

Battle for Contentment

May 10, 2020

PASTOR: Good morning to you all.

Happy Mother's Day to our ladies on Sunday. We hope you have a wonderful Mother's Day, and we know it's a little weird this year. But we know if you have some family around or if you get a phone call or a message from your family we trust that it will be a good one, but have a happy Mother's Day to all of our moms. Let's have a word of prayer this morning.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Lord Jesus today. Thank you for our moms. We remember our mothers on this Sunday, and we pray, Lord, you'll help our moms who still are guiding their children and, perhaps, imparting some wisdom to them.

We pray, Lord, particularly as we open up your word this morning that the spirit of God might take it and use it in a way that, perhaps, will speak to our hearts. We need you to work in our hearts, Lord. Difficult days we live in, and we need the spirit of God to take His word and use it in a manner and a way that our eyes will be opened and that our hearts will be touched and that we'll be not only encouraged but that we might be able to take care of

the things that matter most in our lives, so help us to keep our priorities in order. Help us to live for Jesus Christ. Help us to be godly people in a godless world, and we'll thank you in the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

I'd like to preach this morning on a topic called Battle For Contentment. I know it doesn't sound much like a Mother's Day message, but let me just throw this addendum in. We want our moms to have a spirit of contentment even when things aren't going real well. We pray to that end, that God might give all of our moms some contentment in the midst of a very difficult time, and perhaps this is a very important time for some of our moms as they are often such a steadying influence in the household so we hope, Moms, that you will be content even in the midst of this time when we still are trying to get through this virus.

I was thinking of a Psalm of Asaph. In Psalm 73, picking up in verse 2, and it interested me because Asaph said something of losing his own contentment. He says, But as for me, my feet had almost slipped. In other words, he almost got caught up in it. He almost stumbled. He said, My feet had almost stumbled; my feet had nearly slipped. He

said, For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. He looked around him and he lost his contentment, Asaph, because he saw what other people had and it produced some covetousness, and he lost his contentment.

He says, For there are no pangs in their death. Their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish.

It interested me because Asaph said he almost stumbled, he almost slipped when he looked around him and he saw the abundance, when he saw how well they seemed to be doing and he lost that spirit of contentment of what God was doing for him.

This battle for contentment is a difficult one. It's a struggle, and, first of all, I want to share a few things with you. The first point I would like to share with you is the struggle that is out there. It's hard for us. It's hard for us to be content. Life can be hard. Life can be difficult. I remember there were a couple of comedian brothers many years ago, and they would -- part of their

shtick, as they say, was that they would argue back and forth and one brother would tell the other one, Mom always liked you best, and so that always created a comedic argument, that Mom always liked you best.

There's always a battle for contentment if it's in the household. A few weeks ago we told you about Jacob who had favoritism toward Joseph. We find that many times even in our own household that happens. We want a very content family but we all struggle in some respects because, first of all, we have a sin nature that struggles with satisfaction. Sometimes the more we have the more we would like. It seems like we can never have enough. I know people say life isn't fair.

In Hebrews 13:5 it says, Let your conduct be without covetousness.

It seems like covetousness is often connected to a lack of contentment. I want more. I want what they have. Their household is functioning better than mine. Why is it that it seems like that family never has troubles? Why does that church always seem to do better than our church? Why is it that when I turn on the television set that I watch the ads and they act like I need this, that, and the other thing, and maybe I do, and if I don't have

those things, maybe I'm going to struggle even more. And they have reality shows on TV and they make people think they need something and their life is so much better than mine and I'm getting the short end of the stick, I'm not getting the right deal, and this is so very hard and so very difficult in my life and I'm just not content. You may look at it from many aspects.

In Hebrews 13:5 it says not only let your conduct be without covetousness, but it says, Be content with such things as you have. But I don't have a whole lot. Or maybe you've got a lot. Be content with such things as you have.

I heard yesterday that the unemployment rate right now is as bad as it's been since the Depression many years ago, so I've been thinking about some of these things the last few weeks where people seem rather discontent. People are worried about their jobs and their finances, worried about their families, and I think it's producing a spirit of discontent that is reaching even within the context of people's homes. That includes moms, too, if you want to throw moms in on all that sort of thing.

But that passage reminds us God says, I

will never leave you nor forsake you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. But I won't tell you that this -- because of our own sin nature and living in a difficult time and era right now and the last several weeks and what the prospect of the future holds, I want to remind you that it's easy for us to succumb to a discontented spirit, and I believe it's in our best interest to seek the word of God, to seek God's face at this point and say, I'm not going to fight about all this. I'm tired of being at home. I don't like what the prospects of the future hold. Maybe I do need to look to the Lord. I do need to realize He'll never forsake me, that He'll never leave me, and I think that's an important consideration.

So, yes, the world teaches us and teases us that we need more. Yes, I think it does tease us. I really do. Sometimes I'll watch a few ads on television and I'll think how disheartening sometimes some of these commercials are. If you don't have my product, you live a lousy life. I think I don't have any of these products so is my life lousy? Not necessarily. I need to be content with what God has given me. I need to refocus my attitude and my spirit. I need to have a biblical, godly spirit in the midst of all these things; otherwise, I will fall

into that valley of discontentment. I will fall into this pit of despair and discouragement. I will begin to covet what other people have because we're so media driven today. So, yes, and sometimes we, perhaps, may even battle with God over it.

You may not always trust His provision for us. I think that's an important consideration. Are we going to trust God for His provision? He is the good shepherd. He watches over His sheep. We realize that our God is a great God and He's powerful and He always knows what's best for His children. It may not always be easy.

Scripture does say our affliction is but for a moment, so don't fall for the prosperity gospel. You know, these are hard times for those people that believe in a prosperity gospel, don't you think? Just thinking about it. If you believe in a prosperity gospel and you think to yourself, well, what's happened; what's going on around here; I might have some needs; my check didn't come from the government; my job is gone; I don't have all the things; I went to the store and they didn't have any toilet paper. We sometimes get caught up into that mindset and we become discontent and we stop trusting the Lord.

I thought about the children of Israel in the wilderness in Exodus 16. I thought who in scripture embodied a complaining spirit more than the children of Israel in the wilderness? You talk about complainers, you talk about people that are discontent -- by the way, complaining, bitterness, discontentment, it's not a demonstration of godliness. What it is is a demonstration of ungodliness, but we sometimes fall in that pattern. Sometimes we fall in a pattern where we say we are guilty of that. We become pointed and bitter and angry, and these are some things that are just not pleasing to the Lord in any sense.

In Exodus 16:1-3, this is what discontentment can look like. You say, well, what does it look like? What does discontentment look like? Well, I'm going to give you a little example of it. So speaking of the Israelites, it says, They journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the 15th day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel -- do you notice this? I want you to check that out. The whole congregation of the children of

Israel, what did they do? It says they complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. So their discontentment began to show through in a very visible and very audible way. They were upset. They were discontent. And so they were complaining, and the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and we ate bread to the full!"

I seem to remember they were under a hand of slavery. They were slaves. I think they remembered some days from bygone days where things were looking up for them and some pleasant days. Sometimes we can be that way. We may remember, for instance, some good days many years ago but we may try to forget some of the difficult days. I think this is what's going on here at this point. For you may remember before they came out of Egypt they were under the taskmasters and the taskmasters put a very hard thumb down upon them. They were having to work harder and things were looking really bleak.

So now all of a sudden they are complaining and they are saying, Oh, we had all these wonderful provisions back in Egypt. Maybe they weren't as wonderful as they remembered it.

But they are discontent. They're complaining. In fact, we're told -- it says, "You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

They didn't trust God and so their complaint, actually, was not only directed at Moses, but it was also directed more specifically at God. We don't trust You. And this is very, very important. Listen to me. Listen. When we complain, in essence, we are telling God, You are not doing enough for me. You're not doing enough for my family. Things are not what they ought to be. You should be giving us more. And so that is a spirit of discontentment and so it is very hard with that old sin nature of ours for us not to struggle, not to struggle because we're teased, we're taunted by the world: You don't have enough. Look at the celebrities. Look at all the movie stars. Look at all these big-time athletes. You deserve more. You deserve it. And so we become discontent and we become like the children of Israel and we ring out of our mouths discontentment and we tell God, You have not done enough for us.

Second of all, not only is there a struggle with discontentment, but sometimes we say manna isn't

enough. So what did God do for them? God said, sure, I'm going to provide for you. I'm going to provide food for you and do all these things for you, and so God surrounds them with manna.

In Numbers 11 manna surrounded the Israelites, and God heard their complaints and God was going to provide for them. He wanted to see if they were going to trust Him and to respond in obedience to Him, and it was a struggle for them.

Notice what God did for them. Let me skip around a little bit here in Numbers 11. We're told, When the people complained, it displeased the Lord, as you could imagine. It was telling God, we don't think You know what You're doing. They're telling God, You're not doing enough for us. They were telling God that we know better than You do. There was this spirit of discontentment.

So the Lord heard it. His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. God was responding. God was responding to their complaints, to their disobedience, to their discontentment, and He demonstrated this in a very, very judgmental way as only God can righteously do.

Well, we're told in verse 2: The people

cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the Lord. The fire was quenched. Well, he called the name Taberah, because the fire of the Lord burned among them, and the mixed multitude among them yielded to intense craving.

These are people that were some proselytes and people that were not necessarily Jews by their own genealogy but came in among them.

And so the children of Israel wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat?" So again, they start complaining about all the things they thought they had in Egypt in verse 5 -- the melons, the leeks, the fish, the garlic -- and our whole being is dried up. There is nothing here except the manna before our eyes. So, okay, the manna was all around them. God was providing, actually, what we're told was very delicious bread.

In fact, we're told what it was like in verse 7, that -- then verse 8 it said, The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it on the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.

I don't know about you, but sometimes a little pastry sounds pretty good. Maybe you're

sitting at home watching this and you're saying, hey, it's Mother's Day, Mom. Can we have some dessert? It sounds like dessert. It's kind of like, you know, can we have some pie? Can we have these pastries that sound so good that it makes our mouths water?

So when the dew fell on the camp -- guess what happened -- in the night, the manna fell on it. So it was all around them. This is the point here. The manna surrounded them. It was everywhere.

If you go out on a morning, even like this morning, there was dew on the ground. We had this late morning frost or this late season frost, and if you went out and you touched the grass, it was all wet. So we have this idea if you went out and touched the grass that this manna would have been everywhere and all you had to do was go out with big containers and just gather manna all around you and you could make it up and, man, this stuff tasted good like pastry. That's not a bad deal, but the people were discontent. The people complained. And so God provided meat for them.

I want to make a point here at this juncture. Sometimes manna or blessings fall all around us and we fail to be thankful or satisfied.

I was thinking about that in the book of

Philippians 4. In the book of Philippians 4, which is, I think, just a wonderful passage, Philippians 4, but, folks, sometimes we pray to God and we say, Lord, will You do this for me? Will You provide that for me? Will You give this for me?

And sometimes we find out the Lord provides. Maybe you say, Lord, I pray that we won't get this virus. Have you said thank you that here we are, it's May, and perhaps you have not gotten that virus and God has kept you safe. Or maybe you wanted a safe journey on the road or you took a trip or you traveled or maybe you were concerned about a meal or having enough finances and we've become blessed and we don't see it sometimes, and it's all around us like manna and yet we complain.

You know, we gather these blessings all around us and yet sometimes it's almost like that's not good enough, Lord. I want more because I've been teased by the world. I see the celebrities; I see the famous athletes; I see all these people. This guy won the lottery, this guy did all these things, and here I am. I'm worried about next week and the week after.

Don't forget. We're not to be anxious for anything. We're reminded that the Lord takes care of

the sparrows in the field. We see what God provides, and God provides for these little creatures and He surely will provide for us as well. And so we remind you that our sovereign God continues to provide again and again in our life. We've got to be careful and cautious that we do not become like the Israelites and start complaining because we don't have enough.

In Philippians 4:19 we're told what? And my God shall supply what? All your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He will supply all your need.

He doesn't say He's going to lavish you with riches here on earth. After all, if you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, and we trust that you do, the Bible tells us that He goes to prepare a place for you. And Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man can come unto the Father but by Me."

We're reminded in scripture that there's a wonderful blessing of riches in Christ Jesus alone, that there is salvation in Him and there's no greater riches than Christ himself and so sometimes we long for toys. I can be that way at times. Sometimes we long for toys instead of treasures. We want all these gadgets and we want all these little toys of

life. Sometimes, you know, somebody may say, I want a boat; I want a nicer car; I want this because I deserve it. I deserve it. And sometimes we long for toys instead of treasures, and the true treasure is Jesus Christ.

And so all around us we have manna, folks, but sometimes we say it's not enough. Not only do I want the meat, but I want more. The manna and the meat is not enough. I'm tired of all that. I want more. I don't trust you, Lord. I'm discontent. We all have our moments. I'm not going to say I'm not guilty sometimes myself of some of these things.

I remember being a young man and I used to play -- or maybe, better yet, I played at it -- tennis. I played a little high school tennis and then I played a little bit of college tennis, and it seemed like I put a lot of stock in it for a while, became competitive, and I found out God always wanted to thwart my efforts.

My freshman year, I remember I was trying to make a little bit of headway and I thought I was making some headway on the team and I played a pick-up game of basketball. So I was going in for a basket, a layup, and some guy pushed me and I landed really badly on my ankle and my -- I had what they

call a high ankle sprain and so I had -- my ankle was bruised almost even up through into my calf from it, and it just kind of set me back.

Then the next year we have what you call challenge matches and you kind of go up against another guy for positions on the team, and I played a practice match against a guy for a position and I beat him that day but I pulled a muscle in what they call your quads, your upper thigh muscle. But back in those days I thought, well, you're supposed to tough it out.

So later that week I played the guy and I said, well, maybe it will be better. I couldn't run well at all. He ended up beating me out of a starting position that I wanted. So I said, oh, great, you know. It was kind of creating some discontentment in my life.

And then the last part was I remember I was winning a challenge match for this starting -- another starting position the next year. I said, oh, boy, it's finally mine. I'm winning this challenge match. For some reason the coach of our team stopped the match, went and talked to the other guy who was already a starter, and it just deflated me. Just deflated me. I felt like he went and he told him

something and I ended up losing the match. It created discontentment in my heart. It upset me particularly that the coach went and talked to him, and I thought, well, that was -- you know, he's helping him out instead of -- and it kind of like took the air out of me.

And I thought to myself later God really didn't want me to put a lot of stock in these things. He's trying to lead my heart into a different direction but I was kind of battling it. I would rather play tennis instead of put my concentration, perhaps, on some things that were more important, of thinking about ministry or about thinking about serving Jesus Christ. And so I kind of missed it at that point, but we all have our moments. Believe me, we all have moments we complain. We all have moments when we're discontent.

The battle for contentment is this: We don't want to live in that existence. We want to come out of it. And sometimes it's contagious. It may be contagious with your spouse, your children, with those around you, and we want to, instead, rise above these things and recognize that God loads us with benefits.

I was thinking about being loaded with

benefits, particularly from the Psalms. In Psalm 68:19 we're told this: Blessed be the Lord. Blessed be the Lord. That's the spirit that we want. Blessed be the Lord, and it says, Who daily loads us -- and I just love the picture painted for us. He daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! That was Psalm 68:19. He is the God of our salvation.

Oh, man, if he takes everything away from me and I still have my salvation in Jesus Christ, I have everything. I have everything. Blessed be the Lord. He daily loads us with benefits.

Psalm 103:2 says: Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.

One of the problems we all have is we become forgetful. We become forgetful in our life. We forget that God did this for us and that for us and He helped us along our journey and we forget all of His benefits. He took care of us yesterday, he's taking care of us today, and yet we are complaining about tomorrow or we're discontent about what is next on our agenda, and we need to ask God for help to get through this.

Psalm 116:12 says: What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? What should

I give back to the Lord? How shall I respond to the Lord for all of His benefits? I need to respond in a very, very tangible way. Sometimes we can't see the forest from the trees. God provides.

You see, when we have Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have everything. Even when everything else is taken away from our life, we have everything, and so that's why we always encourage people. We encourage people. We're all sinners. That's why we complain and that's why we have periods of discontentment in our life. We don't want you to continue to have it. God doesn't want you to be like the Israelites for sure.

But with Jesus Christ we have everything. We realize we're sinners. That's how we started out saying that's why we complain. And because we're sinners, we desperately all need Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Perhaps you have repented of your sin. If not, we trust that you will recognize that in Jesus Christ, who went to the cross of Calvary, there is forgiveness of sin. We have hope in Christ alone and so, again, we appeal to you. We beg you to trust Jesus Christ alone for your soul salvation.

The example of Paul here in Philippians 4 is a monumental one. I like what Paul said. I need

the example of Paul in my life. I don't need the example of the Israelites. I need the example of Paul.

Paul said this in Philippians 4:11-13. He says, Not that I speak in regard to need -- and certainly Paul could have said, you know, Lord, I'm so committed to you, I deserve all the riches in the world, I deserve a lack of suffering, but he said, I don't speak in regard of need. He says, I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. Wow. That's -- my response to that is wow. How can you be content, Paul? You've been in prisons; you lack; you have a thorn in the flesh.

Perhaps some of you that are out there say, I've got all these health problems, I'm really struggling, I don't want to hear about being content, but I want you to understand Paul had a thorn in the flesh, too. How can I be content? This is where we're at this morning. People have died. I miss so-and-so. I miss my mom. She's gone to be with the Lord or she passed away. Perhaps these are some of your struggles of life.

Paul said, I have learned. This is a process. It's not an immediate, momentary thing. I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.

How can we learn this?

He said, I know how to be abased. He said, I know how to abound. He said, I know to be knocked down on the ground and I know when things are going well. He says, Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. And then sometimes we misuse this passage, but do you see this in regard to contentment? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

It's not about if I can run down the football field or hit a home run or if I can win this opportunity or I can do this better than the next person. This is about being content even in the midst of suffering and struggles.

Listen to me, folks. Don't miss some of this. We're all going to suffer, we're all going to struggle in this old world, and this creates a basis for us to want to complain, to be discontent, to be bitter, to be angry, to be upset, and how are we going to respond to all of this suffering and struggles of life? Are we going to live our life in discontentment? How about this virus, is it ever going to go away? Am I always going to have to be careful and wear a mask and social distance and I

can't do this and I can't do that? I'm upset.

Perhaps that's how you feel.

I want you to understand something, that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, and we can be content even in the midst of difficult times.

I want you to understand that gratitude, if you are in a spirit of thankfulness, if you have a spirit of humility, it's connected with contentment. You see, we become thankful that God has provided. We are humbled that God would provide for me and take care of me and, see, this provides a spirit of contentment even in my life and my existence. Yes, I know the flesh is going to come out of our life again, we're going to be upset, but we've got to make sure those moments are fewer and farther between.

Finally, let's come to the crux of this matter. Contentment is found with godliness and, see, Paul says this in 1 Timothy 6:6-10 as we bring this to a close. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:6, Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

You want gain today? You want to find some contentment? You want to find some joy in your life? Then you need to live a godly life, and that's really kind of the secret to the whole business. If you

live for Jesus Christ, if you want to be godly, you will find some contentment.

You see, the opposite of that is what the Israelites were doing. They were complaining; they were bitter; they were angry; they were always pointing fingers at God/the leaders. They were saying you can't do it.

But in the midst of your struggles and trials and what's going on in the world right now, you might be saying, I can't help but be discontent, but I believe with all my heart that if we have a godly spirit, this is the secret, this is the answer to our need.

And it says this: For we brought nothing into this world. You do realize that. You didn't bring a treasure trove into the world. The idea of having a silver spoon never happened. And just because you think if you whistle a happy tune or that you say to yourself I can make lemonade out of lemons or whatever else or I'll have a positive attitude or whatever else, it's not going to be enough. It's not going to be enough, folks. What you need is godliness.

And so we are reminded here in this wonderful passage that we brought nothing into this

world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. You aren't going to take that U-Haul out with you, folks.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. What? I should be content with food and clothing? That's not enough. I want this; I want that. God's word says godliness with contentment is great gain. God says, I'll provide all of your need according to My riches in glory. Sometimes we want more than that and maybe that's all God is going to give us and we need to be content.

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, and then it talks about the love of money.

By the way, money is not the root of all evil, is it? What's the root of all evil? It's the love of it. It's the love of it, and don't miss it. It's okay that you have some money. If God's blessed you with some money, it's okay, but that's not the answer to contentment. That's what Paul is telling us here in 1 Timothy 6. The answer to your contentment is godliness, and we miss it so often.

In Proverbs 30:8 God tells us this. Well, actually Solomon said, Feed me with the food allotted

to me. In other words, give me according to what You say I need. Give me what You say I need. That's kind of what Solomon says there.

You see, we find contentment in God's word. Don't you find contentment in God's word? You know, sometimes when you come to the end of the rope, you go out back and you look into the word of God and you enter into that holy place and you say, Lord, I'm at the end of the rope. Where do I go? And God, through His spirit, reminds us of His truths and that God is our provision and God will supply your need and so we come back to that. When that discontentment raises its ugly head in our life, we come back to that again and again. And, you see, the Holy Spirit can quiet us and He gives us hope, and guess what. Man, it's no small thing. We've got eternity to look at. We've got eternity to look at. There's not going to ever be any discontentment in glory, and that day is coming sooner than we all think.

Finally, there's a realization that gain is found in godliness. Right? Gain is found in godliness. The old passage in Romans 8, you know, all things what? Work together for good, right, to them that love God and are the called according to

His purpose. Do you believe that, that all things work together for good? I believe that. I believe that today.

I was thinking this past week about the old hymn Day by day and with each passing moment / Strength I find to meet my trials here. And then there's this very great phrase that came to my heart and my mind that says, Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment.

I'm going to trust him. I'm going to trust the Lord and his wise bestowment. He's a lot wiser than me and He knows exactly what I need and you need in your life, and may God give us contentment for the days to come. May God bless you as you seek His face. May you not forget the blessing of godliness when discontentment raises its ugly head.

Thank you, Father, for your goodness and grace in our life. You are a wonderful, wonderful God and we acknowledge that again today. May You continue to provide for those that are even listening today, that we might remember your goodness and grace in our life and how You load us with your benefits, and may we find contentment in the goodness and the grace of our God and may we live for you day by day. And we'll ask these things again, oh Lord, in the

precious name -- in the precious and glorious name of
our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and amen.