

The Cure For Covetousness

Christ is Contentment

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If you will this morning, turn with me in the word of God to Hebrews 13:5. That will be our text this morning, Hebrews 13:5.

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, I thank thee, Lord, that you have brought us here again today in thy faithfulness. O Lord, we call upon that faithfulness and ask and beseech because thou art faithful, Lord, that thou would clear our minds and hearts, our desires, our worries, fears. Lord, may you at this hour bring us to thy feet to be instructed in thy word in our soul by thee as thou art pleased to do so. Lord, make you anoint this message, bless it as only thou can, and bring it forth as only thou can for the glory of thee, that, Lord, thy people be fed and plowed and also made to rest in thee in thy green pastures for thy glory and for thy name's sake. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." When I was younger and I read this verse, I always could understand it doctrinally, I mean, but I always thought it was kind of oddly written where there was like a division in it, where the first part Paul says he's exhorting us or encouraging us about covetousness and contentment being the opposite of each other, and then goes off to a separate telling us that the Lord will always be with us. That's the way I've always looked at that verse in my younger days and knowing that the word of God is the inspired word of God, didn't really question it or think too much about it being one text with the Lord explaining the answer, the remedy, so to speak, because Christ truly is contentment and that's what Paul wants us to know in this verse. And they are not two separate parts but it's one verse and it's an explanation of how and how the Lord works, contentment, and how he overrules covetousness, and how he puts it down, and he does it one way, and he does it by revealing his presence, revealing himself.

It wasn't until the Lord revealed to me in the school of Christ, meaning through experience and experientially, that truth, that Christ is only contentment. Christ only is contentment. You know, we as people in this life, we live and we become content with many things. I mean, if I was to walk out and get my mail and I had some check, a huge amount of money in there, I would feel good that day. I would feel content like I have a windfall come my way. We find somewhat pleasure in that and contentment, rest and that, I should say, because we think, wow, with extra money or something, we can do these things or it would meet a need and then there is health too. I mean, sometimes when we're not healthy and we go to the doctor and we hear what the doctor's prognosis is, what he says is wrong with us, we sometimes get peace out of that and contentment and say, "Oh, that's all it is?" And we go on and we take our medication and things like that.

Back in 2007, about 11 years ago, I read a book by Jeremiah Burroughs and it was called "The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment," and when I read it, I was looking this morning at my comments and my comment in the front of the book was, "Oh, what a great expounding on contentment and how great that is and how good and how deep Burroughs went into contentment." Then I started thumbing through the chapters. Wow. You know, if I had to read it again today and I had to write an explanation on the book, I don't think that would be by observation. Truly the book lacks something. It had a lot of duty in it, a lot of obedience driven contentment. Here's how you are content. Here's what you need to do to be content. But one thing I do agree on in the book is contentment is a rare jewel. It is rare.

I was thinking about that sitting and studying this morning. I've been on this earth 48 years and I've never in my whole life met a content man. I have never met a content woman. I've never met a content child. I have never ever come across a content person in this world and it's something to be said but it should immediately when you think that, and hopefully you're sitting there too thinking, "You know, that's true. I haven't ever met anyone that had everything and was content with what they had and never murmured or never complained and never said I wish things were this way." Why is that? Because contentment is Christ and our old nature will never be content.

For the child of God, contentment is not something that is found in the old nature, in fact, it's magnified even more in our lives. Being covetous is more magnified in our life because we know what the Bible says that makes the child of God content. I just said it, it's Christ. We know this verse, he says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Christ said, "If I'm enough, if I'm enough, if I will never leave you and if I will never forsake you, is that enough for you today?" Is that enough every day of your life to know that Christ will never leave you and never forsake you? That's where true contentment is, it rests in Christ and what he has done, what he will do and what he has finished.

The opposite of that is covetousness. You know, that's what we have in the first part of this verse is we have two polar opposites. We have two that could never dwell together. I know that's very odd to hear nowadays in religion. Religion, religious man believes everything can dwell together. The law and the Gospel go together. The Gospel and obedience goes together. The Gospel and duty goes together. I can be content, I can be

covetous and God is pleased with that. No, he's not and you'll see that in the Scriptures today, Lord willing.

But it's truly something, these two things, they can never coexist in the child of God. He must increase, we must decrease. Light and darkness, darkness is covetousness, light is contentment in Christ. The two do not mix. In fact, Jesus said it this way in Luke 16: 13, 14, he said, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." And you know, you've heard that read many times. You've heard it said that Jesus said those words. I wonder if you know what the next verse was that came after that? The next verse, verse 14 says, "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him." They were angry with him. "How can you say that you can't serve two masters?" Religious man, the Pharisee set it, not the tax collector. Not the ones who had the love of money, although that is in the pharisaical, the level of titles, the love of money, the love of God things of this world.

But Christ said you truly cannot serve two masters. Those two things can never. You cannot be covetous and content at the same time. We are content and I mean truly content. We have that peace in our souls. We are brought to rest in whatever Christ brings into our life knowing that at by his hand it is good. That Romans 8:28 is true. When the Lord reveals that, that is where contentment is. That is true contentment. It's only in Christ.

The psalmist was so concerned about covetousness that in 119:36 he asked the Lord and cried out to the Lord, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies." Lord, bring my heart and my desire to thy word. Bring my desire and what I desire in this life to thy word. Let it be thee. Let it be the living Word. Let it be Christ. And the other part that, "and not to covetousness." It's so easy in this life to murmur and complain, especially our fallen nature that is never ever satisfied. The Lord hates that this position. He hates covetousness.

David said it, go to the Psalms again in 10:3 and said, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous." Do you hear that? The wicked boast of his heart's desire and he blesses the covetous. The wicked in this world look at those who covet things and they think they have the truth. They think that's a good thing. They bless those people and say, "Yes, it is good to want more. It is good to desire more." That's what all of the youth in this country are taught in all the colleges today, to desire more, to want more, to want more, and the world is your footstool. Take. Take. Take. But how does the Lord look upon that? In that psalm 10:3, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth." The Lord hates covetousness. Even in his holy law, "Thou shalt not covet." The desiring of anything that you do not have. That's what our text says today, to be content with such things as ye have. You presently have. Not what you will have but what you presently have. Be content with today, what the Lord has given you today.

Do you know how hard that is to be that way? We're always looking to tomorrow. We're always looking to something better. We're always looking somewhere or to something that we think will add to our name, add to our stature, add to our riches, add to our fame, and to our things. And the Lord tells us in our text today that the remedy, the remedy for that sin is the sin bearer, the one who bore those sins for his children, the one who can only satisfy the soul of his elect. It's Christ. In Christ, by Christ, through Christ, is truly where contentment is.

Paul wrote in Timothy, 1 Timothy 6-7, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Godliness with contentment, you see, those two things go together. Godliness is Christ. If you think you can be godly without Christ, you are sorely mistaken. The child of God is taught in his life, we're going to see that in just a few minutes what Paul says, he is taught in his life that his life consists of Christ and when Christ is hidden from him, he's out in the street, he's begging for the Lord to come back. His desire is for the Lord to feed his soul. His desire is for the Lord to satisfy his soul. The things of this world cannot do it. We will try. We will try our hardest to feed our carnal desires, to somehow make ourselves happy and sometimes the child of God is allowed to do those things, to explore the depth of his depravity and his lusts and his desires, and all to show the richness of Christ, the goodness of Christ. And the Lord brings us back to his feet and the Lord brings us back to contentment, and that contentment is in the one thing that is needful, the one thing that is needful for our soul, that being the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn with me over to Philippians 4. We'll be back to our text later but look at Philippians 4. Now we've read this many times, we seen this many times, but in verse 11, Paul writes this, he says, "Not that I speak in respect of want." In respect of desire. In respect of lust. In respect of the things of this world. I don't speak in respect of want. Well, Paul, why is it that you don't speak that way? Why is it you're not speaking that way? Why is it, Paul, you're not telling everyone to run and to get as much as they can in this life? "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." I have learned. I have learned and he's going to say how in just a minute in 13, how have you learned it, Paul? Is it some special school that we need to go through? Is it some kind of walk through the doctrines and as we look at the doctrines we can then take those doctrines off the pages and digest them into our minds and we can rote studying them over and over and then we can believe them? And then we can arrive and we can say, "Oh, well we're there now because now we're content." No. No. To learn where Paul has learned, he has been brought through the many trials, the afflictions, the furnace, if you will, to be brought to see that if he doesn't have Christ in his soul, he has nothing.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Because what is contentment? He defines it in 12. He says, "I know both how to be abased." Do you know how to be emptied and be content? Have you ever been shown through loss that you are content with Christ Jesus? We talked about that a few weeks ago when Job was brought to the end of himself and he cried out and he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord. He gives and he takes." That's contentment, contentment in what the Lord has done.

Paul said when he has been abased, when he has been in the stripping room, when the Lord is stripped him of all his creature reliability and all of the things that he wanted it to be and all of the things that he said that he testified, "This is who I am. I have all these credentials." And when the Lord stripped him of all of those things and abased him at the feet of him, Paul said, "That's where I learned contentment." You say, "I understand that. I understand that when the Lord takes away, when the Lord takes away, that he stripped me of all the things that I have and, therefore, it brings me to rely upon him." Good, but he doesn't stop there.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." In contentment. So when the Lord took him to the third heaven and when the Lord revealed these deep truths to Paul, how could he be content? How could he not be? Well, the Lord sent him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan. We need those things because of pride. We need those things because of self-reliance. Even in the time of being abounding and believing that nothing, there are times like that, I've said those things many times to my wife, there are times I feel that way, I feel so content. Nothing, I mean it doesn't matter what's going on in the world, the things that happen in the world this week, those things shook me. I don't know if they shook you. They shook me. When that took place, it kind of came out of the blue for me and when it did, my mind started wandering to all of the wicked and horrible things that could come out of what took place. How far could this go? I started thinking about my family and I started getting really scared. And what was the remedy? The remedy came throughout the night, the remedy came in the morning, contentment. Christ. The fear had to be driven out. His love was enough.

And what can I say? What can little insignificant me say to an Almighty God who has brought these events to take place in our nation? Yes, we've had years of prosperity. What can we as a people of the people of God say to God who has brought these things and who knows what is to come? He does. Do you find contentment in that the Lord holds all things in his hand? The heart of every king? The purpose of every predestinating thing that he will allow in this world? Do you find any contentment in that? Because if you don't, if you're not given contentment in what the Lord has ordained and what he's done, you will be fearful. You will be complaining. You will be murmuring. You will be in the political realm saying, "Oh, there's blame here. There's blame there."

Do you not see? Do we not understand that our God is a living God who controls all things for the good of his people? No, we don't see it because we haven't been taught how to be abounding and abasing in contentment in what the Lord has done and will do. It's a sober, sober, sober talk. It's a sober reality. Things scare us. It doesn't matter how old you are. From the young to the old, we get scared.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." That's life. Paul said we're instructed to live life in what Christ brings us each day, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Every day the Lord's providence brings things in our life and sometimes in that day we will abound in his graces and some days we will be abased through his chastisements and through the afflictions, through the thoughts.

But contentment, contentment is the remedy and contentment is Christ. It's not in things. It's not in world peace. We'll have people telling us in our ears, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." The Bible tells us there's no peace for the wicked and I've got news for every one of you in this room: you've got a wicked part in you and there will never be peace in that part. There will never be peace in that old nature.

Paul, how? How, Paul, how can we get to this? To sit at the feet of the Lord and say, "You have done all things." How? Verse 13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In Christ who is my strength, who is my life. I am the way, the truth and the life of my people. He who has Christ has life. When I, the Lord, strengthen my people, they will be content. When I reveal my goodness, my graciousness, they will be content. That's how and there's no other way.

Do we have reason to be content? Just a couple of things I want to read to you. This one struck me. Paul said in Romans 8:17, "And if children," if you are a child of God. I can't answer that for you but this is a beautiful verse. "And if children, then heirs; [you are] heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." That's what he teaches us in contentment. Union. We're in Christ. We're kept in Christ. We're secure in Christ. Our rest is in Christ. Christ has provided all things. "Joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Our glory is in the Lord. Our contentment is in Christ. Our contentment is Christ.

We've heard from Paul quite a bit, let's hear from Peter. I just want to read the beginning of Peter to you, 1 Peter. Let's read the beginning of 1 Peter, the first five verses. What is there to be content in? What does the Lord teach his children that we have contentment in? I could have gone to Ephesians for this but Peter.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Do you find contentment in that? That if you are an elect child of God, it's because of the foreknowledge of the Father?

"Through sanctification of the Spirit." The Spirit has sealed you, has sealed the work that Christ has done. "Be ye holy as I am holy." We are sanctified and set apart because of him. Is there contentment in that or do you want to be holier? Do you kick against that and say, "No, I need more. I need my religion to be because of what I've done. I need it because of my obedience. I need it to be because of me performing duties." It seems odd, doesn't it, but that's that old nature. That's that covetousness to desire that we have an equal say with God Almighty. That's why rest is such a precious gift of the Lord, because we go day by day telling the Lord that he's not going to reign over us. That's what our old nature desires. It desires to do something, to be rid, to be patted on the back, to be said, "Yes, you're good. You're faithful. You're the one." That's all in our old nature.

"Unto obedience and sprinkling." Oh, there's that word, "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." It's his obedience. Does that make you sad today that Christ

obeyed perfectly? It makes me about want to jump out of my shoes because I can't obey every day. I want to. I desire to walk in the way that the Lord says, "This is the way of holiness." But I find in me, and that is in my flesh, no good thing. I find anger. I find unbelief. I find fear. I find duty. I find a willingness to puff myself up. I find a pride. And that causes me to be disobedient.

But unto the obedience of Christ, "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy." They are new every day, the word of God says. "Hath begotten us," hath borne us again, has given us life "again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He's alive and we're alive because we're in him. We live because he is the resurrection and his resurrection power that Paul longed to know, you and I long to know it in the new nature, and the Spirit intercedes for us.

I thought about that yesterday. I have had a trial in my life for 5, 6, 10 years, as long as I've lived in my house basically. Well, that's been 20 years. But we have this huge oak tree that sits, it's in my neighbor's house and it goes over my house, and that last hurricane, we heard that thing creaking and I was praying, "Lord, hold that tree up," because the bulk of it goes over my house. And I prayed at that time for the Lord to remove that tree but do you know what? I haven't prayed that in I don't know how long, but that tree is still there. Steph and I were out walking yesterday morning and the neighbor stopped and said, "We want to let you know we're taking that tree down." And I thought, "Praise God." Then I had conviction because I hadn't prayed for it. I hadn't prayed for it and the Lord said, "I prayed for it. My Spirit intercedes for you. My Spirit." I was like, "Wow! That's truly what prayer is." Prayer isn't running around telling everybody you're going to pray. Prayer is what the Lord works in the soul and we don't know. The Lord is faithful to himself and I cried out to him, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Great things you have done. I've got enough to worry about, I hadn't even thought about that." Look at the Lord's mercy. He knows. He knows.

"A lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Is that enough? That there is an inheritance in Christ Jesus? That there is a reservation for the child of God? That there is a life to come that is so much greater than this one? And you say, "No, that's not enough. I've got to have what I want in this life. I'm not content with what I have." That's what our text says today. What is the remedy for that? There's only one, that's Christ. That's Christ.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith," the gift of faith, "unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Now those five verses I just read to you, are you content with that? You say, "Yeah, I can be content with that." Yes, you can in the day of the Lord's power and it won't be any time other than that.

I love you all in this room, love every one of you. I've spent time with every one of you and I know there are many times you're not content. We all murmur. We all complain.

Contentment is a great rare jewel but there is contentment in Christ and the Holy Spirit has to reveal what Christ has done in your soul and make you sit at his feet and lie down in his green pasture before you ever experience it, before you ever rest in it, and you won't rest in it without him.

The end of our text says something, it says, "for he hath said," this is Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for," because of, because, "for he," the Lord Jesus Christ, "hath said," God the Father has said, the Holy Spirit has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Four times in the Old Testament the Lord spoke those words. He spoke them to Abraham. He spoke them to Jacob. He spoke them to Joshua. He spoke them to Joshua in Joshua 1:5 when he said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." And as the Lord said this to his saints in the Old Testament, he has said it to his saints in the New. He has said it to his saints today. That's one commonality we all share, is that we must hear from the Shepherd. We must hear that contentment is in him.

Turn with me real quickly over to Psalm 37. David says it this way, 23 to 28, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way." It's the only way we can delight in the Lord's way, the Lord being the way, is if the Lord orders our steps in goodness.

"Though he fall," that's us, "he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." David in all of his life and David went through some very heavy trials and David had times so he cried out to the Lord in forgiveness and did not feel the Lord's presence at times, but he was never forsaken. He never believed he was forsaken. And when I see "bread," I think of Christ, "nor his seed begging bread," for the Lord is faithful. The Lord is enough for his people. He is faithful to himself.

"He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off." The Lord preserves his people in his Son forever. Forever. Preserved by grace in Christ Jesus forever.

Let's go back to our text, Hebrews 13. Our text says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, "We are troubled on every side." Yes, we are. I feel it today. I've felt it this weekend.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." One of the things I love to hear when the Lord was on the cross and he cried out not to be forsaken, and we know that the Father could not look upon him because he was made sin and he was at that

moment forsaken, and because at that moment he was forsaken, you and I never will be. Never will be because of what he has done for his people.

How can there be contentment in anything else? I know, our carnal nature is thinking right now how we could have more. Our carnal nature is desiring more. Our carnal nature is wishing things were better. But, oh, to be brought to the feet of the Lord, to rest in what he has done and in his contentment.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." I told the kids this week, you know, we come to that word "helper" in the Bible and, oh, religious man, what fools, they think that means the Lord is helping us out; that means it's co-pilotship. Well, the Lord's done his part, we've got to do our part. That's not what it means. It doesn't mean that to the child of God. The child of God knows that if he has to help God out, he's in trouble because he won't. He won't believe. He won't. Just like Peter, he'll sink down to the bottom of that ocean until the Lord puts down that hand and says, "Believe. Believe and come out and come up out of there." That's the only way.

"The Lord is my helper," means that he has done all things. "The Lord is my helper," means that he is the cure. It doesn't mean that he's taken me by the hand and he's helping me walk through life and he's being a little bit of strength for me and I'm being a little bit of strength on my own. That's popular pharisaical religion today. That's popular, "Oh, I've got to help God along." I've heard that all my life by people so close to me in my life that God can't quite do everything. I've got to do something for him. My Lord said, "I came not to be ministered to. I came to minister. I came to minister my power and my life for my children and they will be willing in the day of my power."

The last place I want to go this morning. Let me finish that. "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." That's where contentment is. Not fearing what man or anyone else will do unto you.

Last place I want to go as we end this this morning, is 1 Corinthians 3. Just let me read three verses as we end today, 21 through 23 in 1 Corinthians 3. "Therefore let no man glory in men." There is no glory in men, I don't care who they are, I don't care who you put on a pedestal. "Let no man glory in men." This is what Paul said. "For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Well, how is that? "And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Do you see that union? Do you see that union? That's John 17 union right there. That's the prayer that the Lord prayed, "that they would be in me," that we would be in you, that we would all be unified together. That's where contentment is. That's where contentment in Christ is.

"Ye are Christ's." We have been purchased with a great price. "We are Christ's." All things are yours in Christ Jesus. All of his promises are yea and amen. And does that mean that you sit there and carnally think, "Oh, anything I want is mine. Anything I ask."

That's not what he's saying. That's what our carnal nature says. All that Christ has for his people is in Christ and all of it is ours by union. That's a beautiful thought and praise be to God that he is the faithful one to distribute it. He is the faithful one who is faithful to himself.

Our text one more time, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

O Lord, may you now bless this message to the souls of thy people. May you come with power. Show us thy ever presence in our life, the power of thee to put down that covetousness that we have and the murmuring and complaining. O Lord, bring us to thy feet to rest in thee and may you show us, Lord, that you are all-in-all to thy people for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.