

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Contentment

It's Not Natural

Morning and Evening, Spurgeon (Edited)

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

The words in Philippians 4:11 show us that contentment is not a natural propensity of man. Covetousness, discontent, and murmuring are as natural to man as thorns are to the soil.

We need not sow thistles and brambles. They come up naturally enough because they are indigenous to earth, and so we need not teach men to complain. They find fault fast enough without any education.

The precious things of the earth, however, must be cultivated. If we would have wheat, we must plow and sow it. If we want flowers, there must be a garden and all the gardener's care.

Contentment is one of the flowers of Heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It will not grow in us naturally. The new nature (II Cor. 5:17) can produce it. Even then, we must be especially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us.

Paul says, "I have learned... to be content" as much as to say, he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain the mystery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned and then broke down. When at last he had acquired it and could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old, grey-headed man, close to the borders of the grave — a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome.

We might be willing to endure Paul's infirmities and share the cold dungeon with him if we, too, might by any means attain his good degree. Do not indulge the notion that you can be contented with learning or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. We know this from experience. Brother, hush that murmuring, natural though it be, and continue to be a diligent pupil in the College of Content.

We Can be Content

Watson, 1696 (Edited)

If we should put some men in a job that they are not skilled in, how unfit would they be? Put a farmer to drawing pictures, and what strange work would he produce? Usually, he would be out of his expertise.

Take an artist that is exact in his use of colors and put him to the plow or set him to planting and grafting trees, and he most likely would not do it properly. It was not his skill and would not be done right.

Bid a worldly man to live by faith and to be content will be expecting him to do something he has no skill in. He will not excel.

To live contented upon God's provision and promises is a way of living which "... flesh and blood hath not revealed it..." (Mat. 16:17). However, many of God's children who have learned to trust Him are content in the state they are allowed to be in (Phil. 4:11). They are pleased with what God has provided or allowed them to experience. Their training and history with God's help have taught them to be satisfied in the faithful hands of their Master.

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." I Timothy 6:8

Be Content

Watson, 1696

The best way to be contented is to believe that the condition is best which God carved out for you. If God had seen it fit for us to have more, we would have had it. His wisdom chooses the best for us.

Perhaps we could not manage great wealth. Having all this world can offer includes great temptations that could be our demise. What many see as the answer to their woes can bring great loss and unhappiness.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11

"Enough is an abundance to the wise."

The Two Chimneys

Bowden

Two chimneys stood near each other on separate houses. One was high and therefore very conspicuous. The other short, just jutting above the roof.

"What a contemptible structure you are," said the tall one, looking down disdainfully on his neighbor, the short chimney.

"I know," said the short smokestack. "I am but a very humble thing."

“You need to look up very high to see my top,” boasted the tall chimney.

“Yes,” said the shorter one.

“Why, you are hardly worth the name of a chimney at all,” remarked the other. “You are so short!”

“I don’t pretend to be greater than I am, though I am just as high as I ought to be for my purpose,” replied the little chimney.

“As high as you ought to be? Well, that is funny. Why you are little better than a mere hole in the roof,” said the tall one with a loud laugh.

“It isn’t becoming that all chimneys should be of one height,” said the little one modestly. “It is fitting that some should be high, like you, and some low down, like me. Our duties are the same. We are pretty much equal for our use, whether tall or short.”

The morning light showed the short chimney smoking as usual. Where was the tall one? Alas! A storm that had come suddenly during the night swept it from its lofty place because it was so exposed. It lay now only a heap of bricks on the ground.

“How thankful I am,” said the little chimney, “that I was so low. Had I been high, like my poor neighbor, I might, and no doubt would have shared his unhappy fate.” The little chimney was content and grateful he was what he was made.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Prov. 16:18

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5

Blind, but Content

Bill Brinkworth

Because of poor medical treatment, Fanny Crosby lost her sight at a very young age. Although the life-altering blindness changed her life, the writer of over 9,000 hymns accepted her condition and did not let it dominate her life. Even at eight years old, her content attitude was evident in a short poem she wrote:

Oh, what a happy soul I am,
Although I cannot see!
I am resolved that in this world,
Contented, I will be.

How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don’t,
To weep and sigh because I’m blind
I cannot, and I won’t!

When someone asked William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, his great secret to happiness, he replied, "I never said 'no' to the Lord."

Paul's Advice to Christians

Bill Brinkworth

In closing his letter to the Hebrew Christians, Paul left them with seven pieces of advice dealing with a Christian's social duties. They were:

- To love other Christians (Hebrews 13:1).
- To be nice to strangers, especially because we do not know that when we do, we may be entertaining angels (Hebrews 13:1). This informs a Bible reader that angels are real and that we may contact them more often than realized. Because we may entertain them "unawares," the art depicting them with wings and halos is not accurate. If they had those features, we could distinguish them from other people. However, if they looked like normal men, we would never know if we had communicated with them. You may even come in contact with an angel today!
- To be concerned about the difficulties others are going through as if they were your trials (Hebrews 13:3).
- To remember, marriage is the "honourable" thing, whereas adultery and fornication (sexual relations without being married) are not (Hebrews 13:4).
- To be content with what you have and not to covet the things of others (Hebrews 13:5).
- To be respectful and obey those with leadership responsibilities over you in your church (Hebrews 13:7, 17). It is the preachers, teachers, and other church leaders who God uses to minister to us. They have to answer to God for how they lead those under them. The least we can do is obey their leadership.
- To not fall for false doctrine (Hebrews 13:9). Study the Scriptures and evaluate if what you are hearing is taught in the Word of God. If it is not, stay with what the Word of God teaches!

Paul felt this advice would benefit the early Christians if they would heed his counsel. Over two thousand years later, it is still excellent advice for one to follow.