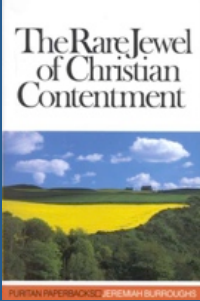


**WELCOME TO CPC'S
FIRST FRIDAY**

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.



Philip 4:11-12

The Signs of Discontent

*It was Spring, but it was summer I wanted,
the warm days and the great outdoors...*
*It was summer, but it was Fall I wanted:
the colorful leaves and the cool, dry air.*
*It was Fall, but it was Winter I wanted:
the beautiful snow and the joy of the holiday season.*
*It was Winter, but it was Spring that I wanted:
the warmth and the blossoming nature.*

*I was a child, and it was adulthood I wanted:
the freedom and the respect.*
*I was 20, but it was 30 I wanted:
to be a mature and sophisticated.*
*I was middle-aged, but it was 20 I wanted:
the youth and the free spirit.*
*I was retired, but it was the middle-aged I wanted:
the presence of mind without limitations.*

MY life was over, and I never got what I wanted.

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Ex. 20:17

Covet?
From the Hebrew "chmd"
"to desire, take pleasure in"



Ox? Donkey?

Trapped in the Cult of the "Next Thing"

"I belong to the cult of the Next Thing. It's dangerously easy to get enlisted. It happens by default—not by choosing the cult, but by failing to resist it. The Cult of the Next thing is consumerism cast in religious terms. It has its own litany of sacred words: more, you deserve it, new, faster, cleaner, brighter. It has its own deep-rooted liturgy: charge it, instant credit, no down-payment, deferred payment, no interest for three months. It has its own preachers, evangelists, prophets and apostles: ad men, pitchmen, and celebrity sponsors. It has of course its own shrines, chapels, temples, meccas: malls, superstores, club warehouses. It has its own sacraments: credit and debit cards. It has its own ecstatic experience: the spending spree."

(Mark Buchanan, "Trapped in the Cult of the Next Thing" CT, 10-6-99)

But What's So Bad About Coveting?

To Be Clear:

- This is not a commandment against desire, passion, zeal, drive in life...
- Nor is this a commandment against the enjoyment of good things properly given to us by God...

They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving;

1Tim. 4:3-4

Rather, covetous desires, are the desire for anything albeit,

- The **wrong way**—as related to the ways desires can cause us to neglect our God given duties to love God and one another.
- The **wrong time**—as related to right things but not according to God's timing... timing can be related to all sorts of things—impatience, seasons in life.
- The **wrong reason**—when something that is "good" is wanted as if our identity or even sense of being more fully human is contingent upon it.
- The **wrong context**—as related to being discontent in whatsoever situation God has ordained by his providence.

What's So Bad About Coveting?

The Sin that Leads to All Other Sins

"10th the only commandment that seems to be restricted to the heart rather than actions... coveting refers to an inward desire, that if fanned, will lead to actions, many of which are related to the above..."

Peter Enns

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

James 1:1-154

James points out these progressive steps, where he says that lust conceives before it begets sin; and then "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," Jon Calvin:

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But What's *Really* So Bad About Coveting?

Westminster Larger Catechism

Q. 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.

Q. 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.

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Why Is Discontentment So Bad?

The Sin Against The Sufficient Goodness in God's Providence

Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have;

Why?

for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Heb. 13:5-6

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What Does Contentment/Discontentment Affirm/Question About God?

Heidelberg Catechism

Question 27. What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

Answer: The almighty and everywhere present power of God; (a) whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs (b) heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, (c) fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, (d) riches and poverty, (e) yea, and all things come, not by chance, but be his fatherly hand.

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The Biblical Grounds For The Power and Presence Of God's Providence

God's works of providence are his most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

Westminster Shorter Catechism. Q # 11

Heb.1:2-3, ...his Son... through whom also he created the world... upholding the universe by his word of power.

Psalms 104, (excerpts) Blessed be the Lord, O my Soul, O Lord you are very great... You set the earth on its foundations so that it shall never be shaken... you cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for people to use... O Lord how manifold are your works, In wisdom you have made them all... Bless the Lord!

11

The Biblical Grounds For The Power and Presence of God's Providence (cont'd)

- God directs, disposes, and governs "*all creatures, actions, and things*".
- In Daniel 4:34-35, these are specified as things both in heaven and on earth.

Acts 2:23, this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up...

Acts 4:27, ... Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place...

Acts 17:25-28, "The God who make the world, and everything in it.. he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation... He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being..."

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The Biblical Grounds For the Goodness of God's Providence

Mt. 16:18. *I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.*

Mt. 28:20. *And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Romans 8:28. *We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God who are called according to his purpose... And those whom he predestined... he also glorified.*

Philip 1:6. *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

1 Tim. 4:10. *For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

c.f. Preserving Providence: **Psm. 46:1-2**
 c.f. Governing Providence: **Prov. 16:1, Philipians 2:13. Psm. 103:19**

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The Advantage of Christian Contentment in God's Providence

Heidelberg Catechism

Question 28. What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by his providence does still uphold all things?

Answer: That we may be patient in adversity; (a) thankful in prosperity; (b) and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father; (c) that nothing shall separate us from his love; (d) since all creatures are so in his hand, that without his will they cannot so much as move. (e)

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There is no such thing under the divine government, or providence, as real chance or accident... This surely is a most cheering doctrine. What could be more gloomy than to believe that our dearest interests, even life itself, might lie at the mercy of blind or misguided chance? On the contrary, how consoling to know that nothing can befall us, nothing injure us, without the direction or permission of our heavenly Father!

Asbel Green

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it;_but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

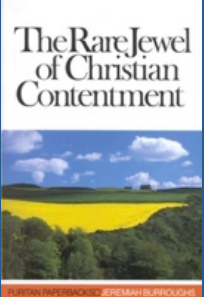
1Tim.6:6 -8

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WHICH BRINGS US TO JEREMIAH BURROUGHS

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philip 4:11-12



16

Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment Chapter 1:

The word rendered 'content' here has great elegance and fullness of meaning in the original. In the strict sense it is only attributed to God, who has styled himself 'God all-sufficient', in that he rests fully satisfied in and with himself alone. But he is pleased freely to communicate his fullness to the creature, so that from God in Christ the saints receive 'grace for grace' (John 1:16). As a result, there is in them the same grace that is in Christ, according to their measure. In this sense, Paul says, I have a self-sufficiency, which is what the word means.

But has Paul got a self-sufficiency? you will say. How are we sufficient of ourselves! Our Apostle affirms in another case, 'That we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves' (2 Corinthians 3:5). Therefore his meaning must be, I find a sufficiency of satisfaction in my own heart, through the grace of Christ that is in me. Though I have not outward comforts and worldly conveniences to supply my necessities, yet I have a sufficient portion between Christ and my soul abundantly to satisfy me in every condition.

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Round Table Discussion

Question: In light of Burrough's previous observation, how does the following saying by Christ apply to contentment?

Matt. 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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Round Table Discussion

Chapter 2: The Mystery of Contentment

You never learned the mystery of contentment unless it may be said of you that, just as you are the most contented man, so you are also the most unsatisfied man in the world... 'How is that?' A man who has learned the art of contentment is the most contented with any low condition that he has in the world, and yet he cannot be satisfied with the enjoyment of all the world.

Two Counter-Intuitive Characteristics of Contentment Explored:

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Round Table Discussion

1. A CHRISTIAN COMES TO CONTENTMENT, NOT SO MUCH BY WAY OF ADDITION, AS BY WAY OF SUBTRACTION.

Questions For Discussion:

- What is the assumption of discontentment that is here exposed?
- Why do you think that contentment is in proportion to subtraction.
- Is there scripture that supports this?

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Round Table Discussion

Two Counter-Intuitive Characteristics of Contentment Explored

1. A CHRISTIAN COMES TO CONTENTMENT, NOT SO MUCH BY WAY OF ADDITION, AS BY WAY OF SUBTRACTION.

A carnal heart knows no way to be contented but this: I have such and such possessions, and if I had this added to them, and the other comfort added that I have not now, then I should be contented....

But contentment does not come in that way, it does not come, I say, by adding to what you want, but by subtracting from your desires. It is all one to a Christian, whether I get up to what I would have, or get my desires down to what I have, either to attain what I do desire, or to bring down my desires to what I have already attained. My wealth is the same, for it is as fitting for me to bring my desire down to my circumstances, as it is to raise up my circumstances to my desire.

Jeremiah Burroughs 21

Round Table Discussion

2. A CHRISTIAN COMES TO CONTENTMENT, NOT SO MUCH BY GETTING RID OF THE BURDEN THAT IS ON HIM, AS BY ADDING ANOTHER BURDEN TO HIMSELF

Questions For Discussion:

- What is the burden(s) that makes us discontent ?
- What is the burden that makes us content?
- Is there scripture that supports this?

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Round Table Discussion

Two Counter-Intuitive Characteristics of Contentment Explored

1. A CHRISTIAN COMES TO CONTENTMENT, NOT SO MUCH BY GETTING RID OF THE BURDEN THAT IS ON HIM, AS BY ADDING ANOTHER BURDEN TO HIMSELF

What, do you think that there is no way for the contentment of your spirit, but to get rid of your burden? O you are deceived. The way of contentment is to add another burden, that is, to labor to load and burden your heart with your sin; the heavier the burden of your sin is to your heart, the lighter will the burden of your affliction be to your heart, and so you shall come to be content.

Jeremiah Burroughs

Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

2Cor. 12:10 23

Round Table Discussion

"Verses Upon the Burning of our House"
By Ann Bradstreet (July 10th, 1666)
c.f. Handout

What do we learn about contentment?

How doe's Bradstreet get to the conclusion:

*Ther's wealth enough, I need no more;
Farewell my Pelf(money),
Farewell my Store(Possessions).
The world no longer let me Love,
My hope and Treasure lyes Above.*

24

Chapter 5: The Evils of a Murmuring Spirit

1. As contentment argues much grace, and strong grace, and beautiful grace, so murmuring argues much corruption, and strong corruption, and very vile corruptions in your heart. (p.137)
2. It is a most dreadful Scripture, that the Lord, when he speaks of ungodly ones, puts murmurs in the very forefront of all. (p.138) (Jude 14-15)
3. God counts it as rebellion... (since) It is contrary to the worship that is in... (p.139)
4. It is a wickedness which is greatly contrary to grace, and especially contrary to the work of God, in bringing the soul home to himself. I know no disorder more opposite and contrary to the work of God in the conversion of a sinner, than this one. (p.141)

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Chapter 5: The Evils of a Murmuring Spirit

A Confession:

Oh, had I had this grace of contentment, what a happy life I might have lived! What abundance of honour I might have brought to the name of God! How might I have honoured my profession! What a great deal of comfort I might have enjoyed! But the Lord knows it has been far otherwise. Oh, how far have I been from this grace of contentment which has been expounded to me! I have had a murmuring, a vexing, and a fretting heart within me. Every little cross has put me out of temper and out of frame. Oh, the boisterousness of my spirit! What evil God sees in the vexing and fretting of my heart, and murmuring and repining of my spirit!

Absolution: Jer. 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things,
and desperately sick;
who can understand it?

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall be saved,
for you are my praise.

26

Chapter 8: How to Attain Contentment

- Consider the condition that others have been in, who have been our betters.
- Consider that we have but a little time in this world. If you are godly you will never suffer except in this world. Why, do but shut your eyes and soon another life is come, as that martyr said to his fellow martyr, 'Do but shut your eyes', he said, 'and the next time they are opened you shall be in another world.' When he was banished, Athanasius said, 'It is but a little cloud and it will be over, notwithstanding, soon.' These afflictions are but for a moment.

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Chapter 8: How to Attain Contentment

- We should consider, in all our wants and inclinations to discontent, the greatness of the mercies that we have, and the meanness of the things we lack. The things we lack, if we are godly, are things of very small moment in comparison to the things we have, and the things we have are things of very great moment.
- The consideration that God is beforehand with us with his mercies should content us... Oh, you have had mercy enough already to make you spend all the strength you have and time you shall live, to bless God for what you have had already.

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