

Being Content

Philippians 4:10-20

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

While most people's goal in life is to be happy then why is our natural state one of discontentment? Approximately 9.14 billion U.S. dollars are spent in Canada alone to convince us to buy goods and services with the promise that it will make us happy.¹ For the poor of this world does this mean that happiness is unattainable and the best they can hope for is to "window shop" and dream? If this were the case, then how does one explain so many people in this world remaining poor and yet happy? Also, if happiness comes from buying "stuff" then how does one explain why so many rich people are unhappy? Isn't it true that despite buying the best vacations, fanciest cars, luxurious homes and mountains of food to eat, our insatiable desires to always want more keeps us sad because we are always looking a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow that simply does not exist? Charles Spurgeon said that both in abundance and need "covetousness, discontent and murmuring, are as natural to a man as thorns are to the soil,"² In today's sermon we are going to find out that the key to happiness is being content and thankful with whatever God has provided!

The Wealth Trap

Wealth, fame and power are often a trap that catches and drowns many a person in a sea of sorrow! To prove this statement true, I invite you to think about the following illustration that



I am going to do in church on Sunday. The first thing that I am going to do is to ask for some children to volunteer as my bankers. I want children to play this part because of their ability to persuade an adult to do "silly" things! The children will be asked to "huddle" together and decide which adult they want to ask to be the "worldly" person of this illustration. Once an adult is chosen I am going to instruct the children to get this person to sit on a chair. I

will then explain how good life can be when one has only the simplest of things in their possession.

Most people however have a difficult time living this way because Satan dangles before them all sorts of "stuff" that is promised to bring them pleasure. Does not a person need more

¹ Taken from the following website: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1837/advertising-in-canada/>

² C. H. Spurgeon, "[Contentment.](#)" in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 269.

and better hair to be happy? I will get the children to pick out a “silly” wig and place it on the adult’s head. I will then ask the adult to smile when the wig is being put on but later to frown to show their happiness was short lived because he/she desired something else! Sitting outdoors in the sun is hot so now this person wants sunglasses to be happy. I will get the children to pick out “silly” sun glasses and put it over the adult’s eyes. While they are doing this, I will again ask the adult to smile but later to frown to show his/her happiness is short lived because he/she now desires a hat to keep his/her new expensive hair from being damaged. I will get the children to pick out a “silly” hat and place that on the adult’s head. While they are doing this again I will ask the adult to smile for a bit but later to frown to show his/her happiness is once again short lived. I will then tell the adult that their new “stuff” is expensive and invite them to get on a bike to work off their debt. While they are doing this, I will ask them to give a huge frown! I will then thank the adult participant and the children for their wonderful help and ask them to be seated.

Once you get caught in the spider’s web of “stuff” there is little chance of escaping for no matter how much one has one will always covet the “more” of someone else! In today’s



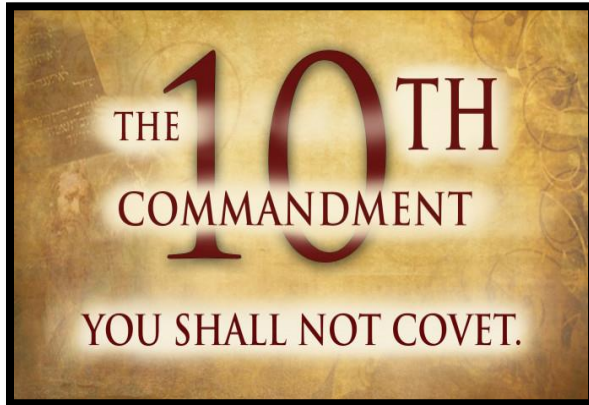
techno-savvy world one is always but a click away from buying more and more stuff! And the sad part is that the more debt one acquires to buy all the “stuff” one covets, the less money available to give to God and the greater likelihood of neglecting one’s spiritual walk with Him because one is working all the time to pay one’s bills! This is what Charles Spurgeon calls the “money spinner.” Once you get your fingers into coveting the things of this world soon goes in a hand, the feet, body and all!³ Way too many people’s happiness have been destroyed by Satan’s promise that acquiring stuff is the key to

becoming happy! And even when the blessings come from God are we not like Israel, the moment we experience providential mercies our gratitude lasts only as long as we don’t see something we covet as being “better”?⁴

³ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Contentment.”](#) in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 270–271.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, [“Contentment.”](#) in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 271.

The Bible has much to say about the “worldly” trap! While acquiring wealth is not a sin, we are told in 1 John 2:15-17 it is a sin to love and covet the things of this world. The lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life will not make one happy because the world and its desires will pass away. Having our mind understand this passage is one thing but having our heart

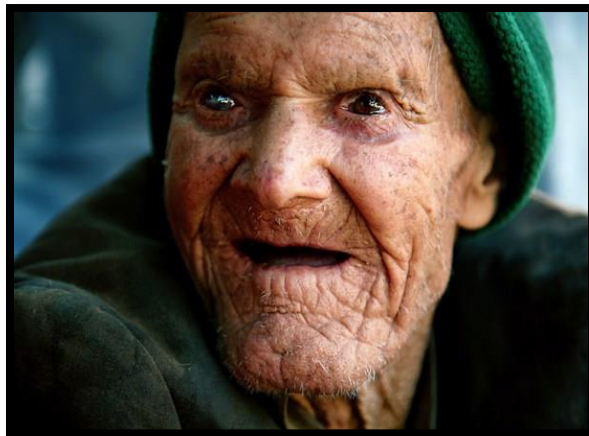


embrace this truth is quite another! While many believe they are like the Psalmist whose main goal in life was to thirst and pant to meet God (Psalms 42:1-2), truthfully most of us Christians still have one foot in Satan’s kingdom and as such are motivated to chase after things that are here today and gone Tomorrow (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)! Knowing that we struggle with the evil desires (James 1:14) to gratify our carnal pleasures of our hearts (Romans 7), Satan constantly dangles before us his version of happiness in which

money can buy absolutely anything. God tells us that true happiness doesn’t not come from acquiring “stuff” but from trusting in and accepting God’s sovereignty and providence⁵ to do good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28)! I would rather be a “dog” begging for a scrap from the Master’s table (Matthew 15:27) than a drunk of worldly possessions whom does not know his/her Creator, Savior and king!

The Poor Trap

While wealth, fame and power can be a trap that catches and drowns many a person in a sea of sorrow, so can being poor! There is nothing in hunger, or thirst, or nakedness, or peril, to



invite our contentment.⁶ For almost half of the world’s population that lives on less than \$2.50 a day⁷ I can only imagine how hard it is to be happy seeing the rest of this world throw out more food than they get to eat! For those living with cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, depression, paralysis or any other chronic disease it is very difficult to not covet the good health seen in others. And for all those whom have been laid off work, are having marital problems, recently lost a loved one or have been rejected by their friends and piers; can one truly be happy looking up from

⁵ D. A. Carson, “[Rejoice in the Lord Always,](#)” in *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016), Php 4:4–20.

⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Contentment,](#)” in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 272.

⁷ Taken from the following website: <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-global-poverty>

such valleys of tribulations only to see others blessed beyond worldly measure? “To have one day a path strewn with mercies and the next day to find the soil beneath you barren of every comfort”⁸ can bring any man or woman to their knees, crushed with overwhelming sorrow. And yet one finds amongst the poorest of this world joy and happiness that even the richest of the rich envy and would trade everything to obtain! This begs the question: how are these people able to look beyond their bleak circumstances and what do they look at or dream about that makes them so happy?

To answer this question, I want to do another illustration based on the following story.

Years ago, now a delightful old French woman told me a story from her own life that illustrates this principle. In her youth in France she had been taught to make a little box of Bible verses containing a selection of the promises of God from Scripture. Each verse was written on a small piece of paper about the size of a



piece of chewing gum, and each was then rolled up to make a miniature scroll. After there were forty or fifty of these small scrolls they were placed on end in a tiny open box. This was the promise box. She had been encouraged as a child to pull out one verse each morning and read it. One day during World War II (when she was much older) she was feeling terribly discouraged by many things that had happened. In

her depression her mind turned to the little box of promises that had been long since forgotten. She went to the drawer of the dresser where she kept the box and took it out. She prayed, “Lord, you know how depressed I am. You know that I need a word of encouragement. Isn’t there a promise here somewhere that can help me?” She finished praying and stepped over to the window where the light was better for reading. As she did she tripped over a loose edge of the rug and all the promises spilled out onto the carpet. She immediately got the point and prayed again, joyfully, “Lord, how foolish I have been to ask for one promise when there are so many glorious promises in your Word!”⁹

After telling the congregation this story I am going to present a similar box of promises. Each piece of paper will have a promise written on it from God’s word, rolled up with a ribbon around

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, “[Contentment](#),” in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 271.

⁹ James Montgomery Boice, [Philippians: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 256–257.

it to make it into a scroll. I am going to dump the promises on a table and then ask if anyone would like to come forward, open a scroll and read the promise.

Scroll 1: Promise of Salvation (John 3:16)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life

Think for a moment about all the riches and blessings that others have, and you covet. Can you honestly name one thing in life that is more valuable and precious to your soul than to be able to know your Creator? Since we all sin and fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) we all deserve death (Romans 6:23). Jesus died on the cross for everyone (2 Corinthians 5:15) so that through our belief in Him we become born again (John 3:1-21) and spend an eternity with Him. While we suffer for a little while Paul says it will be nothing in comparison (Romans 8:18) to the joy we are to experience in heaven!

Scroll 2: Promise to be Adopted as God's Children (John 1:12)

Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God

While we cannot choose our biological family we certainly can our heavenly one! For those who believe in the true Light that has come into the world they not only pass from darkness and death to light and life but are adopted into God's family! While one can only dream of being born into a "rich" family on this earth, through Jesus one can become part of a family that is in control of all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16)!

Scroll 3: Promise of Forgiveness of Sins (1 John 1:9-10)

**⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness**

Even in the darkest of trials and tribulations whom would ever say that forgiveness is not priceless? Is not having one's soul healed far more important than the healing of one's mind or body? While one can endure a disease that can only last a lifetime whom can endure the guilt and shame of having gone against a holy God if there was no way to be forgiven?

Scroll 4: Promise of God's Continual Presence (Hebrews 13:5)

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."

What a blessing it is to have God continually present in our lives! Whether we go to the heavens, the depths or the far side of the sea He whom knows everything about you is always present and ready to help you in your time of need (Psalms 139)! No amount of money can buy enough psychologists that could even begin to understand and help you like Jesus can!

Scroll 5: Promise of God's Continual Love (Romans 8:37-39)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Living in a world where relationships are fragile and easily broken isn't nice to know that no matter what we say or do God will always love us? While this does not give us a license to sin (Romans 6:1-4) it certainly gives us peace of mind knowing that Jesus loves us with an undying love! Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a world without God's love?

Scroll 6: Promise of Rest for the Weary (Matthew 11:28-29)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

When life's trials and tribulations become unbearable isn't it a true blessing to know that you can cast your burdens upon Jesus who is gentle and humble in heart? To receive the peace that surpasses all understanding that Jesus will give rest to one's heart and mind so that one does not become overwhelmed during life's storms is truly a gift beyond all measure (Philippians 4:7)!

Scroll 7: Promise of a Glorious Inheritance (Ephesians 1:18)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in His holy people, ¹⁹ and His incomparably great power for us who believe

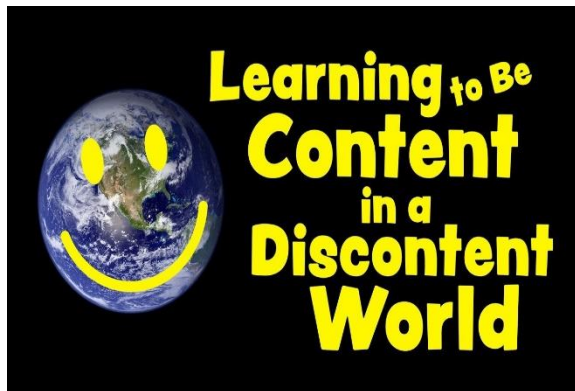
For those who believe in Jesus they are promised to receive a glorious inheritance both now and upon their arrival in heaven. He who called us out of the darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9) lavishes us with gifts without measure. To have a Counsellor living inside of us whom can heal body, mind and soul is a gift from Jesus that we did not earn or deserve (Ephesians 2:8-9) but are to gladly receive with thanksgiving in our hearts! To know that Jesus is preparing us a place in heaven (John 14:1-3) where there will be no more sorrow, pain or death (Revelation 21:4) but unspeakable joy in His presence is more valuable to me than anything else in life.

Whom of us would ever trade any of these blessings for something from this world? When we look up from the pit of trials and tribulations we are not to look upon the blessings of others and covet what they have but upon the face of Jesus and thank Him for having received unseen, eternal blessings that will never fade or spoil!

Secret of Happiness

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. ¹³ I can do all this through Him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:12-13, NIV)

Happiness according to Apostle Paul is not contingent on one's circumstances but faith that God is sovereign and will do good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28). This is not the



kind of faith that self-deluded people practice trying to escape reality¹⁰ but one that truly believes that God has a better plan for our present and eternal life than we could ever ask or imagine! Since we are what we think (Proverbs 4:23), happiness is not situationally dependent on events in our lives but the way one thinks about these events. In the face plenty, happiness can be maintained by thinking of one's riches as belonging to God and as such generously giving out of one's abundance to the needy of this world. In face of poverty happiness can be maintained by

thinking about all the glorious blessings one has been given and will receive in heaven. While it is difficult to give up our natural tendency for covetousness, discontentment and murmuring; it is possible to be continually happy because He who strengthens us will always come good on His promises!

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, 258.