

Christian Contentment

RESOURCES

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The **1828 Webster's Dictionary** defines "**content**" as

Rest or quietness of the mind in the present condition; satisfaction which holds the mind in peace, restraining complaint, opposition, or further desire, and often implying a moderate degree of happiness.

Contentment - a resting or satisfaction of mind without disquiet. It is "internal satisfaction which does not demand changes in external circumstances." (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

Contentment (1Timothy 6:6) is more inward than satisfaction; the former is a habit or permanent state of mind, the latter has to do with some particular occurrence or object. (ISBE)

Contentment - "The acceptance of 'things as they are' as the wise and loving providence of a God who knows what is good for us, who so loves us as always to seek our good" (Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible)

A wise content his even soul secur'd;
By want not shaken, nor by wealth allur'd.
Smith

[THE RARE JEWEL OF CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT](#) Jeremiah Burroughs' 400 year old **PURITAN CLASSIC**, is indeed deep but is also surprisingly easy to read. If you are struggling with Christian contentment [and who isn't?] this book is absolutely one of the best books ever written on this subject! [Highly recommended - click some reviews.](#)

Jeremiah Burroughs describes **CONTENTMENT** as

that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every

condition....It is a work of the Spirit 'indoors.' It is a box of precious ointment, very comforting and useful for troubled hearts in times of troubled conditions....Certainly our **CONTENTMENT** does not consist in getting the thing we desire, but in God's fashioning our spirits to our conditions...To be well-skilled in the mystery of Christian **CONTENTMENT** is the duty, glory and excellence of a Christian...That man or woman who is never without a **CONTENTED** spirit, truly can never be said to want much. 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 and no men in the world may live such comfortable, cheerful and contented lives as the saints of God. Oh, that we might learn this lesson." (Amen!)

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Here are a few snippets of [reviews from Amazon](#) regarding Burroughs' book...

- After you've read through the first chapter of this book, you will think most modern evangelical writing should be shelved next to Dr. Seuss. This is a fantastic and profound book,
- This is 'the book' on the doctrine of Christian contentment. The depth of the Puritans is rarely even approached by modern authors. Burrough's takes you through some of the ABC's of Christian living. For example on p.87-88 "We deserve nothing and therefore why should we be impatient if we do not get what we desire."
- This great book, written almost 400 years ago, addresses the basic problem of human discontent, suffering and offers a timeless and tested solution. 16th and 17th century Divines did not mince words, cater to the fickle tastes of the reading public or care about being politically correct. They preached the truth. True contentment, argues the author, is achieved by subtraction and not by addition; by surrender and not struggle. Read this great work and toss all those written by people who will be forgotten next year. It will set your heart on fire and elevate your soul.
- I am still reading this book, but I've read enough to have it significantly change my

outlook on life and afflictions.

- I especially like Burroughs view he takes throughout the book that we are pilgrims and soldiers in this world. It brings a much needed perspective to contentment.
- I don't read a lot of Puritan books because they can be hard to get into, but I enjoyed listening the the audio version of this book on contentment by Jeremiah Burroughs. The author uses many illustrations from daily life and Scripture to show how and why complaining (which he calls "murmuring" and having a "disquieted spirit") are absurd, unhelpful, and an affront to God's goodness and sovereignty.
- A must read if you want to grow your faith and go deeper with God. Today's Christian in America is too easily and often caught up in keeping up appearances and too little content with God's blessings. Jeremiah Burroughs wrote this gem 400 years ago but it reads very contemporary and has many great examples. This Puritan preacher's comments and attitude made me realize how worldly concepts can creep into my life. Prepare to have your world rocked.
- [Click here](#) if you want to read a few more reviews to motivate you to read this gem!

Steven Cole writes that contentment...

is an inner sense of rest or peace that comes from being right with God and knowing that He is in control of all that happens to us. It means having our focus on the kingdom of God and serving Him, not on the love of money and things.

Only genuine believers can be truly, fully content, for in the final analysis, **contentment** is not a **natural attainment** but a **supernatural gift** from our heavenly Father to His children (Jas 1:17-note)! To say it another way, a believer's degree of contentment in this world is a reflection of their degree of contentment regarding the world to come! The more the invisible, eternal realities grip our heart, the less the visible, temporal things of the world will have power to cause discontent.

Henrietta Mears adds that "The man who keeps busy helping the man below him won't have time to envy the man above him."

Spurgeon said "If you are not CONTENT with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled!"

A tragic illustration of this principle is found in Ps 106:13-15 (describing events in Nu 11:4, 31-34 where Israel was not CONTENT with **MANNA** but craved **MEAT**)

They quickly forgot His works. They did not wait for His counsel, but **CRAVED INTENSELY** ("greedy desires" Nu 11:4) in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert. SO He gave them their request, but sent **LEANNESS** into their SOUL. (Ps 106:13-15-[note](#))

The psalmist explains that Israel's craving **TESTED** (tempted) the LORD, because He had already given them all they needed for life (Manna), yet they were neither CONTENT nor GRATEFUL! Oh, the dire consequences of DISCONTENTMENT and the LEANNESS OF SOUL

(spiritual barrenness) it brings! Indeed, DISCONTENT is one of man's greatest sins, while CONTENTMENT is one of God's greatest blessings! Contentment comes not from greater wealth but from fewer wants.

A W Pink writes that

Contentment is the product of a heart resting in God...It is the blessed assurance that God does all things well and is, even now, making all things work together for my ultimate good.

Thomas Watson adds that

Contentment lies within a man, in the heart and the way to be comfortable is not by having our barrels filled, but our minds quieted!

Spurgeon comments on Ps 106 writing that whatever the meat "might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the **SOUL LEAN**. If we must know scantiness (falling short of what is necessary and desirable), may God grant it may not be scantiness of SOUL: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner." **TRUE CONTENTMENT** consists not in the **LARGENESS** of our possessions, but in the FEWNESS of our wants. **SOUL CONTENTMENT** is vital to our spiritual health.

Puritan Thomas Watson writes that "There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another's than BEING CONTENT with that which is our own."

The more content we are with what God has given us, the less we crave what we don't possess. On the other hand, the more we get the more we want. When we focus on material things, our **HAVING** will never catch up with our **WANTING!**

I am so convicted as I write this — how often I want something more or something other than what God has already generously given me! Oh, that we all might have a heart saturated with the sweetness of His sufficient provision in Christ, always confident that

God is able to make all grace abound to (us), that always HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING, (we) may have an abundance for **EVERY** good deed" (2Cor 9:8-note)

Earlier in Second Corinthians Paul had acknowledged that anything he accomplished for the advancement of the Gospel was a result of Divine provision...

Not that we are **adequate** (hikanos - sufficient = enough, enough to meet the needs of a situation or a proposed end) in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our **adequacy** is from God, Who also made us **adequate** as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2Cor 3:5-6-note)

Paul had **LEARNED** the sweet **SECRET OF CONTENTMENT** writing

Not that I speak from want; for I have **LEARNED** ("learned by experience" - exactly what we too must do! Trials, difficulties teach us this "secret") to be **CONTENT** (word study) (the idea is "contained" = describes one whose resources are within himself so that he does not have to depend on substitutes from without - we have the Spirit of Christ within!) in whatever circumstances I am (in Jail as he wrote, so his contentment was not based on his present circumstances but the presence of his Christ, His sufficiency!). I know how to get along with humble means and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have **LEARNED THE SECRET** of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need." (Php 4:11-12-note)

Having learned the **SECRET OF CONTENTMENT** Paul could boldly write the words which are sweet as honey to our taste

I can do **ALL** things (Whatever works have been prepared for me [Eph 2:10-note] I can do) through (Gk literally "**in**" not through = speaks of intimate, personal, vital union with Jesus) Him Who (endunamoo in the present tense = continually, all the time, always) strengthens me." (Php 4:13-note)

Contentment does not come naturally (even to Christians) but only supernaturally as one learns that this life is no longer me living but Christ living in and through me and enabling by His indwelling Spirit. In other words, true supernaturally enabled **CONTENTMENT** is not self-sufficiency (as the Greek's thought) but **CHRIST-SUFFICIENCY**. Have you "learned the secret?" Notice that Paul does not say he is simply "letting go and letting God". His part, his responsibility is to "**do**", while God's provision is the supernatural enablement.

**When Jesus is our sole satisfaction,
We will have true satisfaction in our soul.**

Steven Cole has a great comment on Phil 4:10-13...

In Philippians 4:10-13, a man who sits in prison because of corrupt officials awaiting possible execution over false charges tells us **how to find contentment**. The answer lies buried in the midst of a "thank-you note." The Philippian church had sent a financial gift to Paul the prisoner. He wants to express his heartfelt thanks, but at the same time he doesn't want to give the impression that the Lord was not sufficient for his every need. Even though he had been in a very difficult situation (Php 4:14, "affliction"), he doesn't want his donors to think that he had been discontented before the gift arrived; but he does want them to know that their generosity was truly appreciated. So he combines his thanks with this valuable lesson on the secret for contentment...

The word content (Php 4:11) comes from a Greek word that means self-

sufficient or independent. The Stoics elevated this word, the ability to be free from all want or needs, as the chief of all virtues. But the Stoic philosophy was marked by detachment from one's emotions and indifference to the vicissitudes of life. This clearly is not the sense in which Paul meant the word, since in 4:10 he shows that he rejoiced in the Lord greatly when he received the gift, not because of the money, but because it showed the Philippians' heartfelt love and concern for him. Paul was not detached from people nor from his feelings. He loved people dearly and was not afraid to show it. And, 4:13 clearly shows that Paul did not mean the word in the pagan sense of self-sufficiency, since he affirms that his sufficiency is in Christ.

Neither does contentment mean complacency. As Christians we can work to better our circumstances as we have opportunity. The Bible extols hard work and the rewards that come from it, as long as we are free from greed.

Warren Wiersbe adds that...

The Apostle Paul was a thermostat. Instead of having spiritual ups and downs as the situation changed, he went right on, steadily doing his work and serving Christ. His personal references at the close of this letter indicate that he was not the victim of circumstances but the victor over circumstances:

“I can accept all things” (Php 4:11)

“I can do all things” (Php 4:13)

“I have all things” (Php 4:18)

Paul did not have to be pampered to be content; he found his contentment in the spiritual resources abundantly provided by Christ.

Contentment is not complacency, nor is it a false peace based on ignorance. The complacent believer is unconcerned about others, while the contented Christian wants to share his blessings. **Contentment** is not escape from the battle, but rather an abiding peace and confidence in the midst of the battle. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor or Logos or Wordsearch](#))

SUPERNATURAL CONTENTMENT ENABLES MAINTENANCE OF SPIRITUAL EQUILIBRIUM

Paul alludes to **contentment** in his warning to Timothy regarding...

men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

But (term of contrast) = contrast the aforementioned erroneous view

of false teachers and now gives the Christian view explaining that) godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by **contentment** (an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances). For (term of explanation - Paul explains the great value of godly contentment - it is so valuable because) we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be **content**. (1Ti 6:5-8)

Hiebert comments: A state of contentment makes one independent of outward circumstances, satisfied with one's inner resources, **enabling one to maintain a spiritual equilibrium** in the midst of favorable as well as unfavorable circumstances. It is not a stoical indifference to or contempt for material needs. The Christian can be self-sufficient because his sufficiency is rooted and grounded in God's all-sufficiency and rests with assurance upon God's providential care. **Such contentment naturally belongs to true godliness.** (Ed: Which is why in dependence on the Spirit's enabling power, we need to seek to obey Paul's command to discipline ourselves for godliness because it is profitable now and in the life to come! 1Ti 4:7, 8-note) "Paul knows that man is only satisfied in God; and therefore devotion to God is the first condition of this true satisfaction, and contentedness with an earthly lot the second" (Liddon, quoted in Brown). Such godliness is a very different thing from the mercenary concept of the false teachers. It is truly "**great gain.**" It not only brings satisfaction amid one's earthly lot but fills the soul with positive good. "Godliness makes us content, and to be content is the highest good" (Van Oosterzee). (First Timothy - Everyman's Bible Commentary)

Steven Cole explains that: Contentment means that you are focused on the eternal. You are aware of the shortness of life. Therefore, your life is committed to seeking first the kingdom of God, the only thing that will last. Since you trust in the sovereign God, you're not tossed around by changing circumstances... You need to see that true contentment only comes from making godliness your priority and eternity your perspective... God has called His people to a life marked by contentment. Contentment comes from...

**having the right priority—
godliness, not gain;
and the right perspective—
the eternal, not the temporal.**

Jim Elliot, who was martyred at 28, wisely wrote in his journal when he was a 22-year-old college student, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." You can't keep the things of

this world; you can't lose the promises of God regarding eternity. Order your life in line with that truth, and you will know God's contentment. ([1 Timothy 6:6-8 Prescription for Contentment](#))

Theodore Epp comments that...

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that we should be content with unsatisfactory conditions. But because of our personal relationship with Christ we can be content in them. As different situations arise and we learn our lessons one after another, we will also find it possible to be content in every situation.

Contentment is one of those concepts that is easier to define than to experience. This is probably because the tendency is to seek contentment in **possessions** rather than in a **person**. We assume that contentment comes from having things, but it is possible to have deep contentment without things. So often we think contentment would be ours if we were promoted to the next higher position or if we were able to buy that object we think we need so much or if we could be accepted in a certain circle of friends. But as we advance in these areas, we discover that contentment is elusive because we are seeking it in the wrong places and in the wrong way.

**Contentment does not depend on what we have;
it depends on who we are.**

It is a spiritual attainment, not something that results from purchasing power. As someone has said, "Contentment is a state of a believer's heart rather than a statement of bank account." ([Contentment, Not Complacency](#))

Spurgeon rightly says that

CONTENTMENT is one of the flowers of heaven and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It will not grow in us by nature. It is the new nature (**Ed:** And the enabling power of the Holy Spirit) alone that can produce it and even then we must be especially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us... Remember that a man's **CONTENTMENT** is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander (the Great) with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer.... But how easy it is for a man to be **CONTENTED** when he knows that God has promised to be with him in **ALL** circumstances and at **ALL** times." ([Philippians 4:10-13 The Secret for Contentment](#))

The writer of Hebrews amplifies Spurgeon's thoughts encouraging us to

Let (our) character be free from the love of money, **BEING CONTENT** with what (we) have; For (See note = explains why we should be able

to **BE CONTENT** with what we have) He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER (in Greek 5 negatives paraphrased "never, ever, no never, absolutely never"), FORSAKE YOU." (Hebrews 13:5-note)

We will be **CONTENT** when we truly embrace the fact that we have Jesus, Who is forever **ENOUGH** and forever with us. The material things of life can decay or be stolen, but God will never leave us or forsake us. This **great truth** is the firm foundation for **great contentment** - Christ in us our Hope of Glory (Col 1:27- note).

A W Tozer said,

The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One." A Puritan sat down to his meal and found that he had only a little bread and some water. His response was to exclaim, "What? All this and Jesus Christ too!

The truth is that when you come to the point where you realize that all you have left is Jesus, then you come to know that **JESUS** is all you **NEED**, a truth Paul affirms in Second Corinthians...

And He (**JESUS**) has said to me, "My grace is (present tense = continually, all the time, always) **sufficient** for you, for (term of explanation = Ask "What is Jesus explaining?") (My enabling) **power** (dunamis = supernatural enablement to accomplish the supernatural!) is perfected (brought to maturity, to its intended goal) in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2Cor 12:9-note, 10-note)

IS JESUS ENOUGH FOR YOU?

While you may quickly answer "Yes", let me ask one qualifying question "Have you looked Here's a way to assess your Thank You great giving God, especially for the unfathomable gift of Your precious Son Jesus Who is "more than enough for all of me for every thirst and every need." (See song below) May You grant each of us great grace, supernaturally enabling us by Your sweet Spirit to be **CONTENT** with what you have given us (be it in the world's eyes a little or a lot), **SO THAT** we might give the world a proper opinion of ("glorify") Your great Name and Your gracious giving character which prompted You to give Your only begotten Son to die that we might truly live. Amen

[The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment](#) by **Jeremy Burroughs** - Recommended Reading

[ENOUGH](#)

All of You is MORE THAN ENOUGH for
All of me for every thirst and every need
You satisfy me with Your love
And all I have in You is MORE THAN ENOUGH
You are my SUPPLY, my BREATH OF LIFE
Still more awesome than I know
You are my REWARD, worth living for
Still more awesome than I know
You're my SACRIFICE of greatest price
Still more awesome than I know
You're the COMING KING, You are EVERYTHING
Still more awesome than I know
MORE THAN ALL I WANT, MORE THAN ALL I NEED
You are MORE THAN ENOUGH for me
More than all I know, more than all I can see
YOU ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH

Illustration - An airline pilot was flying over the Tennessee mountains and pointed out a lake to his copilot. "See that little lake?" he said. "When I was a kid I used to sit in a rowboat down there, fishing. Every time a plane would fly overhead, I'd look up and wish I was flying it. Now I look down and wish I was in a rowboat, fishing." Contentment can be an elusive pursuit. We go after what we think will make us happy only to find that it didn't work; in fact, we were happier before we started the quest. It's like the story of two teardrops floating down the river of life. One teardrop said to the other, "Who are you?" "I'm a teardrop from a girl who loved a man and lost him. Who are you?" "I'm a teardrop from the girl who got him."

Epictetus said "Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants."

James Hastings

The idea of 'contentment' is more prominent in Scripture than appears on the surface. The word, indeed, is seldom used, St. Paul being the only NT writer who treats the subject explicitly. But whether the word is there or not, the thing is there. Seeing that the virtue is one of the constituent elements of earthly life and happiness, it would be strange if it were absent from the ethics of Scripture. No amount of worldly fortune or success, without a contented mind, brings happiness, while contentment makes straitened means enough. We are not surprised

that the subject enters into all ethical schemes and has been a favourite text of essayists in all lands and ages. (Dictionary of the Apostolic Church)

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Two little teardrops were floating down the river of life. One teardrop asked the other, "Who are you?"

"I am a teardrop from a girl who loved a man and lost him. But who are you?"

The first teardrop replied, "I am a teardrop from the girl who got him."

Life is like that. We cry over the things we can't have, but we might cry twice as hard if we had received them. Paul had the right idea when he said, "... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation ... " (Phil. 4:12, NIV). (Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Over 1500 sermon illustrations Green, Michael P)

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Fanny Crosby was blinded by a quack medicine man at a very young age, but instead of being embittered at God, became enamored with God and His Word and found her sufficiency in Him. [Wholesome Words](#) writes that...

The secret of this contentment dates from her first composition at the age of eight years. "It has been the motto of my life," she says. It is:

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

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

This has continued to be her philosophy. She says that had it not been for her affliction she might not have so good an education, nor so great an influence, and certainly not so fine a memory. She knows a great many portions of the Bible by heart, and had committed to memory the first four books of the Old Testament, and also the four Gospels before she was ten years of age. ([Fanny Crosby](#))

Collins Thesaurus of the Bible

I will be satisfied when I awake in your likeness (Ps. 17:15); from the fruit of his mouth a man will be satisfied with good (Pr. 12:14); Abraham died, an old man and satisfied (Gen. 25:8); when Moses heard

this, it was good in his eyes (Lev. 10:20); I have learned to be content in all circumstances (Phil. 4:11); I am well-pleased with weakness, insults etc. (2 Cor. 12:10); godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6); if we have food and clothing we will be content (1 Tim. 6:8); death comes to some who are at ease and satisfied (Job 21:23); you will have plenty to eat and be satisfied (Joel 2:26); show us the Father and we will be satisfied (John 14:8); God satisfied your hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:17).

Spurgeon

No man ever need fear offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man, for if anyone came to claim the reward, he would prove his discontent.

Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Savior's blood my full discharge,
Content at his dear feet I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay.

Small shoes are apt to pinch, but not if you have a small foot; if we have little means it will be well to have little desires. Poverty is no shame, but being discontented with it is.

It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy that brings happiness (contentment).

Even crumbs are bread.

A crust is hard fare, but none at all is harder.

To many men it is given to have all that heart can wish, and yet not to have what their heart does wish. They have everything except contentment.

The two ends of our life are nakedness; if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder; and if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.

Steven Cole points out that the **lack of contentment** that marks most Americans is reflected in many ways.

(1) We see it in our high rate of consumer debt. We aren't content to live within our means, so we go into debt to live just a bit better than we can afford, but then we suffer anxiety from the pressure of paying all our bills...

(2) Our discontent is reflected in our high rate of mobility. People rarely stay at the same address for more than five years. We're always on the move, looking for a better house, a better job, a better place to live and

raise a family, a better place to retire.

(3) Our discontent rears its head in our high divorce rate. We can't find happiness in our marriages, so we trade our mates in for a different model, only to find that the same problems reoccur.

(4) Our lack of contentment is seen in our clamoring for our rights, all the while claiming that we have been victimized. If we can just get fair treatment, we think we'll be happy. We are suing one another at an astonishing rate, trying to get more money so we can have more things so that life will be more comfortable. We spend money that we can't afford on the lottery, hoping to win a big jackpot that will give us what we want in life. But even those who win large settlements in a lawsuit or a lottery jackpot are not much happier in the long run...

George Muller proved the sovereign faithfulness of God in the matter of finances. He lived in 19th century Bristol, England, where he founded an orphanage. He and his wife had taken literally Jesus' command to give away all their possessions (Luke 14:33), so they had no personal resources. Also, he was firmly committed to the principle of not making his financial needs known to anyone, except to God in prayer. He was extremely careful not even to give hints about his own needs or the needs of the orphanage. The children never knew about any financial difficulties, nor did they ever lack good food, clothes, or warmth.

But there were times when Muller's faith was tried, when the Lord took them down to the wire before supplying the need. On February 8, 1842, they had enough food in all the orphan houses for that day's meals, but no money to buy the usual stock of bread or milk for the following morning, and two houses needed coal. Muller noted in his journal that if God did not send help before nine the next morning, His name would be dishonored.

The next morning Muller walked to the orphanage early to see how God would meet their need, only to discover that the need had already been met. A Christian businessman had walked about a half mile past the orphanages toward his place of work when the thought occurred to him that Muller's children might be in need. He decided not to retrace his steps then, but to drop off something that evening. But he couldn't go any further and felt constrained to go back. He gave a gift that met their need for the next two days (George Muller: Delighted in God! by Roger Steer [Harold Shaw Publishers], pp. 115-116). Muller knew many instances like that where God tried his faith.

If you are walking with God and you find yourself in a desperate situation, you can know that you are not there by chance. The sovereign God has put you there for your training in faith, that you

might share His holiness. It may be a small crisis or a major, life-threatening crisis. Submit to and trust the Sovereign God and you will know the contentment that comes from Him...

Legend has it that a wealthy merchant during Paul's day had heard about the apostle and had become so fascinated that he determined to visit him. So when passing through Rome, he got in touch with Timothy and arranged an interview with Paul the prisoner. Stepping inside his cell, the merchant was surprised to find the apostle looking rather old and physically frail, but he felt at once the strength, the serenity, and the magnetism of this man who relied on Christ as his all in all. They talked for some time, and finally the merchant left. Outside the cell, he asked Timothy, "What's the secret of this man's power? I've never seen anything like it before." "Did you not guess?" replied Timothy. "Paul is in love." The merchant looked puzzled. "In love?" he asked. "Yes," said Timothy, "Paul is in love with Jesus Christ." The merchant looked even more bewildered. "Is that all?" he asked. Timothy smiled and replied, "That is everything." (Adapted from Leonard Griffith, *This is Living* [Abingdon] p. 149.) That's the secret of contentment--to be captivated by Christ- as the Sovereign to whom I submit; as the Savior whom I serve; as the Sufficient One whom I trust in every situation. ([Philippians 4:10-13 The Secret for Contentment](#))

See Other Resources on Contentment. [Monergism Contentment](#)

CONTENTMENT AND A HUMBLE WALK

John Owen...

The soul that sets up its rest, and makes it its great concernment to walk humbly with God, is brought to His foot, bent to His will, is ready for His disposal; and whatever God does in the world with himself, his, or others, he hath peace and quietness in it. His own will is gone, the will of God is his choice; his great concernment lies not in anything that can perish, that can be lost.

When a man shall see, in the worst state and condition, that his great concernment is safe; that though all is lost, God, who is all, is not lost; that this can never be taken from him;—it fills his heart with delight. Is he in prosperity? he fears not the loss of that which he most values. Is he in adversity? yet he can walk with God still; which is his all. He can therefore glory in tribulations, rejoice in afflictions;—his treasure, his concernment is secure. ([from sermon entitled Of Walking Humbly With God](#))

**O Lord, give me the grace to be
Content with what You give to me.
No, more than that, let me rejoice
In all You send, for it's Your choice!**

—Anonymous

PONDER THESE QUOTES RELATED TO CONTENTMENT

All the world lives in two tents—content and discontent.

Contentment is an inexhaustible treasure. Anon.

Contentment is wanting what you have, not having everything you want.

The richest person is the one who is contented with what he has.

Many Christians find it difficult to be content because we typically focus, not on what we do have, but on what we lack!

Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have.

When you can think of yesterday without regret and tomorrow without fear, you are near contentment.

A Christian is one who does not need to consult his bank balance to see how wealthy he is.

A contented person is one who enjoys the scenery along the detour.

Let your riches consist, not in the largeness of your possessions, but in the fewness of your wants. -Anonymous

It isn't what we have, but what we enjoy that makes for a rich life, and the wise person understands that contentment is not having everything we want, but enjoying everything we have.

Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants.

A contented spirit is a fruit of divine grace. - George Barlow

Contentment with what we have is absolutely vital to our spiritual health. -Jerry Bridges

To live content with small means; to see elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable; and wealthy, not rich; to listen to stars and birds, babes and sages, with open heart; to study hard; to think quietly, act frankly, talk gently, await occasions, hurry never; in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common - this is my

symphony. - William Henry Channing, clergyman & reformer (1810-1884)

Remember this—that very little is needed to make a happy life. - Marcus Aurelius

He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has - Epictetus

It is the best riches not to desire riches. -Thomas Brooks

If we have not quiet in our minds, outward comfort will do no more for us than a golden slipper on a gouty foot. - John Bunyan

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. (**Ed:** A corollary is that this contentment is firmly rooted in a steadfast faith in the **providence** of God - trusting that whatever happens in my life is "filtered through the omnipotent, omniscient, loving fingers" of my Father!) (**See also Jeremiah's Burroughs' classic work [The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment](#)**) -Jeremiah Burroughs - **Comment: Consider reading this book with Christian blogger [Tim Challis reading thru Burroughs book](#)**

Being "contented" ought to mean in English, as it does in French, being pleased. Being content with an attic ought not to mean being unable to move from it and resigned to living in it: it ought to mean appreciating all there is in such a position. -G. K. Chesterton

True contentment is the power of getting out of any situation all that there is in it. - G. K. Chesterton

O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be;
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, and I won't.
- Fanny Crosby

I am always content with what happens, for what God chooses is better than what I choose.

Epictetus'

Contentment does not depend on what we have; it depends on who we are. It is a spiritual attainment, not something that results from

purchasing power. As someone has said, "Contentment is a state of heart rather than a statement of account." - Theodore Epp

Contentment is the direct fruit of having no higher ambition than to belong to the Lord, at His disposal. - Sinclair Ferguson

If we noticed little pleasures,
As we notice little pains—
If we quite forgot our losses
And remembered all our gains.
If we looked for people's virtues
And their faults refused to see.
What a comfortable, happy, cheerful place
This world would be!
--Forbes Magazine of Business

Content (ment) makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor.
- Benjamin Franklin

Better a little fire to warm us than a great one to burn us. - Thomas Fuller

Contentment consists not in adding more fuel, but in taking away some fire; not in multiplying wealth, but in subtracting men's desires. - Thomas Fuller

Be happy with what you have and are, be generous with both, and you won't have to hunt for happiness. William E Gladstone

Contentment is realizing that God has already given me everything I need for my present happiness. - Bill Gothard

Contentment is understanding that if I am not satisfied with what I have, I will never be satisfied with what I want. - Bill Gothard

Happy is the person who has learned the **secret of being content** with whatever life brings him, and has learned to rejoice in the simple and beautiful things around him. - Billy Graham

Some one hundred years ago it was determined that the average American had about 70 wants, things he desired to have. A similar survey was taken of his grandson and he had nearly 500 wants on his list and today, I'm sure that number is even higher. Why? Because people are not content in what they have! - Joe Guglielmo - [Philippians 4:11-20 The Content Life](#)

The holy person is the only contented man in the world. - William Gurnall

He is much happier that is always content, though he has ever so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has ever so much. -

Matthew Henry

That condition of life is best for every man which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. - Matthew Henry

Contentment is internal satisfaction which does not demand changes in external circumstances. - Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

Christ is enough to satisfy the hearts of all who confide in Him and who leave everything in His hands. Such need never be cast down by seeming misfortunes. A Christian asked another how he was getting along. Dolefully his friend replied, "Oh, fairly well, under the circumstances." "I am sorry," exclaimed the other, "that you are under the circumstances. The Lord would have us living above all circumstances, where He Himself can satisfy our hearts and meet our every need for time and eternity." -- H. A. Ironside

Is your place a small place?

Tend it with care!

He set you there.

Is your place a large place?

Guard it with care!

He set you there.

Whatever your place, it is

Not yours alone, but His,

Who set you there.

--John Oxenham

The only person in this world who enjoys complete contentment is the person who knows that the only worthwhile and satisfying life is to be a means, however humble, to God's chief end his own glory and praise. - J. I. Packer

All the misfortunes of men spring from their not knowing how to live quietly at home in their own rooms. -Blaise Pascal

Contentment does not come naturally but only supernaturally as one learns that this life is no longer me living it, but Christ living in and through me. - Preceptaustin

Contentment is an embracing of the **providence** of God. -George SeEVERS

If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled. -C. H. Spurgeon

Small shoes are apt to pinch, but not if you have a small foot; if we have little means it will be well to have little desires. Poverty is no shame, but being discontented with it is. - Spurgeon

It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy that brings happiness. - Spurgeon

Even crumbs are bread... A crust is hard fare, but none at all is harder. - Spurgeon

A little sprig of the herb called content put into the poorest soup will make it taste as rich as the Lord Mayor's turtle. - Spurgeon

I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little water, and lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, "What! all this, and Christ too?" - Spurgeon

Remember that a man's contentment is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander, with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer.- Spurgeon

To many men it is given to have all that heart can wish, and yet not to have what their heart does wish. They have everything except contentment. - Spurgeon

The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One - AW Tozer

There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another's than being content with that which is our own. -Thomas Watson

Immoderate care (anxiety) takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we shall live, we forget how to die. - Thomas Watson

Discontent keeps a man from enjoying what he doth possess. A drop or two of vinegar will sour a whole glass of wine. - Thomas Watson

The fewer desires, the more peace.-Joseph Wilson

Sermons by Charles Simeon that discuss contentment -

(1) [**Contentment Illustrated in the Shunamite - 2Kings 4:13**](#)

Excerpt: [Nothing will so soon or so effectually deliver us from worldly desires, as the acquisition and experience of heavenly joys. Our Lord told the Samaritan woman that "whosoever should drink of Jacob's well, would thirst again; but that whosoever should drink of the water that he would give, should never thirst." And so we find it invariably. "By the cross of Christ, the world will become crucified unto us, and we unto the world." Let us then "set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth:" so shall we both advance our happiness here, and secure a more exalted happiness in the realms above

(2) [**Contentment - Philippians 4:11-12**](#)

Excerpt: How am I to "learn" this lesson? (CONTENTMENT) I ANSWER,

1. Apply to God for the influences of his Holy Spirit—It is, as I have said, the knowledge of Christ crucified, and that alone, that can ever fill the soul and render it superior to all earthly things. But who can give you that knowledge? It is the office of “the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and to reveal them unto us.” None but he call “open the eyes of our understanding:” none but he can “guide us into all truth:” nor can any but he renew our souls after the Divine image — — Pray then to God for the gift of his Holy Spirit: and, if you yourselves would not mock your child with giving him a stone when he asked for bread, much less will God mock you, by refusing to impart to you this gift, in which all good things for time and for eternity are contained.]

2. Contemplate the fulness which is treasured up for you in Christ Jesus—“It has pleased the Father, that in Christ should all fulness dwell:” and for you is it treasured there, that “you may receive out of it” according to your necessities. Hence then, if you have believed in Christ, you are authorized to say, “All things are mine, since I am Christ’s.” And if all things are yours, whether “things present, or things to come,” what can you lack? or what ground can you have for discontent? Only get clear views of Christ as your righteousness and strength, and you will be at no loss for the attainment which your soul desires — — —

3. Survey the glory that is reserved for you in heaven—[What does it matter to a traveler, if his accommodations, where he stops but a few minutes, be not exactly such as he could wish? Can they carry me forward to my destined home? will be his main inquiry: and if he find that he can attain his wishes in this respect, he will not lay to heart the little inconveniences which he is to sustain for so short a time. The comforts which he shall enjoy at home occupy his mind; and the very discomforts of the way endear to him the end, and make him look forward to it with augmented zest. Let it then be thus with you, my brethren: ye are only pilgrims and sojourners here: and, if you dwell with blessed anticipations on your eternal rest, you will become indifferent to the accommodations of the way; and, according to the grace given to you, will be enabled to say, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Having tasted of redeeming love, they are become comparatively indifferent to every thing else. Whatever they possess, they account on undeserved mercy: whatever they want, they regard as scarcely worthy of a thought. They know that “all things shall eventually work together for their good.” “They are hid, in the secret of their Saviour’s presence, from the strife of tongues: and whilst the minds of others are agitated with violent and malignant passions, theirs are “kept in perfect peace.”

This, then, I would earnestly recommend to you: Let your first concern be about your own souls. Seek for reconciliation with your offended God; and endeavor to walk in the light of his countenance. Then, whatever others may do, you may look forward to better times, when all troubles shall have fled away, and your happiness be unalloyed in the bosom of your God.

(3) **Contentment Recommended - Ecclesiastes 7:10**

Excerpt: Having tasted of redeeming love, they are become comparatively indifferent to every thing else. Whatever they possess, they account on undeserved mercy: whatever they want, they regard as scarcely worthy of a thought. They know that “all things shall eventually work together for their good.” “They are hid, in the secret of their Saviour’s presence, from the strife of tongues: and whilst the minds of others are agitated with violent and malignant passions, theirs are “kept in perfect peace.” This, then, I would earnestly recommend to you: Let your first concern be about your own souls. Seek for reconciliation with your offended God; and endeavour to walk in the light of his countenance. Then, whatever others may do, you may look forward to better times, when all troubles shall have fled away, and your happiness be unalloyed in the bosom of your God.

(4) **Inordinate Desire Punished - Numbers 11:10-13**

Excerpt: 2. Cultivate a Contented Spirit - “Be contented with such things as ye have.” (Heb 13:5) It is better to have little with a devout spirit, than abundance, and “leanness of soul withal.” (Ps 106:15KJV) God showed that it was not from any want of power that he did not feed them every day with flesh (Ed: Referring to God's provision to Israel in the wilderness - cp Nu 11:4-6, 31-34); but because he knew that it would be productive of no good to their souls. Think not that it is from any want of love or power that he suffers you to be tried in a variety of ways. He could easily carry you on without any trials, and give you all that the most carnal heart could desire. But trials are the fruits of His love: He desires to instruct you in every part of your duty; that you may “know both how to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Php 4:12) “Learn then in every thing to be content,” and to say from your hearts in all things, “Not my will, but thine be done.” (Luke 22:42)

Thomas Watson wrote that **contentment** is

a sweet temper of spirit, whereby a Christian carries himself in an equal poise in every condition. The nature of this will appear more clear in these three aphorisms.

(1) Contentment is a divine thing; it becomes ours, not by

acquisition, but infusion; it is a slip taken off from the tree of life, and planted by the Spirit of God in the soul; it is a fruit that grows not in the garden of philosophy, but is of an heavenly birth; it is therefore very observable that contentment is joined with godliness, and goes in equipage; “godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Ti 6. 6) Contentment being a consequent of godliness, or concomitant, or both, I call it divine, to contradistinguish it to that of contentment, which a moral man may arrive at. Heathens have seemed to have this contentment, but it was only the shadow and picture of it; — the beryl, not the true diamond: theirs was but civil, this is sacred; theirs was only from principles of reason, this of religion; theirs was only lighted at nature’s torch, this at the lamp of scripture. Reason may a little teach contentment, as thus: whatever my condition be, this is that I am born to; and if I meet with crosses, it is but catholic misery: all have their share, why therefore should I be troubled? Reason may suggest this; and indeed, this may be rather constraint; but to live securely and cheerfully upon God in the abatement of creature supplies, only religion can bring this into the soul’s exchequer.

(2) Contentment is an intrinsic (internal) thing -- it lies within a man; not in the bark, but the root. Contentment has both its fountain and stream in the soul. The beam has not its light from the air; the beams of comfort which a contented man has, do not arise from foreign comforts, but from within. As sorrow is seated in the spirit; “the heart knows its own bitterness:” (Pr. 14. 10) so contentment lies within the soul, and does not depend upon externals. Hence I gather, that outward troubles cannot hinder this blessed contentment: it is a spiritual thing, and arises from spiritual grounds; the apprehension of God’s love. When there is a tempest without, there may be music within; a bee may sting through the skin, but it cannot sting to the heart; outward afflictions cannot sting to a Christian’s heart, where contentment lies. Thieves may plunder us of our money and plate, but not of this pearl of contentment, unless we are willing to part with it, for it is locked up in the cabinet of the heart; the soul which is possessed of this rich treasure of contentment, is like Noah in the ark, that can sing in the midst of a deluge.

(3) Contentment is an habitual thing -- it shines with a fixed light in the firmament of the soul. Contentment does not appear only now and then, as some stars which are seen but seldom; it is a settled temper of the heart. One action does not denominate; he is not said to be a liberal man, that gives alms once in his life; a covetous man may do so: but he is said to be liberal, that is, “given to hospitality,” that is, who upon all occasions is willing to relieve the necessities of the poor: so he is said to be a contented man that is given to contentment. It is

not casual but constant. Aristotle, in his rhetoric, distinguishes between colours in the face that arise from passion, and those which arise from complexion; the pale face may look red when it blushes, but this is only a passion; he is said properly to be ruddy and sanguine, who is constantly so, it is his complexion. He is not a contented man, who is so upon occasion, and perhaps when he is pleased: but who is so constantly, it is the habit and complexion in his soul. ([The Art of Divine Contentment](#) - highly recommended reading) (For motivation to read this book, the old style of which does take some effort [Read Some of the Reviews](#))

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Contentment is being just as happy driving that Mercedes as you would be if you had to drive that jalopy from college. In both cases you'd have a ride. Contentment is taking as much pleasure in that big three-hundred-thousand-dollar house as you would a two-bedroom apartment. In both cases you'd have a roof over your head. Contentment is appreciating that T-bone steak as much as you would a hot dog. In both cases you are not starving. Contentment is being just as satisfied with the designer outfit as you would with an outfit from the thrift store. In both cases you have clothes on your back and you are not naked. Contentment is realizing that God has met your needs. (Tony Evans' book of illustrations: stories, quotes, and anecdotes)

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Advertisers are well aware of our propensity toward covetousness, and spend an inordinate amount of time attempting to make us dissatisfied. They know if we become discontent enough, the frustration of our covetousness will make us spend and spend. Due to our chronic covetousness, many of us have adopted the motto, "I shop, therefore I am." (Tony Evans' book of illustrations: stories, quotes, and anecdotes)

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A NEW PERSPECTIVE - A Jewish man in Hungary went to his rabbi and complained, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answered, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man was incredulous, but the rabbi insisted, "Do as I say and come back in a week."

A week later the man returned looking more distraught than before. "We can't stand it," he told the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi said, "Go home and let the goat out, and come back in a week." A week later the man returned, radiant, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat- only the nine of us." (Reader's Digest [12/81].) Contentment is more a matter of our perspective than of our circumstances, isn't it!...

Legend has it that a wealthy merchant during Paul's day had heard about the apostle and had become so fascinated that he determined to visit him. So when passing through

Rome, he got in touch with Timothy and arranged an interview with Paul the prisoner. Stepping inside his cell, the merchant was surprised to find the apostle looking rather old and physically frail, but he felt at once the strength, the serenity, and the magnetism of this man who relied on Christ as his all in all. They talked for some time, and finally the merchant left. Outside the cell, he asked Timothy, "What's the secret of this man's power? I've never seen anything like it before." "Did you not guess?" replied Timothy. "Paul is in love." The merchant looked puzzled. "In love?" he asked. "Yes," said Timothy, "Paul is in love with Jesus Christ." The merchant looked even more bewildered. "Is that all?" he asked. Timothy smiled and replied, "That is everything." (Adapted from Leonard Griffith, *This is Living* [Abingdon], p. 149.)

That's the secret of contentment--to be captivated by Christ--as the Sovereign to whom I submit; as the Savior whom I serve; as the Sufficient One whom I trust in every situation. ([From Steven Cole's message - The Secret of Contentment](#))

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A story is told of a king who was suffering from a mysterious malady and was advised by his astrologer that he would be cured if the shirt of a contented man was brought for him to wear. People went out to all parts of the kingdom looking for such a person, and after a long search they found a man who was really happy. But he did not even possess a shirt. (Michael P. Green, 1500 illustrations for biblical preaching)

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A Puritan sat down to his meal and found that he had only a little bread and some water. His response was to exclaim, "What? All this and Jesus Christ, too!" Contentment is found when we have a correct perspective on life.

A little Swiss watch had been made with the smallest of parts and great skill. Yet it was dissatisfied with its restricted sphere of influence on a lady's wrist. It envied the position of the great tower clock on the city hall. One day as it passed with its owner by the city hall, the tiny watch exclaimed, "I wish I could go way up there! I could then serve many instead of just one." Now it so happened that its owner was in a position with the city that gave her access to the tower clock, so she said, "You shall have your opportunity, little watch." The next day, a slender thread was let down from the tower and the little watch was tied to it. Slowly and carefully, the watch was pulled up the side of the tower, rising higher and higher each moment. Of course, when it reached the top, it was completely lost to view. In this dramatic way, the watch learned that its elevation had effected its annihilation! Pray that you too may not lose the small influence you now have for Christ by coveting something larger for which you are not equipped, and which God constantly refuses you in his love. Learn to be content. (Michael P. Green, 1500 illustrations for biblical preaching)

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Two little teardrops were floating down the river of life. One teardrop asked the other, "Who are you?" "I am a teardrop from a girl who loved a man and lost him. But who are

you?" The first teardrop replied, "I am a teardrop from the girl who got him." Life is like that. We cry over the things we can't have, but we might cry twice as hard if we had received them. Paul had the right idea when he said, "... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation ..." (Phil 4:12NIV). (Michael P. Green, 1500 illustrations for biblical preaching)

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Billy Graham tells this story illustrating godliness and contentment - My wife and I were invited to have lunch with one of the wealthiest men in the world. He was seventy-five years old. Tears came down his cheeks. "I am the most miserable man in the world," he said. "I have everything anyone could ever want. If I want to go anywhere, I have my own yacht or private plane. But down inside I'm miserable and empty." Shortly after, I met another man who preached in a small church nearby. He was vivacious and full of life, and he told us, "I don't have a penny to my name, but I'm the happiest man in the world!"

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Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

God promises to provide the necessities of life, such as food and clothing. Once we have accepted this, we have laid the foundation for genuine contentment.

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"As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well-fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed... This particular piece of bread was just to be held—not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep" (Charles L. Allen, God's Psychiatry).

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For most of us, the refrigerator and the cupboard contain enough food for tomorrow's meals. Yet, like those children, we still feel a gnawing anxiety. Why is this? Either we do not trust God or we think we need more than we have. We have substituted desire for need and need for desire. Even Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart," is not an unconditional promise that God will give us whatever we want. We must first delight ourselves in Him. Then our desires will be in line with what He desires to give us—and that will bring us true contentment. —D. J. DeHaan

**Contentment comes not from greater wealth
but from fewer wants.**

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How Much to Make Us Content? - In the fifth century, a man named Arenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the conforms of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need. Those of us who live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 articles; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential? How many superfluous? - Our Daily Bread, May 26, 1994.

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Content with What He Possessed - Philip Parham tells the story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

- Our Daily Bread, May 18, 1994.

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GODLY CONTENTMENT - Contentment is never the result of multiplying riches, increasing pleasures, or gaining fame. All these only incite discontent, for when one obtains them, he finds he still is not satisfied. Contentment does not depend upon things on the outside, but results from conditions on the inside! Paul had suffered more for the sake of Christ than probably anyone else (2 Cor. 11:23-28); yet this is the man who says, "I am content." The apostle was able to interpret all the experiences of life in terms of God's will for his eternal good (Rom. 8:28). Paul did not come to this happy philosophy of life in a moment. He says, "I have learned ... to be content." Aspiring to be what we are not, or grasping after riches which elude us, is not the way to happiness. We must rather do our very best with God's help to accomplish our life's task with the talents and opportunities He presents.

In his famous lecture on "Clocks and Watches," Dr. Joseph Parker related the following story: A little watch, delicately strung, was dissatisfied with its restricted sphere of

influence in a lady's pocket. It envied the position of Big Ben, the great tower clock. One day as it passed with her ladyship over London's Westminster Bridge, the tiny watch exclaimed, "I wish I could go up there! I could then serve multitudes, instead of just one individual." "You shall have your opportunity, small watch," she said. The lecturer then dramatically described how the pocket timepiece was drawn up the side of the mammoth tower by a slender thread. When it reached the top, it was completely lost to view. In his dramatic way, Dr. Parker concluded his lecture by exclaiming, "Its elevation had become its annihilation!"

Pray that you too may not lose the small influence you now have for Christ by coveting something larger for which you are not equipped, and which God constantly refuses you in His love. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O for the peace of perfect trust
My loving God in Thee;
Unwavering faith that never doubts
Thou choosest best for me.
—Anon.

**Discontent makes rich men poor,
While contentment makes poor men rich**

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Diamonds and Discontent - Years ago, Russell Conwell told of an ancient Persian, Ali Hafed, who "owned a very large farm that had orchards, grain fields, and gardens... and was a wealthy contented man." One day a wise man from the East told the farmer all about diamonds and how wealthy he would be if he owned a diamond mine. Ali Hafed went to bed that night a poor man--poor because he was discontented. Craving a mine of diamonds, he sold his farm to search for the rare stones. He traveled the world over, finally becoming so poor, broken, and defeated that he committed suicide. One day the man who purchased Ali Hafed's farm led his camel into the garden to drink. As his camel put its nose into the brook, the man saw a flash of light from the sands of the stream. He pulled out a stone that reflected all the hues of the rainbow. The man had discovered the diamond mine of Golconda, the most magnificent mine in all history. Had Ali Hafed remained at home and dug in his own garden, then instead of death in a strange land, he would have had acres of diamonds. - G. Sweeting, in Moody Monthly, May, 1988, p. 95.

BAD AND GOOD OF POVERTY - The young man I visited in jail had been arrested for armed robbery. He was bitter as he spoke of the inner-city school from which he had dropped out because he felt unsafe. He asked, "Why couldn't I have gone to a better school? Why didn't someone help me to learn a trade?" He said he committed the robbery because he was sick and tired of having so little while others had so much.

I felt sorry for him. Poverty has a down side. It can place people in a position where they

are tempted to commit crimes.

Like the writer of Proverbs 30, I would never ask God to send me poverty. Yet Jesus said, "Blessed are you poor" (Luke 6:20).

I grew up in the 1930s during the Great Depression. My family seldom ate meat, and we wore second hand clothing. Yet we were happy. We were supremely thankful for small favors. We enjoyed simple pleasures. We appreciated one another. We valued our spiritual riches.

I'm not saying that we should desire poverty, but we can be thankful for it. We can learn lessons through it that we could earn in no other way. Let's be like the apostle Paul who said that he had learned to be content, no matter what his situation (Phil. 4:11). -- Herbert Vander Lugt

Lord, help me not to set my heart
On things that pass away;
Make me content with what I have
And help me stay that way.
--Sper

Those who are content are never poor;
those who are discontent are never rich

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Today in the Word - According to a recent report, the wind carries elements such as dust and pollutants farther than scientists ever thought possible. The results of this are both good and bad. On the good side, it is estimated that some thirteen million tons of windblown dust fall on the Amazon region every year. Most of this dust comes from Africa's Sahara Desert, and it contains valuable nutrients. But the wind has also carried pesticides such as DDT as far as Antarctica, and the Arctic skies are often clouded by pollution. The wind and its effects are similar to money and its effects. Like the wind, money is by itself morally neutral. But money is also such a powerful force that it sweeps a lot of things along with it, and produces some good and bad effects. People can use money to spread good around the world. But it can also poison the lives of people who have it or want it. (Today in the Word)

I have often been encouraged by people without their realizing it. I remember walking through the main lounge of a Christian retirement community late one evening. The residents had gone to their rooms for the night, except for one elderly woman. Unaware of my presence, she patiently worked on a jigsaw puzzle and joyfully hummed to herself. She seemed to be quite content.

I began to wonder, "How can people find true contentment, no matter what their circumstances?" The apostle Paul addressed this issue in 1 Timothy 6. He warned against

corrupt people who see godliness as a means for financial profit (1Ti 6:5). A more subtle error among Christians is the belief that godliness-plus-money is life's winning combination. Paul corrected both errors by stating the real winning combination: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). He urged believers to be satisfied with food and clothing (1Ti 6:7, 8). "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1Ti 6:10), but loving and trusting God is the root of all contentment.

How about you? Are you experiencing the joy that comes when godliness is combined with contentment? If so, you've got the winning combination. —Joanie Yoder (Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread)

**True contentment is not in having everything,
but in being satisfied with everything you have.**

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The Rich And The Poor - Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! --Psalm 68:19

My wife and I think of ourselves as neither rich nor poor. When we consider people living in poverty, struggling just to get by, we can feel guilty because of our comfortable lifestyle. But when we see others who live in luxurious houses, drive expensive cars, and take exotic vacations, our lifestyle seems unpretentious and humdrum.

Actually, how much we possess is not as important as our attitude toward our possessions. Paul wrote that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). Regardless of our status, we should be content, neither coveting more nor resenting those who have more than we do.

Although we as Christians may enjoy God's blessings without feeling guilty, we must also heed Paul's admonition not to be haughty but to trust in God (1Ti 6:17). We must humbly acknowledge Him as the source of all we have, and share willingly and generously with others (1Ti 6:17, 18). Such generosity has eternal value (v.19). Since God measures our giving by the degree of our sacrifice (Mk. 12:42, 43, 44), many who have little to give in this life will be immensely rewarded in the life to come.

Whether we are rich or poor, let's be sure to invest in eternity. --H V Lugt

If we've been blessed with riches,
We must be rich in deeds;
God wants us to be generous
In meeting others' needs.
--Sper

**Our value is determined not by what we have
but by what we do with what we have.**

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Great Gain - Over the past 15 years, a New Jersey businessman has anonymously given away more than \$600 million to universities, medical centers, and other beneficiaries. When a legal complication forced him to reveal his identity, he explained his generosity by saying,

"Nobody can wear two pairs of shoes at one time. I simply decided I had enough money"

A friend of the donor described him as a man who doesn't own a house or a car, flies economy class, wears a \$15 watch, and "didn't want his money to crush him."

Few people seem able to treat their resources as a servant instead of a master. It seems so natural and sensible to grasp rather than to give. Even as followers of Christ, we may mistakenly believe that "godliness is a means of gain" (1Ti 6:5). But the apostle Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain... And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1Ti 6:6, 7, 8). —D. C. McCasland

**Money is what you make it-
A Master or a Servant**

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Be Content - Confusing our wants with our needs goes to the heart of coveting and explains why we are so often driven by the desire for more and more. We fail to see that life's greatest fulfillment is not found in accumulating things but in knowing God.

The tenth commandment may seem like an add-on compared to such big-ticket items as murder, stealing, lying, and adultery, but it is foundational to all the other commandments and ensures peace and contentment. It is the only command that zeroes in on a forbidden attitude rather than an action. Yet it is a safeguard against the temptation to break the other nine commandments.

David's covetous desire for another man's wife led to adultery, stealing, and murder (2 Sam. 11). And a desire for more and more pleasure, power, or possessions can destroy family relationships and cause us to lie to others. And because covetousness is idolatry (Col 3:5), it also keeps us from having and maintaining a right relationship to God. Lord, help us to be content in You. --D J De Haan

When we would covet more and more
Of this world's gold, of earthly store,
Help us, O God, to look above
And draw upon Your matchless love.
--D J De Haan

Contentment is wanting what you have,

not having everything you want.

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A Good Surrender - Surrender is not a very popular word. We use it in reference to the humiliation that accompanies defeat. When a nation loses a war, it may be forced to surrender unconditionally, and has no say in the terms of defeat.

Yet there is a type of surrender that is dignified and appropriate. Paul understood it in two aspects. First, it means surrendering our desires and will to the heavenly Father. Jesus is our example, for He did the Father's will in everything (Jn. 6:38).

The second aspect is our acceptance of God's supreme sovereignty. This is marked by our realization that things do not always go our way as God works out His will on earth. Our business goes through good times and bad. Our health may suffer. Loved ones will hurt us, or leave us, or even die. Our fondest dreams may never be realized.

In the spiritual sense, to surrender means that we trust God to do what is best. It is, as Paul said, choosing to be content "in whatever state I am" (Phil. 4:11, 12), and knowing by faith that God will take care of our needs (Php 4:19). That kind of faith isn't easy. But it's the only way to overcome dissatisfaction and anger about uncontrollable circumstances.

Perhaps it's time to say "I surrender" to the Lord and to His perfect will and plan. --D C Egnor (Our Daily Bread)

Take my love--my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself--and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.
--Havergal

Surrender is victory when we yield to God.

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Battle for Contentment - LIFE in an affluent society can be frustrating, I thought, as I walked through a local mall. On display for a special show was an astounding array of recreational vehicles. Campers and mobile homes bore signs, "Yours Today for Only \$25,000." They were so inviting I realized I was envying people who could afford one of these beauties.

Our battle to be content doesn't involve just big-ticket items. Imagine the struggle of a single mother who can barely make her rent payments. How difficult it must be to not covet a car that is rust-free or to not envy a woman who doesn't have to send her children to school in hand-me-downs. How can someone who struggles to stretch a paycheck across two weeks be content in a world of wealth and affluence?

In 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul warns us to beware of people who think that being godly will bring them riches. It is contentment plus godliness that makes us truly rich, he says. But how do we become content? By recognizing that we brought nothing into the world and that we will carry nothing out—that everything we have is from God.

When waves of envy and covetousness are pulling us under, there is one thought that can keep us from being swept away in the current: Godliness—not gold—brings contentment. —J D Brannon

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WHAT WE DON'T NEED - Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. - 1Timothy 5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

In the fifth century, a man named Arsenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the comforts of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need.

Those of us who live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 articles; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential? How many superfluous?

It's hard for us to say sincerely with the apostle Paul, "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1Ti 6:8). In our constant battle against seductive materialism of our culture, let's follow the example of Arsenius. As we walk through the markets and shopping malls, we too can rejoice at the sight of all the things we don't need.

That's only the first step, however. The next step is to become much more wise in our spending, more generous in our giving to others, and more sacrificial with the resources God has given to us. - V C Grounds

Contentment isn't getting what we want
but being satisfied with what we have.

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TODAY IN THE WORD According to a recent report, the wind carries elements such as dust and pollutants farther than scientists ever thought possible. The results of this are both good and bad. On the good side, it is estimated that some thirteen million tons of windblown dust fall on the Amazon region every year. Most of this dust comes from Africa's Sahara Desert, and it contains valuable nutrients. But the wind has also carried pesticides such as DDT as far as Antarctica, and the Arctic skies are often clouded by pollution. The wind and its effects are similar to money and its effects. Like the wind, money is by itself

morally neutral. But money is also such a powerful force that it sweeps a lot of things along with it, and produces some good and bad effects. People can use money to spread good around the world. But it can also poison the lives of people who have it or want it.

We have already talked about the dangers of falling in love with money and material things, but let's look again in the context of what we do to make a living. The vast majority of people make their money from their jobs or some other form of income-producing activity.

Paul's precaution against attaching our hearts to our bank accounts takes on an added urgency in a culture that tempts people with the dream of instant wealth by buying a lottery ticket or hitting it big at the casino. Books have been written and films made about the grief that has pierced the lives of people who fell into the destructive trap of a get-rich-quick fantasy. That particular danger may seem like a stretch from where you live every day--and we hope it is. But the danger of letting money become our first love can also reach us in the ordinary daily routine of making a living.

APPLY THE WORD Just as the wind leaves visible evidence of its power, so too does money. If you look back on the events of your life, you can probably see the benefits--and perhaps some hard lessons--that money has provided you over the years.

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TODAY IN THE WORD Coming down the stairs one morning, a British gentleman by the name of Lord Congelton overheard his cook conversing with one of the other servants. "I would be perfectly content," the woman declared, "if I just had five pounds!" After pondering the matter, Lord Congelton decided to help his long-time employee. He pulled her aside later in the day and gave her a five-pound note--a fairly substantial sum, worth about \$25 at the time. The surprised cook thanked her employer profusely, whereupon Lord Congelton departed. But once outside the door, Congelton paused to see what, if anything, the woman would say. Surely, he reasoned, she would express her thankfulness to God. A second or two passed and Congelton heard the woman cry out, "**Oh, why didn't I say ten pounds?!**"

Like Lord Congelton's cook, many Christians find it difficult to be content. Typically we focus, not on what we do have, but on all that we lack. It doesn't help matters when we are bombarded daily by advertisers whose sole purpose is to make us dissatisfied with our current possessions and hungry for their newest products and latest models. Even our children are targeted on Saturday mornings with commercials designed to make them want the latest toy.

In his first epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul warns us about the dangers of discontent. He reminds us that possessions and riches are temporal (v. 7). No matter how much we accumulate, we will leave it behind when we die. He reminds us that the desire for more leads to "ruin and destruction" (vv. 9-10).

APPLY THE WORD How do you treat the other members of your family? Today, take a

moment to consider. If you find it difficult to be content, it may be that you are filling your mind with too many materialistic temptations. Many Christians have found relief (as well as a renewed joy) by shutting off the TV (or tuning out commercials); avoiding unnecessary shopping; and refusing to peruse mail order catalogs.

Another Version of the preceding anecdote - Coming downstairs one morning, Lord Congelton heard the cook exclaim, "Oh, if I only had five pounds, wouldn't I be content!" Thinking the matter over, and anxious to see the woman satisfied, he shortly after handed her a five-pound note, then worth about twenty-five dollars. She thanked him profusely. He paused outside the door to hear if she would express her satisfaction and thank God. As soon as his shadow was invisible, she cried out, "Why didn't I say ten?"- *Prairie Overcomer*

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The magazine *Campus Journal* reported on a recent survey that asked people to name the salary they thought they would need to achieve that elusive standard of happiness known as "the American dream." The results were interesting because the study had segmented the people based on their actual incomes. Two examples tell the story. People who earn about \$25K a year estimated they would need about \$54K to be happy. And on average, people in the \$100K income range said it would take about \$192K to reach the stated goal of the study. Do the math and you'll see that most of the people surveyed said it would take about twice their current income to make them happy. What we don't know is whether these people, and others like them, actually live as if they're only halfway content. Judging by some of the unwise and spiritually harmful things some people do to acquire more money, the answer to that question has to be yes. Many people live with a mindset of discontent.

The first sentence of today's reading (1Ti 6:6) is the biblical alternative to this mindset. Paul says contentment is worth a great deal when it enables us to pursue God's real goal for us--"godliness," becoming like Him. To some people, discussing money and godliness on the same page may seem like trying to go in two different directions at once. That's because of a common misinterpreting of 1Ti 6:10 (1 Timothy 6:10 Commentary) by saying the love of money is the root of all evil. Some people even shorten that to: "Money is the root of all evil." That's not what Paul was saying. A desire for money that's so consuming it turns us away from God is a source of many evils, but not all. Thank goodness for that, because the dangers that the love of money brings are bad enough. They include "many foolish and harmful desires" that bring "ruin and destruction" (1Ti 6:9) (1 Timothy 6:9 Commentary). No need to ask Paul what he really thought about the problem! What a refreshing break we have in 1Ti 6:11 (1 Timothy 6:11 Commentary). If we want to become men and women of God, we need to put sin behind us and pursue the valuable virtues Paul lists there.

APPLY THE WORD Here's a test to measure your CQ (contentment quotient). Write the three or four material possessions you consider most valuable. Then ask yourself some questions in relation to these items. If you lost them, would you no longer be content? Could you serve God just as well without them? Would you still be a giver instead of a

taker? And finally, would the loss of these things in any way dull your desire to pursue those qualities that please God?

1 Timothy 6:6-12

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TODAY IN THE WORD Earlier this year, Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was awarded the 1996 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Before becoming a Christian in 1951, Bright says he was a materialistic young businessman. After his conversion, he and his wife, Vonette, made a crucial choice that allowed them to concentrate on ministry.

“We made a decision to relinquish all our rights, all our possessions, everything we would ever own,” says Vonette. For the Brights, the antidote to greed and the secret to contentment was a radical decision regarding material things. In many ways their decision is unique to their situation and their calling, but every believer must deal with the trap of wanting to get rich (v. 9).

This is really the crux of the issue when it comes to greed. Verse 10 of today’s text is a much-quoted and often misquoted warning about the allure of greed. It’s the love of money that is the root of all sorts of evil.

It’s not what you have but what you lust for that does the damage. Greedily chasing after money or anything else that takes your heart away from God is like trying to run through a twisted patch of thorns. You’ll never make it through without getting “pierced” repeatedly. In fact, you may not make it through at all.

Look at the contrast Paul describes between those who want to get rich and are eager for money and those who pursue God. The former can’t take their gold with them even if they get it (1Ti 6:7).

APPLY THE WORD When do you say “Enough”? Most people don’t say it at all. Greed is easy to spot in others but tough to pinpoint in ourselves. Here’s a brief self-test that may help focus the issue. Jot down the When the Bible tells us to be content with what we have, God is not asking us to settle for second best. On the contrary, He is asking us to let go of the temporary baubles of earth so as to claim our eternal treasures. The exhortation of Hebrews 13:5 is followed by the staggering promise of God’s never-failing presence.

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Check Your Checkbook! - SOME evening when you have a spare moment, get out your old checkbook registers and read the entries. You will be startled to learn how you spent your money. The entries will read like a family history book, chronicling every major event—births, deaths, and illnesses—and reflecting your tastes, habits, and interests.

They record vacations, travels, and other moves. They also tell much about how expensively you dress or how extravagantly you eat. The total spent in each category will pinpoint the things that make the greatest demands on your income—either due to need or choice.

This checkbook checkup might also gauge our spiritual temperature. Contributions given to the work of the Lord compared to expenditures for unnecessary things offer some clues. When we give nothing to church or to people in need but spend large sums on personal gratification, it's time to examine our values.

A healthy checkbook checkup will show that we've been "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1Timothy 6:18). —R W De Haan (Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread)

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Happy Without - The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (469-399 BC) believed that if you are truly wise you will not be obsessed with possessions. Practicing to an extreme what he preached, he even refused to wear shoes.

Socrates loved to visit the marketplace, though, and gaze with admiration at the great abundance of wares on display. When a friend asked why he was so allured, he replied, "I love to go there and discover how many things I am perfectly happy without."

That type of attitude runs counter to the commercial messages that continually bombard our eyes and ears. Advertisers spend millions to tell us about all the latest products that we can't be happy without.

The apostle Paul advised his spiritual son Timothy, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1Timothy 6:6-8). If we become enamored with things, Paul warned, we may wander from the faith and be pierced with the pangs of frustrated desire (1Ti 6:9, 10).

Let's ask ourselves, "What am I truly happy without?" The answer will reveal much about our relationship with the Lord and our contentment with Him. —Vernon C Grounds

**Contentment comes not from great wealth
but from few wants.**

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Contentment

by [William Cowper \(Piper's comments\)](#)

Fierce passions discompose the mind,

As tempests vex the sea;
But calm content and peace we find,
When, Lord, we turn to Thee.

In vain by reason and by rule
We try to bend the will;
For none but in the Saviour's school
Can learn the heavenly skill.

Since at His feet my soul has sate,
His gracious words to hear,
Contented with my present state,
I cast on Him my care.

"Art thou a sinner, soul?" He said,
"Then how canst thou complain!
How light thy troubles here, if weigh'd
With everlasting pain!

"If thou of murmuring wouldst be cured,
Compare thy griefs with mine;
Think what my love for thee endured,
And thou wilt not repine.

"'Tis I appoint thy daily lot,
And I do all things well;
Thou soon shalt leave this wretched spot,
And rise with me to dwell.

"In life my grace shall strength supply,
Proportion'd to thy day;
At death thou [still] shalt find me nigh,
To wipe thy tears away."

Thus I, who once my wretched days
In vain repinings spent,
Taught in my Saviour's school of grace,
Have learnt to be content.