



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 – Habakkuk 3:17-19

New Testament Reading – Colossians 1:9-14

The Epistle of Joy
“Paul’s Secret of Contentment” # 2
Philippians 4:10-23

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Having reached the end of his letter to the Philippians, we can now see that Paul's thesis was built around his "contentment" in Jesus Christ.

- Certainly, Paul was not referring to his physical needs, for he was under house arrest and chained to a Roman soldier each day.
- Even though he could still meet with those who visited with him, Paul never had a moment of personal freedom, and unless Caesar reversed his arrest by the Jewish Religious leaders in Jerusalem, he had no future.
- Paul knew his missionary travels were over. He wrote to Timothy: ***"The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day."*** 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Paul's secret to true contentment was to focus on all he had in Christ, rather than what he didn't have in this world.

- Paul shows us that God alone can make us content in any situation. Therefore, true contentment is being satisfied with God's provision, and any expression of discontentment is to question or to doubt the sovereignty of God over us. In Psalm 115:3, David declared, ***"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."***
- Because God is sovereign over all, in all, and through all, we know that God never allows anything to happen to us that He cannot use for our good and His glory.
- Therefore, when we go through those times when we think God has forgotten us, we must remember, what we are feeling is an indicator of our lack of trust in God, not an indicator of God's lack of concern for what is going on in our lives.
- When Lazarus died, Jesus waited four days before He decided to go visit the family, not because of his lack of compassion or concern but rather because of His desire to use this event to demonstrate God's power over death.
- When Martha declared, ***"Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died,"*** she was questioning the Lord's love and doubting His sovereignty.

Paul's secret to contentment for the Christian is found in two verses:

- In verse 13, Paul affirmed that God, through Christ, resided in him and that it was through that union with Christ that he received sufficient strength to endure the various sufferings of his life.
 - Jesus affirmed that in John 15:5-8 when He said: ***"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."***
 - The beginning of contentment is to ensure we have a personal, intimate relationship with God through our expressed faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, for that is the channel through which the blessings of the Lord will come.
- Then in verse 19, Paul makes this astounding promise to all those who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord: ***"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."***
 - Paul didn't say God will provide all we want, but all we need. In 1 Timothy 6:8, Paul said, ***"Having food and clothing, with these we should be content, for godliness with contentment is great gain."***

1. Contentment begins with a settled confidence in the Lord – Vs. 10 – “*I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.*”

- The content of the gift that the church at Philippi sent Paul is not known. But rather than asking them why they didn't send it sooner, Paul says he understands that they would have if they could have, and he is very thankful for what he has received.
- Therefore, an attitude of gratitude is foundational to the development of a life of contentment, and so is our trust in the sovereignty of God.

2. Contentment requires us to be satisfied with little – Vs. 11 – “*Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.*”

- Paul had learned to live with very few creature comforts. However, Paul knew any expression of discontent with what God had provided was a sin; it questioned God's sovereignty and doubted His love.
- The sin of discontent also breeds other sins, such as covetousness, greed, envy, theft, violence, and even murder.
- The most precious lesson parents should teach their children is to be satisfied with what God has provided for them and to trust God to provide for them in the future.

3. Contentment is that ability to live independently from life's circumstances – Vs. 12 – “*I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*”

- Satisfaction is not related to what we have or don't have. Satisfaction is that ability to live within the circumstances of life that God has allowed, whether good or bad, without allowing them to affect our attitude of life or our trust in the sovereignty of God.
- Paul had learned to live with the best of life and the worst of life: hugs and kisses one day, beatings and floggings the next day.
- Paul could rejoice in anything and he could have peace in anything.
- Paul was free from anxiety about anything, he maintained a gentle and gracious spirit about everything, because he had put his life into God's hands; whether he lived or died was up to God, not him.
- Paul trusted the providence of God and He trusted the promises of God – i.e., the joy of his life was not based on the circumstances in which he lived.
- Have you reached that level of spiritual maturity?

4. Contentment is sustained by the indwelling presence of Christ – Vs. 13 – “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”

- This is the missing ingredient in today's discipleship training.
- Paul said he was sustained by Christ who strengthened him. Therefore, no matter how difficult his life was in the world, he had learned to rely upon his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to sustain him.

- Even when he wasn't satisfied in his daily events and activities, he was completely satisfied with his relationship with the Lord.
- Christians should not base their contentment on the circumstances of their daily lives, for they are forever changing.
- True contentment will come to that believer who is firmly attached to the Lord, who is the only and always Sufficient One.
- Our adequacy, our sufficiency, our contentment comes from our personal relationship with God, through our faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ; Christ lives in us, and we live in Him, which means we have the eternal life of Christ within us, which means we can do anything Jesus Christ empowers us to do. In fact, it is when we have reached the end of our resources, that Christ is there to prove Himself strong in my weaknesses.
- In Ephesians 3:14-20, the Apostle Paul prayed that God would grant to his readers, "According to the riches of His glory:"

- *"To be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."*
- *"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."*
- *"That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height."*
- *"That you may know the love of Christ which passes knowledge."*
- *That you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

5. Contentment is enhanced by our concern for others – Vs. 17 – *"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account."*

- In verse 17, Paul told the Philippians, *"You sent me that gift to meet my needs, but I'm not rejoicing because I've received the gift, I'm rejoicing because you gave me the gift, and therefore, you have opened up your heart to receive the blessings of God."* (Paraphrased)
- In verse 19, Paul said: *"My God is going to supply all your needs from His riches in glory."*
- Those who spend their whole lives worrying about themselves will never be content, but when they forget about themselves and invest their lives in the needs of others, they will find true contentment.