

LIVING INSIDE OUT

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In Pocatello, Idaho *frowns are forbidden*.

Literally, it's a crime to walk around the town with a grim or sullen expression on your face. A city ordinance enacted in 1948 prohibits the citizens of Pocatello from "*looking gloomy*" while strolling their city's streets.

According to the law, if you're in Pocatello - whether you feel like it or not - you had better wear a smile.

Here at Calvary Chapel we have no such laws.

We won't throw you in the *slammer*, if your face indicates you're having a *bummer* of a day. **But as God's kids we really ought to be wearing smiles!**

Joy should characterize our lives.

The story is told of a man who was stranded in St. Louis on a Sunday. He was in town on business, and his flight home had been delayed until Monday.

This fellow was a Christian, and he wanted to gather with other believers to worship the Lord, so he asked the hotel clerk if he could direct him to a good church.

The clerk gave him careful directions, and told him he'd better hurry - the service was about to begin.

But as the man was leaving the hotel he asked the clerk why he'd suggested *that particular* church over the many others in town. The clerk replied, "I don't go to church very much myself, but the people who come out of that church are the happiest looking people in St. Louis. If I did go to church that would be the one for me!" I have no doubt that's God's desire for Calvary Chapel - for us - to be a *church-full* of joyful people.

Did you know the word "enthusiasm" is from two Greek words, "*en*" and "*Theos.*" "*Theos*" means "God." Thus, "enthusiasm" is literally "*in God*" or "*full of God.*"

True joy, and zeal, and excitement - real enthusiasm for living - comes when a person is **full of God.**

Paul's letter to the Philippians teaches us, **that the evidence of Jesus in our lives is the presence of joy in our hearts.** And as we've learned, His joy is still evident even when the flag of our lives flies at half-mast - *even in times of sorrow, or grief, or difficulty.*

Yet rather than live a joyful life, some believers I know let the world, and Satan, and their own failures throw a wet blanket over the joy God intended.

I've seen Christians - people born again, bound for heaven, *and forgiven to boot* - **look so sullen** you would've thought they were baptized in pickle juice.

They look as if they'd given up. They're *sinking*, not *soaring*. If they lived in Pocatello, Idaho they would've been slapped with a ticket by now - *finned for a frown*.

It reminds me of Ed Greer. In the early 1980s, Ed worked for Hughes Aircraft in El Segundo, California.

He had a great job - made a handsome living - had a family, and house in the burbs. But Ed was miserable.

Ed had tired of the corporate rat race. He felt pressure *at home*... His wife kept pushing him to climb the corporate ladder. Yet his best efforts on the job seemed to never be enough to satisfy his superiors.

Finally, on September 10, 1981, Ed Greer snapped.

He left work that day, climbed on a plane headed for Fort Lauderdale, and just disappeared - *vanished*. He told no one where he was going, or if he'd be back.

Ed escaped his smothering circumstances.

He abandoned his wife, his two sons, his coworkers, and for the next seven years Ed Greer kicked around the beaches of South Florida fixing boat engines.

Ed's wife divorced him. His company fired him. But Ed Greer became a somewhat of a folk hero among his former employees. Apparently, a lot of folks identified with Ed's frustrations. Employees at Hughes Aircraft started holding annual celebrations on September 10th. They called it, "Ed

Greer Day.” People even wore masks resembling Ed in honor of their hero.

Seven years after Ed’s disappearance, in October, 1988, the FBI caught up with Ed in Houston, Texas.

In an interview, the 40 year-old, Greer, tried to explain his actions. He said, *“I felt trapped. I didn’t like my life.”* And so he ran - he copped out, he bailed out, he wimped out on the people who depended on him.

Hey, I’ve felt the same pressures Ed felt. I’m sure you have too. At times, we’ve all thought, *“How nice it would be to just walk away from all my responsibilities. Escape all my troubles, in an instant.”* Yet short of the rapture *escape* is never God’s will. Escape is not God’s solution to your’s or my situation. *God’s answer is joy!*

Remember the book of Philippians, this *joy-filled journal* - was penned by a man in prison. Paul was behind bars, handcuffed to a guard, his ankles and wrists were chained. He was awaiting his day in court before a wicked Nero, who would render his sentence.

Yet, in this book, the apostle of joy is kicking up his heels. Paul celebrates life and love - friends and Jesus.

He seemed to be plucking joy out of thin air. He rejoices, even in a situation that was void of the tiniest traces of joy. Obviously, Paul lived from **the inside out!**

Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe, recounts a flight he was on to New York City. The plane was ordered into a holding pattern over Kennedy Airport. It added an extra hour to his

trip. When the delay was announced in the cabin, a passenger shouted, *“Bring out the booze.”*

Apparently, the only resource available to this man when situations turned sour was a bottle of liquor.

What about you? Do you live from the inside out, or the outside in? When times get tough do you depend on outward stimulus, or do you possess an inner, spiritual strength? Is your mood, your attitude - shaped by circumstances - or is there an inner reservoir of hidden, spiritual capital out of which you can draw?

Realize, all nature depends on hidden resources.

Tall oak trees are supported by extensive root systems that dive deep into the soil to suck up water and minerals from the earth... Raging rivers spring from sources high atop the snow-capped mountains...

The supply is out-of-sight, or below the surface...

Even the man-made space station that orbits the Earth carries an onboard supply of food, and water, and fuel, and oxygen. There's no place to plug in out in space... And likewise, God wants you and I to carry with us an onboard stash of hidden, spiritual resources.

Let me put it another way - **are you a thermometer, or a thermostat?** A thermometer has no effect on its environment. The mercury rises or falls based on its surroundings. It reads the temperature - it doesn't set it... *Whereas a thermostat alters the temperature. Its inner workings dictate the comfort of its surroundings.*

I want to be a *thermostat*, not a *thermometer*! Don't you want to live from the *inside out* not the *outside in*?

Paul was a thermostat. He carried with him onboard spiritual resources that allowed him to be content - even *joy-filled* - in the very worst of situations.

Ed Greer escaped. Too many of us live defeated. But Paul was an overcomer, despite his situation. He could find joy even when the flag of his life flew at half-mast!

For me, it's comforting to know Paul didn't always have victory in trying circumstances. Notice, what he says in verse 11, "**I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.**" Paul's joyful resilience wasn't an ability he picked up overnight. An overcoming *attitude* is an *aptitude* you have to learn and cultivate over time.

The Greek word translated "**learned**" in verse 11 means "**to learn by experience.**" Some trial and error was involved. There was a lot of *getting knocked down then getting back up* in the grasping of this lesson.

Paul **learned** to **rejoice** or "**take joy.**" He developed contentment while enrolled in **Life 101**. Paul was a student at UGA - *the University of Grievances and Aggravations*. Perhaps you're an alumni of *that UGA*?

It was there in the rough-and-tumble of life - in the midst of the daily grind - that Paul learned how to rejoice in whatever difficulties life dished out to him.

Paul learned five lessons that taught him how to live **from the inside out**. I hope you're ready to jot these five points down. Here are *the keys to inside out living*...

First, Paul learned that Christians live in different states... Second, he learned that contentment isn't found in where and what... Third, he learned that joy doesn't always carpool with happiness...

Fourth, he learned that success always comes in a can... And fifth, he learned that overcoming strength flows through Jesus Christ...

First, if we want to live from *the inside out*, we need to learn **that Christians live in different states.**

In verse 10 Paul acknowledges the believers in Philippi and the uniqueness of their circumstances. He writes, **“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.”**

We're going to come back to the exact details of the Philippians' condition next week. Earlier circumstances had limited the financial support they could provide Paul. But now their situation had changed. They could give. *They had always cared. Now they could show it.*

The point though Paul is acknowledging, is that some believers had the wherewithal to give, and other didn't - that's because **Christians live in different states.**

Yet I can hear some of you complain, **“Come on Pastor Sandy, you're just telling us the obvious. Sure there are believers in Jesus in different states. They're in Georgia, South Carolina, Florida... why, I've even heard there're actually a few Christians in Alabama.”**

Alabama!... God's grace is simply amazing!... But you and I both know, that's not what I'm talking about...

Listen to what Paul says in verse 11, **"I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."**

Paul isn't talking about the *fifty* states. He's talking about the infinite number of circumstances we're liable to encounter as we trudge through this world.

For some of us life has been a trail of tears sprinkled with only a few breaks and slight reprieves... For more of us life has been a bundle of blessing tempered by a teardrop or two... For the rest of us, life has been an equal mixture of both good times and bad times...

But what every believer in Jesus at some point discovers, is that God's will doesn't always involve pleasant circumstances! The truth we're all so reluctant to accept, is that we learn far more from the *trials* God allows us to experience, than we do from life's *thrills*.

If the reason for these few, short years on earth is to get us ready for an eternity with God - *and it is* - then it seems pretty clear to me, that now is the time for us to learn from those trials before they cease forever.

United States tennis champion, Arthur Ashe, had heart-bypass surgery in 1983. His surgery called for a blood transfusion, and from it Ashe contracted AIDS.

When Ashe was first diagnosed in 1988 he was tempted to direct his anger at God, but he overcame that temptation. In 1992 Arthur Ashe spoke to an assembly at Niagara Community College, and he testified of the place Jesus Christ held in his life...

Ashe reflected, "I've had a religious faith - growing up in the South, and black, and having the church as the focal point of my life - and I was reminded of what Jesus said on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Jesus was asking, "why do the innocent suffer?" And I'm not so innocent - I mean, I'm hardly a perfect human being - but you ask yourself, "why me?" And I think, "**why not me?**" Why should I be spared what some others have been afflicted with?

I think of all the good in my life - a great wife and daughter, family and friends, professional successes, and a free scholarship to UCLA - all kinds of good things. You could also ask of the good, "why me?" Sometimes there are no explanations." It's true for both the good and the bad. This is why I say, God allows Christians to live in different states at different times.

When the artist, Rembrandt, painted the disciple's boat as it was being tossed in stormy seas, he put fourteen men in the boat. Look closely, there's Jesus, the 12 disciples, and a 14th passenger... *Who was it?*

It was Rembrandt himself. The famous painter knew that just because we're Christians, we're not immune to the storms and stresses of life on Earth! Christians live in every state - both *pleasant* and *painful states*.

Hey, if you're going to live from *the inside out* you can't get disappointed and angry at God - and begin to doubt Him every time you face a little hardship...

Nor can you forget Him, and neglect Him when you're floating on calm and carefree seas. Smooth sailing - periods of prosperity - can be as dangerous to our faith as the storms. Paul says in verse 12, "*I know how to be full and hungry, to abound and suffer need.*"

Christians can live in *prosperity* or *poverty* - but they need to live the same way in each - *from the inside out*.

For notice the second lesson Paul learned about living with an *inside out* attitude. He discovered that **contentment isn't found in where and what.**

You're terribly mistaken if you think all that separates you from real joy is a change in your circumstances: an *additional possession* or *transitional location*. Forget it!

Contentment isn't found in *the where* and *the what*.

A 2014 Harris poll listed the modern inventions that Americans said they couldn't live without... **42% said they couldn't live without their automobile.**

30% said their computer, or laptop or tablet.

28% said internet access.

26% said their mobile phone.

23% said their television.

8% said their GPS.

And 7% said social media.

Try to imagine your grandpa saying he couldn't be happy without social media. Or grandma admitting her life would be

incomplete without a GPS. *Yesterday's luxuries have certainly become today's necessities.*

If you think purchasing a new car, or going on a vacation is going to end your battle with the blues... or moving into a new neighborhood will fulfill your family life... or landing a prestigious job is going to bring about the contentment you've been longing for... *then I've got a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sale you!*

John Micofsky thought dumping his wife would solve all his problems. He was thrilled when the divorce was final. January 20, 1993 was the day it was all official.

But John's excitement was short lived. On January 21 - one day later - his ex-wife Maryann claimed the \$10.2 million jackpot in the New Jersey Pick-6 Lottery. When asked how John was feeling, his lawyer replied, *"Very upset. I think that's the word I would use."*

Don't be foolish, and think you can engineer contentment and fulfillment by changing the *who* or *what* or *where* of your life. Living *from the inside out* means being content - as Paul puts it, *"everywhere and in all things."* It's been said, *"A truly happy person is the guy or gal who can enjoy the scenery on a detour."*

Realize, our text presents us with what at first seems to be a contradiction. In verse 12 Paul says there were occasions where he *"suffered need,"* yet in verse 11 he says, *"Not that I speak in regard to need."* What gives?

Paul is not denying he has needs. He has physical needs: *food, rest, air, and water*. He has emotional needs: *love, acceptance, significance, and security*.

Paul has needs, but he's *no longer driven by his needs*. He knows how to turn his needs over to Jesus.

Rather than live in pursuit of his own needs, Paul lived in pursuit of Jesus. He trusted Jesus to take care of his needs - both his physical *and* emotional needs.

In verse 11, Paul uses a Greek word that's translated "**content**" - but it could better be translated "**contained**."

And isn't that real contentment? Paul was content in any situation because he contained in his heart all that He ultimately needed. Paul wasn't driven by needs for *anything* or *anyone* or *anywhere* other than Jesus.

This is what we mean by the phrase, "**the sufficiency of Christ**." Jesus alone was all Paul needed, and He's all you and I ever need. Jesus can satisfy the deepest parts of who we are, and what we're called to be!

Look at what Paul says to the Philippians later in the chapter. Verse 19 promises us, "**my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**." We need to *learn this once and for all!* Despite what our world tells us Jesus can meet every need!

The third lesson Paul learned that helped him live *an inside out life* was that **joy doesn't always carpool with happiness**. Realize, joy and happiness are not synonyms. They're completely different experiences.

Author Tim Hansel explains it this way, "Happiness depends on circumstances. In fact, the word itself comes from the same root word as *'happening.'* It means that something good has happened to you.

For example, if I get a new shirt, I'm happy.

If I eat a good meal, I'm happy.

If I paid off my car, I'd be happy. In fact, I'd probably be really happy... There's certainly nothing wrong with that. I encourage people to get as much happiness as they can - but we should realize that happiness is always based on circumstances, on *'happenings.'*

Then he writes, "Happiness is not the same as joy. Because circumstances allow happiness, they can also make happiness dissolve into thin air. Joy, on the other hand, defies circumstances. It can coexist with doubt, ambiguity, and pain. It's a contentedness beyond circumstances - an indestructible kind of confidence."

You could summarize it by saying happiness is a *unpredictable feeling*, whereas joy is a *indestructible force*! It's the key to being an overcomer! This is why the Bible declares, "the joy of the Lord is our strength."

Two letters from two teenage girls appeared in Dear Abby. They were published just a few days apart.

The first letter read, "Dear Abby, happiness is knowing your parents won't yell at you if you come home a little late. Happiness is having your own bedroom. Happiness is getting the phone call you've been praying for. Happiness is something I don't have."

Signed, “Healthy, but unhappy and ungrateful.”

A couple of days later the second letter was featured.

This girl wrote, “Dear Abby, happiness is being able to walk, happiness is being able to talk. Happiness is being able to see. Happiness is being able to hear. Unhappiness is reading a letter from a 15 year-old girl who can do all these things and still says she’s unhappy. I can talk, I can see, I can hear, but I can’t walk.” Signed, “Thirteen, and happy, and grateful.” You see, real joy has very little to do with circumstances.

Happiness just happens - *when, and how, and the duration it lasts - who knows?* But joy is a choice!

Ella Wilcox wrote a poem that I think says it well, “One ship drives east and another drives west with the selfsame winds that blow. ‘Tis the set of the sails and not the gales which tells us the way to go. Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate, as we voyage along through life: ‘tis the set of the soul that decides the goal, and not the calm or the strife.”

What’s the set of your sails? The goal of your soul?

Do you want to always drift on the highs and lows of circumstance, or live in the enduring joy of Jesus?

Paul uses the word “*rejoice*” multiple times in this letter. The most recent example was in 4:4 where he wrote, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*” Recall the term “*rejoice*” means “*to take joy.*”

You rejoice when you reach out to Jesus by faith, and grab onto His joy. The joy of the Lord is not something we muster up on our own. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It’s God’s Spirit that gives us His joy.

Our job is to reach for it and to take hold!

Notice *fourthly*, Paul learned that **success always comes in a can**. Once I was coaching baseball when a player said, *“Coach I just can’t do it.”* I reprimanded the boy, *“Son, my daddy use to tell me that **“can’t”** never did anything.”* *I didn’t want to hear his excuses.*

At that point, another kid piped in, *“That’s right, Coach. **Success always comes in a can.**”* And it’s true.

Paul would agree. That’s why he says in verse 13, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

Did you hear about the 4th grade class that had a funeral? The teacher made the kids list all the things they couldn’t do. *“I can’t kick the ball past second base... I can’t do long division with three numerals... I can’t get Susan to like me...”* on and on their list went.

The papers were all collected and put in a box. Then the class marched the box outside and buried it just outside their class window. They had a funeral service.

From that day forward when a child slipped up and said the awful words, *“I can’t,”* the teacher escorted the student to the window and pointed to the freshly-dug grave. All their *“I can’ts”* were dead and gone. They were buried forever. They were no longer legitimate excuses... And, we too, need to bury all our *“I can’ts.”*

Remember, the word **“content”** means **“contained.”**

Paul contained sufficient resources in his own heart and life to meet any need that might arise. Paul was sufficient... *but it was not his own self-sufficiency.*

The resources at Paul's disposal were put there by Jesus. The Amplified Version ties it all together. Verse 13 reads, "**I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency.**"

Yes, through faith *I **can** do it* - that's where it begins.

If I concede from the outset that it just can't happen for me, *then I stand no chance.* If I succumb to evil tendencies, or feelings of sadness, or discouraging circumstances without believing it can be beat, *without putting up a fight* - then how will Jesus ever have the opportunity to show Himself strong on my behalf?

If my immediate reaction when difficulty raises its head is to cower from the challenge, and capitulate to the pressures, and toss in the towel, and hide my lack of faith behind a bunch of "*I can't's*" - then *I won't!*

Victory comes through Jesus, **yes** - but it starts with the confidence that through Him it **can** get done!

Once upon a time, one of my sons went upstairs and spread shaving cream on his younger brother while he was sleeping. After I reprimanded him - we prayed and asked Jesus to forgive him. But here was his prayer, "**God, please stop me the next time I think about doing something bad. Don't let me do it. God, just come down and grab my hand.**" I didn't really like his prayer.

It was a poor prayer. It put too much responsibility on God, and too little on himself. Yes, God gives us the strength to

overcome temptation, but we've got to use His strength when He gives it. We can't expect God to work on our behalf without our cooperation.

Don't count on God reaching down out of heaven, and physically prying a can of shaving cream (*or a can of beer for that matter*) out of your white-knuckled grip.

God helps you - but you do it! God never violates our will. He won't force us to do what we don't want to do.

That's why in verse 13 victory starts with *"I can."*

It's not pride - it's faith it can happen. It's accepting my responsibility to draw upon Christ's strength. Over time Paul had realized *success always comes in a can.*

*Fifth and finally, to live an inside out life, Paul learned that **overcoming strength flows through Jesus Christ.** Notice the scope and source and supply revealed in verse 13... First the scope, *"I can do (how many things?) all things,* then the source (*through whom?) through Christ,* and finally, the supply (*through Christ who gives us what?) who strengthens me."**

***Pain** never caused Paul to doubt God - **prosperity** never caused him to forget God.* He was confident the strength of Christ would sustain him in every situation.

A Christian cannot lose. We can handle anything that comes our way through the strength of Jesus Christ.

I heard of a pastor who was asked by one of his friends to be the guest speaker at a Bible Conference.

When it came time to introduce him, his friend, the host pastor, stated, “I would like to introduce to you the most dynamic person you will ever meet. He’s exciting, positive, and winsome. He can reach inside of you more deeply than anyone else you have ever known.

He will give you confidence and courage, and lots of other things you always wanted, but never had.”

Wow, the guest pastor was floored. He knew his friend thought a lot of him, but this was the most flattering introduction he’d ever heard, let alone received. He wasn’t quite sure how he should react...

As he was thinking of a suitable response, his friend finished the introduction, “And the person of whom I am speaking, is of course, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And here to tell you about Him is my friend.”

Instantly, his head returned to its proper proportion.

But let me tell you, everything that host pastor said about Jesus, and far more - is true! Jesus wants to reach deep into your heart and plant supernatural resources in your life - He wants to hide His power, peace, love, and joy in you. He’s stockpiling in you spiritual blessings you can draw on in any situation!

In High School I carried around a pocket NT, and in it I had Philippians 4:13 underlined! Before Tim Tebow wore it on his eye-black I had this verse put to memory. *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!*

I read Philippians 4:13 before every football game - it was part of my pre-game ritual - yet I interpreted the verse in

terms of *winning the game, or scoring the decisive touchdown - triumphing over the other team.*

But when I reached a level of competition where I was no longer successful, and had to give up the sport I loved, I realized that again this verse came to my aid. *T h e r e w a s meaning to this verse I'd never seen.* My life wasn't over. Christ could strengthen me to play, and He could strengthen me to move on to other pursuits. Jesus can both enable us **to do, and to not do.** We can do *“all things”* through Christ who strengthens us!

If it's the Lord's will for you to succeed in your job, He'll strengthen you in it. If He wants you to change careers, He'll strengthen you through the transition...

When babies are born, Christ give us the energy to provide constant care... When kids turn teenagers, He gives us wisdom from above... When they leave home as adults, He helps us let go... Jesus is enough for the challenges of youth, and the rigors of old age... *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!*

This is what it means **to live inside out...** It's relying on the strength of Jesus in every situation! *To run, or to wait - to build up, or to break down - to speak, or to keep silent - when I'm up, or when I'm down - when the storms are blowing, or when the blessings are flowing!*

It's knowing that *I can do all things* - in each and every situation - *through Christ who strengthens me.*

Let's learn the lessons that helped Paul live life *from the inside out*: **Christians live in different states.**

Contentment isn't found in where and what.

Joy doesn't always carpool with happiness.

Success always comes in a can.

And overcoming strength flows through Jesus.

Joy is the result, when we to live *from the inside out*!