

How to Stabilize the Boat

We are going through turbulent times and for most it's essential that 'the boat is stabilised' and kept on course. When the storms of life are raging we must remain steadfast throughout the journey. The more you allow the winds of change to affect you in a detrimental way, the greater your risk of capsizing. Turn to **Philippians 4** and let's read **verses 10 to 13...**

Note, for Paul, true joy was not a surface emotion that depended on favourable circumstances. But rather, his joy stood independent of all outward conditions. His delight was in the Lord, and the pleasure he took in God was his strength. True joy can only be found in a dynamic personal relationship with Christ, and in the assurance that our heavenly Father is able to turn adverse circumstances to our good. The joy Paul was always expressing came from an inward single-minded contentment, which was established and rooted in strong faith. He was fully persuaded that every hostile situation was subject to change, and 'by faith' he knew it was going to shift in his favour – to his benefit.

Verse 10 – ***“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly...”*** Observe, he didn't rejoice in the stormy conditions, he rejoiced in the Lord. In other words, he rejoiced despite the circumstances! God doesn't want you to rejoice *outwardly* (much or many times over), but *inwardly* (with great dimension, depth and passion). So, in order to stabilise your boat the **first** thing you should do is, ***“Rejoice in the Lord with great dimension and depth.”***

Verse 11 – This is a wonderful passage of scripture. Having just praised the Philippians, Paul introduces a disclaimer: The original Greek reads, ***“Not that I speak with regard destitution...” Or, “My gratitude is not like a beggar's thanks for charity.”*** The fulfilment and satisfaction of Paul's needs were neither the reason nor the measure of his joy. He immediately severs himself from any suggestion that he is expectant upon man to meet his needs. This makes him truly self-sufficient, because his sufficiency is in God! Hence, **verse 19**, ***“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*** The **second** thing you must do to stabilise your boat is, ***“Don't be expectant upon man to meet your needs.”***

Let's move on... With this powerful understanding Paul confidently declared, ***“I've learned in whatever state I am to be content.”*** Notice that Paul had to teach himself to be *satisfied and content*, so it couldn't have come naturally. The primary lesson he learned from the university of 'hard knocks' was to be *self-sufficient* in all circumstances. But beware, self-sufficiency in nothing to do with selfish independence!

So what exactly was this Godly attitude that Paul had taught himself to abide in, and how can we also attain it? The Greek word used here is an adjective and it only appears once in the New Testament – it is the word *“aftarkis”*. This word was mostly applied philosophically when describing a person who was *'self-sufficient in all circumstances'*, and the ancient word literally means *“sufficient in oneself.” It was used to describe a person who, through discipline, had become independent of all external circumstances. And who had discovered within himself resources that were more than adequate for any situation that may arise.*

Now Paul wasn't trying to imply that he was completely self-sufficient because he expressly disclaims this fact in **2 Corinthians 3:5; 9:9**, ***“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers.”***

Nevertheless, Paul was self-sufficient in all circumstances because he actually wasn't reliant on, or

influenced by them. The **third** thing you must do to stabilise your boat is, *“Never rely on, or get influenced by your circumstances - whether good or bad.”*

The self-sufficiency of any Christian should be relative: *an independence from the world through dependence upon the Lord*. Paul's sufficiency was **in Christ**, and therefore, he could enjoy lasting peace by being detached from his circumstances (whether good or bad), and attached to Christ – the Rock. Paul knew, and was fully persuaded, that every adverse situation was in the process of being changed for the better. His eyes were not on the circumstances (which are subject to constant change), but on the Rock of his salvation – Jesus Christ! What's more, this total dependence (that provided him with his independence), also gave him joy, and brought him great strength.

Whenever you are caught up in the turmoil of possible destitution, when you are in a state of being with insufficient resources, you ought to learn to be *content*. You must understand and truly believe that God's your source. And that ***“He shall supply all our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus.”***

Thereafter, you should be able to detach yourself from the circumstances and rejoice in the Lord (in spite of them). This will always be made easier if you see your position as being *'subject to change'* according to God's promises. Yes, you must see yourself benefiting from every adverse situation, and God being glorified in it. So the **forth** thing you must do to stabilise your boat is, *“Learn to see every negative situation as being subject to change for the better.”*

Verse 13 – Paul now reaffirms his self-sufficiency and qualifies it in these his most famous words ***“...I can do all things.”*** But it is very important to note that the emphasis here is not so much on achievement, but rather, on the willingness we have to allow Christ's power to sustain us in difficulty and adversity. Those translations that give the impression that Paul meant he (or we) could do anything, and that nothing was beyond our powers, are misleading.

“All these things” – (*panta*) is used here and can only be referring to *“all these things that are available for me to do now.”* You should have the solid faith that believes for **all** of Christ's sufficiency when facing difficulties. The fifth thing you should do to stabilise the boat is, *“Believe you can do all things with His strength.”*

Verse 19, ***“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”***

This verse tells us that God is committed to supplying all that we need by a distinct and definite measure. That is, *“according to His riches.”* God makes it clear that He is never stingy when it comes to provision. His *“riches”* are unfathomable and inexhaustible. But don't misread this scripture, it says *“all your need”* and not *“all your needs.”* This means that God will supply everything at once! After all, He's doing it according to the measure of His own glorious riches! The **sixth** and final thing you must do to stabilise your boat is, *“Expect God to supply all your need at once.”*

So remember, you can bring about a great 'stabilising force' by doing these six simple things:

- (1) *“Rejoice in the Lord with great passion and depth.”*
- (2) *“Don't expect man to meet your needs.”*
- (3) *“Never get influenced by your circumstances.”*

- (4) *“Recognise that everything is subject to change for the better.”*
- (5) *“Believe you can do all things with His strength.”*
- (6) *“Expect God to supply all your need - at once.”*

Through this simple process you've been given the resources to master all circumstances. And, you will also have the strength to stay afloat! However, you must continue to believe that you can prevail over, and be master of, all negative conditions or circumstances. Furthermore, you should *capitalise* on any adverse situations because they will cause you to grow in character. Remember the bigger the character the larger the vessel for God to use. And this equals even bigger success – success that will last for your lifetime!