

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

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Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Part 1 – Contentment.

I. The Nature of Christian Contentment.

A. Scripture text.

1. ***[Philippines 4:11]-Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.***

2. Text a timely cordial*.

- a. **Cordial – medicine, food, or beverage that invigorates the heart; exhilarating drink.*
- b. *Needed for drooping saints in the hour of temptation*

3. Text the very life and soul of all practical divinity.

- a. We may plainly read his own proficiency in the school of Christ.
- b. The lesson every Christian who would prove the power and growth of godliness in his own soul must necessarily learn from him.
- c. A clear argument to persuade the Philippians that he did not seek after great things in the world, and that he sought not “theirs” but “them.”
- d. He did not long for great wealth; his heart was taken up with better things.

4. The text examined.

a. *“In whatsoever state I am.”*

- 1.) The word state is simply “*in what I am,*” that is, in whatever concerns or befalls me, whether I have little or nothing at all.

b. *“Therewith to be content”*

- 1.) “*Content*” 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.
- 2.) 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).
a.) ***[John 1:16]- And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.***

- 3.) 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.

c. How are we sufficient of ourselves?

- 1.) ***[2 Corinthians 3:5]- Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;***
- 2.) ***[Proverbs 14:14]- The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.***
- 3.) ***[2 Corinthians 6:10]- As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.***

5. Conclusions.

- a. The one most necessary duty: quieting and comforting the hearts of God’s people under the troubles and changes they meet with in these heart-shaking times.
- b. That to be well skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory, and excellence of a Christian.

- 1.) *[1 Timothy 6:6,8]- But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*
- 2.) *[Hebrews 13:5]- 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*

B. Contentment defined. *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.*

1. Contentment is a sweet, inward heart-thing.
 - a. *[Psalm 62:1,5]- Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*
 - b. *Not only must the tongue hold its peace; the soul must be silent. Many may sit silently, refraining from discontented expressions, yet inwardly they are bursting with discontented expressions—they are bursting with discontent!*

2. Contentment is the quiet of the heart.
 - a. What contentment is not opposed to:
 - 1.) It is not opposed to a due sense of affliction. God gives His people leave to be sensible of what they suffer. Christ does not say, "Do not count as a cross what is a cross"; He says, "Take up your cross daily" (Luke 9:23).
 - a.) *[Luke 9:23]- And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*
 - 2.) It is not opposed to making in an orderly manner our moan to God and to our friends.
 - 3.) It is not opposed to all lawful seeking for help in different circumstances, or to endeavoring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means—it is but my duty.
 - b. What contentment is opposed to:
 - 1.) It is opposed to murmuring and repining at the hand of God, as the discontented Israelites often did.
 - a.) *Repining – grumbling; expressing discontent.*
 - 2.) To vexing and fretting, which is a degree beyond murmuring.
 - 3.) To tumultuousness of spirit, when the thoughts run distractingly and work in a confused manner.
 - a.) *Tumultuousness – the state of commotion and confusion.*
 - b.) *[Acts 19:36]- Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.*
 - 4.) It is opposed to an unsettled and unstable spirit, whereby the heart is distracted from the present duty that God requires in our several relationships—towards God, others, and ourselves.
 - 5.) It is opposed to distracting, heart-consuming cares. A gracious heart so esteems its union with Christ and the work that God sets it about that it will not willingly suffer anything to come in to choke it or deaden it.
 - a.) *Gracious heart – heart born of the Holy Spirit and brought into union with Christ.*
 - 6.) It is opposed to sinking discouragements.
 - 7.) It is opposed to sinful shiftings and shirkings to get relief and help.
 - a.) *Shiftings and shirkings – methods used to achieve an objective quickly, regardless of whether they are fair, right, or wise in the long term and avoiding one's responsibilities*
 - 8.) It is opposed to desperate risings of the heart against God by way of rebellion.

3. Contentment is an inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit.
 - a. It is a grace that spreads itself through the whole soul.
 - 1.) The whole soul—judgment, thoughts, will, affections—all are satisfied and quiet.
 - b. Spiritual contentment comes from the frame of the soul.
 - 1.) When a Christian is content in the right way, the quiet comes more from the disposition of his own heart than from any external argument or from the possession of anything in the world.
 - c. It is the frame of spirit that shows the habitual character of this grace of contentment.
4. Contentment is a gracious frame, opposed to natural quietness.
 - a. In opposition to the natural quietness of many men and women.
 - b. In opposition to a sturdy resolution.
 - c. By way of distinction from the strength of natural (though unsanctified) reason that may quiet the heart in some degree.
 - d. Those who are content in a natural way when outward afflictions befall them are just as content when they commit sin against God.
5. Contentment is freely submitting to and taking pleasure in God's disposal.
 - a. It is a free work of the spirit.
 - 1.) That the heart is readily brought over.
 - 2.) It is free, that is, not by constraint, not, as we say, patience by force.
 - 3.) This freedom is in opposition to mere stupidity.
6. Contentment is freely submitting to God's disposal.
 - a. The word submit signifies nothing else but "to send under."
7. Contentment is taking pleasure in God's disposal.
 - a. *[Psalm 119:71]- It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*
 - b. *[Ezra 7:9]- For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.*
 - c. *[Psalm 104:28]- That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.*
 - d. *[Philippians 4:18]- But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.*
 - e. *[2 Corinthians 6:10]- As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*
8. Contentment is submitting and taking pleasure in God's disposal.
9. Submission must be in every condition.
 - a. The kind of affliction. In general and in particular afflictions
 - b. There must be a submission to God in every affliction, as to the time and continuance of it.
 - c. For the variety of our condition.

II. The Mystery of Contentment.
 A. There is a great mystery in it.

1. When Luther was sent great gifts by dukes and princes, he refused them, and said, "I did vehemently protest that God should not put me off so; 'tis not that which will content me."
 2. *[Philippians 4:7,9]- And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*
 3. *[Psalm 73:25]- Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.*
- B. A Christian comes to contentment not so much by way of addition, as by way of subtraction.
1. Here lies the bottom and root of all contentment: when there is an evenness and proportion between our hearts and our circumstances. That is why many godly men who are in low position live more sweet and comfortable lives than those who are richer.
- C. 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.
1. The way of contentment is to add another burden: the burden of sin.
 2. 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!
- D. It is not so much the removing of the affliction that is upon us as the changing of the affliction.
1. There is a power of grace to turn this affliction into good; it takes away the sting of it.
 2. Christianity will teach you how to turn your poverty to spiritual riches
- E. A Christian comes to this contentment not by making up the wants of his circumstances, but by the performance of the work of his circumstances.
1. A carnal heart thinks, "I must have my wants made up or else it is impossible that I should be content."
 2. But a gracious heart says, "What is the duty of the circumstances God has put me into? Indeed, my circumstances have changed. I was not long since in a prosperous state, but God has changed my circumstances. Now what am I to do? Let me exert my strength to perform the duties of my present circumstances."
 3. You should rather labor to bring your heart to quiet and contentment by setting your soul to work in the duties of your present condition, and take heed of your thoughts about other conditions as a mere temptation!
- F. A gracious heart is contented by the melting of his will and desires into God's will and desires.
1. The man comes to have his desires satisfied though he does not obtain the thing that he desired before, because he makes his will to be at one with God's will.
 2. This is a small degree higher than submitting to the will of God.
 3. A gracious heart has learned not only to make the commanding will of God to be its own will—that is, what God commands me to do, I will do it—but to make the providential will of God and the operative will of God to be his will too.
 4. Yes, you are satisfied, for he to whom you made over your debt is satisfied.
 5. A Christian heart makes over his will to God and if God's will is satisfied, then I am satisfied, for I have no will of my own.
 6. A gracious heart must needs have satisfaction in this way because godliness teaches him this: to see that his good is more in God than in himself. The good of my life, comforts, happiness, glory, and riches are more in God than in myself!
- G. The mystery consists not in bringing anything from outside to make my condition more comfortable, but in purging out something that is within.
1. *[James 4:1]- "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"*
 2. They are not so much from things outside, but from within.

3. The way to contentment is to purge out your lusts and bitter humors. *
 - a. **humors – attitudes; dispositions; taken from early medical theory that certain vapors moved through the body causing abnormal moods.*

- H. He lives upon the dew of God’s blessing.
 1. A poor man or woman who has but a little with grace lives a more contented life than his rich neighbor who has a great income.
 2. When your husbands are at sea and send you a token of their love, it is worth more than forty times what you already have in your houses.
 3. Every good thing the people of God enjoy, they enjoy in God’s eternal love to them.

- I. He can see love in all afflictions.
 1. A Christian not only has the dew of God’s blessing in good things and finds them very sweet, but in all the afflictions, all the evils that befall him,
 2. He can see love and can enjoy the sweetness of love in his afflictions as well as in his mercies.

- J. A godly man sees Christ as Mediator.
 1. A godly man has contentment because just as he sees all his afflictions come from the same love that Jesus Christ did, so he sees them all sanctified in Jesus Christ, our Mediator. *
 - a. *Mediator – one who goes between two parties to remove a disagreement or reach a common goal; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.”*
 2. He sees all the poison of them taken out by the virtue of Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man.
 3. When a Christian would have contentment, he works it out thus: “What is my affliction? Is it poverty that God strikes me with? —Jesus Christ had not a house to hide His head in. Now my poverty is sanctified by Christ’s poverty. I can see by faith the curse taken out of my poverty by the poverty of Jesus Christ.

- K. A gracious heart has contentment by getting strength from Jesus Christ.
 1. A Christian finds satisfaction in every circumstance by his faith bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into his own soul. He is thereby enabled to bear whatever God lays on him. Of His fullness do we receive “grace for grace” (Joh 1:16).
 - a. ***[John 1:16]- And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.***
 2. Now if a man has a burden to bear and yet can have strength added to him, if the burden is doubled, he can have his strength trebled. *
 - a. ** trebled – tripled.*
 3. The burden will not be heavier, but lighter than it was before to his natural strength. “The Lord is...my strength (Psa 18:2).
 - a. ***[Psalm 18:2]- The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.***

- L. A godly heart enjoys much of God in everything he has and knows how to make up all wants in God Himself.
 1. When all is gone, godliness teaches to make up all those losses in God.

2. If anything is cut off from the stream, he knows how to go to the fountain and makes up all there. God is his all in all (1Co 15:28). [God is to us as] Elkanah said to Hannah, “Am not I better to thee than ten sons?” (1Sa 1:8).
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 15:28]- And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*
 - b. *[1 Samuel 1:8]- Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?*

 3. You know when a man has water coming to his house through several pipes, and he finds insufficient water comes into his wash-house, he will rather stop the other pipes that he may have all the water come in where he wants it. Perhaps, then, God had a stream of your affection running to Him when you enjoyed these things; yes, but a great deal was allowed to escape to the creature, * a great deal of your affections ran waste. Now the Lord would not have the affections of His children to run waste; therefore He has cut off your other pipes that your heart might flow wholly to Him.
 - a. * *Creature – created thing, perhaps a person or creature comfort.*
 - b. *If you have children, and because you let your servants perhaps feed them and give them things, you perceive that your servants are stealing away the hearts of your children, you would hardly be able to bear it; you would be ready to send away such a servant. When the servant is gone, the child is at a great loss. It does not have the nurse. But the mother intends by sending her away, that the affections of the child might run more strongly towards herself.*

 4. So those affections that run towards the creature, God would have run towards Himself, that so He may be all in all to you here in this world.
- M. A gracious heart gets contentment from the covenant promises that God has made with him.
1. He gets contentment from the particular promises that he has for supplying every particular want. There is no condition that a godly man or woman can be in, but there is some promise in the Scripture to help him in that condition.
 2. When God makes a promise to His people, it must be with this reservation: God must have liberty for these three things:
 - a. He will have liberty to make use of anything for your chastisement.
 - b. He must have liberty to make use of your wealth, liberties, or lives for the furtherance of His own ends, if it is to be a stumbling block to wicked and ungodly men.
 - c. God must have sufficient liberty to make use of what you have to show that His ways are unsearchable and His judgments past finding out (Rom 11:33).
 - 1.) *[Romans 11:33]- O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*
 - d. Perhaps you have given your children something, but afterwards if you have a use for that thing, you will come and say, “I must have it.” “Why, Father?” the child may say, “You gave it to me.” “But I must have it,” says the father, “and I will make it up to you in some other way.” The child does not think that the father’s love is ever a whit * the less to him.
 - e. When there is any such promise as this, that God by His promise gives you His protection, and yet for all that such a thing befalls you, it is only as if the father should say, “I gave you that indeed; but let me have it, and I will make it up to you in some other way that shall be as good.”
 - 1.) * *A whit – the least bit.*
 - f. The one who is filled with good things is just like many a man who enjoys an abundance of comforts in his own house. God grants him a pleasant home, a good wife, and fine walks

and gardens. Now such a man does not care much for going out. Other men are fain * to go out and see friends because they have quarrelling and contending at home. So a carnal man has little contentment in his own spirit.

1.) * *fain* – *eager*.

- g. *“As it is with a vessel that is full of liquor *, if you strike it, it will make no great noise; but if it is empty then it makes a great noise. So it is with the heart: a heart full of grace and goodness within will bear a great many strokes and never make any noise—but if an empty heart is struck, it will make a noise. When some men and women are complaining so much, it is a sign that there is emptiness in their hearts. If their hearts were filled with grace, they would not make such a noise.”*

1.) * *liquor* – *any liquid*.

- h. Specific scriptural promises given.

1.) ***[Isaiah 43:2]- When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.***

2.) ***[Joshua 1:5]- There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.***

3.) ***[Hebrews 13:5]- 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.***

a.) *There are five negatives, as if God should say, “I will not leave you, no I will not, I will not, I will not,”*

4.) ***[Isaiah 54:17]- No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.***

5.) ***[Psalm 34:10]- The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.***

6.) ***[Psalm 37:6]- And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.***

7.) ***[Isaiah 58:10]- And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day:***

- N. He has contentment by realizing the glorious things of heaven.

1. He has the heavenly glory that is to come, [and] by faith, he makes it present.

2. The martyrs had contentment in their sufferings.

a. *“Though we have but a hard breakfast, yet we shall have a good dinner; we shall very soon be in heaven.”*

b. *“Do but shut your eyes,” said one, “and you shall be in heaven at once.”*

c. *“We faint not,” says the Apostle. Why? Because these light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2Co 4:17).*

1.) ***[2 Corinthians 4:17]- For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;***

3. *“One drop of the sweetness of heaven is enough to take away all the sourness and bitterness of all the afflictions in the world. A carnal heart has no contentment from what he sees before him in this world, but a godly heart has contentment from what he sees laid up for him in the highest heavens.”*

III. How Christ Teaches Contentment.

- A. The Lesson of self-denial. *“Whoever has not learned the lesson of the Cross has not learned his A-B-C in Christianity.” John Bradford (c.1510-1555) – English, taught at Cambridge, preached in*

London, burned at the stake for refusing to deny his faith by order of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary.

1. Such a person learns to know that he is nothing.
 - a. ***[Proverbs 23:5]- Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.***
2. I deserve nothing. I am nothing, and I deserve nothing.
3. I can do nothing. Christ says, “Without me you can do nothing”.
 - a. ***[John 15:5]- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.***
4. I am so vile that of myself I cannot receive any good. I am not only an empty vessel, but also a corrupt and unclean vessel.
5. If God cleanses us in some measure, yet we can make use of nothing when we have it, if God but withdraws Himself.
6. We are worse than nothing. By sin, we become a great deal worse than nothing and contrary to all good.
7. If we perish, we will be no loss. Christ teaches the soul this. A man who is little in his own eyes will account every affliction as little and every mercy as great.
 - a. ***[1 Samuel 9:21]- And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?***
 - b. *“There was never any man or woman so contented as a self-denying man or woman. No one ever denied himself as much as Jesus Christ did. He gave His cheeks to the smiters; He opened not His mouth; He was as a lamb when He was led to the slaughter; He made no noise in the street. He denied Himself above all and was willing to empty Himself—and so He was the most contented that ever any was in the world.”*
 - 1.) ***[Isaiah 50:6]- I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.***
 - 2.) ***[Isaiah 53:7-10]- He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.***
 - 3.) ***[Matthew 16:24]- Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.***
 - 4.) ***[Philippians 2:6-11]- Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***
8. But there is a further thing in self-denial that brings contentment: thereby the soul comes to rejoice and take satisfaction in all God’s ways.
 - a. A gracious heart says, *“God’s ends are my ends—and I have denied my own ends.”*

- b. *“In the City [of London] what a great deal of stir there is in narrow streets—since Thames street is so narrow, they jostle and wrangle and fight one with another—but in the broad streets they can go quietly. Similarly, men who are selfish meet and so jostle with one another: one man is for self in one thing, another man is for self in another thing, and so they make a great deal of stir. But those whose hearts are enlarged and make public things their ends and can deny themselves have room to walk and never jostle with one another as others do.”*
- B. The vanity of the creature.
1. ***[Ecclesiastes 1:2]- Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.***
 2. *“My brethren, the reason why you do not have contentment in the things of the world is not that you do not have enough of them. The reason is that they are not things proportional to that immortal soul of yours that is capable of God Himself.”*
- C. The one thing necessary.
1. Christ teaches a Christian what the one thing necessary is.
 - a. ***[Luke 10:41-42]- And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.***
 - b. It is absolutely necessary that I should have pardon of my sin.
 - c. It is necessary that my soul should be saved in the Day of Jesus Christ!
 2. When the soul is once taken up with the things that are of absolute necessity, it will not be much troubled about other things.
 - a. A man who lies at home and has nothing to do finds fault with everything.
 - b. When the heart of a man has nothing to do but to be busy about creature comforts, every little thing troubles him.
 - c. When the heart is taken up with the weighty things of eternity, the things of here below that disquieted it before are things now of no consequence to him in comparison with the other.
- D. The soul comes to understand its relation to the world.
1. A stranger and pilgrim.
 - a. God comes to instruct the soul effectually through Christ by His Spirit on what terms it lives here in the world.
 - 1.) ***[Hebrews 11:13]- These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.***
 - 2.) ***[1 Peter 2:11]- Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;***
 - 3.) ***[2 Timothy 2:3-4]- Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.***
 - b. We are all in this world but as seafaring men, tossed up and down on the waves of the sea of this world, and our haven is heaven. Here we are traveling, and our home is a distant home in another world. Though we meet with travelers’ fare sometimes, yet it should not be grievous to us. The Scripture tells us plainly that we must behave ourselves here as pilgrims and strangers.
 - 1.) ***[1 Peter 2:11]- Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;***

- c. When a man comes into an inn and sees there a fair cupboard of plate, he is not troubled that it is not his own. Why? Because he is going away. So let us not be troubled when we see that other men have great wealth, but we have not. Why? Because we are going away to another country.
 - 1.) ***[Psalm 119:19]- I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.***
- 2. A soldier.
 - a. God has set me in this world, not as in my home, but as a mere stranger and a pilgrim who is traveling to another home, and that I am here a soldier in my warfare—a right understanding of this is a mighty help to contentment in whatever befalls one.
 - 1.) ***[2 Timothy 2:3]- Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.***
 - b. What an unseemly thing it would be to see a soldier go whining up and down with his finger in his eye* complaining that he does not have hot meat every meal and his bed warmed as he did at home! Now Christians know that they are in their warfare: they are here in this world fighting and combating with the enemies of their souls and their eternal welfare, and they must be willing to endure hardness here.
 - 1.) **finger...eye – weeping.*
 - 2.) *A soldier is content to endure hardness though he does not know that he shall have the victory; but a Christian knows himself to be a soldier and knows [also] that he shall conquer and triumph with Jesus Christ to all eternity!*
- E. Christ teaches us wherein consists any good that is to be enjoyed in any creature in the world.
 - 1. If there is any good in wealth or in any comfort in this world, it is not so much that it pleases my sense or that it suits my body, but that it has reference to God, the first Being.
- F. Christ teaches the souls whom He brings into this school in the knowledge of their own hearts.
 - 1. By studying your heart, you will come soon to discover wherein your discontent lies:
 - 2. This knowledge of our hearts will help us to contentment because by it we shall come to know what best suits our condition.
 - 3. By knowing their own hearts, they know what they are able to manage.
- G. Christ teaches contentment in the burden of a prosperous outward condition.
 - 1. There is a burden of trouble in prosperity.
 - a. ***[1 Timothy 6:10]- For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.***
 - b. *“A man may have a very fine new shoe, but nobody knows where it pinches him except the one who has it on. So you think certain men are happy, but they may have many troubles that you little think of.”*
 - 2. There is a burden of danger in prosperity.
 - a. *“You know when a ship has all its sails up in a storm—even the top sail—it is in more danger than one that has all its sails drawn in. Similarly, men who have their top sail and all up so finely are more likely to be drowned in perdition than other men.”*
 - b. Example of this in the children of Kohath.
 - 1.) ***[Numbers 4:4]- This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things:***
 - 2.) ***[Numbers 7:6-9]- And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service: And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.***

3. There is a burden of duty in prosperity.
 - a. ***[Luke 12:48]- But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.***
 4. There is a burden of account in prosperity.
 - a. ***[1 Corinthians 4:2]- Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.***
- H. Christ teaches them what a great and dreadful evil it is to be given up to one's heart's desires.
1. The greatest misery of all is for God to give you up to your heart's lusts and desires, to give you up to your own counsels.
 - a. ***[Psalm 81:11-12]- But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.***
 2. *"The Lord has inflicted external judgments, but He has not inflicted spiritual judgments on you; He has not given you up to hardness of heart and taken away the spirit of prayer from you in your afflicted condition."*
 - a. *Think thus: "Lord, you have laid an afflicted condition upon me; but, Lord, you have not given me the plague of a hard heart."*
- I. Right knowledge of God's providence *
1. * *Providence – God's...most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions.*
 2. The right knowledge of God's providence
 - a. The universality of providence, that is, how the providence of God goes through the whole world and extends itself to everything.
 - 1.) ***[Revelation 19:6]- And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.***
 - 2.) ***[Matthew 10:29-30]- Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.***
 - b. The efficacy * that is in providence.
 - 1.) * *efficacy – capacity or power to produce a desired effect.*
 - 2.) ***[Job 18:4]- He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?***
 - 3.) I may say to every discontented, impatient heart: "What?—shall the providence of God change its course for you? Do you think it such a weak thing that, because it does not please you, it must alter its course?"
 - 4.) *"When you are in a ship at sea that has all its sails spread with a full gale of wind and is swiftly sailing, can you make it stand still by running up and down in the ship? No more can you make the providence of God alter and change its course with your vexing and fretting. It will go on with power, do what you can."*
 - c. The infinite variety of the works of providence, and yet the order of things, one working towards another.
 - 1.) *"When a child looks at a clock, it looks first at one wheel, and then at another wheel; he does not look at them all together or the dependence that one has upon another. But the workman has his eyes on them all together and sees the dependence of all, one upon another. So it is in God's providence."*

- d. Christ teaches them the knowledge of God's usual way in His dealings with His people more particularly.
 - 1.) *"When we come to live in a society with men and women, they may be good; but until we come to know their way, course, and disposition, many things may cross us, and we think they are very hard. But when we come to be acquainted with their way and spirits, then we can suit with them very well. The reason of our trouble is that we do not understand their way. So it is with you: those who are but as strangers to God and do not understand the way of God are troubled with the providences of God."*
3. In God's ways.
 - a. God's ordinary course is that His people in this world should be in an afflicted condition.
 - 1.) ***[1 Peter 4:12]- Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:***
 - b. Usually when God intends the greatest mercy to any of His people, He brings them into the lowest condition.
 - 1.) ***[Hebrews 2:10]- For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.***
 - c. It is the way of God to work by contraries, to turn the greatest evil into the greatest good.
 - 1.) Luther says, *"It is the way of God: He humbles that He might exalt; He kills that He might make alive; He confounds that He might glorify."*
 - 2.) *"God brings joy out of sorrow, and He brings prosperity out of adversity—yea, and many times brings grace out of sin, that is, makes use of sin * to work furtherance of grace. It is the way of God to bring all good out of evil, not only to overcome the evil, but to make the evil work toward the good."*
 - a.) ** Makes use of sin – God does not approve of sin and is not the author of sin, but He uses the occurrence of sin for the good of His people—a great mystery in God's wisdom.*

IV. The Excellence of Contentment.

- A. By contentment, we come to give God the worship that is His due.
 1. You who often will worship God by hearing and praying, and yet afterwards will be forward * and discontented—know that God does not regard such worship;
 - a. **froward – not willing to yield; stubbornly contrary.*
 2. He will [rather] have the soul's worship, the subjecting of the soul unto God.
 3. In active obedience, we worship God by doing what pleases God;
 4. In passive obedience, we do as well worship God by being pleased with what God does.
 - a. "I labor to do what pleases God, and I labor that what God does shall please me"
 - b. Here is a Christian indeed who shall endeavor both these.
- B. In contentment, there is much exercise of grace.
 1. There is a great deal of exercise of grace
 - a. In one action that you do, you may exercise one grace especially; but in contentment, you exercise a great many graces at once.
 2. There is a great deal of strength of grace in contentment.
 - a. You who complain of weakness of memory, of weakness of gifts, you cannot do what others do in other things—but have you this gracious heart of contentment?

- b. It is an argument of a gracious magnitude of spirit that whatsoever befalls it, yet it is not always whining and complaining as others do, but keeps in a constant tenor⁴² whatever befalls it.
3. There is a great deal of beauty of grace.
- a. The glory of God appears here more than in any of His works.
 - b. There is no work that God has made—the sun, moon, stars, and all the world—in which so much of the glory of God appears as in a man who lives quietly in the midst of adversity.
 - c. That was what convinced the king: he saw that the three children could walk in the midst of the fiery furnace and not be touched.
 - 1.) [Daniel 3:25]-
 - d. So when a Christian can walk in the midst of fiery trials without his garments being singed and has comfort and joy in the midst of everything—when like Paul in the stocks he can sing, which wrought upon the jailor, it will convince men, when they see the power of grace in the midst of afflictions.
 - 1.) [Act 16:25-34]-
 - e. When they can behave themselves in a gracious and holy manner in such afflictions as would make others roar, this is the glory of a Christian!
- C. Those who are contented are fitted to receive mercy.
- 1. If you want a vessel to take in any liquid, you must hold it still; for if the vessel stirs and shakes up and down, you cannot pour anything in. You will say, “Hold still,” that you may pour it in and not lose any.
 - 2. So if we would be vessels to receive God’s mercy and would have the Lord pour His mercy into us, we must have quiet, still hearts.
- D. Contentment makes fit to do service.
- 1. The wheels in a coach move up and down, but the axletree⁴⁴ does not move up and down. So it is with the heart of a man: if he will move to do service to God, he must have a steady heart within him.
 - 2. That is the reason why, when the Lord has any great work for one of His servants to do, usually He first quiets their spirits.
- E. Contentment delivers us from an abundance of temptations.
- 1. Where the devil sees the spirits of men and women troubled and vexed, he says, “There is good fishing for me.”
 - 2. There is occasion of temptation for the devil when he meets with a discontented spirit! Now God does not dwell in spirits that are in confusion, but He dwells in peaceable and quiet spirits.
- F. Contentment will bring abundant comforts in a man’s life.
- 1. Contentment will make a man’s life exceedingly sweet and comfortable.
 - a. What a man has, he has in a kind of independent way, not depending upon any creature for his comfort.
 - b. If God raises the position of a contented man who is low, he has the love of God in it. It is abundantly sweeter then, than if he had it and his heart was not contented; for God may grant a discontented man his desire, but he cannot say that it is from love.
- G. Contentment draws comfort from those things we do not possess.
- 1. There is more comfort in the grace of contentment than there is even in any possessions whatsoever.

2. If I become content by having my desire satisfied, that is only self-love; but when I am contented with the hand of God and am willing to be at His disposal, that comes from my love to God.
 3. You see that contentment brings comfort to a man's life [and] fills it full of comfort in this world; the truth is, it is even a heaven on earth.
- H. Contentment is a great blessing of God upon the soul.
1. ***[Deuteronomy 33:7]- And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.***
- I. Those who are content may expect reward from God.
1. God will give them the good of all the things that they are contented to be without. There is such and such a mercy that you think would be very pleasant if you had it; but can you bring your heart to submit to God [without] it?
 2. "How many things have I that others lack? Can I bring my heart into a quiet, contented frame to lack what others have? [If so,] I have the blessing of all that they have, and I shall either possess such things as others have, or else God will make it up one way or another, either here or hereafter in eternity to me." Oh, with contentment you have all kinds of riches!
- J. The soul comes to an excellence near to God Himself.
1. This word translated "content" signifies self-sufficiency.
 - a. A contented man is a self-sufficient man; and what is the great glory of God, but to be happy and self-sufficient in Him?
 - b. El-shaddai means "God having sufficiency in Himself".
 - 1.) ***[Genesis 17:1]- And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.***
 - 2.) ***[Genesis 35:11]- And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;***
 2. As you partake of the divine nature by grace in general, so you do it in a more peculiar manner by this grace of Christian contentment.

Part 2 – Murmuring.

- V. The Evils of a Murmuring Spirit.
- A. The great evil that is in a murmuring, discontented heart.
1. As contentment argues much grace, strong grace, and beautiful grace, so murmuring argues much corruption, strong corruption, and very vile corruptions in your heart.
 2. When you are troubled for an affliction, you need rather to turn your thoughts to be troubled for the murmuring of your heart, for that is the greatest trouble.
- B. When God would show the brand of a wicked man, He instances the sin of murmuring in a more special manner.
1. ***[Jude 1:14-15]- And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.***
- C. God accounts murmuring as rebellion.

1. *[Numbers 16:41]- But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.*
2. *[Numbers 17:10]- And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.*

D. Murmuring is contrary to the work of God in salvation.

1. What is the work of God when He brings a sinner home to Himself?
 - a. The usual way is for God to make the soul to see and be sensible of the dreadful evil that is in sin and the great breach that sin has made between God and it. Now how contrary is this sin of murmuring to any such work of God!
 - b. Am I the soul to whom the Lord has revealed the infinite excellence of Jesus Christ, and yet shall I think such a little affliction to be so grievous to me, when I have had the sight of such glory in Christ as is worth more than ten thousand worlds? But has God given you that, and will you be discontented for a trifle⁵⁴ in comparison to that?
 - c. A third work when God brings the soul home to Himself is by taking the heart off from the creature, disengaging the heart from all creature comforts.
 - d. A fourth work of God in converting a sinner is this: the casting of the soul upon Jesus Christ for all its good. Has God converted you and drawn you to His Son to cast your soul upon Him for all your good, and yet you are discontented for the want of some little matter in a creature comfort?
 - 1.) *[Luke 8:25]- And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.*
 - e. The soul is subdued to God, and then it comes to receive Jesus Christ as King—to rule, order, and dispose of him how He pleases. Now, how opposite is a murmuring, discontented heart to a heart subdued to Jesus Christ as King and receiving Him as a Lord to rule and dispose of him as He pleases!
 - f. In the work of conversion, there is the resignation of the soul wholly to God. Have you ever surrendered up yourself to God in an everlasting covenant? Then, certainly, this fretting, murmuring heart of yours is strongly opposite to it.

E. Murmuring and discontent is exceedingly below a Christian.

1. Murmuring is below the relation in which you stand as a Christian.
 - a. The relation in which you stand to God.
 - 1.) Do you not call God your Father? Do you not stand in relation to Him as a child?
 - 2.) *[2 Samuel 13:4]- And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.*
 - 3.) *[Luke 11:9-13]- And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*
 - b. The relation in which you stand to Jesus Christ.
 - 1.) You are the spouse of Christ. What! One married to Jesus Christ and yet troubled and discontented?

- 2.) *[1 Samuel 1:8]- Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepst thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?*
 - 3.) *[Romans 8:32]- He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*
 - 4.) *[Revelation 21:9-10]- And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*
- c. The relation in which you stand to The Holy Spirit. [added by the reader....]
- 1.) You are a beneficiary of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
 - a.) *[Acts 2:38]- Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*
 - b.) *[John 14:16, 26]- And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*
 - c.) *[1 Corinthians 14:12]-Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*
 2. Murmuring is below the high dignity that God has put upon you.
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 3:22]- Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's;*
 - b. Even death itself, your greatest enemy, is turned to be your slave.
 - c. The death of Christ is yours. He died for you and not for the angels, and therefore you are likely to be raised above the angels in many respects.
 3. Murmuring is below the spirit of a Christian.
 - a. The spirit of every Christian should be like the spirit of his Father.
 - b. Every father loves to see his spirit in his child.
 - c. Oh, the Lord Who is our Father loves to see His Spirit in us.
 - d. We are one spirit with God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost; therefore, we should have a spirit that might manifest their glory.
 4. It is below the profession of a Christian.
 - a. A Christian's profession is to be dead to the world and to be alive to God, to have his life hid with Christ in God, to satisfy himself in God.
 - b. What! Is this your profession? Yet if you have not everything you want, you murmur and are discontented— in that, you even deny your profession.
 5. It is below that special grace of faith.
 - a. Faith is what overcomes the world.
 - b. It makes all the promises of God ours.
 - c. A Christian should be satisfied with what God has made the object of his faith.
 6. It is below those helps that a Christian has more than others have.
 - a. A Christian has the promises to help him, which others have not.
 7. It is below the expectation that God has of Christians.

- a. God expects not only that Christians should be patient in afflictions, but that they should rejoice and triumph in them.
 1.) *[James 1:2]- My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*
- 8. It is below what God has had from other Christians.
 - a. Others have not only been contented with little trials, but they have triumphed over great afflictions. They have suffered the spoiling of their goods with joy!
 - b. Therefore, not to be content with smaller crosses must needs be a great evil.
- F. By murmuring, you undo your prayers.
 - 1. When you come to pray to God, you acknowledge His sovereignty over you.
 - 2. Objection: “But I do not know what would become of my children if I were to die. Or if I have bread now, I do not know where I shall get it from next week, or where I shall get provision for the winter.”
 - 3. Answer: Where did Christ teach us to pray, “Lord, give us provision for so long a time?” No, but if we have bread for this day, Christ would have us content. Therefore, when we murmur because we have not so much variety as others have, it is against our prayers.
- G. The woeful effects that come to a discontented heart from murmuring.
 - 1. You come to lose a great deal of time
 - a. When you are alone you should spend your time in holy meditation, but you are spending your time in discontented thoughts!
 - b. If you are discontented with anything, then you can go alone and roll things up and down in your thoughts to feed a discontented humor.
 - 2. It unfits you for duty.
 - a. But when one is in a discontented condition, then a man or woman is exceedingly unfit for the service of God: it causes many distractions in duty.
 - 3. Consider what wicked risings of heart and resolutions of spirit there are many times in a discontented fit.
 - a. In some discontented fits, the heart rises against God and against others.
 - b. Sometimes it even has desperate resolutions what to do to help itself.
 - 4. Unthankfulness is an evil effect that comes from discontent.
 - a. Though men and women who are discontented enjoy many mercies from God, yet they are thankful for none of them. This is the vile nature of discontent—to lessen every mercy of God. It makes those mercies they have from God as nothing to them because they cannot have what they want.
 - b. It is so even in spiritual things: if they do not have all the comforts they desire, then what they do have is nothing to them.
 - c. It is so for outward blessings: God has given you health of body and strength and has given you some way of livelihood; yet because you are disappointed in something that you would have, therefore all is nothing to you.
 - d. *“This is the rhetoric of the Spirit of God: to extenuate evil things and to amplify good things; if a cross comes, to make that cross but little; but if there is a mercy, to make the mercy great. But the devil goes quite contrary he lessens God’s mercies and amplifies evil things.” – Luther*
 - 1.) *rhetoric – eloquent language of persuasion.*
 - 2.) *extenuate – diminish in size.*
 - e. *[Numbers 16:12-13]- And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up: Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a*

land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

5. Murmuring causes shiftings of spirit.
 - a. Those who murmur are liable to temptations to shift for themselves in sinful ways.
- H. There is a great deal of extreme folly in a discontented heart.
 1. It is a foolish sin because you will not enjoy the comfort of what you have because you have not got what you want!
 2. It is a foolish sin because by all your discontent, you cannot help yourselves.
 - a. *[Matthew 6:27]- Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*
 - b. *[Matthew 5:36]- Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*
 3. It is a foolish sin because there are commonly many foolish attitudes that a discontented heart is guilty of.
 4. It is a foolish sin because discontent and murmuring eat out the good and sweetness of a mercy before it comes.
 - a. *[Exodus 16:3-4]- And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*
 5. It is a foolish sin because it makes our affliction a great deal worse than otherwise it would be.
- I. There is a great deal of danger in the sin of discontent, for it highly provokes the wrath of God.
 1. *[Numbers 14:26-30]- And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.*
 2. *[Psalm 106:24-26]- Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:*
 3. *[Numbers 16:41,46]- But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.*
 4. *[I Corinthians 10:10]- Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.*
 5. *[Job 38:1-2]- Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*
- J. There is a great curse of God upon murmuring and discontent.
 1. *[Deuteronomy 28:67]- In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.*

- K. There is much of the spirit of Satan in a murmuring spirit.
1. *[Matthew 12:43]- When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.*
- L. If you have a murmuring spirit, you must then have disquiet all the days of your life.
1. *"It is as if a man in a great crowd were to complain that other folks touch him. While we are in this world, God has so ordered things that afflictions must befall us. If we will complain and be discontented at every cross and affliction, we must complain and be discontented all the days of our lives!"*
- M. God may justly withdraw His care of you and His protection over you, seeing God cannot please you in His administration.
1. *[Exodus 15:1-2, 11]- Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*
 2. *[Exodus 15:23-24]- And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*
 3. *[Exodus 16:1-3]- And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

VI. Aggravations of the Sin of Murmuring.

- A. To murmur when we enjoy an abundance of mercy.
1. The sin of discontent for private afflictions is exceedingly aggravated by the consideration of public mercies to the land.
 2. *Objection: You will say, "Yes, but you do not know what our afflictions are because you do not feel them."*
 3. *Answer: Though I cannot know what your afflictions are, yet I know what your mercies are.*
 4. *[Numbers 16:8-11]- And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?*
 5. *[Job 2:10]- But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*
 6. *[Ecclesiastes 7:14]- In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.*
 7. *[2 Samuel 18:33]- And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!*

- B. When we murmur for small things.
1. *[2 Kings 5:13]- And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?*
 2. *[Genesis 25:22]- And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.*
 3. *“It is too much for anyone to murmur over the heaviest cross that can befall one in this world; but to be discontented and murmur over some small things increases the sin of murmuring very much.”*
- C. For men of gifts and abilities to whom God has given wisdom to be discontented and murmur is more than if others do it.
1. *“Murmuring and discontentedness is too much, yet we can bear with it sometimes in those who are weak. Yet for those who are men of understanding, who have wisdom, whom God employs in public service—that they should be discontented with everything is an exceedingly great evil.”*
- D. The consideration of the freeness of all God’s mercies to us.
1. *[1 Corinthians 4:7]- For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*
- E. To be discontented and impatient when we have the things for the want of which we were discontented before.
1. *[1 Samuel 8:19]- Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;*
 2. *[Genesis 30:1]- And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.*
- F. To be discontented when God has raised you from a low position.
1. *[Luke 15:16-17]- And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*
- G. For those to be discontented who have been very great sinners and ungodly in their former life.
1. Consider how we have crossed God in our sins; then if God should cross us in the way of our sufferings, should not we sit down quiet without murmuring?
- H. For men who are of little use in the world to be discontented.
1. Little provision serves his turn because you do not make use of him. If we lived so as to be exceedingly useful to God and His Church, we might expect that God would be pleased to come in some encouraging way to us; but when our consciences tell us we live and do but little service for God, why, what if God should turn us upon the commons?
- I. For us to be discontented when God is about to humble us.
1. I am discontented and murmuring because I am afflicted; but this is why you are afflicted: God would humble you. The great design God has in afflicting you is to break and humble your heart.
- J. The more remarkable the hand of God appears to bring about an affliction, the greater is the sin of murmuring in that affliction.
1. When I see the Lord working in some remarkable way about an affliction beyond what anyone could have thought of, shall I resist such a remarkable hand of God?

- K. Though God has been exercising us for a long time under afflictions, yet still to remain discontented.
1. *[Hebrews 12:11]- Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*
 2. *[Philippians 4:11]- Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*
 3. *“A new cart may creak and make a noise; but after it has been used a while, it will not do so. So when you are first a Christian, perhaps you make a noise and cannot bear affliction; but are you an old Christian and yet will you be a murmuring Christian?”*

VII. The Excuses of a Murmuring Heart.

- A. “It is not discontent; it is a sense of my condition.”
1. There is no sense of any affliction that will hinder the sense of God’s mercies.
 2. If it were but a bare sense of an affliction, it would not hinder you in the duties of your condition
 3. If it were but a mere sense of your affliction, then you could in this your condition bless God for the mercies that others have.
- B. “I am not so much troubled with my afflictions, but it is for my sin rather than my affliction.”
1. They were never troubled for their sin before this affliction came.
 2. If it is your sin that troubles you, then even if God should take away your afflictions, unless your sin is taken away and your heart is better, this would not content you.
 3. If you are troubled for your sin, then it will be your great care not to sin in your trouble, so as not, by your trouble, to increase your sin.
- C. “I find my affliction is such that God withdraws Himself from me in my affliction.”
1. For you to make such a conclusion—that God has departed every time He lays an affliction upon you—is a sinful disorder of your heart, very dishonorable to God and grievous to His Spirit.
 - a. *[Exodus 17:7]- And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?*
 2. If God is departed, the greatest sign of God’s departing is because you are so disturbed.
 3. Do you find God departing from you in your affliction? Will you therefore depart from God too?
- D. “But when men deal so unreasonably and unjustly with me, I do not know how to bear it.”
1. Though they are men who bring this cross on you, yet they are God’s instruments.
 2. If this is your trouble, that men do so wrong you, you ought rather to turn your hearts to pity them than to murmur or be discontented.
- E. “Oh, but the affliction that comes upon me is an affliction which I never looked for.”
1. It is your weakness and folly that you did not look for it and expect it.
 - a. *[Acts 20:22-23]- And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.*
 2. Is it unexpected? Then the less provision you made for it before it came, the more careful should you be to sanctify God’s name in it now that it is come.
- F. “Oh, but it is very great! My affliction is exceeding great.”

1. Let it be as great an affliction as it will, it is not as great as your sin. God has punished you less than your sins.
 2. It might have been a great deal more: you might have been in hell.
 3. *“It is an easier matter to be oppressed than to perish.”*
 - a. *Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) – French monastic reformer known for his devotion.*
 4. It may be it is the greater because your heart murmurs so. Shackles upon a man’s legs will pain him more, if his legs are sore.
- G. “But however you may lessen my affliction, yet I am sure it is far greater than the affliction of others.”
1. It may be it is your discontent that makes it greater, when indeed it is not so in itself.
 2. If it were greater than others were, why should you be discontented the more because God is gracious to others?
 3. Is your affliction greater than others? Then in this, you have an opportunity to honor God more than others: exercise more grace than other men.
- H. They think they would be more contented if the affliction were any other than it is.
1. You must know that we are not to choose our own rod that God shall beat us with.
 2. It may be that if it were any other than it is, it would not be so suitable for you as this is.
 3. Know that to be fitted for any condition is the excellence of grace in a Christian; not only to say, if it were this or that, but if it were any.
 4. Know that the Lord has rewards and crowns for all graces and for honoring them in all conditions.
- I. “Oh, but the condition that God has put me in makes me unserviceable, and this troubles me.”
1. Do but consider that though your condition is low and mean yet you are in the Body—the toe and the finger have their use in the body.
 - a. ***[1 Corinthians 12:14]- For the body is not one member, but many.***
 - b. *“It is better to be a little sprig in the tree joined to the root, than to be an arm cut off from the root.” – Augustine.*
 2. Though you have only a mean calling in this world and are not regarded as a man of use in the world, yet if you are a Christian, God has called you to a higher calling.
 - a. ***[Philippians 3:14]- I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.***
 3. Your calling is low and mean; yet do not be discontented with that, for you have a principle within you of grace (if you are a godly man or woman).
 4. Know further that there is likely to be more reward.
 - a. ***[Matthew 25:23]- His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.***
- J. “Oh, I could bear much affliction in some other way, but this is very grievous to me: the unsettledness of my condition.”
1. ***[Matthew 6:11]- Give us this day our daily bread.***
 2. ***[Ezra 4:13]- Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.***
 3. ***[John 1:16]- And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.***
- K. “If I never had been in a better condition, then I could bear this affliction.”
1. For is your eye evil because God has been good to you heretofore?

- a. *[Matthew 20:15]- Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*
- 2. We should look at all our outward prosperity as a preparation for afflictions.
 - a. Sailors who are in a calm prepare for storms.
- L. “Oh, but after I have taken a great deal of pains for this comfort, yet then I am thwarted in it.”
 - 1. *[2 Samuel 24:24]- And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*
- M. They think to keep it in.
 - 1. “Though I confess that my affliction is hard and I feel trouble within, yet I do not break out to the dishonor of God. I keep it in, although I have much ado with⁸² my own heart.”
 - 2. Oh, do not satisfy yourselves with that! —For the disorders of your hearts and their sinful workings are as words before God.

Part 3 – Applications and Conclusion.

VIII. How to Attain Contentment.

- A. Considerations to content the heart in any afflicted condition.
 - 1. 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.
 - a. *[Ephesians 1:3]- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*
 - 2. The consideration that God is beforehand with us with His mercies should content us.
 - a. *I remember reading of a good man who had lived to fifty years of age and enjoyed his health for eight and forty years exceedingly well, and lived in prosperity; but the last two years, his body was exceedingly diseased. But he reasoned the case with himself thus: “Oh, Lord, You might have made all my life a life of torment and pain, but You have let me have eight and forty years in health. I will praise Your mercies for what I have had and will praise Your justice for what now I feel.”*
 - 3. The consideration of the abundance of mercies that God bestows and we enjoy.
 - a. *“The sea of God’s mercies should swallow up all our particular afflictions.”- Luther*
 - 4. Consider the way of God towards all creatures. God carries on all creatures in a vicissitude of several conditions.
 - a. *We do not always have summer, but winter succeeds summer; we do not always have day, but day and night; we do not always have fair weather, but fair and foul.*
 - 5. The creatures suffer for us; why should not we be willing to suffer to be serviceable to God?
 - a. *God subjects other creatures: they are fain to lose their lives for us, to lose whatever beauty and excellence they have, to be serviceable to us. Why should not we be willing to part with anything in service for God?*
 - b. *“I look upon the creature and see what it suffers to be useful to me. Thus, the brute beasts must die, must be roasted in the fire, must come onto the plate, be hacked all in pieces, must be chewed in the mouth, and in the stomach turned to that which is loathsome if one should behold it—and all to nourish me, to be useful to my body—and shall not I be willing to be made anything for God, for His service?”*

1.) *John Hooper (c. 1495-1555) – English Protestant Reformer, burned to death during the persecutions of Bloody Mary; his views influenced the Puritans under Elizabeth I.*

6. Consider that we have but a little time in this world.
 - a. ***[2 Corinthians 4:17]- For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;***
 7. Consider the condition that others have been in, who have been our betters.
 - a. Jacob—who was the heir of Abraham, Isaac, and the promise—yet he goes over Jordan with a staff and lives in a very poor and mean condition for a long time.
 - b. Moses might have had all the treasure in Egypt. Yet what a low condition he lived in, when he went to live with Jethro his father-in-law forty years on end!
 - c. Elisha was many times in a low condition.
 - d. The prophets of God were hid in a cave by Obadiah and were fed there with bread and water.
 - e. The prophet Jeremiah [was] put into a dungeon, and oh, how he was used!
 - f. It would be endless to name the particulars of the great sufferings of the people of God.
 - g. ***[Romans 9:18]- Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.***
 8. Before your conversion, you were contented with the world without grace, though you had no interest in God or Christ. Why cannot you now be contented with grace and spiritual things without the world?
 - a. ***[Romans 8:28-29]- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.***
- B. What course to take that we may attain this grace of contentment.
1. All the rules and helps in the world will do us little good unless we get a good temper within our hearts.
 2. If you would get a contented life, do not grasp too much of the world.
 3. Be sure of your call to every business you go about.
 4. What has just been said is especially true if I add, “I walk by rule in the work that I am called to.”
 - a. ***[1 Corinthians 3:22-23]- Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.***
 5. Exercise much faith:
 - a. *A man may go very far with the use of reason alone to help him to contentment; but when reason is at a nonplus, then set faith at work.*
 - b. ***[1 Peter 5:7]- Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.***
 6. Labor to be spiritually minded.
 - a. ***[Colossians 3:1]- If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.***
 7. Do not promise yourselves too much beforehand; do not reckon on too great things.
 - a. ***[Genesis 28:20]- And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,***
 - b. ***[1 Timothy 6:8]- And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.***

- c. *[Jeremiah 45:5]- And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.*
8. Labor to get your hearts mortified, that is, dead to the world.
 - a. *[Romans 8:13]- For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*
 - b. *[Galatians 6:14]- But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*
 - c. *[1 Corinthians 15:31]- I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.*
 - d. *[Romans 6:3]- Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*
 9. Let not men and women busy their thoughts too much to look down into their afflictions.
 10. If any good interpretation can be made of God's ways towards you, make it.
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 13:5]- Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*
 - b. *[1 Peter 3:6]- Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*
 - c. *[Matthew 25:24]- Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:*
 11. Do not so much regard the fancies of other men, as what indeed you feel yourselves.
 12. Be not inordinately taken up with the comforts of this world when you have them.
- C. Conclusion.
1. Oh, the Word holds forth a way full of comfort and peace to the people of God even in this world. You may live happy lives in the midst of all the storms and tempests in the world. There is an ark that you may come into. No men in the world may live such comfortable, cheerful, and contented lives as the saints of God.
 2. God forbid that it should be said of any of us concerning this lesson, as Paul says of the widows,
 - a. *[2 Timothy 3:7]- Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*