



Pursuing Contentment



Why have this class?

Some things are hard to do over a long timeline.

Contentment is one of those things.

If you sense that you already are content, consider this an early refresher. If the material is somewhat new, then all the better.

Class Roadmap (tentative)

- A Word and Idea Survey of the Scriptures
- The Elements of Contentment
- Learning Contentment
- The Scope and Implications of Contentment
- The Dangers of Discontentment
- Contentment in Heaven
- Objections and Hindrances

Lesson 1: A Word and Idea Survey

Paul's Experience and Exhortation

Philippians 4:10-13 But 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. 11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 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. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Word Association

What words do you associate with the word *contentment* or the idea?

The OT Expression of Content & Contentment

- Don't spend time looking for the word *contentment* in the OT.
- The idea is there, but the word -- not so much

Sometimes it is consent, filled, satisfied, etc.

The OT Expression of Content & Contentment

Exodus 2:21 Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.

Joshua 7:7 And Joshua said, “Alas, Lord God, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!”

The OT Expression of Content & Contentment

Job 10:15 If I am wicked, woe to me; Even if I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head. I am full of disgrace; See my misery!

Exodus 16:11-12 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God

Genesis: 37:27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

The NT Expression of Content & Contentment

- Sufficient for one's self
- Independent of external circumstances
- Contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest
- A contented mind with its lot
- To be satisfied

The NT Expression of Content & Contentment

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Matthew 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

The NT Expression of Content & Contentment

Luke 3:14 Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”

John 6:7 Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.”

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

The NT Expression of Content & Contentment

3 John 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

1 Timothy 6:6-8 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

The NT Expression of Content & Contentment

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things. as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Was Jagger Right?

Chorus

I can't get no satisfaction

I can't get no satisfaction

'Cause I try, and I try, and I try, and I try

I can't get no, I can't get no



Is Satisfaction Possible?

Ecclesiastes 1:3-8 ... 8 All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Evil Under the Sun

Ecclesiastes 6:1-7 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men ... so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it ... This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction. ... 3 If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years ... but his soul is not satisfied with goodness ... 7 All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied.

Is this contentment?

Peace and Contentment
Eduard von Grutzner (1897)



Lesson 2: The Elements of Contentment

Some of the ideas we recently covered ...

- 1) Some of the words associated with contentment such as satisfaction, happiness, serenity, settledness, sufficiency, fullness, filled, stoicism, etc.
- 2) Yikes! One of the great evils in Ecclesiastes 6:1-7
A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction.
- 3) There simply must be a significant mental component to whatever contentment is.
- 4) Mick probably never got any satisfaction.

NT Usage: autarkeia

Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

1 Timothy 6:6-8 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

Scripture Unified

WCF 1:6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

What Does the Dictionary Say?

- 1) The state or degree of being contented or satisfied [also pleased]
- 2) happiness in one's situation; satisfaction
- 3) The neurophysiological experience of satisfaction and being at ease in one's situation, body, and/or mind.

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/contentment>

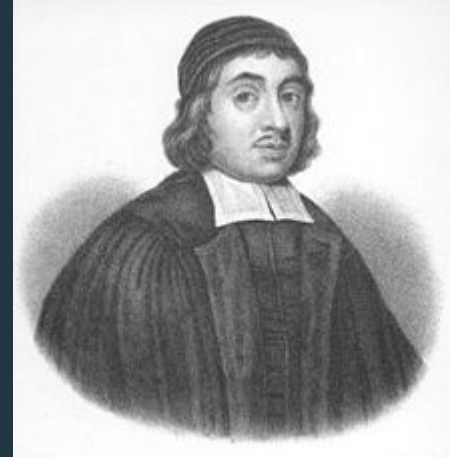
Jeremiah Burroughs

“I offer the following description:
Christian contentment is that sweet,
inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit,
which freely submits to and delights in
God's wise and fatherly disposal in every
condition.” - *Rare Jewel*



Thomas Watson

“It is a sweet temper of spirit, whereby a Christian carries himself in an equal poise in every condition.” - *Art of Contentment*



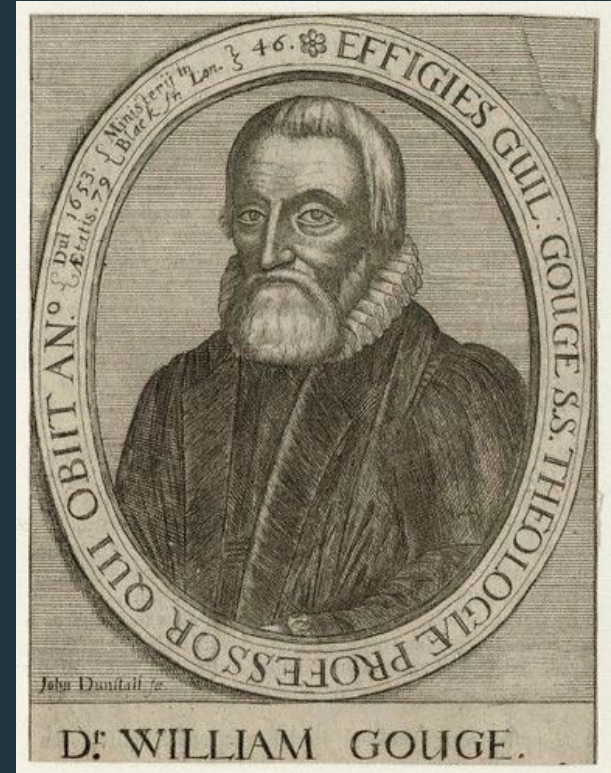
William Ames

“Contentment is a virtue, whereby the mind rests in that portion that God has given him.” -- *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Chapter 22*



William Gouge

“Contentedness is a satisfaction of the mind concerning the sufficiency and fitness of one’s present condition. This general matter of contentedness, a satisfaction of mind, does not only put a distinguishing difference between contentedness and covetousness, but also shows that they are diametrically contrary one to another: for a covetous mind is never satisfied with any estate: and a contented mind is never unsatisfied with any.” -- *Of Covetousness*



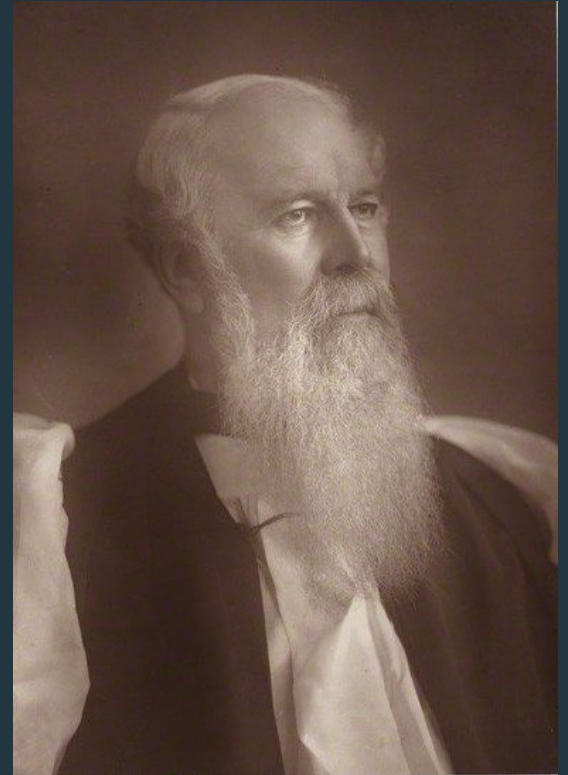
Joseph Hall

“If there be any happiness to be found upon earth, it is in that which we call contentation [contentment]. This is a flower that grows not in every garden.” --
Works, v6



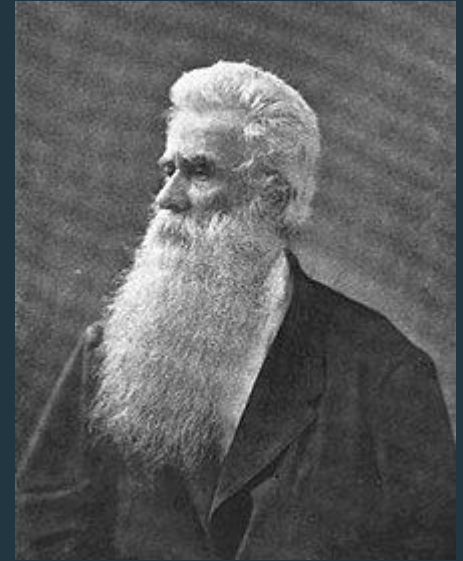
JC Ryle

“To be content is to be rich and well-off. He is the rich man who has no wants and requires no more... To be content is to be independent.... Such a man is the only one who is always happy. Nothing can come amiss or go wrong with such a man....” --
Be Content, sermon or pamphlet, 1885



William S Plumer

“But what is contentment? And how may it be known from evil states of mind somewhat resembling it? Contentment is not carelessness or prodigality. It is not obtuseness of sensibility. It is a disposition of mind in which we rest satisfied with the will of God respecting our temporal affairs—without hard thoughts or hard speeches concerning His allotments and without any sinful desire for a change.” -- Chapel Library (Florida) Plumber (1802-1880)



Thomas Jacomb (1622-1687)

“We are to consider contentment as it imports [signifies or suggests] calmness and composedness of mind in every condition — stillness and sedateness of spirit under all occurrences of providence. When a man likes whatsoever God doeth to him or with him ... this is contentment.” -- Probably a sermon or tract



Hebrews 13:5 - The Contrast

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.

Covetousness and contentment “are inconsistent in the same mind, in any prevalent degree.” -- John Owen

COVETOUSNESS

CONTENTMENT



John Owen

“... this contentment is a gracious frame or disposition of mind, quiet and composed; without, [1] complaining or repining at God’s providential disposals of our outward concerns; [2] ... envy at the more prosperous condition of others; [3] fears and anxious cares about future supplies; and, [4] desires and designs of those things which a more plentiful condition than what we are in would supply us withal.” - Commentary on Hebrews 13:5



The Grace of Contentment

“Contentment, though it is not properly a grace (it is rather a disposition of mind,) yet in it there is a happy mixture of all the graces: it is a most precious compound, which is made up of faith, patience, meekness, humility, etc. which are the ingredients put into it. - Thomas Watson, *Art of Contentment*, (loc 2208)

The Elements of Contentment



Lesson 3: Characteristics of the Contented 1

Slices

"... God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition." - Burroughs

"... that portion that God has given him." - William Ames

"... we rest satisfied with the will of God respecting our temporal affairs ... concerning His allotments ..." - William S Plumber

"... stillness and sedateness of spirit under all occurrences of providence."
- Thomas Jacomb

Of Creation

WCF 4:1 It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.

Of Providence

WCF 5:1 God the great Creator of all things doth [does] uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

Of Providence

Daniel 4:34-35 I, Nebuchadnezzar, ... and my understanding returned to me ... For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Of Providence

Psalm 135:6 Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places.

Proverbs 15:3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

Psalm 33:10-11 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. 11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.

Heidelberg Catechism of 1563

Q: What do you understand by the providence of God?

A: The almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures; and so governs them, that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

Belgic Confession (Article 13)

We believe that this good God, after creating all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without God's orderly arrangement.

Belgic Confession (Article 13)

This doctrine gives us unspeakable comfort since it teaches us that nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the arrangement of our gracious heavenly Father, who watches over us with fatherly care, sustaining all creatures under his lordship, so that not one of the hairs on our heads (for they are all numbered) nor even a little bird can fall to the ground without the will of our Father.

In this thought we rest ...

Nothing is Too Insignificant

Matthew 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

The Answer Really is Jesus

Acts 17:25-28 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

The Answer Really is Jesus

Hebrews 1:1-3 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The Answer Really is Jesus

Colossians 1:9-18 ... He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Resliced

"... God's wise and fatherly disposal [which is carefully upheld by Jesus] in every condition." - Burroughs

"... that portion that God [through Jesus] has given him." - William Ames

" ... we rest satisfied with the will of God respecting our temporal affairs ... concerning His allotments [which are maintained and secured by His Son] ..." - William S Plumber

" ... stillness and sedateness of spirit under all occurrences of providence [which are administered under the careful eye of Jesus]." - Thomas Jacomb

You vs Sparrows

You are vastly more important than sparrows and Jesus knows exactly what is happening to them at all times.



Lesson 4: Characteristics of the Contented 2

Meekness

1 Peter 3:3-4 Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle [meek] and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Matthew 21:5 "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly [meek], and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

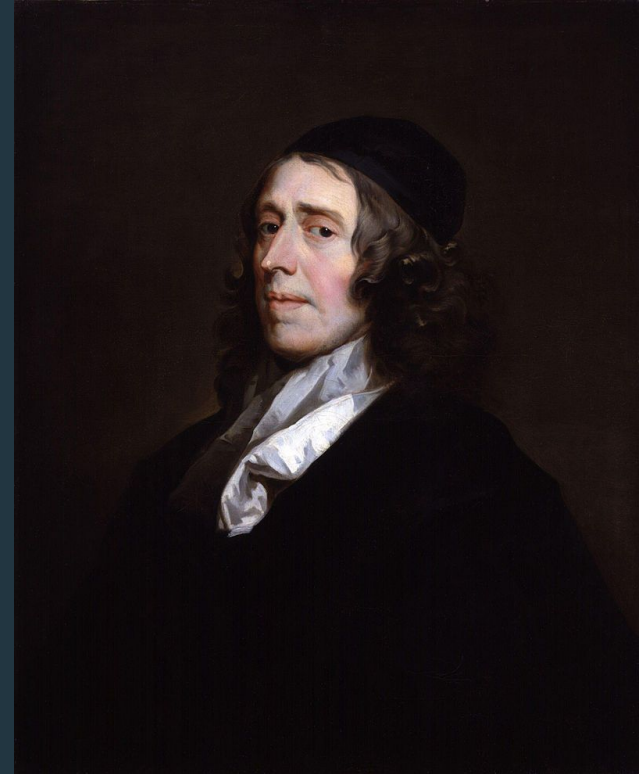
Brakel on Meekness

“This virtue [meekness] also resides in the heart. The understanding, having been enlightened, perceives the vanity and transitory nature of all that is to be found in the world - and that it is not worthy of our being disturbed about upon it being removed from us, nor of going to great lengths to attain it.” - *The Christian's Reasonable Service*



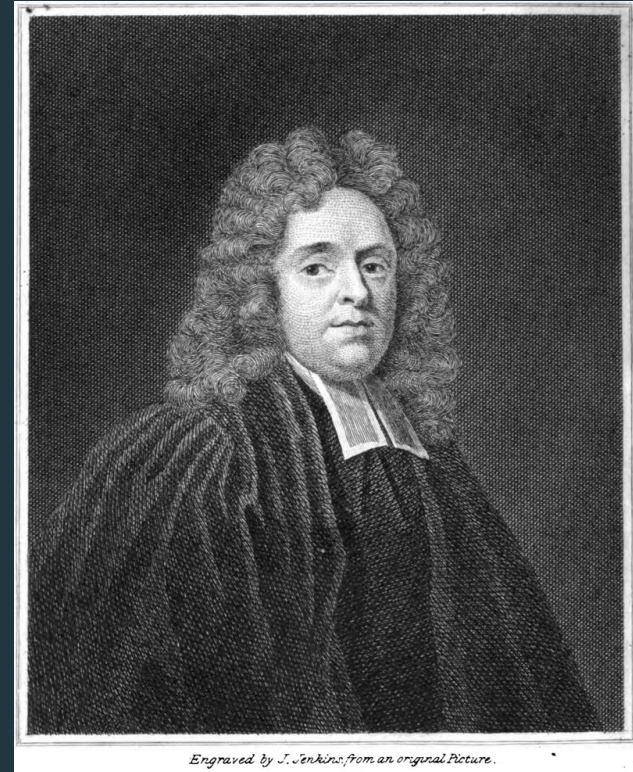
Owen on Contentment in the Mind

“It [contentment] is a gracious disposition of mind, arising solely from trust in and satisfaction with God alone, against all other things whatever that may appear to be evil ...” --
Owen on Hebrews 13:5



Matthew Henry on Meekness

“There is meekness toward God, and it is the easy and quiet submission of the soul to his whole will, according as he is pleased to make it known, whether by his word or by his providence.” -- Matthew Henry

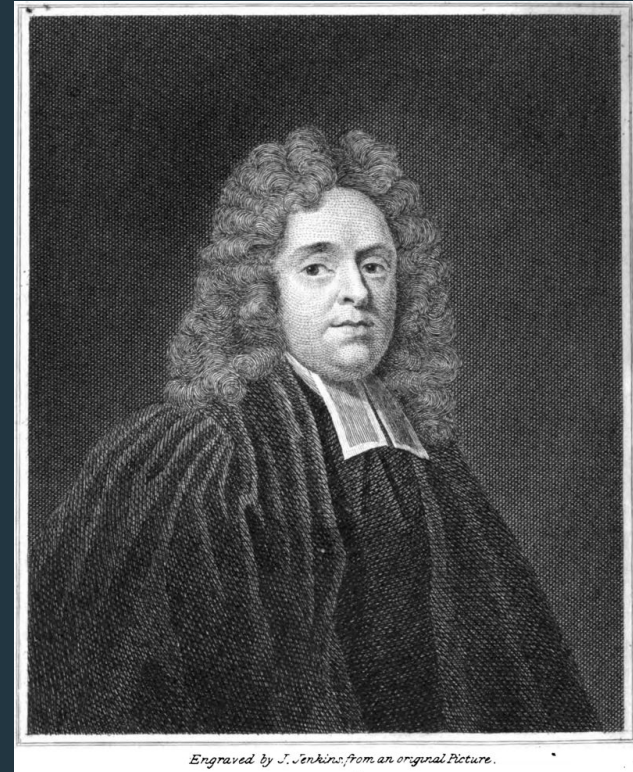


Engraved by J. Jenkins, from an original Picture.

Matthew Henry on Meekness

“It is the silent submission of the soul to the word of God: the understanding bowed to every divine truth, and the will to every divine precept; and both without murmuring or disputing. The word is then an engrafted word, when it is received with meekness, that is, with a sincere willingness to be taught, and desire to learn.”

(Loca 110)



Meekness

Job 2:10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

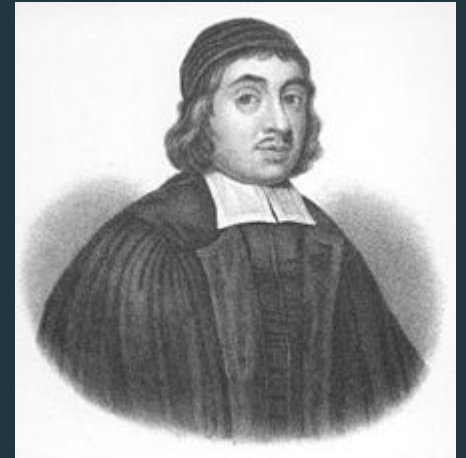
Leviticus 10:1-3 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron ... So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace.

Meekness Profession

- 1) I will gladly submit, without reservation or resentment all that God has written in His word and I will not add to it nor take away from it what He has written; it will be my only rule for faith and life.
- 2) I will gladly submit, without reservation or resentment all that God has revealed through His upholding, directing, disposing, and governing the events and circumstances of my life and the lives of everyone else.

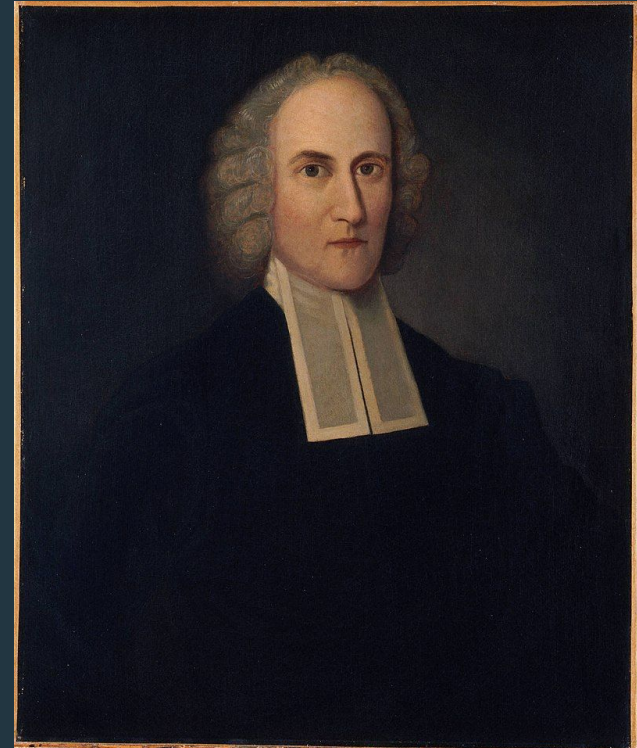
Thomas Watson on Submission

“God’s end in all his providences is to bring the heart to submit and be content; and indeed this pleaseth God much, he loves to see his children satisfied with that portion he doth carve and allot them; it contents him to see us contented; therefore let us acquiesce in God’s providence, now God hath his end.” -- *The Art of Contentment*



Jonathan Edwards on Submission

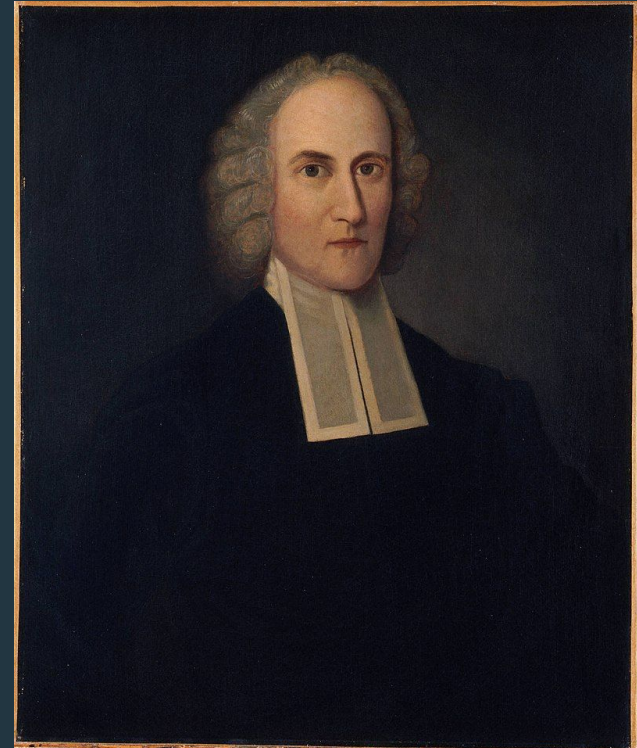
“So God glorifies himself towards the creatures also two ways: (1) by appearing to them, being manifested to their understandings; (2) in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying the manifestations which he makes of himself.” - *Miscellanies (448) The End of Creation*



Jonathan Edwards on Submission

“And this [is] very consistent with what we are taught ... God made all things; and the end for which all things are made, and for which they are disposed, and for which they work continually, is that God's glory may shine forth and be received. From him all creatures come, and in him their well-being consists; God is all their beginning, and God received is all their end.”- *Miscellanies* (448)

The End of Creation



Meekness and Godliness Are Synonymous

Psalm 37:7-11 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret - it only causes harm. 9 For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. 10 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. 11 But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Contentment and Meekness

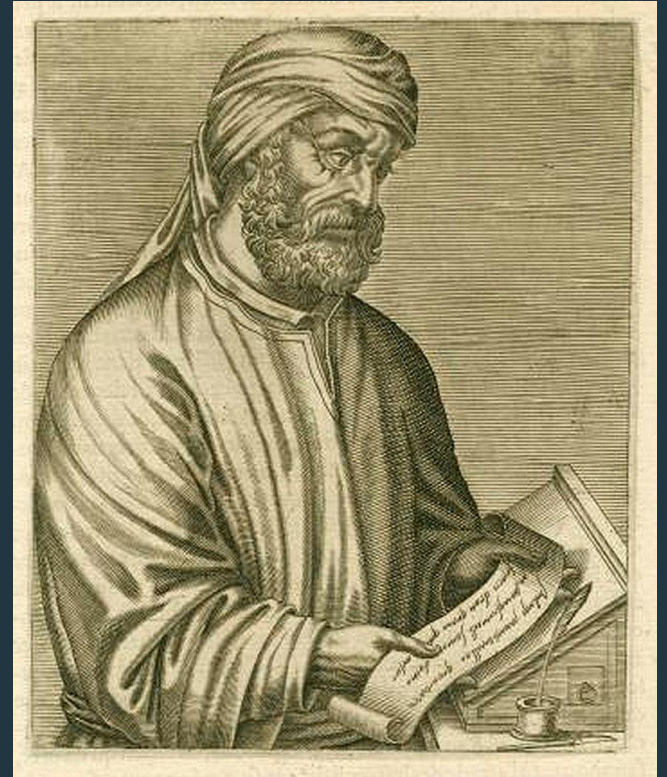
James 3:13-18 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the **meekness of wisdom**. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the **wisdom that is from above [fruit of the Spirit]** is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle, willing to yield**, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

End of Lesson

Life Hack

"Denique si sedeas, requies est magna laboris;
si multum sedeas, labor est" Tertullian
(155-220), *Carmen Ad Senatorem*

"Lastly, if you sit it is a great rest from work:
but if you sit for long it becomes a strain."



Lesson 5: The Dangers of Discontentment 1

Some of the ideas we recently covered ...

- 1) A few of the words associated with contentment such as satisfaction, happiness, serenity, settledness, sufficiency, fullness, filled, stoicism, etc.
- 2) Contentment has many facets
- 3) The doctrine of providence gives us unspeakable comfort.
- 4) Jesus didn't hesitate to identify as someone who is meek.

Man's Querulous Condition

“The nature of man is extremely querulous [complaining in a petulant or whining manner]. We know not what we would have, and when we have it, we know not how to like it. We would be happy; yet we would not die. We would live long; yet we would not be old. We would be kept in order; yet we would not be chastised with affliction. We are loath to work; yet are weary of doing nothing. We have no list [desire] to stir; yet find long sitting painful. We have no mind to leave our bed; yet find it a kind of sickness to lie long. We would marry, but would not be troubled with household cares; when once we are married, we wish we had kept single.” - Joseph Hall, *On Contentation*

The Seriousness of Murmuring

“Contentment excludes a vexatious [annoyance, frustration] repining [discontent, fretting]. Murmuring is properly the daughter of discontent. ‘I mourn in my complaint.’ (Psalm 55:2) He does not say ‘I murmur in my complaint’. Murmuring is no better than mutiny in the heart; it is a rising up against God. When the sea is rough and unquiet - it casts forth nothing but foam. Just so, when the heart is discontented - it casts forth the foam of murmuring, anger, and impatience! Murmuring is nothing else, but the scum which boils off from a discontented heart!” - Watson, *Art of Contentment*

Jude

Jude 1:14-19 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage...

Numbers 16/17

Numbers 16:11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?" ... **16:41** On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord."

Numbers 17:5, 10-11 And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints [murmurings] of the children of Israel, which they make against you." ... 10 And the Lord said to Moses, "Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die." 11 Thus did Moses; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

The Murmurers and Their Carcasses

Numbers 14:26-30 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 27 “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. 28 Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing [murmuring?], so I will do to you: 29 The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. 30 Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun

....

Singing and Discontent

Psalm 106:23-25 Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them. 24 Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, 25 But complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord.

- 1) “They despised the pleasant land” (abhorred, rejected)
- 2) “They did not believe His word” (unbelieving of God’s revealed will)
- 3) “They complained in their tents.” (cowards, they thought no one was listening)
- 4) “They did not heed the voice of the Lord” (stubborn)

That was a long time ago, but today ...

1 Corinthians 10:6-11 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. **7** And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” **8** Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; **9** nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; **10** nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. **11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The Temptations

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.



Lesson 6: The Dangers of Discontentment 2

Discontentment is Foolish

“What a foolish thing is this, that because I have not got what I want, I will not enjoy the comfort of what I have! Do you not account this folly in your children? You give them some food and they are not contented, perhaps they say it is not enough, they cry for more, and if you do not immediately give them more they will throw away what they have.” -- Burroughs, *Rare Jewel*

Discontentment is Futile

Matthew 5:33-37 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

Discontentment Torments the Mind - 1

“Discontentment is a mixture of anger and of grief, both which are wont to raise up fearful tempests in the soul ...” Joseph Hall, *On Contentation*

“... what woeful work doth it [discontent] make in ungoverned minds! ... How many have run from their wits!” Joseph Hall, *On Contentation*

“What can be more foolish, than for a man, because he thinks God hath made him miserable by crosses, to make himself more miserable by his own distempers? ... How witless a thing it is for a man to torment himself with the thoughts of those evils that are past all remedy ...” Joseph Hall, *On Contentation*

Discontentment Torments the Mind - 2

“Discontentment is nothing else but the echo of unbelief; ...” - Thomas Watson, *Art of Meditation*

[The discontented,] how do they help themselves? By abuse, by bad language. Someone crosses them, and they have no way to help themselves but by abuse and by bitter words, and so they relieve themselves in that way when they are angry.” -- Jeremiah Burroughs, *Rare Jewel*

“For care is to the mind as a burden to the back, it loads the spirits, and with overloading sinks them.” - Thomas Watson, *Art of Meditation*

Discontentment Makes You Censorious

Discontent accuses God

- of folly
- of injustice
- of cruelty

Discontentment and Covetousness

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.

COVETOUSNESS

CONTENTMENT



Discontentment and Covetousness

1 Timothy 6:6-10 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Discontentment, Covetousness, & Clustering

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

1 Corinthians 10:1-12 [discussed previously]

Discontentment and Conflicted Prayers

Matthew 6:9-10

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

Lesson 7: Learning Contentment 1

The Limits of the Puritans

“Now there is in the text another lesson, which is a hard lesson: 'I have learned to abound.' That does not so nearly concern us at this time, because the times are afflictive times, and there is now, more than ordinarily, an uncertainty in all things in the world. In such times as these are, there are few who have such an abundance that they need to be much taught in that lesson.” -- Jeremiah Burroughs, *Rare Jewel*

Three Approaches

- 1) Sense or instinct (brute beasts, animals)
- 2) Reason (unregenerate, but thoughtful men)
- 3) Faith (those born again)

Discerning Spiritual Things

Romans 1:21 “... futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Mark 4:11-12 And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables 12 so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them.’”

Walk As Regenerate Men

Ephesians 4:17-18a “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, ...”

Hebrews 13:5-6

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” 6 So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

- 1) The instruction
- 2) The intensification
- 3) The parallel
- 4) The repetition
- 5) The outside world

Deuteronomy 31:1-6

Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said. 4 And the Lord will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

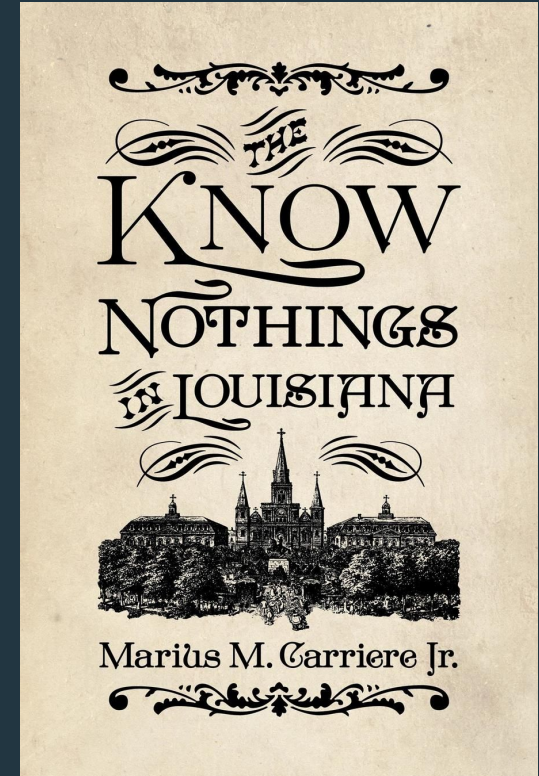
Psalm 118:1-6

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. 2 Let Israel now say, "His mercy endures forever." 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, "His mercy endures forever." 4 Let those who fear the Lord now say, "His mercy endures forever." 5 I called on the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place. 6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? 7 The Lord is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me. 8 It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. 9 It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

Lesson 8: Learning Contentment 2

The Proud Know-Nothings

1 Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.



Great Gains

1 Timothy 6:6-10 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Arrive with Nothing; Depart with Nothing

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Not everyone got the message.



Nobody Ever Arrived or Departed w/ Stuff

Psalm 49:16-20 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; 17 for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him... 20 A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish.

Ecclesiastes 5:15 As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand.

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But Those Who Desire To Be Rich

1 Timothy 6:8-10 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The Nature and Origin of Desire

How do you define desire?

Where does desire originate?

Are some desires inherent to man?

Disordered Desires: Concupiscence

Romans 7:7-8 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Disordered Desires: Concupiscence

1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.

James 1:14-15 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The Most Terrifying Granted Wish

Psalm 106:13:15 They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, 14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. 15 **And He gave them their request [desires, lust], but sent leanness into their soul.**

Mega Gains

Psalm 73:21-26 Thus my heart was grieved, And I was vexed in my mind. 22 I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You. 23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. 24 You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. 26 My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

What Mega Gains Look Like

1 Timothy 6:11-12 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Riches without Regerts

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.



Lesson 9: Learning Contentment 3

Henry Wilkinson

1. A contented person makes it his business to bring his mind suitable to his means
2. He is a person thankful for anything, and everything that he has
3. He strives and endeavors against coveting those things, which are not his own
4. He enjoys himself cheerfully and goes on contentedly and quietly in the management of the works of his calling
5. Above all he labors to make God his portion

Obligated Duty ... To Labor After Contentment

“A contented person makes it his business to bring his mind suitable to his means.”

We are obliged:

- 1) to labor after a contented mind,
- 2) to acquiesce in our present condition,
- 3) to rest satisfied in that condition

Thankful for Anything and Everything

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything [all circumstances] give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Strive and Endeavor Against Coveting

WLCQ. 147. What are the duties required in the tenth commandment?

A. The duties required in the tenth commandment are, such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto, and further all that good which is his.

Strive and Endeavor Against Coveting

WLCQ. 148. What are the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the tenth commandment are, discontentment with our own estate; envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

Fulfill the Mandates

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Genesis 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Why Is There a Mandate? Your Happiness!

... there is also a profuse variety of taste and interest, of aptitude and endowment, of desires to be satisfied and of pleasures to be gratified.

... the earth is fashioned and equipped to meet and gratify the diverse nature and endowments of man ...

Lesson 10: Learning Contentment 4

Henry Wilkinson

1. A contented person makes it his business to bring his mind suitable to his means
2. He is a person thankful for anything, and everything that he has
3. He strives and endeavors against coveting those things, which are not his own
4. He enjoys himself cheerfully and goes on contentedly and quietly in the management of the works of his calling
5. **Above all** he labors to make God his portion

“Above all he labors to make God his portion.”

Numbers 18:20 Then the Lord said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.”

Job 20:25b-29 Terrors come upon him; 26 total darkness is reserved for his treasures. An unfanned fire will consume him; it shall go ill with him who is left in his tent. 27 The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him. 28 The increase of his house will depart, and his goods will flow away in the day of His wrath. 29 This is the portion from God for a wicked man, the heritage appointed to him by God.”

“Above all he labors to make God his portion.”

Psalm 73:25-27 Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. 26 My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 119:56-58 You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words. 58 I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word.

Lamentations 3:22-24 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”

“Above all he labors to make God his portion.”

Psalm 16:5-6 O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. 6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.

Henry Wilkinson

1. A contented person makes it his business to bring his mind suitable to his means.
2. He is a person thankful for anything, and everything that he has
3. He strives and endeavors against coveting those things, which are not his own
4. He enjoys himself cheerfully and goes on contentedly and quietly in the management of the works of his calling
5. Above all he labors to make God his portion
6. He employs the Sabbath to aid in the pursuit of contentment.*

* Unauthorized, but likely approved.

The End of the Week and All Things

Mark 2:27 “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath

Exodus 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

The End of the Week and All Things

Mark 2:27 “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Don't be like those guys

“Work without letup is worse than slavery: it’s the front porch of hell. ‘But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace ... for the wicked’ (Isaiah 57:20-21). But rest, enjoying the blessing of God on our work, is a taste of heaven.” — Daniel Howe, *Worship Feasting Rest Mercy: The Christian Sabbath*

I Have Learned ... Abase and Abound

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 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. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Variety of Estates and Conditions

“Every grace that brings a Christian to heaven must be a tried grace. He must try his patience, his contentment, his humility. How would these graces be tried but in a variety of estates and conditions?” -- Richard Sibbes, *The Art of Contentment*



Variety of Estates and Conditions

“And secondly, how would we experience the goodness of God but in a variety of estates? When we find the stable, certain, constant love of God in a variety of conditions — that however our conditions ebb and flow, ... yet notwithstanding, the love of God is always constant. And we never have so sure an experience of it, as in the variety of conditions that befall us.” -- Richard Sibbes, *The Art of Contentment*



Lesson 11: Learning Contentment 5

Strength and Power

Philippians 4:13 ... for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 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. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation [He] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Strength and Power Paraphrased

Philippians 4:13 [paraphrase] Whatever set of circumstances I find myself in, under whatever imposition God makes upon me, my mind can be at peace and I can rest in God's rule over me because of the strength Christ Himself gives me.

1 Corinthians 10:13 [paraphrase] God is faithful and He will make the way of escape from whatever difficult circumstances it has pleased Him to place me under so that I may rest in peace and not resort to complaining, murmuring, or being vexed of mind.

Strength and Power

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

What does grace do in us?

- 1) We learn to think better of God. Grace transforms our minds. Our knowledge of His goodness, mercy, and lovingkindness grows to fill a larger part of our mind displacing the doubts and censures that previously grew there.
- 2) He renews our disordered desires. He grants us hearts which want the lovely things and gives us a distaste of that which is wretched.
- 3) He enables our will. The old man is put to death. Sin no longer reigns. The old man doesn't control our responses as before. We can act differently now. We can decide to not sin.
- 4) He warms our hearts through the bonds of affection.
- 5) He increases our fear of Him.

What will it take to convince you?

Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ... 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

God loves us, He gave His Son for us, the Spirit now indwells us, He hears our prayers, and He delights in us. Why would we ever wonder if there will be sufficient help and power in our time so that we can glorify and enjoy Him?

Westminster Strong

Q. 75. What is sanctification?

A. Sanctification is a work of God's grace ... in time ... through the powerful operation of his Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance ... and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

Be Sensible: We are not Stoics

“Question. 1. Whether a Christian may not be sensible of his condition, and yet be contented? Answer: Yes, for else he is not a saint, but a Stoic.” --
Watson, *Art of Contentment*

Psalm 130:1 “Out of the depths I cried to You.”

Beware: Sin is Cunning

Genesis 4:7 And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

Beware: Sin is Cunning

“... But methinks I hear some bitterly complaining, and saying to me, Alas! how is it possible to be contented? ‘The Lord hath made “my chain heavy;” he hath cast me into a very sad condition.” -- Watson, *Art of Contentment*

“There is no sin, but labours either to hide itself under some mask; or, if it cannot be concealed, then to vindicate itself by some apology. This sin of discontent I find very witty in its apologies ... We must lay it down as a rule, that discontent is a sin; so that all the pretences and apologies wherewith it labours to justify itself, are but the painting and dressing of a strumpet [prostitute].” -- Watson, *Art of Contentment*

Who can you trust?

- 1) You can trust God will use His word to instruct you.

Proverbs 4:5-7

Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

- 2) Your elders.

Lesson 12: Learning Contentment 6

We are not Stoics and We are not Unaware

“Question. 1. Whether a Christian may not be sensible of his condition, and yet be contented? Answer: Yes, for else he is not a saint, but a Stoic.” --
Watson, *Art of Contentment*

“There is no sin, but labours either to hide itself under some mask; or, if it cannot be concealed, then to vindicate itself by some apology. This sin of discontent I find very witty in its apologies ... We must lay it down as a rule, that discontent is a sin; so that all the pretences and apologies wherewith it labours to justify itself, are but the painting and dressing of a strumpet [prostitute].” -- Watson, *Art of Contentment*

A Suasive to Contentment Workshop

1) I have lost a child.

2) I have a great part of my estate strangely melted away, and trading begins to fail.

3) It is sad with me in my relations ... where I should find most comfort, there I have most grief.

4) My friends have dealt very unkindly with me, and proved false.

A Suasive to Contentment Workshop

5) I am under great reproaches.

6) Disrespect in the world. I have not that esteem from men as is suitable to my quality and grace.

7) I meet with very great sufferings for the truth.

8) The prosperity of the wicked.

A Suasive to Contentment Workshop

9) Is the evils of the times. The times are full of heresy and impiety, and this is that which troubles me.

10) Lowness of parts and gifts; I cannot (saith the Christian) discourse with that fluency, nor pray with that elegancy, as others.

11) The troubles of the church. Alas, my disquiet and discontent is not so much for myself, as the public! The church of God suffers.

12) It is not my trouble that troubles me, but it is my sins that do disquiet and discontent me.

Questions Answered

Ambition

Technology

Any others?

My Takeaways

- 10) Contentment is a wide idea and the Puritans attacked it from many different angles.
- 9) The relationship between contentment and covetousness.
- 8) The creation mandate provides many opportunities to experience contentment.
- 7) Contentment is a powerful route to glorifying and enjoying God.
- 6) When it comes down to you or a sparrow ... I am way more important to Jesus.

My Takeaways

- 5) Meekness requires perspective. God rules; I submit.
- 4) The sin of murmuring is quite serious and often underappreciated.
- 3) Sins cluster.
- 2) Desires are hard to honestly appraise.
- 1) I need to be very sensible.

Don't Be Overwhelmed!

“For a close, remember this, that your life is short, your duties many, your assistance great, and your reward sure; therefore faint not, hold on and hold up, in ways of well-doing, and heaven shall make amends for all.” --

Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*