enough? Be honest. I mean, most people in Paul's day, when they heard this, they would have laughed at him.

[ 13 : 17 ] Because they realized that to be content, you had to follow your passions. You had to follow those things that brought up your discontentment. And so if you saw a woman or you saw a guy or you saw a relationship or you saw a marriage and you felt, oh, I wish I had that, you need to pursue that.

And if you pursued that, then you got it. And when you got it, you became content. And so if you wanted relationships, you pursued relationships. And you start thinking, like most of us think, well, I just got to find the right person.

If I find the right person, then everything's going to work out. If I find the right person, then all my life is going to be good. I mean, it's going to be perfect and I'm not going to have any worries. I'm going to feel peace. I'm going to feel contentment.

If I just get married, if I can just get married, then everything's going to be good. Have you ever heard anybody say that? I've heard a lot of people say that.

They think that they look at us as married people and we have this kind of secret playbook and when everything's great and everything's in control and there's no chaos in our life and sex is all there is, it's great. If I can just find the right person to have the right sex with, then everything's going to be okay because that's my passion and that's what I'm driving for and if I drive for it and I grab it, then I'm going to be happy, right?

[ 14 : 29 ] But what happens when you find that right person and they let you down? I mean, what happens when you find that right person and they're seeking for the same thing that you're seeking?

What happens if they say to you, in you, I'm hoping that you're going to fulfill all my needs, you're going to meet all my needs perfectly, you're going to do everything that I need, that's why I married you and you go, well, that's why I married you so now you have two people who are trying to get what they need from each other and no one's getting what they need and Paul says, that's not contentment.

Some of the people, when they heard Paul spoke, they would have laughed and they said, that's ridiculous because everyone knows that contentment comes in stuff. I mean, if I get enough stuff, if I attain enough things, if I can get enough money, if I can collect enough houses, now I've been told in Hong Kong you need three houses, right?

You live in one, you rent the two out and if you do that, your life is perfect, you're going to be content, you're going to have peace, everything is great. So if I just have three houses, everything is going to be good. I have a friend who has three Ferraris.

His idea was, if I just get Ferraris, life will be great. It's amazing because he's come to Christ and he's realizing, well, I have these Ferraris and they're not really making me happy or content, they're actually making me unhappy.

[ 15 : 46 ] I need to sell them and I'm like, can I drive one around for one week? But some of the people were saying, if you can get these things, if you can collect these things, if you can satisfy your feelings and you're going to be happy and everything's going to be good, right?

Some people, when they heard Paul laugh, speak and said that God is enough, they would have laughed. They would have said, come on, Paul, everybody knows that peace, happiness, contentment is found in education.

It's in getting the right degrees and it's in status, it's in power. I mean, I can find peace and happiness through my doctor, right? I mean, all I need to do is to go through the right doctor, the right psychiatrist and if I go to the right psychiatrist, then everything's going to be okay.

He can give me the right pills, he can teach me how to breathe right, he can teach me how to burn those candles, he can teach me how to rearrange my furniture in my house so that everything's perfect and I'll have peace. I can go on vacations, I can stop thinking so much, I cannot be anxious, I cannot worry, I cannot fear, I don't have to be worried about content if I could get the right education, the right doctor, the right medication, the right person in my life, everything's going to be okay.

Really? Is that what it calls to be content? I mean, have you ever had someone say those things to you? I mean, I've said them to myself and so I'm trying to be as transparent as I can and be as open as I can but is that really where those things are found?

[ 17 : 19 ] I love the quote in your bulletin when you get a chance to go back to it, we have it up here but the quote from one of Sigmund Freud's best students, have you ever read this? It's amazing, this guy is not a Christian, he didn't come to Christ, he didn't have any kind of religious faith and he was asked one day about contentment and what they do as psychiatrists for contentment and basically what he says is that if you're looking for counseling and psychiatry to show you that contentment, it will never work.

I mean, all it does is it shows you why you're not content but psychiatry and psychology will never answer the big questions it's not going to answer why you're here, why you have to die, how you can make your life triumphal and meaningful, how you can live a life of contentment.

If psychology pretends to do this, if it offers a full explanation and solution for your unhappiness and discontentment, it's a fraud. Don't listen to it because you'll never be able to escape from it.

All counselors can do is show you what you've done in your life and why you're discontent or why you're unhappy but it can't show you how to find contentment. Drugs cannot show you how to find happiness.

Counselors will just show you why you're not happy and maybe they'll tell you that that unhappiness isn't real unhappiness. It's just been forced upon you but you should really be happy but you're feeling unhappy and discontent and that's just a false discontentment.

[ 18 : 38 ] But do you see what he says at the end? This is a guy who's not a Christian. He's one of the leading psychiatrists and thinkers of his day, one of Freud's best students. He says this. He says the only thing that can answer the questions and deal with our happiness, deal with our discontentment, the only strength that can overcome these feelings is the strength of a God.

I read that. I'm like, oh my, wow. Here's a guy and he's at the top of his field and doing these things and trying to make people content and trying to make people unhappy and he realizes that none of it will work.

The only thing that can make people happy is God. I don't know what is in your life right now. I don't know what you're trying to make yourself content with. The passage says a really quick and easy question.

You look at verse 13. All you need to do to figure out what's driving you, what's giving you, what's your passion, all you need to do is see, I can do all blank through him.

I mean, I can do all things through blank who strengthens me. I can do all things through blank who strengthens me.

[ 19 : 52 ] What would you put there? Be honest. No one else is going to know. But what would you put there?

Sometimes I put, I can do all things through Tobin who strengthens me. I hope you don't put that on yours. But I put that on mine. Sometimes I can do all things through my family who strengthens me.

And whatever you put there, if it's not God, Paul says that it's a lie. That it's hollow. And if that lie is taken away from you, if you can say I can do all things through Tobin and all of a sudden my health deteriorates, where am I?

Christina's not here because last week we found out her mom has cancer. So she flew home to be with her mom going through chemo. So Karen's sitting in a chair going through chemo and I'm talking to her about this sermon for this week.

And it's amazing to see the resolve and the contentment in her life. Because she knows the blank is filled in by nothing but God.

[ 21 : 20 ] C.S. Lewis on his journey, I'm reading his autobiography right now. It's really very interesting. He talks about how he came to Christ. He's in Oxford in 1920s. He probably came to Christ about 1930.

There's all this upheaval in Oxford. All these things are happening and he's trying everything. He's trying materialism. He's trying money. He's trying pleasures. He's trying passion. He's trying theology. He's trying philosophy.

And all of them fall short. All of them leave him empty. And he comes to this amazing realization that if all these things in the world are leaving me empty, then maybe I'm built for something else.

Maybe I'm built for something else not in this world. Maybe I'm built for something more. And Paul says that in his prison cell to us today.

He reminds us over and over through his word and through his scripture that there's so much more to contentment and contentment can only be found in a person. Contentment can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

[ 22 : 30 ] And until we realize that even as Christians, some of us say, yeah, I believe Christ and I came to Christ, but we walk off our life and we filled that blank in when we first said that prayer, but now we say I can do all things through my MPF or my finances that strengthen me.

And we forgot in our first love, an older brother of mine changed my life.

One day he came to me, it was many years ago, he looked at my life and my life was in chaos. I was anxious, I was fearful, I didn't have peace. I felt like my world was going around and I felt like I was continually going around in circles.

I felt like I was walking down this long corridor with all these doors open and I was opening up the doors trying to find happiness and contentment and I could just never open up the right door and the hallway kept going longer and longer and longer and there's a lot of doors on every side and I'm trying to open up the one finding happiness and meaning and contentment and get rid of my anxiety, get rid of my fear and I could never do that.

Have you ever felt like that? And he looked at me and he said, Tobin, the reason your life is a mess is because you don't have a rudder to your life.

[ 23 : 55 ] And I looked at him and I said, what does that mean? He goes, well, our lives are like these boats and we're on this journey and the rudder is on the back of the boat and the rudder keeps us on track.

The rudder balances us. The rudder keeps us from flipping over and from turning around and losing direction. And he said, the reason I don't have that is because I didn't understand God.

My theological understanding of God was about this deep. And so whenever a wave hit me, whenever something hit me, I freaked out. God, he says, you need to get a rudder.

Your God is too small because you don't know very much about God or who he is or what he wants for you when even just a little puddle hits you.

Your boat goes and you come in and you go, my life is falling apart. What happened? I just got a parking ticket. Really? Your rudder isn't big enough to handle the parking ticket?

[ 25 : 00 ] Your view of God is so small that you don't understand that? There are a lot of us in here today and we've been walking with the Lord or we've said we've been Christians for a long time.

And our rudder is about that big or non-existent. When we say we're a Christian, when it comes to understanding God, his character, his word, theology, all these things that more us, all these things that strengthen us, all these things that help us amongst the storm, our rudder is like that big.

Some of us in here, we've been walking with God for 20 years and we don't even have a rudder. Now there's some theological questions we could ask after that. How big is your rudder?

How well do you know the Lord? How well do you know his character which never changes? How well do you know how much he loves you? How well do you know the power of the gospel?

that doesn't just save you for heaven but it saves you day to day. Today. And I realized I didn't know that and so Henry basically challenged me.

[ 26 : 32 ] He challenged me just to study my Bible and he gave me this passage, Philippians 4, 6, and 7. Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving what you request may be made known to God.

And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And Henry told me to memorize that and to repeat it over and over and over for one week.

And I did. I started to memorize it. I started to repeat it over and over and over. And one of the things kept sticking out to me.

I didn't understand why Paul wanted me to pray with thanksgiving before God even answered my prayers. I mean usually I'm thankful when I get what I want.

But Paul says to pray with thanksgiving before our prayers are even answered. Why?

[ 27 : 36 ] I realized I didn't understand that because my rudder was too small. What Paul was saying to me and what he's saying to us is that God is always at work.

And we thank God for what he's done in the past. We thank him for what he's done at the cross. We thank him for bringing us here. We thank him for taking us on this journey. We thank him for weaving our lives and our story into his story.

But we also thank him for the future. And this is really hard for me to think through as an old young Christian with a rudder about this big because I didn't read my Bible. I didn't know how to pray.

I just knew I was a Christian but I didn't know what that meant really. Isn't that kind of weird? I mean just think about it. You're a doctor and you're in a clinic and the new doctor comes in and you're sitting there and you're doing your work and all of a sudden he comes in and he goes, hey I got this patient and he has a fever and he has a sore throat.

What do you think is wrong with him? He probably has a sore throat. Give him some aspirin and send him home. Okay, okay, okay. And you keep doing your work and he comes in. Hey I got this patient and he's exhibiting these symptoms of just a rash and a flush.

[ 28 : 52 ] He's been out hiking in the woods and he's itching all over the place. What do you think is wrong with him? Maybe he has poison ivy. Give him some Benadryl and send him home. Okay, okay. I have this new guy.

He just came in and he has these symptoms. What would you think if you were a doctor? You go, what the heck is this guy doing here? He's not qualified. He doesn't have the depth and understanding of his practice.

But you know that's like a lot of us in here today. We say we're Christians but something hits us and we just start freaking out. Because we don't understand God.

We don't understand his character. We don't understand who he is. We don't understand how he changes. He never changes. We don't understand how he loves us. We don't understand the cross. We don't understand redemption. We don't understand salvation. We don't understand what it means to walk with him day by day and to trust his goodness.

But we're Christians. But we don't understand because our rudder is that small. And Henry challenged me to read and to grow the rudder of theology in my view of God in my life.

[ 30 : 08 ] And I've been trying to do that. And I realized in prayer, this is an epiphany for me. when I pray, I might not get what I'm asking for.

But God will always give me what I would have asked for if I knew what he knew. Ooh.

Let me try it again. When I pray, because I'm trying to figure out a better way to word this because you know I make up words sometimes up here and I'm not that great of a speaker or communicator. So I was trying to figure out how I should make this a little simpler.

But in Tobinese, I basically just said, Tobinese, when I pray, I might not get what I'm praying for, but God will always give me what I would have asked for if I see everything the way he sees it.

Now that's not original. That's Jonathan Edwards. And Jonathan Edwards stole that from John Owen. John Owen stole that from Tertullian. Tertullian stole that from Paul. Paul stole that from Jesus. Everything's stolen.

[ 31 : 21 ] But it's helped me see things differently. The theological term for that is sovereignty. And God is in control of everything.

Jesus talked about that. Not a hair can fall from your head without God allowing it to happen. Does that make sense? Okay, so Christina's not here, so I'll share something, okay?

Can't not tell her this, okay? Because I don't think I've ever shared this to anybody else. When I grew up and I went off to China, I was serving in Maine, China, and I never thought I'd get married.

I really had no desire ever to get married, and I never thought that I would get married. I dated a lot of girls. Okay, my kids are here.

I dated a few very special select girls, okay? It wasn't like I was dating a lot. Okay, so you're not dating a lot, Rachel or Kip.

[ 32 : 24 ] You're just a few select people, okay, Becca? Why do we have the kids in here today? I don't understand that. What's going on there?

Okay. Dad let us dress ourselves today, and he gave us Pop-Tarts this morning for breakfast. What? Okay.

So, I never thought I'd get married, ever. And I came to, because I just realized what God had me doing, maybe I should just stay single. And I came back from China, and I started going to graduate school, and I met the girl that I never thought that I would meet.

It was the first girl out of all those few select special girls I dated that I felt like for the first time I could marry this person. And we started pursuing a relationship.

All our friends confirmed it. The church confirmed it. Everybody said, you're perfect together. You're going to get married. You're perfect. And so, it was Super Bowl Sunday, which I call Sunday Bloody Sunday from now on, because on Monday, I was going to go buy the engagement ring.

[ 33 : 30 ] And on Sunday, we hung out at the time, and after the time, she came up to me and said, I don't want to date anymore. You need to break up. And I prayed, and I prayed.

Okay, God, obviously, you made a mistake here, God. Something's going on. Everybody confirmed this. The church confirmed this. The elders, you're perfect together. Why did this happen? I don't understand this. And I just kind of thought, and I tried to negotiate, and I tried to pray differently to kind of trick God into answering my prayers.

And I know none of you ever do this, but I did it, right? And so, it didn't work. And about a year later, as I was sharing this with a friend of just doing the healing and working through those things, this friend, whose name was Christina, was sitting outside of a barbecue, and we were talking about life.

And as I'm sharing these things with her, I look at her and go, because we'd been working together for a year, right? And I'm going, wow, she's a girl. She's just not just one of my coworkers.

She's a girl. And I start seeing her heart, and I've seen her love for God. And I'm so thankful that God didn't answer my prayer. I'm so thankful that God is sovereign.

[ 34 : 46 ] I'm so thankful that whatever God's doing, he has the best in store for his children, and he knows what we need to know, and he knows what we need to have, even though we don't want it. It's called sovereignty.

I mean, the Bible's full of stories like that, right? I mean, if you and me were at the cross, and Jesus was being crucified, and we were one of the followers, and Jesus was crucified, and he came away, we would walk home and say, dude, game's over.

Terrible. Three years we're doing this, and now it's just, what are we going to do? Well, you've got to get out of Jerusalem because they're trying to kill us. I mean, we would have seen things in our human perspective, but God had something so much greater planned.

God had something so much greater planned, and Paul is saying as he sits in this prison, and he knows what's going to happen, that God is good, that you can trust him with your life, that he has a plan for you, and even if you don't get what you want, he's always going to give you the best if you're his child, because he cares for you, and he loves you.

Paul is saying to the degree that you and I understand this, to the degree that we can understand this, that God is good and he's out for our best, we will have contentment.

[ 36 : 23 ] And to the degree that we don't understand it, we don't understand God's character, it's what he says in verse 8, while he's talking about let your mind focus on these things, all those things are theological terms, we're talking about God's character.

Whatever's good, whatever's honorable, whatever's pure, he's saying think of God, think of things that don't ever change about God, this is God's character, it's true, it remains steadfast. Focus on those things, and the minute you stop focusing on those things, you become anxious, you become worried.

And Paul says if you want a contentment, if you want a peace that surpasses everything, if you want a peace that's a jailhouse peace, if you want a peace that's a lose-your-job peace, if you want a peace that my wife or my husband is leaving me peace, if you want a peace that you're going through chemotherapy, you don't know what's on the other end, Paul says you're only going to have that peace if your rudder's like this big.

And the only way you're going to have your rudder that big is by knowing the Lord, spending time in his word, praying, being in community with other Christians on that same journey.

That's the secret to contentment. He uses the words in verse 12 and 13. He says it's a mystery. And everybody would have understood that because it was full of mystery cults all around them.

[ 37 : 55 ] It's a mystery. It's a mystery. What is the mystery? The mystery to contentment is a relationship. He says if you're sitting in here today and you're anxious, you're fearful, you're worried, you're medicating, if you're a follower of Christ, you don't understand God.

And your rudder is that big and the waves are going to continually move you around. The amazing thing about this passage is that he says I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Lord, I pray and I realize that there are some of us here right now that have never filled that slot in with your name.

They spent their whole lives seeking other things that will bring them contentment and peace and happiness. And if they were to be very honest, they would realize that those things just have not fulfilled.

fulfilled. We know why we're not content, but we don't know how to be content. And Lord, I pray for those of us in here who are at that place in our life that we would think of you, the creator of all things.

[ 39 : 25 ] I pray that they would examine your son, Jesus. They would ask the people they came to church with today questions about their faith and why they believe and what is their hope. And maybe they would even convict us when we start to worry and they would say, I thought you're hoping in God.

Why are you worrying? We need it. Lord, I pray that they would see that what they're hoping in isn't true. It isn't full. It's not heavy, but it's light and it will dissipate.

And the only thing that can fill that in, the only thing that can give us strength, true strength, true peace, prison peace, chemo peace, bankruptcy peace, marriage, family peace, the only thing that can give that is your son, Jesus Christ.

Lord, I know there's some of us in here who've stepped into that relationship and we've kind of wandered. And Lord, I just pray this time that you would speak to us, you would show us your peace, you'd show us your desire for us to come back.

Thank you so much for using this church, community group, others in our lives to convict us, to show us when our rudder is so small, no wonder we're getting beat up.

[ 40 : 42 ] And I pray for those of us who are in there like this, that we would grab a staff person or an elder, ask, hey, can you teach me the Bible? Can you show me what it means to have a relationship with God and how I can trust Him and endure all these things I'm facing every day?

How can I start down that path of contentment? I pray that they would enter into the Bible studies that we have at community groups and training time. And they wouldn't be Christians that have a small rudder anymore, but they would have rocks that waves could beat upon.

And the rock would still be there because the rock is your son. And what I pray for this church as we live in this part of Hong Kong where everybody is discontent, if they're honest, and everybody's seeking for the next job and the next bonus and the next wife and the next girlfriend and a boyfriend and the next flat.

What I pray that we would be a church that would be different, that we'd have people like Henry that would speak into our lives and convict us that we're shallow. And we wouldn't just take it and be, well, yeah, that's what I am.

But we'd be convicted of that and we'd come before you and ask your forgiveness and start on that process of studying your word and praying and being in groups and fellowship.

[ 42 : 06 ] So I pray that Hong Kong would be different because of us here. They would see your son and they would fall in love with him. So Lord, we come before you this time and pray all these things and in his incredible name.

Amen. Amen.