

Contentment Series

SESSION 3—The Truths of Contentment

“God is meticulously involved in the planning and carrying out of his good and wise plan for my life”

“God knows better than I do what is ultimately best for me”

“God is more trustworthy than I am due to his unmatched and impeccable character”

“God’s wisdom is superior to my own”

Psalms 139; Luke 12:6-7

*God's providence, which is nothing else but the carrying on of his decree—should be a combatant against discontent. God has set us in our station, and he has done it in wisdom...If we would be able to parcel out our own comforts, we would often parcel out that which is harmful to us. Is it not well for the child—that the parent should choose for it? were it left to itself, it would perhaps choose a knife to cut its own finger. It is well for the patient, that he is at the physician's appointment. The consideration of a decree determining, and a providence disposing of all things, should work our hearts to holy contentment. The wise God has ordered our condition; if he sees it better for us to abound—we shall abound; if he sees it better for us to be in need—we shall be in need. Be content to be at God's disposal...God sees, in his infinite wisdom, the same condition is not best for all; that which is good for one, may be bad for another. One season of weather will not serve all men's occasions, one needs sunshine, another rain. One condition of life will not fit every man, no more than one suit of apparel will fit everybody. Prosperity is not fit for all, nor is adversity fit for all...The wise God sees that condition to be bad for one, which is good for another; hence it is, that he places men in different orbs and spheres; some higher, some lower. One man desires health, God sees sickness is better for him; God will work spiritual health out of physical sickness, by bringing the body of death, into a consumption. Another man desires liberty, God sees bondage to be better for him; he will work his liberty by bondage; when his feet are bound, his heart shall be most enlarged. Did we believe this, it would give a check to the sinful disputes and cavils of our hearts: "Shall I be discontented at that which is enacted by God's decree, and ordered by His wise providence?" (Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, pp.23, 24.)*

“God is always worthy of praise and thanksgiving”

Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:4-11

Gratitude is a handmaiden of contentment. An ever-growing attitude of gratitude will certainly make us more content since we will be focusing more on what we do have, both spiritually and materially, than on what we do not have. But contentment is more than focusing on what we have. It is focusing on the fact that all we do have, we have by the grace of God. We do not deserve anything we have, materially or spiritually. It is all by His grace.

(Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*)

Putting this [antidote] of contentment (gratitude) into practice will require you to learn how to interpret providence...in light of God's sovereignty and goodness. (Priolo, 27.)

“I need to be thinking more about God’s promises than my circumstances”

2 Pet. 1:2-4

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God never promised me that I would have these comforts, at this time, and in such a way as I would have them. I am discontented only because I don't have these things which God never promised me. And therefore I sin greatly against the Gospel, and against the Grace of Faith.
(Burroughs, 170)

"God expects and has given me grace to trust and obey him in these circumstances"

Micah 6:8; 1 Pet. 4:19

Others spend their thoughts on those things that will disturb and disquiet them; and so they grow more and more discontented. But indeed, let me spend my thoughts in thinking what my duty is. What is the duty of my present condition which I am in? "Oh," says a man whose condition is changed, and who has lost his wealth. "If only I had my wealth, as I had before, how would I use it to his glory? God has made me see that I didn't honor him with my possessions as I should have done. Oh, if I had it again, I would do better than I did before." But this may only be a temptation. You should rather think, "What does God require of me in the circumstances I am now brought into?" And you should labor to bring your heart to quiet and contentment, by setting your soul to work about the duties of your present condition. And the truth is, I know nothing more effective for quieting a Christian soul and getting contentment than this: setting your heart on the work surrounding the duties of your present condition that you're now in; and beware your thoughts about other conditions as a mere temptation. (Burroughs, 54)

"My sin may not have brought about my circumstances, but I need to examine my heart regardless"

Psalms 19:12-14

Remember that in every loss there is only a suffering—but in every discontent there is a sin—and one sin is worse than a thousand sufferings...Your sufferings are not so great as your sins! Put these two in the balance, and see which weighs heaviest; where sin lies heavy, sufferings lie light. A carnal spirit makes more of his sufferings—and less of his sins; he looks upon one at the great end of the telescope—but upon the other at the little end of the telescope. The carnal heart cries out, "Take away my affliction!" But a gracious heart cries out, "Take away my iniquity!" The one says, "Never has anyone suffered as I have done!" But the other says, "Never has anyone sinned as I have done!" (Watson, 34, 44)

"There is some spiritual good intended by God in all my troubles"

Lam. 3:19-26

Afflictions teach us humility. We are commonly prosperous and proud, but corrections are God's corrosives to eat out the proud flesh...God brings us into the valley of tears—that He may bring us into the valley of humility; "remembering my affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall; my soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. (La. 3:19,20) When men have grown proud, God has no better way with them, than to brew them a cup of wormwood.
(Watson, 71)

"My life is far worse with the presence of any discontentment"

Psalms 73:1-3, 21-28

Discontent of mind, is the sore which makes the fetters of affliction more grievous. Discontent troubles us more than the trouble itself! (Watson, 84)