

Of Contentment of Mind.

by John Gill

Contentment of mind is an entire acquiescence of a man's mind in his lot and portion, in his state and condition in the present life, be it what it may, prosperous or adverse.

Scripture: Job 1:21, Matthew 6:25, Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:6, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Trust in God's Provision", "Contentment"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the significance of contentment of mind as a natural outcome of joy and peace, which are found only in godly individuals. He contrasts contentment with envy, avarice, pride, and anxiety, illustrating that true contentment is rooted in a deep acceptance of one's circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse. Gill argues that contentment is learned through experiences and is essential for a fulfilling Christian life, as it aligns with God's will and promises. He encourages believers to recognize their blessings and the sufficiency of God's grace, which fosters a spirit of thankfulness and peace.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 12

OF CONTENTMENT OF MIND

Contentment of mind naturally follows upon Joy and Peace; where joy abounds, and peace rules in the heart, contentment is; it is nowhere to be found but in a godly man; in Christians of the first rank and class: the heathens talked much of it, but were not found in the practice of it; and, indeed, few men are; it is "rara avis in terris;" an ungodly man is an utter stranger to it; the ungodly are like a troubled sea, never at rest. Contentment is a branch of true godliness, or rather a super addition to it; which makes it greatly ornamental and profitable; for "godliness, with contentment," is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6).

And it will be proper to inquire, 1. What it is; and it is no other than an entire acquiescence of a man's mind in his lot and portion, in his state and condition in the present life, be it what it may, prosperous or adverse. And, 1a. First, as opposites serve to illustrate each other, this may be known by what is contrary to it, or by what it is contrary unto; as, 1a1. Contentment and envy are contrary to one another; "envying and strife" go together, and where there is strife and contention there is no contentment, but "confusion and every evil work;" a man that envies the superior or equal happiness of another, neither of which he can bear,

inwardly pines^[1] and frets at it.

Envy and fretting meet in the same persons, and are equally dehorted from; and are evils to be found in good men, when they observe the prosperity of the wicked, and dwell upon their own afflictions (Ps. 37:1,7; 73:3), and are contrary to that "charity" which "envieth not;" to rest and acquiescence in the will of God, which becometh saints; and where the sin of envy is predominant, a man can have no true contentment of mind; "envy is rottenness of the bones," it gnaws upon a man, torments him,^[2] eats out his very vitals; "Wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one" (Prov. 14:30; Job 5:2). 1a2.

Contentment is opposite to avarice, and avarice to that; and therefore the one must be quitted in order to possess the other. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5), a covetous man cannot be a truly contented man; he cannot be content with what he has, he always wants more.^[3] The Greek word for "covetousness" is pleonexia, "a having" or a desire to "have more;" not but that there may be a lawful desire of having more in some cases and for some good ends and purposes, and in submission to the will of God; but it is an anxious, immoderate, and unbounded desire of more which is criminal; and especially to have it in an unlawful way, and when a person has much already; it is often usual with men to fix upon the pitch of wealth and riches they are desirous of attaining to, and think if they could attain to that they should be content; now such persons, until they arrive at such a pitch, must be all the while in a state of discontent; and should they arrive to it they are not sure of content; nay they seldom have it, but then enlarge their desires and extend their limits; in short they never have enough, but are like the horseleech, crying, "Give, give," more and more; and in other things persons of this complexion are like that creature, of which naturalists^[4] observe it has no passage through, it takes in all it can but lets out nothing; as a covetous man grasps at all he can, but will part with nothing; and like the said creature, which breaks and bursts with its own fulness. 1a3.

Contentment is opposite to pride and ambition. A proud ambitious man cannot bear that any should be above him, or upon a footing with him; and when he observes this, it gives him uneasiness, and fills him with disquietude and discontent; yea let his pride and ambition be ever so much gratified, he is not content, he still wants more; for the proud man "enlarges his desires as hell," or the grave, and like that "cannot be satisfied," which, how full soever, never says, "It is enough" (Hab. 2:5; Prov. 30:16), for though the world is set in their hearts, and they have all that is in it, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," they are not content; as it is reported of Alexander, when he had conquered the whole world as he thought, sat down and cried because there was not another world to conquer; so boundless were his pride and ambition, and so little contentment had he in his acquisitions.^[5] 1a4.

Anxiety of mind, or a distressing care about worldly things; as about food, drink, and raiment, is contrary to true contentment of mind; and therefore our Lord dissuades from it by a variety of arguments; which may be read in (Matthew 6:25-34). "Take no thought for your life," &c. to do this is to act below the creatures; they might learn better things from them: besides, such anxious care is needless, and of no avail, nothing is to be got by it; God will take care of his people; the grand point is, to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and leave all other things with him; which is the best way to have contentment and happiness. 1a5.

Murmurings and repinings under adverse dispensations of providence, are the reverse of contentment of mind; such as are frequently to be observed in the Israelites in the wilderness, who were a discontented people, often murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and repining at afflictive providences; and from which Christians are dehorted by their example; "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured;" and

murmurers and complainers are joined together, and both must be reckoned among discontented persons; for which murmurs and complaints there is no reason, not even under afflictive providences: not with the people of God; for their afflictions are fatherly chastisements; nor with wicked men, though they are punishments; for "wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" since it is less than he deserves (Lam. 3:39). 1b.

Secondly, what contentment of mind is, may be learned from the several phrases by which it is expressed in scripture. As, 1b1. First, by being contented with what a man has; "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5); *tioV parousin*, "with present things;" things future are not the object of contentment; a man is not to look to things to come for it; which he may never have; and if he should have them, cannot promise himself contentment in them, as before observed; but they are present things, things he is now in the possession of, he should be content with. 1b1a.

Be they more or less, whether a man has a larger or a lesser share of the things of this world, whether riches or poverty, a man should be content; it was a wise petition of Agur, "Give me neither riches nor poverty; feed me with food convenient for me," or that which is sufficient and enough (Prov. 30:8), but be it either, a man should be satisfied with what God gives; if God gives him riches, he should be thankful, knowing that these come of God; and if they increase, he should not set his heart upon them, considering they are uncertain things, fleeting ones, make themselves wings and fly away; and therefore should be prepared for the loss of them, and be content when so it is; and the way to be content with what a man has at present, is rather to magnify it in his own mind than to lessen it; and to think, that God has "given him all things richly to enjoy;" so said the apostle when he had but little (1 Tim. 6:17).

It may be said, a man may very well be content with present riches; but how can he be content with present poverty? He may; for poverty is no disgrace to a man, when it does not come through negligence and sloth; many a good man and an honorable Christian have been poor; God hath "chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;" Lazarus, now in Abraham's bosom, was once a beggar; and our Lord himself became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.

The advice of the apostle James is, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted;" exalted in Christ, and made a partaker of the riches of grace, and has a right to the riches of glory through him. 1b1b. Men should be content, as with present advantages and growing profit, so with present losses, which might have been greater; as Job was with the loss of his substance, his children, and his health, and perhaps all in one day; saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1:21); for let the saint lose what he may, he cannot lose his God, his portion, and his all, his Redeemer and Saviour, his better and more enduring substance, his inheritance reserved in the heavens; and therefore takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods, and is content with the loss of earthly things. 1b1c.

With present reproaches, indignities, and ill usage from men, on account of religion; like Moses, esteeming reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt; yea, our Lord pleased not himself, but was content to bear all the reproaches of the people on him; and who for the encouragement of his followers, pronounces them blessed when reviled and reproached (Heb. 11:25; 2 Sam. 16:10-12; Rom. 15:1-3; Matthew 5:11). 1b1d. With present afflictions of whatsoever kind, whether from God or men; for in whatsoever way, they rise not out of the dust, nor come by chance; but according to the will and appointment of God; and though not joyous, but grievous, yet sanctified, yield good fruit, and work together for good; and are the means of making men more partakers of divine holiness; and those light present afflictions, which are but for a moment, work a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory.

Particularly, 1b1e. "Having food and raiment;" food for the present day, and raiment for present use, skepasmata, coverings from the inclemencies of weather, among which houses to dwell in are included; "Let us," says the apostle, "therewith be content;" this was all that Jacob desired to have; and which sometimes good men have been without, and yet contented (1 Tim. 6:8; Gen. 28:20; 1 Cor. 4:11). But are saints to be content with present grace, present knowledge, present experience? &c.

They may desire more grace, an increase of faith, and every other grace, as the apostles did; they may earnestly covet the best gifts, and yet not envy nor repine at the superior gifts and graces of others; they may forget things behind, and press towards those before, and yet be thankful for past experiences, and for present ones; and bless God for the measure of spiritual light and knowledge they have, and yet humbly desire an increase, and make use of proper means for that purpose; though the apostle, in the text referred to, seems to have respect only to temporal things. 1b2.

Secondly, this contentment of mind is expressed by the apostle from his own experience; "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). 1b2a. The apostle means not his state of unregeneracy; he says not, "in whatsoever state I have been;" but, "in whatsoever state I am;" an unregenerate man is content to be in such a state, like Moab of old, at ease from his youth, and settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, but remains quiet and undisturbed; repents not of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? is in no apprehension of any danger, but like a man asleep and secure in the midst of the sea, and on the top of a mast; and, indeed, it is the business and policy of Satan, the strong man armed, to keep the goods in peace: a state of unregeneracy is a state of ignorance of God, and of his righteous law, and a state of unbelief, in which state the apostle had been (1 Tim. 1:13), and while in it, he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ; and imagined himself to be in a good state and condition, and alive without the law: it was not only a sinful state; but a state of self-righteousness; when the apostle thought himself, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and so safe and secure, and greatly contented with it; but this is not here meant.

But, 1b2b. His state after conversion, his spiritual state, it may be; believing his covenant interest in God; "My God shall supply all your need," &c. and being persuaded of his interest in the love of God, and that nothing should separate him from it; knowing Christ in whom he had believed and being satisfied of his ability and faithfulness to keep what he had committed to him, and of his being found in him, not having on his own righteousness, but his; and in this the apostle was content; yea, with the worst part of his spiritual state, even when in temptation, when buffered by Satan; since he was assured, that "the grave of Christ was sufficient for him;" and since Christ is able to help them that are tempted, and prays for his tempted ones, that their faith fail not; knows how to deliver them that are tempted, and that in the best manner, and in the most seasonable time; therefore they are contented: as they are also even in times of desertion and darkness, when they are directed and encouraged to trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on the mighty God of Jacob, and to wait for him that hides his face from them, as the church was determined to do (Micah 7:7-9), and there is great reason for this contentment, faith, and expectation; since light is sown for the righteous, and to the upright it arises in darkness (Ps. 97:11; 92:4).

But, 1b2c. The apostle chiefly means his outward state after conversion; with which he was content: and which lay, 1b2c1. In his afflictions, reproaches, and persecutions; these attended him wherever he came, and he expected them, and not only bore them patiently, but endured them with pleasure; "I take pleasure," says he, "in reproaches, in necessities," &c. yea, he gloried in them (2 Cor. 12:9,10). 1b2c2. In

his bonds and imprisonment; in such a state he was when he expressed his contentment in whatsoever state he was, and so in that; for he was in bonds, a prisoner at Rome, when he wrote his epistle to the Philippians; (see Phil. 1:13,14), and he seems to show a sort of pride in his title and character as the Lord's prisoner, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph 3:1; 4:1), and reckoned himself so happy a man on all other accounts, that he wished king Agrippa, and all in court, were altogether as he was, excepting his bonds; and though he did not wish them to others, he was content with them himself. 1b2c3.

The phrase, "in whatsoever state," includes both prosperity and adversity; an abundance and a scarcity of the necessaries of life; a fulness, and want of them, as explained in the next verse; the wise man says (Eccl. 7:14), "In the day of prosperity be joyful;" that is no hard lesson to learn: "But in the day of adversity consider" from whence it comes, and for what end, and be content with your portion; this is not so easily learnt; the apostle had learned it: as also, 1b2c4.

To be content both to live and to die; since he was persuaded Christ would be "magnified in his body, whether by life or death;" and though he knew it would be much better for him to depart and be with Christ, which was desirable by him; yet it would be more to the advantage of the interest of Christ, and the good of the churches, to continue longer on earth; this put him into a strait; however, he left it with God, and was content to depart or stay, as he thought fit: some good men, in a fit of discontent, have wished to die, and have expressed an uneasiness at life, by reason of their troubles and afflictions; as Job, and the prophets Elijah and Jonah, which was their infirmity; but one that has learned the lesson of divine contentment, and is under the influence of that grace, he is content to live while God has anything to do by him, and he is content to die, when he thinks fit to dismiss him from service.

Now such a disposition of mind, as to be content in every state of life, appears in a man's thankfulness for all he enjoys; when, as advised, "in everything," in every state, and for everything, be it what it may, he "gives thanks;" when he makes known his requests to God with thanksgivings, for what he has had, and asks for what he wants in submission to his will; thus Job blessed God for what he gave him; and when he took it away from him. This grace shows itself much in a quiet resignation of the will to the will of God, in what condition soever a man is, especially in adverse dispensations of providence; instances of which we have in Aaron, in Eli, in David, and others; as also in bearing cheerfully all things which are disagreeable to flesh and blood; as in the apostles, who departed from the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ; and in the believing Hebrews, who took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and in the apostle Paul, who took pleasure in reproaches and distress for Christ's sake. 1b2d.

The word used by the apostle in the place under consideration for content, *autarkhV*, properly signifies "self-sufficient," or being sufficient of one's self; which, strictly speaking, and in the highest sense, is only true of God, who is "El Shaddai," God all-sufficient, who stands in need of nothing; nor does the goodness of any extend to him, nor is it of any avail unto him; he is blessed in himself, and can have no addition to his happiness from a creature; but in a lower sense is true of some men; who, though they have not an inderivative sufficiency of themselves, yet receive a sufficiency in themselves from God; a sufficiency of spiritual things; "his grace is sufficient for them," and they have a sufficiency of it to bear them up under temptations, trials, and exercises of life, and to carry them through them; the God of all grace, as he is able to make, so he does make all grace to abound towards them, that they always having all sufficiency of grace thus received from him, may abound in the performance of every good work; a sufficiency of strength is given, so that they can do all things required of them through Christ strengthening them; and which is the reason the apostle gives of his being able to conduct in every state of life as he did (Phil 4:13), and a sufficiency of temporal things is given to the Lord's people, at least so as to answer to their

exigencies, and even to give them content; and especially when they have Agur's wish, neither riches nor poverty, but food convenient for them; or "which is sufficient," as some versions have it (Prov. 30:8). 1b2e.

This lesson of contentment is explained by what the apostle says in the following verse; "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; both to be full and to be hungry;" that is, he knew by experience what these things meant, and how to behave in such circumstances. As, 1b2e1. To be "abased," or humbled, treated with contempt by men, and to be in low and mean circumstances; as when he was obliged to work with his own hands, and these ministered to his own and to the necessities of others; and when in very distressed circumstances, in voyages and journeys, shipwrecked, and in perils on various accounts, in pain and weariness, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness; and he had learned to bear all these things patiently, and with submission to the will of God, and to be content with them.

Also, 1b2e2. He knew how to "abound," or what it was to be high in the esteem of men, and to have an affluence of the things of life, an abundance, a fulness of them, at least, as he judged it; and he knew how to behave in the midst of plenty, as not to be elated with it, and carry it haughtily to others; he learned not to abuse it, but to make a good use of it, for the relief of the necessitous, and for the interest of religion. 1b2e3. He knew what it was both to be "full" and to be "hungry," to have a full meal and to want one; to be at a good table, and to be almost starved and famished; and he was "instructed" of God, how to conduct in such different circumstances, as neither to abuse his fulness, nor repine at his wants; and for confirmation, and to show how deeply his mind was impressed with these things, he repeats them, "both to abound and to suffer need," to have an overflow of things, and to be entirely deprived of them; and yet in all to be content.

To be stripped of everything, to have nothing, and yet be content, is wonderful! if a man has something, though but little, there is a reason for contentment; but for a man to have nothing and be content, this is extraordinary; and yet this was the case of the apostle and his brethren, who were sometimes hungry, and had nothing to eat; thirsty, and nothing to drink; naked, and no clothes to put on; and had no dwelling place to shelter them from inclemencies; and yet content: the truth of these words, and the riddle in them, the apostles knew, and knew how to solve; "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things;" and this made them contented. 1b3.

Thirdly, this contentment of mind is expressed by a man's having enough. Esau, who was a worldly man, and Jacob, who was a spiritual, upright, and plain hearted man, both said they had enough (Gen. 33:9,11), but in a different sense; and, indeed, they use different phrases; for though they are the same in our version, yet not in the original; Esau at first refused the present of his brother Jacob, saying, "I have enough;" *br yl vy*, which may be rendered, "I have much;" now a man may have much, and yet not have enough in his own account; he may have much, and yet may want more, and so not be content:[6] but Jacob urged his brother to take his present, saying also, "I have enough;" or rather, as it should be rendered *lk yl vy* "I have all things," or "every thing;" and a man that has everything, has enough indeed, and has reason to be content; and this is the case of every gracious man, and these the circumstances of every true believer in Christ, as will be seen hereafter; and therefore ought to be content. 1b4.

Fourthly, this contentment is expressed by a man's being satisfied with what he has: earthly riches are not satisfying things, especially to such who are greedy of them, or have an immoderate love for them; one that knew human nature full well says, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver" (Eccl. 5:10), but riches of grace are satisfying; the unsearchable riches of Christ, all spiritual things, are of a satisfying nature to spiritual men; the Lord "satisfies their mouth with good things;" with the provisions, the

goodness, and fatness of his house; the poor of Zion he satisfies with spiritual bread; he satiates the weary soul, and replenishes every sorrowful soul (Ps. 103:5; 132:14; Jer. 31:25), especially the love of God is exceeding satisfying to a gracious soul; "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour," with the love of God, "and full with the blessing of the Lord," even to contentment; such as are favored after this manner "are satisfied as with marrow and fatness" (Deut. 33:23; Ps. 63:5), and, indeed, a little of the good things of this life, and the love of God with them, are more satisfying, and give more contentment, than all the riches of the world can without it (Prov. 15:17).

I proceed to inquire, 2. How any come by true contentment of mind. 2a. It is not natural to man; man is naturally a discontented creature, especially since the fall; nay, it was discontent which was the cause of that; our first parents not being content with the state of happiness in which they were, abode not in it, but fell from it; such was their ambition, prompted to it by the tempter, that they affected to be as God; or however, perceiving there was a class of creatures superior to them, more wise and knowing, they could not be content with their present case and circumstances; but wanted to be upon an equality with them; and being told, that by eating the forbidden fruit they would attain to it, took and eat of it, and thus by coveting an evil covetousness, lost the happiness which they had; hence it is most truly said of man, that he is, "at his best estate, altogether vanity" (Ps. 39:5). 2b.

It is not to be found in a natural or unregenerate man; such a man is always uneasy and disquieted; as restless as the troubled sea, and the waves thereof; let him be in pursuit of what he may, he never arrives to it to satisfaction; is it wisdom and knowledge he seeks after, as his first parents did? he gets no content; but finds, that in much wisdom is much grief and vexation of spirit; and that, by an increase of knowledge sorrow is increased. Is it pleasure in the gratification of the senses? these are soon palled with it, and new pleasures are wanting; and these, when had, like the former, issue in bitter reflections and remorse of conscience.

Is it worldly honour, fame, and applause of men? these are fickle, transitory things, not to be depended on, and seldom last long; and amidst them there is something that mars the pride and ambition of men; as Mordecai's not bowing to Haman made the latter uneasy and discontented, notwithstanding the profusion of honours conferred upon him. Or is it wealth and riches? these are very uncertain and unsatisfying things, as has been observed. There is nothing can satisfy the mind of man but God himself; and if a man lives without God in the world, let him have what he will, he lives a discontented life; none but a godly man is a contented man; there may be content with godliness, but without it there is none. 2c.

Contentment is a thing that is to be learned; but not in the school of nature, and by the help of carnal reason; the philosophers among the heathens talked of it, but did not enjoy it; they neither learnt it themselves, nor could they teach it others; by all their wisdom and knowledge they knew not God truly, and therefore could have no solid satisfaction in what they did know; and even by what they knew of God, they glorified him not as God, "neither were thankful;" and if not thankful, then not contented.

The apostle Paul says, he "learnt" it; but he learnt this not at the feet of Gamaliel, where he was brought up; nor among the traditions of the elders, where it is not to be found; for though he was taught after the perfect manner of the fathers of tradition, he was left ignorant of God, and of his law, and of Christ and his righteousness, and of salvation by him; without which there can be no true contentment: but he learnt it, being taught it of God; he had it as he had the gospel; and, indeed, he learnt it by that; which he says, he "neither received of men; neither was taught it, but in the revelation of Jesus Christ; he was instructed in it by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ;" so that he learnt it of God, Father, Son,

and Spirit. 2d.

This is learnt, not as a theory; but practically and experimentally; and by a train of experiences, and generally through a series of afflictive providences; so that it is learned in quite a different way than a carnal man can conceive of; for these very things which breed discontent in others, are the means of producing true contentment in gracious souls. The apostle Paul learned to be content, not only "in," but "by," the adverse providences which attended him; by his dangers at sea and by land; by his distresses, afflictions, and persecutions for Christ's sake; and so other saints have been instructed in some measure, in the same way, and have found it true, what the apostle says (Rom. 5:4), "Tribulation works patience," &c. in such afflicted and experienced souls; and from all this flows contentment. 3.

The arguments moving to such a disposition of mind, and exciting, under a divine influence, to the exercise of this grace, are, 3a. First, the consideration of what we had when we came into the world; and what we shall have when we go out of it; which is just nothing at all: this is the argument the apostle uses to promote contentment in himself and others; "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain, we can carry nothing out;" and therefore upon it reasons thus; "and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:7,8), and that is enough for the present state, and is more than we shall carry with us, or shall hereafter have any need of; and this was what made Job contented with the loss of all he had; "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;" and now, as if he should say, I am stripped of all, I am but as I was when I was born, and shall he again when I die;[7] and therefore I am content; the "Lord gave" all that I have had from my birth, "and the Lord has taken away," and he has taken only what he gave, and to which he had a right; "blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21), and the like argument the Wise Man makes use of to show how fruitless and unprofitable it is for a man to be anxious to get perishing riches, and which his son, begotten by him, may not enjoy; but come into the world naked, and go out in like manner (Eccl. 5:14-16), and this is a reason urged by the Psalmist, why it should give no pain and uneasiness to persons at the increase of the riches of others; since, "when he dies he shall carry nothing away;" so that as it will be no longer his, it will remain to be enjoyed by others (Ps. 49:16,17). 3b.

Secondly, the unalterable will of God is an argument exciting contentment; who does according to his will, as in the armies of the heavens, so among the inhabitants of the earth; he gives to everyone their portion in this life as he thinks fit. What they have is not to be attributed to their wisdom and sagacity, and to their diligence and industry, however commendable these may be; but is to be ascribed to the sovereign will and pleasure of God, who does all things "after the counsel of his will," in the wisest and best manner; and therefore men should be content; and after all, they cannot make things otherwise than they are; for "who can make that straight which he hath made crooked" (Eccl. 9:11 7:13), nor can any man, with all his care and thought, "add one cubit to his stature," or make any change in his condition and circumstances, than what is according to the will of God. 3c.

Thirdly, unworthiness to enjoy the least favour and mercy at the hand of God, should engage us to be content with what we have: we have reason to say, as Jacob did, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies" (Gen. 32:10), not of the bread we eat, nor of the clothes we wear; yea, if God was to deal with us according to our deserts, we should be stripped of all; and, indeed, it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed; and therefore have great reason to be content; since we merit nothing, have forfeited all, and cannot claim anything as our due; what is enjoyed is pure favour (Ps. 145:9). 3d.

Fourthly, a consideration of the great things which God has done for us; a dwelling in our thoughts, and meditation on what may excite thankfulness in us; a recollection of the benefits of every kind which God has conferred upon us, may tend very much to make us contented with what we have, giving thanks unto his name; where there is a proper sense of favours there will be thankfulness; and where there is thankfulness there will be content. 3e. Fifthly, the great promises God has made to his people of good things, here and hereafter, on the fulfillment of which they may depend, are sufficient to make them easy and contented; this is an argument used by the apostle to engage to contentment (Heb. 13:5), where he says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!" which promise itself, containing every favour and blessing, and securing everything that can be needful for comfort and happiness, is of itself enough to excite to contentment.

But besides this, there are many other exceeding great and precious promises; as, they that fear the Lord shall lack no good thing; that God will supply all their need; that his grace will be sufficient for them; that as their day is, their strength shall be; yea, godliness has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; and therefore that, with contentment, is great gain. 3f. Sixthly, eternal glory and happiness; which is promised, prepared, and laid up for the saints, and which they will most certainly enjoy, may serve to make them content with present things, and even with some things that are not agreeable to the flesh; thus Moses having respect unto the recompence of reward, and a view of invisible things, cheerfully suffered affliction with the people of God, and esteemed reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; the sufferings of this present life are not to be compared with the glory of another; and though the saints now may have their evil things, they will hereafter have their good things, and shall be fully satisfied when they awake in the divine likeness; and therefore for the present should be content with their lot and portion. 3g.

Seventhly, the saints and people of God have all things in hand, or in promise, or in sure and certain hope; "all things are yours;" and therefore they may say, as Jacob did, "I have enough," or "I have all things;" I am content: God has given us all things richly to enjoy; all things pertaining to life and godliness, both grace and glory; and what more can be desired? 3g1. God is theirs, Father, Son, and Spirit; all the perfections of God are on their side, and exercised for their good; and all the divine Persons are theirs, and they have an interest in them; and what can they have more? 3g1a.

God the Father is theirs; he is their covenant God; he says, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people!" and he not only avouches them to be his peculiar people; but they say, "The Lord is God!" and avouch him, profess him, and claim their interest in him as such: he is their Father, and has declared himself in covenant to be so; has predestinated them to the adoption of children; sent his Son to redeem them, that they might receive it; and his Spirit to witness it unto them.

He is their shield and exceeding great reward, as he promised to Abraham; he is their portion now and for ever; and what, not content! 3g1b. Christ the Son of God is theirs; the gift of his Father's love, an unspeakable one he is; given as an head unto them; as an head of government, to rule over them and protect them; and an head of influence, to supply them; he is their husband, to love, nourish, and cherish them, as his own flesh, and to all whose goods they have a common right; he is their Saviour and Redeemer from sin, Satan, the curse of the law, and wrath to come; he is their Mediator and Peacemaker, their Prophet, Priest, and King.

All that belong to him are theirs; his righteousness is theirs, for justification; his blood is theirs, to cleanse and pardon them; his flesh is theirs, to feed upon by faith; his fulness theirs, to supply their wants; he is

ALL in ALL unto them; and what, not content! 3g1c. The Spirit of God is theirs; a gift which their heavenly Father has given them; and is given them to make known unto them the things which are freely given to them of God; he is the convincer of them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; the illuminator of them in the knowledge of divine things; their quickener and sanctifier, their comforter, and the spirit of adoption to them; the earnest and seal of their future glory; theirs to begin, to carry on, and perfect the work of grace in them; and what, not content! 3g2.

The covenant of grace is theirs; made with them, and made for them; all the stores of it theirs; the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David; the blessings of grace and of glory, provided and laid up in it; the promises of it, both respecting this life and that which is to come; and what, not content! 3g3. The gospel, and the ordinances of it, and the ministers of it, are theirs! "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas" (1 Cor. 3:21,22), the whole Scripture is written for their use, for their learning and instruction, for their comfort and edification; the gospel is ordained for their glory; and is sent into and published in the world for their good; and the ministers of it are their servants for Jesus' sake; they are gifts to the churches, to be their pastors and teachers; and have gifts given them to feed and instruct them; they are stewards of the mysteries of grace, and are appointed in the house of God, to give to everyone their portion of meat in due season; and which surely must add to divine contentment. 3g4.

Temporal things are theirs; "or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours" (1 Cor. 3:22); the "world," and the fulness of it, belongs to Christ, who is heir of all things; and saints being joint heirs with him, are as Abraham was, "heirs of the world;" and things in it are theirs, and work together, and contribute to their good; and they at last shall inhabit the new earth. "Life" is theirs in every sense, corporal, spiritual, and eternal.

And "death" is theirs, a blessing to them whenever it comes; which will deliver them from the troubles of this life, and enter them into the glories of another. "Things present" are theirs; present mercies, no good thing is withheld from them needful for them, food to eat, and raiment to put on: and "things to come;" the unseen glories of a future state; an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in "heaven," a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. And surely all this is enough to give contentment! ENDNOTES:

[1] "Invidus alterius rebus macrescit opimis," Horat. Epist. l. 1. ep. 2. v. 57.

[2] "Invidia Siculi non invenere tyranni majus tormentum." Horat. ib. v. 58, 59.

[3] "Semper avarus eget," ib. v. 56.

[4] Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 11. c. 34.

[5] "Unus Pellaeo juveni non sufficit orbis: aestuat infelix angusto limine mundi," Juvenal. Satyr. 10. v. 168, 169.

[6] "Nunquam parum est; quod satis est, nunquam multum est, quod satis non est." Seneca, Ep. 119.

[7] "Nemo tam pauper vivit quam natus est." Seneca de Providentia, c. 6.

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