



The artist who hand- colored “Grace,” a photo showing a white-bearded man bowed in prayer before a simple meal, was Rhoda Nyberg, the daughter of Eric Enstrom. Rhoda’s father took the photo in his studio in Bovey, Minnesota in 1918.

Old Testament Reading – Psalm 63:11

New Testament Reading – 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

The Epistle of Joy “Paul’s Secret of Contentment” # 1 Philippians 41-9

Wayne J. Edwards, Pastor

Paul's letter to the Philippians was to thank them for their financial gifts and Epaphroditus personal assistance while he was under house arrest in Rome, but to also counsel them regarding how to deal with those Satan was using to distract them from their spiritual growth.

- In Philippians 1:27-29, Paul gave them three challenges:
 - Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.
 - Do not be terrified by your adversaries.
 - Realize it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only for you to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.
- True contentment has nothing to do with the circumstances of our lives, but rather the level of our trust in the Lord, Jesus Christ.

True contentment is now about what we have, but who has us!

- Matthew 16:25 – ***“Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”***
- Discontentment comes from this satanic concept of self-love; always thinking of ourselves rather than others.
- True contentment comes from our willingness to give ourselves away for the benefit of others, which is why the Lord Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive.
- Therefore, the secret of contentment is to live our daily lives in total obedience to God's will and God's ways and to patiently endure whatever consequences our obedience to God may bring.

Discontentment is a sin, because it declares that God's will is not always the best for us, and it denies God's right to do with us as desires.

Six statements Paul made that are foundational to a believer being able to live in a biblical level of contentment.

1. Being in Good Fellowship with God's people – 4:1-3 – *“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”*

- Because Euodia and Syntyche were both Christians, Paul said they needed to settle their difference so they could stand fast in love for each other, in unity with the church body, and in their relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ.
- If we are to stand fast in our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in these last days of the Church Age, we must remain in good fellowship with God's people, for we never know when we may have to call upon them for help in our time of need.
- Such love transcends our individual differences, and therefore, it reflects our unity in Christ alone.
- John 13:34-35 – ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

2. Cultivating that Spirit of Rejoicing – 4:4 – “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!*”

- This is not a principle but a “command” from the Lord.
- The command is not to always rejoice in our circumstances, but to rejoice in the goodness of the Lord.
 - That the Lord is our Shepherd and we shall not want.
 - That the Lord is the God of all power, mercy, and grace.
 - That the Lord allowed this to happen to us for our good and for His glory, even though we may never see it.
- This is one of more than 70 times in the New Testament where Christians are told to make it a habitual practice to rejoice in the Lord regardless of the circumstances of our lives, for God will use our response to those circumstances as a witness to the lost.

3. Letting Your Moderation be Known to all men – 4:5 – “*Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.*”

- Contentment comes to those who learn to accept a little less than they are due.
- Jesus was due the respect given to God, but He accepted far less, and He did it with meekness and gentleness, because He knew who He was and what He had been sent to do, and for whom.
- The circumstances He had to endure to accomplish His mission did not matter, for He was not dependent upon what others thought of Him or did to Him – He came to glorify the Father.

4. Having a Confident Faith in the Lord – 4:5–7 – “*The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus.*”

- Paul said there is no reason for a believer to be anxious about anything because the Lord is always near us, and God is always ready to hear our prayers.
- If we have truly received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, then He is living within us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and one who is content in that relationship will not worry about those things over which they have no control.
- The contented Christian can sleep in the midst of a raging storm, knowing the worst thing that can happen to them is that they will wake up in the arms of Jesus.

5. Thinking on Godly Things – 4:8 – “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.*”

- John 10:10 – “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy: I have come that you might have life, and that*

more abundantly.”

- If you want Satan to steal your joy, kill your witness and destroy your soul, just keep rehearsing everything that is wrong with the world, wrong with the company you work for, wrong with the people you work with, and wrong with the folks you come home to, and you will never, ever know what it means to be content.
- But if you want the life, and the fullness of life that Jesus died to give you, then learn to be content by being in good fellowship with God’s people, learning to rejoice in the Lord, even in the hard times, cast your burdens on the Lord, and cleanse your mind each day by thinking on those things which are pure and positive and lovely and of good report.

6. Following a Godly Model – 4:9 – “*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*”

- Second only to Jesus, the Apostle Paul was the greatest example of what it means to live in contentment, even in the midst of the direst of circumstances,
 - 1 Corinthians 4:16 – ***“Therefore, I urge you to imitate me.”***
 - Galatians 4:12 – ***“I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me.”***
 - 2 Timothy 2:3 – ***“Join with me in suffering.”***
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:6 – ***“And you became imitators of us and of the Lord.”***
- Paul’s appeal was always in the context of his own imitation of Christ, emphasizing that his life was a reflection of Christ.

True contentment cannot be achieved apart from one’s personal, intimate relationship with God through their faith alone in Christ alone. However, there is a level of contentment we will not achieve until we are with the Lord in heaven.

- In Psalm 17:15 – ***“I shall be satisfied when I awake in your likeness,”*** and that day will come when we are raptured from this world and totally transformed into His image.