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## Learning to be Content

### Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

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“NOT THAT I SPEAK in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, in this to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

Here and now I am sharing TRUTH that many are in desperate need of. If you who are reading this radio message in printed form will dare to open your heart and mind, God can use this particular message to completely change your entire being, especially your disposition, mental attitude, and physical condition. Will you dare to listen with absolute honesty as to your present situation and condition?

Before I give you a definition of *contentment*, let me make some observations. Many people have never learned this important TRUTH in the Bible. Until they become a millionaire, they will maintain the drive and motivation for money, ignoring their family, holding two jobs, and ruining their health just to get ahead financially. They must change jobs whether it be an advancement or not. A change is always a promotion to them.

Some wives are never content with their husbands and keep trying to make them over. What a waste of time! Wife, if your nagging and contentious attitude changes your husband, it will be a turn for the worst. Many junior executives push themselves, striving to get ahead by hook or crook. Many people possess a pressure cooker on the inside of them. They never stop to rest, relax and rejoice in the present, for they are living in some make-believe world someplace down the road. (Such motivation is always down!) What a miserable existence.

Many a mother is gradually killing herself to get money for her children's future needs, while ignoring their present process of growing up before her eyes. Call it nerves if you want to. You can talk about drive and initiative all you want. If you are not content with that which God has already given you, sin is being practiced on your part.

What is the meaning of *contentment*? Let's look up the word in the dictionary, for it means the same as in our Bible. Contentment is the appeasing of all our desires. We possess satisfied desires and appetites.

### Paul's Example

Paul declared that he had learned to have all of his desires fully satisfied. Let's study how he learned this glorious, peaceful satisfaction. Concern of others or the lack of it did not remove his contentment. This I learn from Philippians 4:10: “But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”

Paul mentions that he has no unsatisfied wants and appetites, whether others assist him or not. His contentment was not found in what others did for him. Here is a very important thing to remember. Don't allow the actions of others to affect you so much. You cannot change them, so why allow what they do, or fail to do, bother you? Contentment is a state of the mind and is not determined by what others do or do not do.

Contentment is more than a tranquil mind (peace). The contented person has no more needs. He is possessed by all that a man desires. He has God as His Father, Christ as His Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as His Comforter. What more could a person want or desire? He enjoys the utmost composure of mind, assured that nothing can hurt him and nothing can disturb the tranquility he now enjoys. Nothing can move him, for a consciousness that he is

under Divine care and is upheld in all circumstances is his possession, even in suffering.

Paul practiced that which he taught. First, his teaching: “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome but for you it is safe. For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:1,3).

“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. But I rejoiced the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; of which ye were also mindful, but ye lacked opportunity” (Philippians 4:4,10).

How grateful we are for directions and instructions. We know what the state of our heart and mind can be. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your HEARTS and MINDS through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

It is thrilling to behold the God-given ability to perform His bidding. “I CAN DO all things THROUGH Christ, who strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Contentment is dependent upon our learning process and a God-given ability to perform. I CAN DO! May God burn these words into our soul. What encouragement while living in such reality!

Paul's contentment was not determined by circumstances, environmental factors, or the actions of other human beings. Do you know the biblical definition of *contentment*? “But godliness with contentment is great gain; For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (I Timothy 6:6-11).

Food and raiment! We are to be content with them. How ridiculous to be governed by an eager grasp of things. Such appetite indicates a person's lost condition. “Love not the world, neither THE THINGS that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (I John 2:15). “Whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind EARTHLY THINGS” (Philippians 3:19).

### A Learning Process

God chose the words the Apostle Paul wrote: “I have learned.” In the next verse, he states, “I know.” This verb in the Greek language is related to a mystery hidden and now revealed to him. It is now experimental reality. His learning process involved different situations. Few learn from their difficulties. They are so anxious for a sudden change of the situation, they forget what is to be learned in the process. “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12).

The Apostle Paul had experienced both sorrow and joy, distress and comfort. These things were experientially real to him. He said, “I know them.” He was able to bear up under all the pressures that came his way.

Stop and think for a moment. Do you realize what Paul is stating? He had learned to be independent of external circumstances. Nothing in his environment was going to change his inward contentment.

How could this be? Well, friend, his satisfaction was not found in that which is external or environmental. There is no learning without instruction, so Paul says, “I have been instructed.” You say, *Oh, if I could just live that way.* YOU CAN! The secret is found in the fourth verse of this same chapter four of Philippians. Look at it! “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.” His joy was found in Christ.

The person of Christ was his satisfaction and contentment. He, who knows Christ, will not be completely cast down. This is the promise of II Corinthians 4:8-10: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

Notice the promises of that which will come our way: *trouble, perplexity, and persecution, cast down*. Notice what will become our portion in the midst of difficulty: *not distressed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed*. These are the promises in the midst of trouble and deliverance. I believe them. Do you?

What a variety of experiences. He knew strained circumstances. He learned the secret of coping with plenty, to be full and also to be empty. Paul had far more difficulties than you or I will ever face. Listen to his report: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I am not indignant? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus, the governor under Aretas, the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me, And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands" (II Corinthians 11:23-33).

I HAVE LEARNED. Only various experiences teach us contentment. Paul had a funeral as far as this world was concerned. It no longer held any attraction to him. "But God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

### **His Position**

His contentment was the result of a position which automatically meant a possession of contentment. His position was IN AND THROUGH Jesus Christ, the One he was serving diligently. "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Philippians 3:9, 10, 13).

The secret of contentment is determining where our satisfaction is located. If Jesus Christ is our joy and delight, we will lock arms with Paul when he states in Acts 20:24: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Here Paul says that absolutely nothing is going to bother or move him from the job assigned by the One who died for him.

What a thrilling declaration! Do you say the same thing? Not if you are worried and frustrated about the future. But you say, *I have failed the Lord* – then ask Him to forgive you. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). If sins are forgiven and cleansed, forget them, for they are gone. Get busy rejoicing in the Lord. Keep your knees bent in prayer and your Bible open.

Let your satisfaction be found in Christ. This was His attitude as He expressed it in John 4:34: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat (satisfaction) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Our satisfaction must be found in Christ. If we depend upon any other person, we are in for disappointment, frustration and sorrow.

Friend, are you listening? Life does not consist of the abundance of the things we possess. Happiness will never be found in another human being, circumstances, or in our environment. (Luke 12:15) Contentment is abiding in Christ with absolute confidence that His will, plan and purpose for our life shall be realized.

*But what can I do*, you may ask. Listen to what Paul can do in verse thirteen of this fourth chapter of Philippians: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Everything we ought to do, everything we have been instructed by God to do, we can do it through the strength of Christ. We cannot do it on our own. We do not depend upon human resources.

We have no promise of God to be rich. Why are we killing ourselves to get money? We have no promise of position in the future. Who do we want to become? Contentment is being where God wants us to be, doing His will. Paul's conviction about his future needs is found in verse nineteen of this same wonderful fourth chapter of Philippians: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

There is an inexhaustible supply in heaven of everything we have need of upon this earth and for all eternity. It is ours now and for eternity, because we are in Christ. Be content! This is God's command. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and BE CONTENT with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:10).

If Christ is our satisfaction and he will never leave us nor forsake us, then absolutely nothing is going to trouble us.

Another attitude that robs people of contentment is looking into the future with worries and concern. How can I be content with the future so black? "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavily laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Christ alone is our satisfaction. To know Him and all of His power and promises, leaves us with contentment.

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