



The Tenth Commandment
The Antidote to Covetousness

Exodus 20:17 " You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Having discussed covetousness and its causes and perils last week, tonight I want to briefly discuss the antidote to covetousness. For that antidote can be summed up in a single word, and no before you fly to the kid's stock Sunday School answer, the word I am thinking of is not "Jesus." For while Jesus is indeed the answer to the problem of sin and separation from God and he is sure antidote for our low condition. It is also true that He is always the agent who produces this antidote wherever it truly exists – but what I am looking for is the name of a wonderful virtue, a rare and priceless jewel.

What is this jewel, since there is no such word as discovetousness, we can rule that out. Maybe it's generosity, I mean that's an antonym for covetousness. Well that is a great virtue to have but its not the antidote, its not the rare jewel I'm thinking of.

The name of that jewel is *contentment*.

Wilhelmus A'Brakel defined contentment this way, he said: **Contentment is a Christian virtue consisting in a correspondence between the desire of God's children and their present condition—this being true because it is the will of their God in Christ and according to His sovereign determination. In this they rest with delight, in quiet confidence, joyfully, and with gratitude, trusting that the Lord will cause the present and the future to turn out to their advantage. This causes them to utilize their present condition to the advancement of their spiritual life and to the glory of God.**

Notice some of the things that A'Brakel said in that definition, 1) he said it is a *Christian virtue*, which is just saying that it is only truly to be found in the regenerate heart. The unbeliever on the other hand, has no clue what this contentment consists of. His heart is never satisfied, never at peace. He quests after things that he thinks will satisfy, but they never do. Like the drug addict, he always needs just a little more, and then he says, then I'll be satisfied. The book of Ecclesiastes is an extended meditation on the vanity of seeking peace and satisfaction in *anything* save God, for instance Solomon confesses:

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.

When the unbeliever sees true contentment in the believer, he cannot understand it, so he puts it down to simple-mindedness or a lack of ambition.

Have you ever been witnessing to unbeliever and speaking of the peace and contentment that comes through resting upon Christ Jesus, and they reply by saying in that wonderfully patronizing kind of tone, "Well I wish I had your faith" – translation: *"I wish I were an idiot too, but honey I'm not."*

2) A'Brakel also defines this virtue in a way that differentiates absolutely from stoicism or asceticism. It is not merely that we are mentally practicing a kind of self-denial, but that rather our hearts are truly at peace with whatever our disposition is. It is not merely lacking and not grumbling, and we can be content when we have an abundance of good things.

Well of course we can Andy, that's easy. Not so, the rich man seldom has a satisfied mind, contentment is something he can't buy or add to his collection, either his heart is content *whatever his circumstances* or it never will be *regardless of his circumstances*.

That is why Paul was able to write to the Phillipians: " **11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:**

12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

True Contentment flows only from trusting in the Lord and recognizing that because He is both loving and sovereign that as His children, God (as A'Brakel said) – "will cause the present and the future to turn out to their advantage."

You know one of the most difficult tasks in counseling is persuading the individual that the answer to their problems is not to be found only in their present circumstances. That is often a monumental task because it goes against the natural man's inclination.

You know what Feng Shui is? It's basically the Chinese art of arranging your furniture so that you will be happy and prosperous. If the desk is in that corner, you will be sad, and you won't get the important contract, but if the desk is in that corner, you will be happy, your business will prosper and your children will marry well.

Ok, it sounds absurd, but do you know how many people I've met who assume that if they can do some sort of *feng shui* in rearranging the circumstances of their life, they will be happy and content.

- If I live in this state over here I am bound to be unhappy, but if I move over here I will be blissfully happy.
- If I have this job, contentment will be impossible, but this job satisfaction will ooze out of my pores.
- If I have this wife, I will be sad, but if I have this wife I will live happily ever after.

Rearrange the circumstances of your life, and your heart will be the same. You may see some improvements, but rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic doesn't change the fact that it still got a huge hole in the side and is going to sink.

Contentment will only exist in a heart that really honestly has closed with Christ and knows that God has ordained everything that comes to pass in our lives. Now that does not mean that you will suddenly learn

to long for and enjoy hardship, and tribulation, and loss, and grief, and suffering and torture. The apostles did not rejoice after they had been beaten by the Sanhedrin because they were masochists. They went away rejoicing knowing that this too was ordained of God, and that it indicated that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

They surely did not enjoy the trials but they knew and believed what Paul said:

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

And therefore were able to look at trials and see what they indicated, what they taught, and what great benefits they had for the faithful, that is why James could write:

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

Only the eye of faith perceives these things. Even the pagan who believes in some sort of fate, cannot truly be content, because while he believes that everything that happens to him had to happen there was no loving and sovereign hand guiding the events so that they would turn out to his ultimate good. He can come up with perhaps with a stoic philosophy that "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger" but never in all things I am content because all of these events are being used by my God for my salvation and for His Glorification. Yes I may die a martyr's death in the midst of terrible torture, but the end even of that is a crown, a crown of life and crown of glory that does not fade away.

The fruits of this contentment will be manifest in different degrees in the life of every believer, and in the degree to which you have it, you will see spiritual growth. A lack of contentment will not only make you bitter and unsatisfied, it will ultimately result in a breaking out of sins of all sorts. I am not satisfied, my lack of satisfaction evidences itself in desiring those things which God has not seen fit to give me, I begin to covet, and then ultimately instead of trusting the Lord, "I say I must have these things" and my pursuit ends in sin.

The circumstances of my life are wrong, I needed that money to be happy, but God goofed and gave him that money and not me, this isn't right, and I am going to redress the situation in order that with that money I might be satisfied. For money, go ahead and insert in its place all of the things you think you must have in order to be satisfied. The end result of coveting will be the same regardless, *sin*.

As James said so well 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

So what is the only true antidote for coveting? Contentment. And as you have seen – ***contentment is born of true faith in Christ.***

If you wish to learn how to be content, then practice the following:

- (1) Always consider what you deserve, and you will then be happy that you are not yet in hell.
- (2) Look at others, and you will not want to exchange your condition with theirs. The one will have much less, and will be much more wretched than you are according to the body and will be an example to you as far as contentment is concerned. The other person will be without grace, and you would certainly not wish to trade places with him.

- (3) Live only by the day and do not take upon you the difficulties of two, ten, or a hundred days. This would be too great a burden for you. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.
- (4) Your difficulty is perhaps not as great as you make it out to be—this in consequence of your desire being excessive. You must therefore make more of an effort to adjust your desire to your circumstances—considering it to be the will of God—rather than seeking to improve your circumstances in accordance with your desire.
- (5) Make use of the means with all diligence and faithfulness so that your conscience will not accuse you, and leave the outcome to the Lord. Trust in His promise and He will make it well.
- (6) Let your focus continually be upon heaven, and consider the insignificance of all that is upon earth. The nearer you are to God, the more you will be at a distance from the creature. Everything will pass away, but he that doeth the will of God shall abide forever.