

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 22nd October 2023 10 am

The secret of contentment

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer Psalm 108:3-5

Hymn MP 103 Come, ye faithful raise the anthem

Scripture 2 Samuel 22:1-7, 26-37 (page328)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk House, phone, money, car

Hymn MP 308 I will give thanks to thee

MP 321 I'm accepted I'm forgiven

Notices Psalm 50:15, phone numbers, Welcome church,
Lailah, Aaron.

Prayer and share time.

Reading Philippians 4:10-13 (page 1181)

1 Tim 6:6-11 (page 1194)

Hymn MP 52 God sent his Son

Sermon: "Are you content?"

Hymn MP 1072 In Christ alone

Closing Prayer No.8

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Prayer and Exordium

✚ Donald Crowhurst had an adoring wife and three happy children. He lived Teignmouth, Devon and ran an entrepreneurial electronics company. He had friends and enjoyed sailing on the inland waterways. One day at a boat show the challenge came up through the Sunday Times Golden Globe Race to sail around the world single handed and without stopping. Sir Francis Chichester laid out the gauntlet with the promise of achievement and fame. The prestige attached filled Donald's mind with dreams of fame, adventure and prize money. His wife tried to persuade him that life was already filled with abundance and there was no need for him to prove himself. She and the family faithfully supported him as he determinedly prepared for the departure.

He was a driven man. he wanted to make his mark. He was not contented, he was a discontented man. He suffered for it and so did those around him.

✚ After a delayed and ill prepared departure, everything that could possibly go wrong with the boat did. He feigned progress in his reports, and on the voyage admitted to himself how foolish he had been in pushing on with it. He couldn't stomach the prospect of returning and having his dishonesty and stupidity uncovered, he slowly lost his mind and then finally took himself overboard.

Here's one example of discontented man. He is not alone, the world is full of them. Are you one to? That is the way the world is. It should never be for a Christian. Many are never at peace in their circumstances, always wrestling for change, always seeking personal improvement and advancement. Wandering eyes, wandering hearts. That is not how someone trusting in Christ should be.

⇒ This morning we are looking a contentment. x2

Paul says: **I have learned the secret of being content** x2. Have you? "Are you content?", as this sermon's title goes. Have you learned the secret of being content in the place and situation the Lord has sovereignly brought you into?

Yes that is the starting point – and the end point - to know that the Lord God has **determined the times set for you and the exact places where you should live**
Ac 17:26

It is no accident or product of chance that you are where you currently are. The Lord has a purpose in it. He has chosen to place you here with your family, your circumstances, at this point in time, for a good reason. We are to be content with our God given lot in life. Your environment is the place he has chosen for you - in which you are live out a Godly life for Him. It is the place for you to prove and demonstrate the Lord's grace and power.

Paul is coming to the end of his letter to the church in Philippi. He commends the church for their concern for him and how they had, along with other churches sent him aid again and again. However, it sounds like it was a little sporadic which had meant there were times when he went without.

A bit like waiting for your ship to come in or those famous POW parcels.

Sometimes Paul had plenty, sometimes he went without. When he says: 11 **I am not saying this because I am in need**, he is not complaining to them about the amount of their gift, no, he turns it round and uses it as a chance to testify to the Lord's power and Grace.

He says: 12 **I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content, in any and every situation whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.**

Are you only content only when things are 'up' and everything is going well? Is your contentment tied to circumstances which rise and fall with the waves?

That is the world's way

✚ Do an online search for the meaning of 'contentment', and Google gives the example saying: "Contentment is the state of being happy and satisfied. On Thanksgiving when you think about all you are grateful for, hopefully you feel a sense of contentment. If not, have another piece of pie and then you'll feel contentment. Contentment isn't an excited kind of happy, it's more like a peaceful ease of mind.

Yes a typically American answer, "have another piece of pie" But can you be content without another piece of pie? A Christian can, - and should be!

There must be an external element to make me content in this trying situation. There must be something that transcends my current, immediate circumstances.

And for us that is our Rock and Stay, our Help and Strength, the Lord Jesus Christ who powerfully indwells every true believer.

The alternative is to be centred on the here and now, - something the advertising industry majors on.

Take note - we as Christians are constantly under attacked from an unchecked and largely unrestrained advertising machine bent on making you discontent.

⇒ **Why? For if you were content you wouldn't buy half the things you do!**

✚ Advertising works. Otherwise, there wouldn't be the vast sums spent on it. Google received an eye watering \$280 billion in revenue in 2022

It works so effectively by making you discontented with your lot in life.

2a

✚ Here are some advertising lines I have noted down: Appearance is not important it's everything. Love Money? Have more. Impatience is a virtue. Just do it. Have it your way. Obey your thirst. You can do it, we can help. The True Definition of Luxury, yours. Honor thy self. Don't dream it. Drive it! Be all that you can be. New EE does more. One life, live it. Reinvent yourself, "All about me" says a party company.

And on it goes, all those products beautifully presented surrounded by perfect people, happy people. Yes have that and your life will be just perfect and happy and you will have all the friends you could ever wish for.

⇒ **That is to set you up to failure.**

Social media is even more adept at persuading you that everyone else's life is fine - and full of fun, - I must be missing out!!

You have no reason to be dissatisfied - but now you are. Having sown dissatisfaction in your heart - you now do all you can to join the fantasy.

⇒ **You may not have left home to travel the world, but you do in your heart.**

Oh how Satan works. This has been his mark from the beginning.

In the Garden of Eden, were Adam and Eve lacking anything? No

Satan sows the doubt saying, "actually God is holding back, there's more, and I can give it to you, have 'this' - and your life will be even better than it is now".

How stupid - can you have more than perfect? No.

How could Eve and Adam listen, believe and act? What a mighty crash it was!

Now Satan, the god of this age is after us. His desire is that you transpose your discontent with things - to a discontent with God, something a Christian should never be.

Paul knows the pitfalls which is why he says: **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.**

Let us look at those pitfalls.

First when you are in need

Can you keep a settled heart when struggling or suffering or hungry? Do you know how to be when you are humbled, how to be when in need?

There are two things we can end up being tempted to do, firstly we can

1. Lose our comfort in God and distrust his providence - and grumble

2b

This was the whole point of their time in the desert. It was an essential, yes an essential test for them to learn to trust Him – as it is for us to learn to trust Him.

How sad to read that the people of God **grumbled in their tents and did not obey the LORD.** Ps 106:25

Grumbling is the outworking of that discontent heart – and the Lord is listening to every word – **he has heard your grumbling.**” Ex 16:9 **“How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites.** Nu 14:27

It is serious stuff - for every word - we will have to give an accounting to God.

Grumbling speeds on God’s judgment which is why Paul says to the church: **do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.** 1Co 10:10

Grumbling ends up at God’s door **Moses said: You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.**” Ex 16:8

Satan loves it when we turn to point the finger at God, Just as Adam blamed God for putting Eve there with him.

⇒ **Our being in need is there to teach us to trust in the Lord, - it is there to instil dependence on the Lord.**

Grumbling is the opposite of faith - a Christian should never, never grumble, **do everything without complaining** says Php 2:14. Grumbling blights us.

Those who do not know God and his goodness and grace grumble – we are not surprised - it is to be expected. But for God’s people? It should never be.

2. The second thing we can do when in need is to fret and scramble to take matters into our own hands and rely on our own solutions and schemes. This is subtle for we must certainly take due responsibility to work and not rely on others – including the state. But our hearts can be drawn away from God and to trust in my own ability to supply. As John the Baptist said to the soldiers: **“Don’t extort money — be content with your pay.”** Lu 3:14. Our faith and trust should be in the Lord and not in my home security, my financial security, my health security.

“Lord let me see the benefit of struggling and how it helps me in my faith”.

What about in a time of plenty?

As most of us are in - what about when the cupboards are full of food, there’s money in the bank, you can pay your bills, you are not lacking anything important. You have all you need. What can this produce in you? Yes pride,

you feel secure. If you are tempted to be satisfied in your prosperity - it is harder to trust the Lord and be satisfied in Him.

There was a documentary following the lives of the Lottery winners – Every life was a tale of woe, and in the end they were ruined by the sudden wealth.

All except one couple. An elderly couple gave most of it away, they lived the same modest lifestyle as before and visited the charity projects they had helped. It was so different, they were at peace and contented.

How do you do you cope with wealth? Sudden or otherwise? Do you see it as ‘Good I now having some disposable income? Do you think ‘now I can have a better car, better kitchen, better phone’ even though there is nothing inadequate with the old one, Christlike, humble modest living goes out of the window.

✚ **Just look at what is thrown away at the Lifford Lane tip? How much of those electrical items are still working fine? If it is not sometimes it is just a fuse gone, some are actually glad it has stopped working, now I have a reason to buy a nicer one.**

So which is harder? To be **well fed or to be hungry?**, to be **living in plenty or to be living in want?**

⇒ **It is easier to be worldly with much - but it is harder to live a life of faith with much – it is easier with less.**

Let us as Christians follow Paul’s good example. He said: **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.**

Paul did not learn this in the classroom, but through the battle within his own heart. For that battle has to be fought and victory found at the feet of Christ. He had learnt to be content; and who more than Paul considering the hardships and sufferings the Lord brought to him. Remember Paul says this writing from his prison cell! **13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**

Firstly the context is about being content, **“I can do everything”** does not mean the Lord will enable me to be a missionary in Japan, to be a church elder, to work in a homeless shelter, work with drug addicts, run a playgroup, jump off the roof and fly – on in the case of Paul enable him to walk out of the prison. This is not a catch all phrase for anything I want to do. Some would like this.

⇒ **Yes you can do everything the Lord wants you to do – for what he wants you to do - he will give you the wherewithal to do.**

Do you know the work the Lord has prepared for you to do? Are you doing it? If not why not? He will enable you to do it.

Let us not fail in our duties – I fear there are many Christians who fail to live up to the Lord’s call on their lives.

⇒ **One big reason we don’t do it is that our eyes have wandered off Him and onto our circumstances.**

The Lord wants you to be content in Him whatever your circumstances, so you are free to serve His purposes, and so you may honour Him. He will give you all the power you need for this, you can be sure of it.

Paul was content with the little he had, and that satisfied him; and when he went without he depended upon the Lord to provide for him from day by day. **Give us this day our daily bread.**

Paul learned to be content whatever situation he was in – So we must learn to trust the promises of God, to take him at his word, to prove that he is able to guard my heart and be my source of satisfaction.

Let us learn to look to the Lord to change our heart so that it would be constantly fixed on him when with nothing, but also when we have all we need like that couple who continued to live modestly whatever their income.

The problem with this sin of discontentment - is that it is a secret sin.

The prodigal son had itchy feet, he no longer wanted to stay where he was, he wanted something better, and he was off. Wonderfully he came to his senses and headed back into the will of God. That is a striking example of discontentment.

But the older brother was the same. The difference was that he didn’t show it. Yet it was all going on inside - a secret sin that grieved his father and ate him up like a cancer.

Ever wonder what the 11th commandment would be if there was one? **Some say thou shall not get caught!** If we had and 11th commandment “you shall not be discontent”

Contentment is an issue of the heart. Being discontent is one of those secret sins, as is coveting. ... and leads to breaking all the others... ^ lying, stealing, ..

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Christ is the font of grace. How often we read about the **grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Almost every church letter starts with it – because we as Christians rely on Christ’s grace as we rely on the air we breath. He promises that His grace will be sufficient for our every condition of life. Yes EVERY condition.

That is it. have that and you have learned the secret of contentment.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” Eph 6:10, let us **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.** 2Ti 2:1

Let me do my work among you, Do not strive, do not strive,

Let my peace reign within your hearts, Do not strive, do not strive

Graham Kendrick, 1977 Make Way Music

Let us be trusting people, May the Lord see we are contented in Him whatever situation you are in - without wandering hearts which leads to wandering eyes, which lead us away from our home in the Lord.

Can you say because of the Lord’s Grace to me I am content in all situations - with my husband or wife? with my house? with my income? with my looks? with my family? with my lot in life, my reputation? I am willing to be 2nd fiddle, I am willing and content to be of low position?

Godliness with contentment is great gain. 1Ti 6:6 x2

⇒ **God’s people can easily fall to grumbling. We have no reason to. His grace**

The answer is that if I have God in Christ with me I have everything, everything. The Lord God almighty is my father, my guide, my helper, my strength, my joy and my Glory. What difference does it make as to whether I am born in a palace with a silver spoon in my mouth, - or born in humble circumstances, if I have Jesus in me!

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Heb 13:5

But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 1Ti 6:8

The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble. Pr 19:23

⇒ **A Christian’s new nature is from God, and is something of God; and therefore it tends to God again, and is contented with nothing short of God, and in a perfect conformity to him.** (Jonathan Edwards devotional p.130)

Content means to be satisfied, we are to be satisfied in Him. - As the early church Father Augustine said: **Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.**

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,” Eph 3:16

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