

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment
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Chapter 1

Philippians 4:11 - *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*

"Contentment in every condition is a great art, a spiritual mystery."

"The contentment of God communicated to our own spirit.

"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."

"To be well-skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory, and excellence of a Christian."

1 Tim 6:6 - godliness is not gain without contentment.

Hebrews 13:5

To prove the above - 4 things breaking open the below description -

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."

I. CONTENTMENT IS A SWEET, INWARD HEART-THING. IT IS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT INDOORS.

"Not only must the tongue hold its peace; the soul must be silent."

"Many may sit silently, refraining from disoriented expressions, yet inwardly they are bursting with disoriented expressions, yet inwardly they are bursting with discontent."

"If attainment of true contentment were as easy as keeping quiet outwardly, it would not need much learning."

II. IT IS THE QUIET OF THE HEART

This quiet, gracious frame is not opposed to...

1. A due sense of affliction — "God gives His people leave to be sensible of what they suffer."
2. Making an orderly manner our moan and complaint to God and to our friends.

3. All lawful seeking for help in different circumstances, not to endeavoring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means.

This quietness of spirit IS opposed to...

1. Murmuring and refining at the hand of God.
2. Vexing and fretting
3. Tumultuousness of spirit, when the thoughts run distractingly and work in a confused manner
4. An unsettled and unstable spirit, whereby the heart is distracted from the present duty that God requires in our several relationships.
5. Distracting, heart-consuming cares
6. Sinking discouragements
7. Sinful shiftings and shirkings to get relief and help
8. Desperate risings of the heart against God by way of rebellion.

III. IT IS AN INWARD, QUIET, GRACIOUS, FRAME OF SPIRIT

1. It is a grace that spreads itself through the whole soul
2. It comes from the frame of the soul and from the heart's disposition
3. It is the frame of spirit that shows the habitual character of this grace of contentment

IV. CONTENTMENT IS A GRACIOUS FRAME OF THE HEART

"In contentment there is a compound of all graces."

In opposition to 3 things

1. The natural quietness of many men and women
2. A study of revelation
3. The struggle of natural, unsanctified reason

"They are likewise of a very full spirit in any good matter, they have no quickness or liveliness of spirit in such matters either."

"He whose contentment is of grace is not disquieted and keeps his heart quiet with regard to vexation and trouble, and at the same time is not dull of hearing but very active to sanctify God's name in the affliction that he is overcoming."

"A gracious heart that is content with its own affliction, will rise up strongly when God is dishonored."

V. FREELY SUBMITTING TO AND TAKING PLEASURE IN GOD'S DISPOSAL

4 things to be explained (only hits 3)

1. The heart is readily brought over

“If I desire a thing of someone else and I get it with much ado, and a great deal of trouble, there is no freedom of spirit here.”

“If you have learned this art of contentment you will not only be content and quiet your hearts after a great ado, but as soon as you come to see that it is the hands of God your heart acts readily and closes at once.”

2. It is freely, that is, not by constraint

“This is the hands of God, and you cannot help it’...is too low an expression for Christians.”

“‘Must be content’ is too low for Christians.”

“No, it should be, ‘Readily and freely I will be content.’”

ILL: A child born in a prison and is content, knowing nothing better, is not content by a free act. “But men and women who know better, who know that the condition they are in is an afflicted and sad condition, and still by a sanctified judgment can bring their hearts to contentment—this is freedom.”

3. THIS FREEDOM IS IN OPPOSITION TO MERE STUPIDITY

ILL: A paralytic being pinched and not feeling it is not the same contentment as a person with feeling being likewise pinched and still being content.

VI. CONTENTMENT IS FREELY SUBMITTING TO AND TAKING PLEASURE IN GOD’S DISPOSAL

Submitting to God’s disposal — ‘to send under.’

“Thus in one who is discontented the heart will be unruly, and would even get above God so far as discontentment prevails.”

VII. CONTENTMENT IS TAKING PLEASURE IN GOD’S DISPOSAL

“Not only do I see that I should be content in this affliction, but I see that there is good in it. I find there is honey in this rock.”

ILL: Eli. David. It is good that I was afflicted. Must carry it into the present.

Proverbs 15:6 - in the house of the righteous (“It may be a poor cottage, and perhaps he has scarcely a stool to sit on.”) is much treasure (“The righteous man can never be made so poor, to have his house so rifled and spoiled, but there will remain much treasure within), but in the revenues of the wicked there is trouble.

Phil 4:18

2 Cor 6:10 - "I have very little in the world, he says, but yet possessing all things." Not "as possessing" but "actually possessing."

VIII. SUBMITTING, AND TAKING PLEASURE IN GOD'S DISPOSAL

"The soul that has learned this lesson of contentment looks up to God in all things."

"In his submission he sees his sovereignty, but what makes him take pleasure in God's wisdom."

"How do I know but that it had not been for this affliction, I should have been undone."

IX. IN EVERY CONDITION

1. Submitting to God in whatever affliction befalls us as to the kind of affliction

"There is a great deal of deceit in general statements."

"We are usually apt to think that any condition is better than that condition in which God has placed us."

2. As to the time and continuance of the affliction

"We must not be our own disposers for the time of deliverance any more than for the kind and way of deliverance."

Ezekiel 1:28-2:1 - "When God casts us down, we must be content to be till God bids us stand up, and God's Spirit enters into us to enable us to stand up."

Noah shut up in ark for a year. "Noah was not to come out of the Ark till God bid him."

"So though we be shut up in great affliction, and we may think of this and that and the other means to come out of that affliction, yet till God opens the door, we should be willing to stay; God has put us in, and God will bring us out."

3. As to the variety and changes of affliction: whatever they are, yet there must be a submission to God's disposal in every condition.

"It is rarely that one affliction comes alone; commonly afflictions are not single things, but they come one upon the neck of another."