

Contentment

Hebrews 13:1-6 (ESV)

- “Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

-Hebrews 13:1-6 (ESV)

- We live in a day and age, where contentment is one of the most elusive things in our lives.

- We live in a time where we have more options available to us than any other generation that has ever existed.
 - We have more food options, career options, dating options, church options, entertainment options, the list could go on and on!
 - And its only natural for it to be so hard for us to be content in the midst of all of these options
 - Because we’ll always be wondering, did I choose the right one? Or we see another thing that we could move on to, or someone else that has something better, and we’re constantly being told by advertisements and marketing that we don’t have everything that we need yet!
- So with all of this constantly bearing down on us, how in the world are we even supposed to find contentment??

- Well I think this passage shows us how we can begin to build contentment in our lives, and shows us some dangers to avoid.

- And I believe the first principle that we see is:

- COMMUNITY BUILDS CONTENTMENT

- *“Let brotherly love continue.” -Hebrews 13:1 (ESV)*

- The most discontent people that I know of, are the ones who isolate themselves the most.
- They’re ones that do not have any real deep relationships with anyone outside of their immediate family, and sometimes not even then
- They’re the people that are not actively involved in other people’s lives yet are still the ones that have the most opinions about other people’s lives and how to fix everything

- Because in their minds, everything and everyone else is at fault

- They’re the ones that will not have meaningful conversations with anyone in public, but put something on social media that they disagree with and they’ll have a field day
- These people will never find any contentment in their lives as long as they’re are isolated, lonely, angry individuals that refuse any sort of help that a real community could give them.

- And that is not the life that God calls us a Christian’s to live.

- When Jesus instituted the New Covenant, public worship was no longer solely dependent on rituals, laws, customs, sacrifices, and traditions. Not even worship services.
- Public worship, was now primarily carried out within the relationships that we form with other believers.

- I’ll prove it to you: Jesus all throughout His ministry whenever He was asked what the

greatest commandments were, He would have the same answer every time:

- Love the Lord your God with all your, heart, soul, mind, strength....Love your neighbor as yourself.
- And we label that the golden rule, or the Great Commandment, but we forget that that was a part of the old covenant that Jesus fulfilled and moved us on from.
- We forget that Jesus took this to another level, when He told His Disciples in John chapter 13: ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. -John 13:34-35 (ESV)***
- Jesus is saying I’m switching it up on you now. I want you to love one another, no longer as yourself—I no longer want you to focus on loving each other in the capacity of which YOU want to be loved.

- I want you to look to a love that is beyond yourself, your wants and your desires...I want you to look at the love in which I loved you with, and allow that to be the standard in which you love one another within your community.
- And here’s the kicker:
- ***“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” -John 13:34-35 (ESV)***
- Jesus says, THIS IS THE GAUGE in which people will know that you are REALLY followers of Jesus
 - If they are flabbergasted, by the radical, selfless, extravagant love of Jesus that is shown through your life toward your brother or sister in Christ.
- And Jesus doubles down on this in John chapter 17: We read Jesus’ prayer in the Garden...the last thing that He does before He

is arrested and ultimately goes to the cross, is take out the time to pray for you and for me.

- And this is what He prays for: ***“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are One, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me.” -John 17: 20-23 (ESV)***
- Jesus prays that the oneness of our community would be the ultimate testimony to the world that shows who Jesus really is and what He came to do.
- Therefore, this is not something that we should be taking lightly.

- That’s why the writer of Hebrews starts his concluding statements by saying: LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE!
- Now the words “let” and “continue” in this short verse are the same exact greek word.
 - In the greek, this verse is just 3 words and 2 of them are the same!
 - Its “Menō philadelphia menō”
 - So it could be translated, Continue in brotherly love continually!
 - And the phrase brotherly love, of course, is the word from which the greatest sports town in America gets its name: Philadelphia
 - It literally means: ***Brotherly Love (Philadelphia): love of brothers or sisters, brotherly love; the love which Christians cherish for each other as brethren***
- Christian community is designed to have fellow children of God actually see and treat each other as family!

- Tim Keller puts it this way, he says: *If you are not actively involved in the lives of other believers, to the point in which it can be comparable to a sibling relationship, then you are not a part of a community, you're a part of a club.*
 - And you will never know or experience the real power that comes within Christian Community, if all you do is go to a Sunday morning club
- And I understand, realistically, you will not be able to develop this kind of deep rooted community with every single person in this room... but you can with some.
- And I know for a fact, that you will never find contentment in your spiritual life if you do not have a spiritual community.
- Let brotherly love continue:
- Next, the writer shows us another way in which our contentment can grow in verse 2, he says: ***“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have***

entertained angels unawares.” -Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)

- GENEROSITY BUILDS CONTENTMENT

- So in verse 1 we had the word philadelphia which means to have a love for the brothers... in verse 2 we have the word philoxenia which means to have love for strangers
- And this would have been counter cultural for them even as it is still today because we as Christians are being taught to be hospitable to those who may or may not ever be able to return the favor.
 - You see in their day, the only people you would invite over to your house to eat at your table were those of notoriety, in the hope that they would in-turn invite you over and you could climb the social ladder
- Jesus once addressed this in Luke chapter 14, at a dinner party that He had been invited to: ***“He said also to the man who had invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet,***

do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you.” -Luke 14:12-14 (ESV)

- You see, if we only ever do for those who can do for us, then we will never find contentment because we're constantly discontent with where we are as we're trying to climb the ladder
- But if we become generous and hospitable with those who cannot or will not return the favor, we actually find a greater peace and purpose in that.
 - We will be blessed, we will be more happy, we will be more content because we're not making everything about ourselves anymore.

- But the writer of Hebrews also says, you never know whenever the stranger that you're caring for is actually a messenger from God!
- He uses the word angel, here, and most likely he is referring to the story in Genesis chapter 18 whenever one day Abraham was hanging out at home and 3 strangers showed up at his doorstep
 - And immediately he invites them to stay, gets them comfortable, washed up, and gives them a 3 course meal
 - And they, in fact, turned out to be Angels sent from Heaven who had a word from the Lord for him
- The point being, you never know what the Lord has for you on the other side of selfless generosity.
- Like the two guys on the road to Emmaus, had a stranger join them on their walk, and they were hospitable to Him, and kind to Him, invited Him in for a meal, and as soon as they

broke bread they realized He was actually the Risen Savior, Jesus Himself.

- Now, it might be faithless of me, but I do not think that Jesus Himself is going to make a physical appearance in your life as you show hospitality to a stranger, however I cannot help but be reminded of what Jesus said, **“Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?’ And the King will**

answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.’ -Matthew 25: 34-40 (ESV)

- Why would Jesus value that that much? Because that is how He loved us. Showing us love and care whenever there was nothing we could ever do to return the favor or repay Him for His kindness.
 - “Love one another, just as I have loved you.”
- We are called to be generous and hospitable people. First and foremost we are called to be generous people because we serve a generous God.
 - He’s the first and the greatest giver! “For God so loved the world that He.....GAVE”
- We are to be generous in our actions, generous in our words, generous with our resources, and God promises to bless us when we do.
- And also very practically, this type of generosity will always build contentment

because it will remind us of how blessed we have been

- The writer furthers this point in the next verse when he says: ***“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.” -Hebrews 13:3 (ESV)***
- Here we see that: **HEALTHY COMPARISON BUILDS CONTENTMENT**
- Now when the writer says to remember those who are in prison, he is specifically referring to those who have been imprisoned for their faith.
- He’s telling his readers, as they are gathered together in the church reading this letter together, he encourages them to take the time to remember those who are not able to be there with them because they have been persecuted to the point of being unjustly imprisoned because of their faith in Christ
 - Now, these readers themselves have been experiencing persecution, they are feeling

the heat, they are being mistreated...

however, it is important for them to

remember those who are worse off than they are

- All of us, in this room, have experienced hardship and mistreatment in some form or fashion in life
- However, no matter what level of hardship we have endured or are currently enduring, there is always someone out there who has it harder
- *How many of us could feel nothing but blessed after the storm we experienced once we heard the news or saw the pictures of what other’s experienced in Asheville, Marion, Chimney Rock, Boone and so many other areas??*
- *And it’s really hard to fall into victimization whenever we take the time to healthily compare our hardships to those who have it much much worse*
- And that is not to take away from any pain or hardships that anyone in this room has felt, this is to encourage us to intentionally look for

- ways that we have been blessed even in the midst of our hardships so we can find the peace and contentment that can only come from God even when things are difficult
- Because if we only ever look at those who have it better, all that will do is cause us to be discontent
 - Because that is Unhealthy Comparison
 - Unhealthy Comparison will harden your heart against others and make you bitter
 - Healthy Comparison will break your heart for others, and make you want to be better
 - Healthy comparison will keep you humble and hungry.
 - I say it that way, because years ago I was hanging out with the Sims in back in Shelby
 - And at one point me and Chavis went for a drive, I think to pick up something from the store for Erin to help with dinner
- But Chavis took the long way home from the store, and we drove through a lower income area of town
 - And I wasn't sure why we were taking the route that we were, but before I could ask, Chavis explained, "You know, sometimes I just have to drive down these streets. It keeps you humble, keeps you hungry."
 - And that stuck out to me so much because I remember me and my best friend from high school used to drive around the rich neighborhoods in Virginia. Looking and these huge houses, thinking, "These people have made it!" As if we needed the motivation of all of that glamour to make us hungry to work hard to get there!
 - But Chavis took the opposite approach, making sure he put himself in situations where he appreciated all that he had
 - But also to make sure he was reminded about all of the students that he taught that lived on those streets, which made him hungry to be

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the best educator he could be for those boys and girls

- Whether he realized it or not at the time, he was living out the principle that the writer of Hebrews was trying to get across. Teaching us to remember those who are less fortunate than us, and to feel it as if we were going through it ourselves because we are all a part of the same body and the same community
- You need to have healthy comparison in your life if you are going to have any sort of contentment
- However, in the same vein, we need to be on guard against unhealthy comparison
- Because unhealthy comparison can destroy lives, and marriages
- *That's why the writer says "Let marriage be held in honor among all, remain faithful, keep it undefiled"*
- "Held in honor" means: to esteem highly, to hold especially dear

- What the enemy wants to do is to get you to unhealthily compare your marriage to others
- And one of the most dangerous thoughts you can ever have is, "I wish my spouse was more like theirs..."
- Get that thought out of your head completely
- I don't have concrete research to prove this, but I would be willing to bet that that thought is the primary gateway thought that leads to defiling and unfaithfulness in a marriage.
 - Men, this is for you especially....Honor your marriage, hold your marriage especially dear, protect it at all costs!
- Do not allow unhealthy comparison to creep into your life that causes you to envy what someone else has. It's dangerous.
- Because that's what Unhealthy Comparison does
- **UNHEALTHY COMPARISON CAUSES YOU TO COVET**

- Researchers did a study not too long ago where they went to two Universities and they had students spend 30 mins on social media, and after the 30 minutes they surveyed the way that the students felt.
 - The study showed that 1/3rd of the students surveyed stated that they felt significantly depressed after spending only 30 minutes on social media and they cited envy as the number 1 emotion that they felt.
 - What we do, is we see what other people post and it looks so fun and glamorous and cute, and then we compare what looks so great in their posts to the mundane of our lives and we get discouraged
 - We don't even take into consideration, how many takes, how much editing, how many filters it took to make that post the way it was
 - We get so caught up, because what we fail to realize is that we are comparing our behind the scenes, to their highlight reel
- And in turn we become so discontent with where we are in life
 - And then we feel like we have to post because we have to make people think that we're also real exciting, glamorous, and cute
 - And in our attempt to make life seem more exciting than it is, we get more and more discontent with our lives
- Its so dangerous when we make it our goal to make our lives look like something that it's not to impress other people
 - And even if they are impressed it's not going to do you any good, because:
- **UNHEALTHY COMPARISON CREATES CONTENTION**
 - Unhealthy Comparison will not only kill the contentment in our lives, it will damage the relationships that we have
 - This happens whenever we make comparison a competition

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- A red flag, to notice if this is a struggle for you is when something good happens to someone else, is your first response, "Why doesn't that ever happen to me?"
 - If we are honest with ourselves, we can probably think of a few people that we just can't stand because everything seems to go their way.
 - *Think about this: Imagine you go home one day and you see your neighbor standing in their driveway. He looks kind of confused. You say, "Hey, is everything ok?" and they say, "My aunt just passed away." "Oh, man i'm so sorry, were you close." "Yea we were pretty close...man, she left me 2 million dollars."*
 - *Whats you first thought gonna be? Most likely, its gonna be "Geez, I want a rich aunt who dies!"*
 - *You might say, "Oh, Kenny, you're horrible!" BUT BE HONEST!*
- *And the longer it goes on, the longer its gonna eat at you.*
- *A few days later you go home, and see your dream car sitting in THEIR driveway.*
- *Over the coming months, you have to listen to the construction of them building add-ons onto the house that you have always wanted to do*
 - *And over time, this person used to be one of your best friends, and now just the sound of their voice is like nails on a chalk board*
- Now this might be an extreme example but we can probably think of similar situations that you have been in.
 - *The person that got the promotion over you,*
 - *the person that always seems to be the life of the party instead of you,*
 - *all of the people getting married when you're still single,*

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- *all of the exotic vacation posts you see when you're just trying to make it to myrtle beach once every other year.*
- And the sad thing is, we compare our situations to theirs and allow it to drive a wedge between what could be a great friendship
 - We develop personal rivalries with these people who aren't giving us a second thought
 - And we allow this comparison to create contention in our lives
- It's dangerous...and probably the most dangerous aspect of Unhealthy Comparison is that:
 - **UNHEALTHY COMPARISON CAN CONTROL YOUR LIFE**
 - Not only can we get caught up comparing ourselves to others, but we can also get caught up wanting other people to compare themselves to us
- If we are not careful, it is very easy to fall into a life that is driven, not by purpose or calling, but our sole motivation will be to try and live a life that we think other people will be envious of
- We know how envious we can get when comparing ourselves to other people so what we want is the satisfaction of having other people compare themselves to us and feeling like they don't live up to our standards
- ***“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” -James 3:14-16 (NIV)***
- This is so evil and diabolical because the continual comparison that leads to envy and

selfish-ambition will never get us to where we want to be

- We will never be satisfied, we will never be content
 - I've heard it said, that *"never before have so many people had so much, and yet still want so much more."*
- So the question is, how combat this? How do we loose the grip of unhealthy comparison on our lives, how do we learn to be content? Pauls states in Philippians 4:
 - ***"I have learned the secret of being content..." Phil 4:12***
- It's important to note that Paul say that contentment is something to be learned
 - Which is another way of saying, contentment does not come to us naturally
- You can see it in children, as they seem so content playing with a toy that they have been given...until...they see another child playing with another toy.

- And then all of the sudden, their toy isn't good enough, and all they want is THAT toy that THAT child has

- *It would be nice if we could outgrow that!*
- But you've probably heard it said, *"The only difference between the men and the boys is the price of their toys."*
- Paul tells us that contentment isn't natural, it has to be learned
- *Contentment is not a state of condition but a state of heart and a state of mind*
- ***"...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."***
-Philippians 4:11-12 (NIV)
- What are some things that we can do to learn and develop this contentment in our own lives?

- I believe throughout Philippians 4, Paul gives us a few:

- **CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTENTMENT**

- **The Content: Remember to Rejoice**

- ***Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!***
 - Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but is the realization of how much you have already been given
 - The most content are those who are less content with the gifts and more content with the Giver
- This is why the most content are also the most generous
- Because they realize that this life and everything we have is a gift so I don't need anything for fulfillment
 - The content realize that even when I have nothing in this world, I have everything I could ever need in Jesus

- Because He gives me eternal worth, this life is just a vapor, and I can rejoice that God has given me purpose, meaning, and mission

- I can be so much more content rejoicing than comparing or complaining
- And those who Remember to Rejoice will also:

- **The Content: Celebrate Others**

- Pastor Greg Laurie states, "*Contentment does not come from seeking self-fulfillment but the fulfillment of others*"
 - You know, the most lonely life there is, is a life fixated on yourself
 - If you are the center of your universe, your universe is too small!
- I'm telling you, we would be so much more content, fulfilled, and satisfied with life, if we learn to stop coveting others and start celebrating others

- *It's possible to look at someone's vacation post and be happy for them*
 - *Its possible to be happy for a couple at their wedding rather than just judging their ceremony and decorations*
 - *Its possible to want more for other people than you do for yourself*
- And you know what? Not only will you be a much more content person if you learn to celebrate others....you will also be much more enjoyable to be around and people will want to be your friend!
 - And don't dare wait for others to celebrate you before you celebrate others. Because what you want other people to be for you, you first have to be for other peopler.
 - So remember to rejoice, celebrate others, and:
 - **The Content: Pray with Thanksgiving**
 - ***“Do not be anxious about anything, 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 your minds in Christ Jesus.”
-Phil 4:6-7 (ESV)

- Keep in mind that Thanksgiving comes before the requests
 - That's what we get backwards so often. We treat our prayer life as a wish list for Santa, rather than taking inventory of all of our blessings
- But it's when I spend intimate time with God, I take every situation to Him, thanking Him for everything He is and everything He has given me
- And now that my mind is more fixed on Him than my problems....THEN I present my requests
 - My heart begins to lineup with His heart and I begin to see things the way I'm supposed to, and in turn, I find begin to find some peace

- Have you ever had those times where you were freaking out about a situation, and then you take the time to actually pray about it and then for some reason you have so much more peace about it, even if the situation didn't change?
- I'll tell you, from personal experience, it so interesting how incredibly patient I become with the people I actually pray for
 - *"My prayer for other people may not change them but it always changes me."*- Craig Groeschel
- We will become so much more content if we begin to understand the power of praying with Thanksgiving, which helps with the next point.
- **The Content: Focus on the Good**
- ***"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is***

excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. -Phil 4:8 (NIV)

- How much more content would we be, if we stopped looking for things to complain about, and started looking for things that we could praise??
- So often, our conversations, our attention, the news, are normally spent on what is wrong and negative with the world
 - Now, we shouldn't ignore those things, but we would be better served if we would spend more energy on celebrating the things that are true, noble, right, pure, and lovely
- What if we spent more time admiring the things that are excellent and praiseworthy?
 - *You replicate what you celebrate, so if we learn to celebrate more, we will in turn live a life worth celebrating*
- **The Content: Rely on the Power of God**
 - How freeing would it be if we realized that we don't have to live this life in our own power?

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- I don't have to rely on my own power or my own wisdom to live a content life, but the Paul clearly states that the secret to living a content life is this...
- ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* -Philippians 4:13 (ESV)**
 - Keep in mind, the "ALL things" includes some "HARD things"
 - Don't get caught up taking this verse out of context
- So many people do this! We think that the "All things" are just the good things that benefit us
- We try and use this verse as some fairy pixie dust to get what we want
 - *"I'ma get a raise, because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"*
 - *"I'ma get that dream job because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"*
- *"I'm gonna play in the NBA because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"*
- I'm not gonna limit the power of God, but bro you are 5'2" 111 lbs. I don't think you're the next Lebron...
 - Just sayin...
- Phil 4:13 is not about me being able to do whatever I want to do with God's help, it is about the Power of God sustaining me, fulfilling me, making me content with whatever season of life that I am in
- Paul is saying I can get a raise, life in abundance, but I don't need it, because God is all that matters
- I can have absolutely nothing to my name, but I still have everything I could possibly need in Jesus
- That's why the writer of Hebrews says in our passage!

- **“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” -Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)**
- CONTENTMENT IS NOT FOUND IN WHAT YOU HAVE, BUT IN WHO YOU KNOW, AND WHO YOU ARE WITH
- AND HE IS WITH YOU, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE!
- Contentment is found in the presence of God
 - Because you can be content in what is consistent
 - And there is nothing more consistent than the power and the presence and the love of God
 - HE is the same Yesterday Today and Forever
 - HE Holds the stars in His Hands
 - HIS Word Will Stand Forever
 - HIS Love is Everlasting
- HE is the Great I Am
- THIS GOD, IS WITH YOU AND FOR YOU! HE PROMISES TO NEVER LEAVE OR OR FORSAKE YOU
 - THIS GOD IS ENOUGH!
 - HE’S ENOUGH BECAUSE HE’S GOOD
 - HE’S GOOD BECAUSE HE’S GRACIOUS
 - HE’S GRACIOUS BECAUSE HE’S LOVING
 - HE’S LOVING BECAUSE HE’S GOD!
- It’s who He is. There’s nothing you and I could ever do to change who He is.
 - There’s nothing you or I could ever do to make Him love you any more or any less. We can be content in that love.
- In the beginning of Philippians 3, Paul starts listing off his resume, all of the things that would have made him the “who’s who” in the Jewish world, but then he gets to verse 7 he says, **“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless**

because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ.

-Philippians 3:7-8 (NLT)

- What makes Jesus so great, that all of the accolades he could ever wish to achieve in life, are seen as “Garbage”??
- Paul was captivated with the Truth that the God who created him, put on skin and bone and came to the planet, and allowed Himself to be brutally tortured on a cross, so that the sin and the selfishness that had separated him from God could be paid for and he could live free in the Love and Acceptance of God as His child.
- The healthiest form of comparison that there is, is comparing everything we experience to the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.

- And the writer of Hebrews says that we develop this type of contentment: ***“So we can confidently say “The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”***

-Hebrews 13:6 (ESV)