

# The Contented and the Discontented Man

by Geraint Fielder

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*The sermon explores the stark contrast between the discontent of King Ahab and the contentment found in the Apostle Paul, emphasizing the importance of God's presence and gratitude in overcoming anxiety.*

**Duration:** 49:16

**Scripture:** Romans 1:21, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:5-6, Philippians 4:11, Philippians 4:14, Philippians 4:18

**Topics:** "Discontent"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of contentment and its connection to the element of surprise. He shares the story of Michael Cassidy, a young man who had a remarkable conversion and was able to convert others through his testimony. The preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing that God is near and therefore there is no reason to be anxious. He encourages cultivating an attitude of thanksgiving and appreciation, even when God seems to say no to our requests.

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## Transcript

Compare tonight the discontented and the contented man. Part of verse 12 of Philippians 4, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. And to contrast that with a phrase from the Old Testament, get up and eat, cheer up, I'll get you the vineyard.

Let's watch two men, one a discontented man and the other a contented man. One is in a palace and the other is in a prison, which is which? If having the possessions of this life contained within it the secret of contentment, then we'd put Mr. Contented in the palace and we'd put Mr. Discontented in the prison. But we know there are more things to contentment than circumstances, and you won't be surprised if I tell you that the two men I want you to think about tonight are placed like this.

Mr. Contented happens to be in this case in prison, and Mr. Discontented is in a palace. You may have guessed who they are. The first is King Ahab.

And I want, first of all, as a background to the contentment that the other man I'm going to speak about shows us, I want to think of an incident in the life of King Ahab, the discontented man. The story of King Ahab is true to nature, true to life in many ways, let me suggest two. It's true to life, first of all, in this.

As a picture of what happens to a man or a woman when he or she refused what they want. It's a highly contemporary scene. It's true also to Ahab's own character.

He's shown in the story in 1 Kings to be an indecisive, passive sort of person. His wife, on the other hand, is shown to be a fierce, ruthless sort of person. Ahab is a pouter.

Jezebel is a shouter. And it's very interesting to see how often, even providentially, two such people are brought together. But we find that Jezebel sadly treats her husband with scorn, and even more sadly, he makes no effort to restrain her.

The story opens, and I want to summarize it for you, and I'm sure if you want to follow the bit that I'm looking at, it's in 1 Kings 21. 1 Kings 21, but sufficient, I think, of the story will come without you necessarily looking that up. But if you wish to, 1 Kings 21.

And the story begins with King Ahab having been put out. He's put out by the prophet, and we read that sullen and angry, King Ahab returned to his palace. He's in a bad mood, and he, in other words, can be described as discontented.

As so often happens to a person in a bad mood or discontented, he looks around for some new toy, and he does so in order that he can be made happy. And his eye, you remember, lightened on a vineyard belonging to Naboth, which was near to his own estates. And Ahab decides to ask Naboth if he would enter into negotiations in order that he could get that vineyard for himself.

What is ominous is this, that Ahab has already set his heart on having it before he has got it. Nothing wrong in him entering into negotiations. Nothing wrong if you've got a family of six, and you've only got two bedrooms, to try and find another house and enter into negotiations to extend your estate a little.

There is nothing wrong in the way in which initially he approaches it. But what is wrong is what lies behind what is in his heart. For a vegetable garden, it's close to my palace.

In exchange, I'll give you a better vineyard, or if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth. Fair enough. But then the next step is that he is refused his request.

And it's the response of Ahab to the refusal which reveals that Ahab, in fact, has been coveting the property. And his inner attitude is this. It's, I must have it.

And as you go through the story, you'll see that he has an excessive overreaction to the fact that Naboth refuses to give him, to sell him the bit of property. And that reveals that in Ahab's heart there is an immature, childish discontent that is sinful. It is true coveting.

The request may have been reasonable, but the way that he responded to someone saying no to him, not being able to get what he asks for, shows all the signs, doesn't it, of our sinful coveting hearts. And like a spoilt child, we read in the passage that he goes home sullen and angry. He throws himself on his bed, so the Bible tells us, he lay on his bed, sulking, and he refused to eat.

When I read this in another version, it rather hit me because it added this phrase, he threw himself on his bed with his face to the wall, sulking. And I was jotted in my memory a phone call from a woman who said, please would you come, and come quickly, we need you. When I got to the house, she said, my husband is upstairs.

And when I got upstairs, he was doing precisely that. He was lying on the bed, his head was buried in a pillow, he was facing the wall, he was sulking, because another woman who he had been having an affair with, as I say, he was already married, had said, no, I'm now going to finish it. And he comes home, sulking at someone having said no to him that he had no right to anyway, which he was already snatching and taking.

There he was, lying with his face to the wall. It's a picture of Ahab. It's a picture of emotionally, people like you and me, in a condition like this, going on strike.

And there are all sorts of ways in which we can be emotionally on strike, even tonight in a service, and it is sin. And it can lead to desperate problems. And God wants to deal with things like that.

And this man was sulking for the simple reason that someone had quite legitimately said no to him. And we find that we're living in a society where this response is now rampant, that it is almost impossible to say no. If a young girl slaps the hands of a fellow and says no, you're not supposed to say it.

If the BBC governors wrap the knuckles of some very feckless producers and say no, they're not supposed to say it. We either literally or emotionally go on strike. And it's the kind of age where we are now reaping what we have sown in terms of not even being able to say no in our families.

There, the picture of Ahab is very clear. And I want us to mark what the covetous spirit does and what it is. All that Ahab has, that he possesses, is as nothing, while that little or bigger, whatever it was, plot of ground is refused him.

While he cannot get that extra percentage to his property, he tosses about on his bed as if he had nothing else in the world to be thankful for. Just as if his palace and his carpets, which he may have had at Harrods, or his land, or his full larder, or deep freeze, his Rolls-Royce chariot, his vineyard, and his wine cellar, and his Jezebel, as if all those things meant absolutely nothing. And all the pleasures and responsibilities that he still possessed meant nothing to him.

And the 20th century parallel is clear. And discontent and godlessness lead to worse wickedness in the story. It leaves Ahab wide open to the militant principle.

And how we've got to beware it, whether it's in government or whether it's in the mob. The militant principle is that which will not allow God, or the law of God, or even legitimate human law, to say, no, so far, no further. And we find the militant principle epitomized in Jezebel.

And it is Jezebel who says to him, oh cheer up, come on eat, I'll get you what you want. Regardless of the power of a contented spirit in a population which could begin with us as God's people tonight, if it were really present even in one-tenth of the community, could put a stop to much of what is going on in society overnight. Such is our need of true priorities, and our understanding of what God means when he says no.

But if we watch what happens to the story of Jezebel and Ahab, we see how the covetous spirit is amenable to further wickedness. I pictured for you Ahab pouting on his bed, surrounded no doubt by everything that he needed, and he wouldn't even eat. It's as if he was in a good hotel, and if he was on a good holiday, and as if he was having everything else that he wanted except one thing.

And that one thing turns him upside down and inside out. And what he does is he protests. He acts in such a way as to show this is me.

I'm in need. I'm in trouble. I'm not being given what I want, and it's all attention-getting.

We see it, don't we? We see it in ourselves, we see it in others, we see it in our homes. Sadly, we see it in our own hearts, and we ask God to rip it out. We've seen it.

I hope you're not spoiling somebody's holiday this week, because that's how you are at the moment. There he is lying on the bed, and in comes Jezebel, and you can hear her, can't you? Now what's the matter with you? What's upset you this time, Ahab, old boy? There's a perfectly good meal waiting for you downstairs going waste, and there you are lolling about in bed. You want to grow up.

Can't you hear her say it? It's the shouter's reaction to the powder, and then Ahab tries to explain, and probably eventually he gets it out, because this kind of person finds it very difficult when they're in a pout to talk at all, don't they? And then eventually he gets it out, and he says what's upset him, and Jezebel makes matters worse, and this is where wives or husbands, however you relate in this pattern, have so much responsibility. She both scorns him, and she panders to him, and it's a terrible picture, and it's a real picture, and she says to him, dost thou rule? Is this how you're acting as king? Get up and eat, and the words are cheer up. I'll get you the thing that you want.

Will that make you feel better? And in terms of her own day, she was really seeing this. Why don't you act like an eastern despot? You see, thankfully Ahab was under the law of God. Although he was such an awful picture, he was in the land where there was a law of God, and the king was under the law, and he couldn't just go and take what he wanted, because God said thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery.

He couldn't just move in, but the society that Jezebel was from, which is so much like the majority society in which we are in today, can move in and take what they want. Why be bothered with this law of yours? Monarchs should be above the law. Cheer up, I'll get it for you.

It's the voice, in other words, as I've suggested, of militant muscle, whether government militant muscle or mob militant muscle. Use your power to get your demands. Do we want it? Yes, lads, we want it.

Well, let's get it. Cheer up, men, we'll get it for you. A determined no produces all sorts of problems in our day, doesn't it? And yet we have to learn from the Word of God how we are to react to it personally, first of all in our own lives, in our own families, and in our relationship to God.

The passage gets even worse. It moves into sheer injustice. It moves into violence, and then it moves into hypocritical religion, because Jezebel actually calls a fast and a religious festival before she goes in and takes from Puro, Naboth, what rightfully belonged to him, and he was killed.

And then, of course, thankfully, Elijah comes. Now, I'm not going to carry on the story about Elijah because I just wanted to picture for you something of the discontented man. That's how it goes.

But I said I wanted to contrast that with the contented man, and that's why our brother read from Philippians. And I remind you that one of our texts was this, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungered, whether living in plenty or in want. The king, on the one hand, in a palace, discontented.

The apostle, on the other hand, in prison, and he shows contentment. Now, if we'd seen him there, we'd have said, let's write a petition. Let's get him out.

He's innocent. He should under no circumstances be in prison, and we would, of course, be right in doing that. But when we look at Paul's own condition of heart, it's remarkable.

Perhaps even as we say these things to him, with him there in prison, he hands us this letter which he's just written. And he's written this letter to his friends in Philippi, to Lydia, and to the jailer, and to others who come to know the Lord Jesus Christ there. And then, let's imagine it, as we've got into that cell and begin to speak to him, he asks us if we'll deliver his letter for him.

They just sent him some money, and he was grateful. There we go on our way, and because he's given us permission to read it, we open the letter, just as we've done tonight. And the very letter that was sent to that church at Philippi, out of that prison, we have had read from this pulpit.

The words of a man whose financial and business prospects at that moment were pretty gloomy. And I'll read it again. Not that I complain of want, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have more than enough. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. And there we go, perhaps me or you, traveling along with the letter.

We possess our freedom. We are not in prison. We've got a firm job.

We've got good prospects, maybe. We are plentifully endowed, maybe. Or perhaps our job is in danger.

Maybe we anticipate living through a time of want. And we look at those words again, and they read like this. I have learned the secret of contentment.

And the Greek scholar tells us that the I is emphasized. As if he's saying, I have learned it. Reader, have you? Creature, have you? I have learned the secret of being content.

But what about you? And so tonight I want to go into some of the content of contentment. And in Philippians chapter 3 and 4, we find something of the content of contentment. And I want to bring these verses that were read together under various headings.

And to do it like this. The first principle that I would bring is from verse 5 of chapter 4 and the first part of verse 6. The end of verse 5 and the first part of verse 6. The Lord is near, or the Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything.

Now what is that saying? It's saying to you and to me that God sees no reason why we should be anxious while he is at hand. Can I stress that? God sees no reason. I look, I see, as I read my situation, I have grounds for anxiety.

God is at hand. The apostle wants us to see that God is telling us, here he is. He's in our present.

He is at hand. He is near. He sees.

He views my situation. He sees it from the eternal perspective. And he says, I who see all tell you who are anxious, there is no ground for anxiety.

Because I see and I know. I suppose inadequately it's a little bit like when you learn to drive, you were sitting there in the driving seat, your instructor was at your side, and you wanted to go between two cars,

and you say, I will never get through there. And he says, go on, you'll get through okay.

You've got plenty of room, and you're petrified. But through you get. You learn to trust his judgment.

He sees there is room. And what we need to realize all the time is that God who sees with his perspective always allows us room. It's very difficult sometimes to appreciate that.

But that's what he is saying. There is room to get through. Because I am at hand, and I say, do not be anxious.

And that is the first principle of contentment of the contented man that we find here that I want to bring to you in Philippians. Unseen, yet forever at hand, our Lord says that. And then the second principle that he brings is this.

If he is at hand, God says, talk to me. Because the verse goes on, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, present your requests to God. The God who is invisible, and the God who is at hand, he actually says to us, well, talk to me.

Tell me about it. He requires that we bring him our cares, and that we bring him all that is on our heart. Everything, the verse says, big or small.

The little things and the big things. In everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. Some of you may have seen recently something of the history of one of the Webb Peps, one of the great missionary doctors of this century.

And Webb Peps, Murray Webb Peps, was of a Christian family of three generations. The grandfather is someone who I think can tell us something about what this verse is calling us to do when it says, talk to the invisible God. He was a student up at Cambridge, I think it was.

He was the only or one of the very few students who could jump in one leap from Great Trinity Court up into the dining hall, missing every step. And it's not surprising therefore that after he was converted and became a vicar, that in a country parish he was known as the vicar who didn't open five barred gates, but leapt over them. That was the grandfather.

He was converted in this way. When he was at university, he was at the Derby, and somebody gave him a text, a tract, and he put it in his pocket, and he didn't read it until the winter. And as he read it, he was saved.

But he was called to the ministry, and he went into the ministry, and he went on holiday with his little family. And while he was on holiday, one of his children died. He had a small little coffin made.

He took his little girl home, and he buried her with his own hands. And he said to himself, I'm home unexpectedly. I'm not going to ask the curate to speak, to preach.

I am going to preach to my people and tell them about God, and tell them about his love. And he looked up the particular allocated reading for that Sunday, and it was the passage in Corinthians that contains the verse, My grace is sufficient for thee. He sat down, he took up his pen, he began to write, and his heart murmured against God.

And he threw his pen down. He went on his knee, and he said to God in the grief upon his heart, the anxiety, grief, whatever we call it. He said to God, God, your grace is not sufficient.

It is not sufficient. O Lord, I beseech thee, make it sufficient. Lord, do.

And he tells us that as he was on his knees, he looked up and opened his eyes, and there on the wall above his desk was the text in black, My grace is sufficient for thee. Only there was one word that was illuminated in bright green, and it was the word is. My grace is sufficient for thee.

And Webb Peplow tells us, that is changed my life. It changed his ministry. It transformed him.

It sent him off to London, to Onslow Square, where he preached to 1600 people regularly on a Sunday, and the people knew. The people knew that that man's life had been changed. And I would like to learn that.

There are times when I say, Lord, your grace, is it sufficient? And he said that little word is, written upon his heart there by the very spirit of the living God, changed his life and changed the whole course of his preaching. He said two sermons a week had been killing him up to that point. He said from then on, when God willed it, 15 sermons a week were no problem.

You can see the turnaround. He really talked to the invisible God honestly, and God shone out into his heart through that little word, my grace is sufficient. And then the next principle that we can bring out here, what this passage would encourage us to do is this, to thank the invisible God.

Cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving and appreciation. Verse 6b contains that praise that I omitted. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving.

And especially the Apostle Paul would tell us when God seems to have said no. Isn't that interesting? That in the very chapter in which that verse comes, the Apostle Paul said that he asked God thrice, and God said no, thrice. And it was out of the thrice repeated no, that the Apostle Paul gives us that verse, my grace is sufficient for thee.

Of course, being the Apostle Paul, he teaches us the example of thanksgiving to inordinary things. As I mentioned, he just received a gift, and the reason why he wrote the letter was he wanted to say thank you for the gift, partly. He says in verse 14 of chapter 4, it was good of you to share in my troubles.

And verse 18, I am amply surprised now that I have received your gift. He's saying thank you, and I want to encourage somebody here tonight. You know, it's the basic sin according to Romans 1, that it's because we do not thank God that the essence of the problem of our sin is manifesting in this world.

Read Romans 1. We do not give God the glory, it says, neither do we thank him. It's as radical, as deep-rooted as that. Here the Apostle gives it as one of the keys of contentment.

Well, another principle I'd like to bring out is this. God can take us by surprise, because God too has a gift. He has a gift that he can shower upon us, and it's called peace.

Peace. Listen, verse 7, and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Thank God for that gift which sometimes surprises us as it comes down.

It transcends our understanding. We can't make it out. Here we were, embattled and involved in problems, and then God meets with us, maybe in his word as we study, maybe on the Lord's Day, maybe just as we are singing a hymn.

And he comes, and he visits us, and he sets our hearts at peace. It's a key to contentment, and yet we thank him as we look to him that maybe even this week, those of us involved in the complexities of life, that God who has a gift called peace will grant it to me even this week. Don't you feel that the element of surprise is important in this whole matter of gift? In fact, it's of the essence of gift.

Can I tell you something that I hope you don't feel misinterpret? I was on a train the other day, and I was on a preaching tour, and while I was on the train going to preach in a particular church, I read something that had been given me, which was the church magazine of the church that I had been going to. And my eye alighted on the description of the series of meetings, and the preacher who was coming to preach that was me, and I was described, and every preacher here will understand my reaction, I was described as an outstanding preacher. Now, you may laugh at that.

I'm just being honest and telling you what I read there. That's what it said, and it hunted me, and it haunted me in that journey on the train for at least half an hour. I remember following the school course of Peter May as the outstanding young batsman, and everybody was expecting great things, and I went to see him in his first test, outstanding as he was, and he was out first ball, and I felt, goodness, this is something that I'm in for.

That was a description that was being given. But you know, it was a real problem, but I was helped, and one of the ways I was helped was this. My little girl, who doesn't usually ask me for anything, on that particular occasion, she said, Dad, will you bring me back a national costume doll? She'd never asked that before anywhere else, but she'd asked it this time, and as I'd been thinking, I thought, wasn't that a pity? Because really, I would have got her one anyway, and it would have been much more of a surprise if she hadn't asked, and I'd bought one, and I was thinking of this as gift and surprise.

My passage for the day was James 1, and I hadn't read it, and I opened my Bible, and as I read it, there in the train, I read the verse, every good gift cometh down from above. And I can just say, thank you to the Lord, but all my foolish pride, all my silly tensions about being described in that way, and wondering, would it actually happen? It all dissipated. And my heart was settled, and I saw the perspective, when God wishes to surprise us with his gift, so he grants it, and it's for us to say, thank you, and if he wanted to bless through the preaching, he would do the gift, he would do the giving, he would grant, and I knew, thankfully, in a train, the gift of God coming down, and its name was peace.

And I thank God for the peace of God, which can pass all understanding, and I would ask that by his grace, we might know it this evening. Pouting in a palace, peace in a prison, peace with God, the peace of God, here in this service tonight, he can grant it. Have we got it? And then another principle of contentment that comes out here.

What about our mind? We heard from Brother Jeffreys last night about the mind. This passage also speaks to us about the mind. Hold your mind, it says, firm to thoughts that are pleasing to God.

Listen, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think on these things. And so I'm asking you, how are we keeping our minds during this week? Think big. How do we think big? As a

believer, we think big by thinking beautiful.

And how do we think beautiful? We think God's thoughts after him. And how do we think God's thoughts after him? There's one of the lovely descriptions in the scripture there in front of us, whatever things are noble and right and pure and lovely and admirable and excellent and praiseworthy. Are we bringing our minds into that sort of subjection, or are we letting our minds drift into a vacuum, because that way leaves the door open to all sorts of covetousness? As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Whatsoever things are lovely, think big in that way. Think beautiful in that way. And as God comes down and grants us the gift of his peace, don't you find that those are the things you think on and you give yourself to and you relate to in your hearts? And you thank him for his wisdom and his direction and the particulars that he directs us in? Then another principle of contentment.

The scripture in this passage would say this, don't envy the unbeliever his ways, grieve for him. Don't envy the unbeliever, but grieve for him. You know how that is put? With tears, the apostle says, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

He puts with tears this fact that he notices it. Their destiny is destruction, their God is their stomach, their glory is in their shame, their mind is on earthly things. Here, as we meet with God's people tonight, we ask that we will think not the Ahab way, not the Jezebel way, but the way in which the apostle Paul is calling us to think here.

And as the unbeliever round about us may perhaps be living in a situation which, when we are caught off guard, we will envy, the apostle says remember their destruction, remember their end, remember where they're going, and reminds us that bodily indulgence and materialistic thinking will send a man to hell. So how can you and I resist the wrongful spirit of covetousness if we allow the atmosphere of our lives to give free reign to those pet sensualities and those panderings to self? We never know the end all, but the Bible says it's destruction. So let's beware and let's be careful and let's see that that's no goal for you and that's no goal for me.

And when we think that way, the end of it is not just discontentment, but it is destruction. And therefore if that's no goal, what is a goal then? Well the apostle gives us another principle. Brethren, he says, I press straight on toward the goal of a prize for which God has called you heavenward in Christ Jesus.

He's talking about the life above. He's talking about a goal that he is after, the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may gain Christ and be found in him. There's his goal, there's his desire, that I might know Christ, that I might be found in him, that I might gain Christ.

When we're talking of goals and when we're talking of contentment, let me remind you and link again this with the element of surprise. I was reading recently of a young chap, his name was Michael Cassidy, who was converted in 1955 and he had a remarkable conversion and people were converted instantly through his witness. Ronald McCauley, for example, was converted the very day in which he was converted through his testimony and when it went on and on and on.

And I was reading only last week one of his books in which he tells us a surprise experience that the Lord granted him. I began to hear from people that he was preaching to 50,000. Now numbers aren't everything, but if Hubert Clement suddenly started to preach to 50,000, you wouldn't be here tonight, neither would I, we'd all be there.

50,000! Reading this book I suddenly became aware of one of the reasons why. Can I just read it to you in terms of showing the ultimate in contentment? He says in 1977 he'd been sharing a room with another man, they'd been having a time of prayer together, and then he said they both turned to the business of slumber. But these are his words, sleep would not come to me.

Instead, quite out of the blue, the spirit of praise came upon my soul. All seemed to be freedom. Hour after hour I praised my God in unrestrained and unrestrainable doxology and song.

In words of men and angels, I rejoiced. No fatigue visited me that night. All my senses were vibrantly alive to God.

The Holy Spirit was blessing me, wave upon wave, flow upon flow. He seemed to be bubbling up from within, descending from above. And somewhere in the early hours of the morning I said to myself, I don't know the correct biblical name for this, but this is the experience I've heard others talk of.

It was a monumental night. I had never had one like it, nor have I had a comparable one since. And the day following was a new day indeed.

It was totally luminous with the love and light of God. My spiritual perceptions seemed strangely sharpened, and I felt born along on the wings of my Lord's love. That is as authentic as 1877, 1777, 1677.

And I say that as a historian, and I thank God for the surprise of it, and I thank God for the potential of it, and I thank God that we too, as we are here this evening, can know the surprise of his peace, that is more than peace, that is joy. Was it John Bunyan who says that peace is joy sitting, joy is peace dancing? And here you get this man's heart dancing before God, as God comes upon him in wave upon wave. I think the word peace is significant, because peace refers to reconciliation, and when reconciliation to God is concerned, it relates all to the reconciliation to ourselves.

And you know that that man had only just previously written a letter a few weeks before to a Christian family who he'd been unreconciled to for eight years, as he makes his peace with a Christian friend, who is no longer a friend. We have this remarkable evidence of God blessing him. The one is not the condition of the other, but do they not go together? Are they not twins? Do we not see the beauty of it? Can we not see, as we ask for the gift of God's peace, that his reconciliation to him, that we are reconciled one to another? Do not they go as twin? You and I in our hearts need to learn it, and to see it, and to feel it, and to thank God that as we want to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, that we might be made conformable unto his death, that we're seeing part of the death to sin as being the way of life and peace in reconciliation with each other.

As I die to my own sin, I live positively to my brother. Here in this particular passage is an indication of that. There I want to give you just, what, shall we say two more of the keynotes of the contented man, as we find it here in Philippians.

You see, if there's an element there which has lifted us, and lifted our sights higher and further, let's remember what is said also in chapter 3, verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies, so that we will be like unto his glorious body. What's it saying? We are citizens of heaven, and we eagerly await our saviour.

One of the elders preached in our church, he said, the second coming isn't preached enough about. He said, on Sunday, we're not going for a hole in the ground, we're waiting for a crack in the skies. Well, he's an ordinary brother, and he can say that, and we can enjoy it, but isn't it true? We are not anticipating the downward look, but the upward look.

We eagerly await our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, from heaven, who shall change our mortal bodies. Our bodies are weak, and they are mortal. They will suffer decline, and our powers will eventually fade.

But thankfully, our bodies are not just made for the pleasures that please, and they're not just made for the pains of disease. And we're to remember that, especially the older ones amongst us. Will we not remember it amidst the pains of disease, amidst the difficulties and the discontents that this life inevitably brings us? We've got to learn that in one sense, we haven't begun to live.

We ain't seen nothing yet in terms of what God has for us when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in his glory. And we don't know what he's going to do with us yet. And yet, we can believe something of the transformation intrinsic in the word dynamite, which is here, dynamos, the power that he has to change us to be like his own image, transforming us to live with him in heaven.

I was preaching recently, and I mentioned the fact that we won't be troubled by arthritis. And I was also mentioning the fact that the implication of this is that the single life, even if it goes on until we die, isn't in any sense inferior to the married life. And I just happened to expatiate on that for a minute.

And a dear brother came to me afterwards, and he said, friend, he said, I've been in the seventh heaven tonight. And I said, what do you mean? Well, he said, here I am. I've got arthritis.

Don't shake my hand too far. And I'm single, he said. Amen.

And he was able to rejoice in it. Now then, if there be anybody here with that twofold condition this evening, here's the word for you and for me. We are citizens of heaven.

We eagerly await for our savior, the Lord Jesus, to come from heaven, who will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his glorious body. And then, if I can put it like this, the keynote, surely, of the life of contentment is to have this divine discontent. Because of the fall, there's got to be discontent.

It's there. It's written into us until Jesus comes again. But oh, when I read to you that experience of that man in 1977 in South Africa, didn't it produce in you a divine discontent that makes you able to look at the world and see that those other things that drags the world away, you can say, I don't want that.

I want God in his glory and in his fullness in that way. And one day I shall see him and be like him. And I cannot have an anticipation of that in the outpouring of his spirit that will make Christ more precious and more blessed to me.

The discontent that we want is the discontent that says, oh, that I might know him. And the power of his resurrection, working to holiness even now in this body of humiliation, as the scripture puts it. And so, the final thing I will say, the keynote of contentment, there's another means, the ultimate means, and the initial means of being content.

The joy of knowing, says verse 3, chapter 4, that our names are in the book of life. Am I speaking to anybody who's not sure of that? The call is to rejoice in the Lord. And again I say rejoice.

Why? Not so much, says Jesus, that the spirits are subject to you, but why? That your name is in the book of life. As we heard last night, as God calls you, as he calls you to understand and to realize that only on the basis of what Christ has done for you, and only as he calls into the depths of the death of your heart, can you quicken and alighten and come to life and believe on him. But as he says it, as he calls you, so you can see and be enraptured by the thought that your name from eternity is written in the book of life.

What is your name? May God call you by name and speak to you. May you rejoice in it. May you see it as all stemming from that central cross.

Can I just close with an experience of some years ago up in the Lake District, a weekend preaching, and the family happened to be with me, and I'd been giving a talk sometime before on women hymn writers. And one of the hymn writers that I'd been speaking about at a women's meeting had asked me to do it was Charlotte Elliot. And I'd been telling them the story of just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.

And in the course of reading it up, I discovered that William Wordsworth's daughter, Dora, had been given that poem when she was ill, and she had been saved through it. And she had died reasonably young, and she had asked that on her tombstone, somehow or other, that glorious message be represented. And I had read that in Grasmere, in Cleveland Cemetery in the Lake District, that she was buried there.

And so I decided I would go and look. And so we made our way as a family. And there were three tombstones.

One on the left had the name William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, nothing else. The one on the right had the name of Dora Wordsworth's husband, just his name, nothing else. And there, the central tomb was the name Dora.

And on the top of that tomb, there was a lamb. And on that lamb, there was a cross. And underneath, there was represented this word, He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

And there, see it, rather than the central tombstone, as the very central cross that preaches to you, and preaches to me, and gives us ultimately what is the basis of our contentment in the presence of God. That there is a lamb, the Lamb of God, who says to you, as He said to me, just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bid'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come. Would you come, as you are called to come? Then come, and as our brother said last night, stop mucking about.

In your heart, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And as He begins to work in you a contentment, O seek Him, and seek Him more, and seek Him oft, and seek Him till that day, when not only in His fullness down here, in the blessing that He will give you, but in the fullness that is glory itself. As Psalm 16:11 says, and in the presence of ultimate joy, you will truly know the contentment that God has planned for you from eternity.

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