

The God Of Delays



I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

Contentment is a difficult lesson to learn. In America, achieving prosperity and indulging in “stuff-itis” is an illness sought after and strongly desired. With garbage cans full of wasted food, bins filled with stored belongings, and houses overflowing from material gain, we purchase more, store up more, and crave more. Living large is expected and hoarding is permissible, all the while creating empty hearts and empty pockets.

Many Christians in other nations live very differently. Ostracized and even persecuted for their faith, they may have all their belongings confiscated, have loved ones killed, and/or be forced to live in refugee camps to escape the terror and horror in their homeland. Living their faith has become impossible and living a life as a refugee is eminent.

The Apostle Paul understood their plight. He, himself, endured more hardship than most today will ever understand or endure. Yet Philippians 4:11–14 gives us a picture of the faith and grateful heart he revealed, even when persecuted. While in prison, Paul rejoiced in the Lord (v.10), learned to be content with God’s purposes in all circumstances (v. 11), and was confident of God’s care and strength (v. 13). He knew his contentment, even in these difficult conditions, didn’t depend on him or his lengthy period of delays, but rather on the risen Christ on whom his dependence rested.

You see, before Paul became the powerful, purpose-filled pursuer for Christ, he was a prestigious man in the Jewish nation. He was circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, and, as to righteousness under the law, was blameless (Philippians 3:4–6). Yet once encountering Christ, He considered all that as loss for the sake of Christ, only wanting the surpassing worth of truly knowing Christ, understanding the power of His resurrection, and sharing in the fellowship of His suffering (Philippians 3:7–10). No matter his prolonged delay in prison, his goal was always focused on Christ and the incredible strength, wisdom, and power he could receive.

With that knowledge, no matter his imprisonment or his delay into freedom again, he states, *“I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own...One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:12–14).

Contentment is available in Christ even in the delays. His grace and mercy provide spiritual progress through the Holy Spirit and, like Paul, reflect an attitude that is impossible without the Spirit of Christ. As a result, we, too, learn to rely on Him.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for providing the example of Paul as one who relied on Your purpose in delays, even in the most difficult of situations. Through Your Spirit, give me such a faith as this. In Your name I ask this. Amen.