

Once again God is not hiding. In fact, Solomon wrote:

*Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
in the markets she raises her voice;
at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.*

- Proverbs 1:20-21

<p>If you need to understand reality, study Creation.</p> <p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p> <p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>	<p>If you need to understand reality, study Creation.</p> <p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p> <p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>
<p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p>	<p>God's voice is in the streets, and his Spirit is in your heart.</p>
<p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>	<p><i>Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.</i></p> <p><i>The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.</i></p>

- 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

10 – EMPOWERED IN CONTENTMENT: THE QUADRANTS OF LIFE

(Philippians 4:11-13)

*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.
I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,
whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

- Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)

Throughout the Scriptures we are told that God is good. Our definition of “good” could include synonyms like pleasant, pleasing, desirable, pain-free, or sought-after. However, when we study the verses that proclaim God as “good”, we see that part of God’s “good” activity toward us does not fall within our “pleasant and pleasing” definition. Things like testing, trying, examining, and sacrificing are also part of the goodness of God.

In Psalm 107, which begins and ends with statements attesting to the “goodness” of God, forty-three verses are laced with real life situations where the goodness of God has been manifested to people. Some of these people were lost and wandering, some had been subjected to bitter labor by God, others were caught in a storm sent by God, and some of them were suffering divine discipline for their rebellion against God. Although each group was in a different situation, and there for different reasons - some had rebelled, some had obeyed, some were guilty, some were innocent - they were all still living within the goodness of God.

The obvious truth is that God is doing something in our lives with the aim of changing us - and this is one of the things we must be taught. We were all at one time rebels and enemies of God, but were then saved by grace. Now that we have been delivered from death and sin, given eternal life, and seated in Christ in heavenly places, we are purposefully being transformed into his image.

The change is more than drastic. In fact, the radical nature of this change we are undergoing cannot be understated. We began as rebels against God who existed in a state of death - but are now being transformed into obedient sons who have been seated with Christ in constant fellowship with a holy God. A great transformation has begun, but it is far from over. We are all being changed even now.

In Philippians 4:12-13, Paul says he has “learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” The phrase “learned the secret” is a technical term in Greek that refers to the process of initiation that would include more than merely attaining knowledge - it would also involve a sequence of life experiences.

The various situations of life are then listed by Paul, and form a quadrant. Paul says he has learned to be content when:

- “well fed”
- “hungry”
- “in plenty”
- “in want”

These four may seem redundant as translated in our English Bibles - as if saying “prosperity or poverty” twice over. But the tenses of the Greek verbs Paul uses in the text develop these pairs into quadrants that can categorize every situation in life.

The first prosperity phrase (“**well fed**”) is passive. This means Paul was the recipient, but not the doer of the verb. In other words he did not cause it to happen. This is also true for the poverty of the last phrase (“**in want**”), which is also in the passive, indicating that there were times Paul was in need that were out of his control. Paul did not deserve or cause the lack in this situation - it was given to him.

The other two phrases (“**hungry**” and “**plenty**”) are verbs in the active tense, meaning Paul did or created both of these situations in his life at some point in time.

All four of these words serve a purpose and demonstrate the manifestation of the goodness of God in our lives. You may be **suffering undeservedly** like Joseph - or **deservedly** like Samson. You may be **prospering undeservedly** like Solomon - or **deservedly** like Abraham.

But no matter which situation you are in now, one thing is true - God’s goodness will eventually take you to and through all four quadrants as part of his process of initiation, which includes both knowledge and experience. And in his strength, you can be content in any of them.

Once initiated (or once you have “learned the secret”), these truths can be applied to your own life. In whatever circumstances you find yourself, you will be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

This verse teaches us that after we have learned the secret of being content we will be able to manifest God’s purpose for us in any and every situation, regardless of what we have or do not have. If we do the work and accept what we are given, we will succeed. This is one of the ultimate and most advanced stages of God’s rest.

In contrast, this verse does not contain any humanistic meaning such as, “Whatever I set my mind to do I can do.” The power of Christ will not help you achieve anything your human will desires. The verse does not say, “The power of Christ is available for you to use however you want.” If God has not planned or purposed your intention, your human effort will not accomplish it. And even if you do achieve that goal, you will not find contentment in it, and the things you did to accomplish it may well destroy you.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.

- Hebrews 13:5

Quadrants of Life

Active	Passive
PLENTY	PLENTY
POVERTY	POVERTY

God’s goodness will never take us to one quadrant and keep us there. Life is about changing us.

Philippians 4:12-13, Learn the secret of being content.

No matter what situation you find yourself in you can remain at rest in your soul knowing that the Lord will never leave you.

No matter what situation you find yourself in you can remain at rest in your soul knowing that the Lord will never leave you. You can do all things in any situation through Christ who strengthens you - independent of the resources or the position you have.

Here are some more promises of God's ways to fortify your soul:

Knowing and trusting these promises will allow the believer to remain calm and confident in God's rest.

Isaiah 41:10 – *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isaiah 41:13 – *For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you.*

Isaiah 43:2 – *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

Isaiah 54:17 – *No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.*

Psalms 32:8 – *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

Psalms 37:23-24 – *The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.*

Exodus 14:14 – *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*

Joshua 1:9 – *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Philippians 4:19 – *My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

Psalms 27:1 – *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalms 34:17 – *When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.*

Psalms 37:4 – *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Psalms 50:15 – *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*

Psalms 9:9-10 – *The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.*

Psalms 103:2-5 – *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

James 5:14-15 – *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

Matthew 6:31-33 – *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Romans 8:31-35 – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

2 Peter 1:3-4 – *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

Psalms 91:1-2 – *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

11 - PRAYER AND ASKING GOD

It is good and right for us to go to God to request the things we desire, and to seek his intervention in our lives. Going to God is not a weakness, and it is not self-centered or greedy. Seeking God’s provision, guidance, and involvement in our lives is something the Bible tells us to do. It is faith alone that enables our souls to even consider the possibility that the Almighty Creator of the universe and Judge of all mankind would hear and care about our prayers. It is obedient to ask God for help.

Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 4:6-7

Knowing that God will respond to our requests will anchor our souls in his rest. When we bring our concerns to our Lord, as Paul proclaims in the verse above, “the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds” (or, “guard your souls”). Knowing God is going to respond to our prayers will secure our soul (heart and mind). We do not pray because we are too weak to face reality. We pray because we want our Creator and Savior involved in situations and with people that are important to us. In my life I want the Almighty Creator active in the reality he has designed.

Knowing that God will respond to our requests will anchor our souls in his rest.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Hebrews 4:16