

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

The words of this text make me think of a special cow from my youth. In the town where I grew up in southern Minnesota a local dairy featured a cow in its television commercials. The cow's name was *Elsie*. This **cartoon-cow** always appeared with a **smile** on her face. She was supposed to be a **contented** cow, representing the other cows of the dairy, completely satisfied with their life in the **dairy's perfect pastureland**.

The dairymen in the upper Midwest know that a distressed cow will not produce well. So they do all they possibly can to keep their cows calm. Some even pipe soothing music into the barns to keep the cows from becoming alarmed and discontented because of things around them. Of course, Paul's words to Timothy are not about what makes contented cows. The apostle Paul writes about

### THE CONTENT OF CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

#### I.

We all know how hard it is to be *content* these days, as our dollars don't buy what they used to. But *discontent* was everywhere before the *dollar was devalued*. ***Discontent arises in the human heart.***

**Marriages** very often break up because man and wife are *discontented*. They want what they see as the greener "grass" on the other side of their fence – more money to pay for more things, or a different partner in marriage. **Millions dream** of winning the lottery because they are not content with what they may earn for a living. **Social workers** tell us that our problems are the result of inadequate housing and lack of good-paying jobs. **Every election year the politicians ask**, "*Are you better off today than you were four years ago?*" Some argue for a redistribution of the wealth, so that those who have less may have more of what belongs to others.

**But all of these measures and propositions** are like piping music into the dairy barn to soothe discontented cows! They don't deal with the real problem of the **heart**. Discontent entered Eve's heart when Satan said that she could be "*even as God.*" She ate, and instead of being **full**, she **fell**!

**"By a mighty hand"** God delivered the children of Israel from the Egypt's Pharaoh. But when God led them into the wilderness, the people **complained** that God had led them there to die! They were unhappy with the food God dropped from the sky. They complained when they were thirsty. They whined that they did not have a king like the nations around them. Finally, their discontent led them to open rebellion against God, unbelief, and destruction!

**Discontent** led David to take Uriah's only wife for himself. **Discontent** led Absalom to plot against his father David to seize his throne. **Fleshly discontent** has caused wars and rebellion without number, as well as quarrels between friends and family members. Just think of how the sin of ***discontent, arising from within us***, has caused us to pile up debts because we just "*had to have*" what we could not afford. Think of how ***discontent*** causes self-pity, anxiety, and sadness!

#### II.

***But Christians can be truly content because we have an inner fulness.*** Paul writes: "*godliness with contentment actually is a great means of gain.*" (Trans. V.F.) The term "*godliness*" is what we call "*worship.*" Worship is not something we do only on Sunday morning. **Worship is really "*worth-ship.*"** This is the understanding that real "**worth**" is found in God. *He alone is truly*

worthy of our attention, our love, and our devotion every day of our lives.

Along with this Spirit-worked godliness or *worth-ship* comes the contentment of the Christian. Christian contentment is **joyful** because it says with the Psalmist: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases Who redeems your life from destruction; Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies!”*

Christian contentment is also **realistic**. Paul asks: *“Why should we be discontented with what we have or do not have in this world? What are our rights before God? What did we bring into this world? Nothing at all! – No clothing, no food, no house, no land, no bank account, no insurance policy or retirement benefits! So, neither shall we be able to bring anything out of this world!”* As Job said: **“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.”**

Our contentment is not found in perishable *contents*, but eternal *contents*. What are these lasting, eternal contents? Jesus Christ **ARE** the contents of Christian contentment. I purposely said that the contents of our Christian contentment **ARE** Jesus Christ, because in this One person – by faith – we possess **ALL** that we need to be content! **In Him** we are guaranteed the **love** of the Father, the **ear** of the Father, and the everlasting **care** of the Father in heaven, Who is **OUR** Father because of Jesus!

We know that we deserve nothing but eternal damnation, and all that we receive are **free gifts** from the hand of a **merciful** God! Therefore we may be content with our earthly possessions, and thankful for what we **have**, rather than anxious about what we do **not** have. As Psalm 23 says, our Good Shepherd **leads us beside the still waters, restores our thirsty souls and leads us in the paths of righteousness! He continually fills our cup to overflowing and sets a full table before us** right in the middle of our enemies!

**Boniface**, was a great missionary of Christ who died as a martyr in 754 A.D.. Boniface brought the gospel to the northern Germanic tribes, who worshiped pagan idols. One day in the town of Geismar, the people told him about an oak tree that was thought to be sacred to their false god, **Thor**. So, while the people of the town watched, Boniface cut the tree down with an ax and made a Christian chapel out of the wood!

After many years among the people, Boniface was murdered by those who thought that he was hoarding treasure in his tent! But when his murderers searched the tent, they only found some books with the Gospel message written on its pages – *that through Jesus alone we are saved from our sins and have eternal life with the true God in heaven.* **Boniface was content!**

Who has expressed the **content of Christian contentment** better than **Henry Francis Lyte**? In the last hours of his earthly life he wrote the familiar hymn, **“Abide with Me.”** How wonderful this second verse: *“Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day. Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!”*

But Jesus was not the content of Lyte’s contentment only in death. Twenty-five years earlier, Henry Francis Lyte wrote another of our favorite hymn stanzas: **“Jesus, I my Cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee; Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shalt be. Perish ev’ry fond ambition, all I’ve sought or hoped or known; yet how rich is my condition! God and heav’n are still mine own!”**

May this same Jesus be the **content of our Christian contentment** each and every day until we share His eternal glory in the heavenly Jerusalem! Amen.