

Finding True Contentment

We live in a culture that continually tells us that we deserve more than we're getting. We're told that we deserve to be happy and completely fulfilled at all times and yet, surveys show an increasing percentage of unhappiness and discontentment with many areas of our lives including: dissatisfaction with our church, our job, our spouse, our children, our present quality of life in general, our future possibility for a comfortable retirement, and on and on it goes. In short, if the surveys are even close to the truth Americans are increasingly becoming an unhappy, unfulfilled, discontented group.

One of the best books (apart from the Bible) I've ever read that teaches us about contentment was written by Jeremiah Burroughs entitled, 'The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.' Even though true contentment may seem to be a 'rare jewel,' Burroughs shows that it should be the ongoing pattern of life for Christians. Burroughs writes: "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."

I want to offer some suggestions for contentment in our Christian lives as given by David in Psalm 37:1-5. David begins this Psalm with the phrase, 'Fret not yourself because of evildoers.' 'Fret not' in the Hebrew text literally speaks of burning with anger. We can fall into patterns of becoming very angry (fretting) based on the way we're treated by others and yet this will only rob us of the joy and contentment that God intends (Ephesians 4:26-27, 31). True contentment, then, can never be totally based on how others treat us, whether good or ill. Christian author, Sinclair Ferguson writes: "Christian contentment means that my satisfaction is independent of my circumstances...This kind of contentment is the fruit of an ongoing, intimate, deeply-developing relationship with [God]." How can we be content even when things around us can cause us to 'fret' (become angry)? David offers us some helpful, biblical counsel:

__ Think biblically about our present circumstances: "For [evildoers] will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb" (vs. 2). In other words, no matter how it may seem at times, the plans of the wicked (and the evil we experience in this broken world) will not last forever. As we seek to address every issue we face in light of God's truth, we will increasingly find contentment even in difficult times.

__ "Trust in the LORD and do good" (vs. 3): To trust in the LORD points to the fact that we need to have faith that God is sovereign over all that happens and that everything is working for good for his children. "...for those who love God all things work together for good..." (Romans 8:28). The concept of 'do[ing] good' takes in every area of obedience to God and love, kindness, grace and compassion toward those who may be involved in wickedness toward us or others.

___"Delight yourself in the LORD" (vs. 4): Contentment is increasingly found as we seek to take great pleasure (delight) in God and his ways above all. When we are properly 'delighting in God' we will, by grace, consistently desire and find joy in what he wants for us in every situation because, '.....he will give you the desires of your heart.'

___"Commit your way to the LORD" (vs. 5): the word 'commit' in the context of this passage pertains to 'rolling away' or 'casting' our burdens of anger, envy and discontentment on the LORD (see also 1 Peter 5:7) and trusting that 'he will act' (vs. 5b) for our good in every difficult situation. To 'commit your way,' then, is to commit our lives to casting our burdens on the Lord.

These truths from Psalm 37:1-5 will require Christians to continually go to God in prayer, trust and obey his word and be in regular fellowship with other Christians in the local church. We can't find true contentment by ourselves. We need the love, grace and strength of the only One who can give true contentment, Jesus Christ.

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