

Transformed – teen devotion – July 1, 2018

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I am not saying this because I am in need, for 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

The Bible doesn't say: "Obedience always leads to blessing."

This week we're looking at another statement that people claim comes from the Bible: 'Obedience always leads to blessing.' Like the saying from last week, it sounds good and can even be understood in a true, biblical sense. "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and obey it," Jesus said (Luke 11:28). God gives us his commands because he wants to bless us. He wants us to live his way in this world. That is the best way to live. It is a blessing to live God's way in this world.

But what if I do obey God, and it doesn't turn out well? What if I obey God and honor his will, but I lose my job because of it? What if I'm living a life of obedience and get made fun of? Or I get cancer? What if I'm doing all the right things, but my life is one hardship after another?

This saying falls apart when obedience doesn't lead to blessing, but instead leads to hardship.

The apostle Paul grappled with this in his life. After his conversion to Christianity, Paul devoted himself to doing God's will. Even then, he had to admit, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). Sometimes his life went well. He was well fed and had plenty of God's

gifts to enjoy. But there were other times when his life did not work out so well. He was hungry. In fact, Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians from a table in his jail cell. Things didn't turn out well at all.

But Paul gives us the secret to a blessed life. He tells us how to be contented and happy whether the circumstances of life are good or not, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant. *"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."* Paul knew that the secret to a blessed life was found in the gifts that Jesus gives, in the rule that Jesus exerts, in the protection that Jesus offers.

This is where we find contentment and blessing. *Jesus gives us gifts every day*, exactly what he wants us to have. He never shorts us (even if we think sometimes that he does). Jesus always gives us the right gifts and the right amount of them because he is good. *Jesus rules over our lives*. Yes, he rules over the good times and the hard times. He rules over them for our eternal good, because he wants us to spend an eternity with him. *He protects us from danger*, especially danger to our souls.

Sometimes there are good times. Other times there are hard times. But our Father rules over both the happy and the sad times. He rules over our lives for our good and promises to give good and perfect gifts to us. He does it all, not because we obeyed, but simply because he is our good and gracious Father in heaven.

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, thank you for ruling over my life for my eternal good and not for my harm. Help me to understand that you always bless me and do good for me, even if it means that hard things enter my life. You are good at all times, O God. Your will is always good for me. Amen.

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