

Learning Contentment

by J.R. Miller

Contentment is a lesson that Christians must learn, and it is especially important for young people to do so, as it brings peace, quietness, and simplicity to life.

Scripture: Philippians 4:11

Topics: "Trust in God", "Contentment"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of learning contentment as a vital grace in the Christian life, arguing that discontentment is often overlooked as a sin. He explains that true contentment is not about being satisfied with one's achievements but rather finding peace and rest in all circumstances, as exemplified by Paul. Miller encourages young people to cultivate this spirit early in life, as it becomes increasingly difficult to change ingrained habits of discontent. He illustrates that contentment allows one to maintain joy and peace regardless of external situations, and it is a reflection of one's faith in God's love and omnipotence. Ultimately, he calls for Christians to trust in God, allowing His peace to govern their hearts amidst life's challenges.

Transcript

Not many people are contented. Not many seem to think that discontentment is a sin. Not many appear to understand that contentment is a grace which should shine in every Christian character. Yet no grace adds more to the beauty and the comfort of a life, than contentment. It is also enjoined in the Scriptures as a duty.

The time to get this spirit into our life is in youth. If one has allowed thirty or forty years to pass in discontent and fretfulness, the habit is so firmly rooted, that it is almost impossible to change it. But if one begins in childhood to learn to keep sweet in all conditions and circumstances, by the time one has reached maturity -- the habit has become so much a part of one's very life, that it is easy to maintain it.

Contentment does not mean satisfaction with one's attainments. This is a condition which is always unreached, unless it be in some indolent person, one without noble aspirations and longings. The end of longing, is the end of growing. The great sculptor wept when he found that he had reached his ideal. He saw that that was the end of his progress as an artist.

Contentment, however, is the spirit of restfulness and peace in whatever circumstances one may be placed. Paul tells us what it meant in his life, when he says, "I have learned, in whatever state I am,

therein to be content." The word content means satisfaction -- and implies that he had in his own heart the secret of satisfaction, and was not dependent for it on any outside circumstances.

On a dark and stormy night a happy family gathers in the living-room of their home. On the table the lamp burns brightly. About the room the members of the household are grouped. There is gladness, conversation, song, cheer. The household is independent of the outside weather. Be it as the storm may upon the windows, it disturbs not their zest and gladness.

This illustrates the secret of contentment. A true family have it in their own home, in themselves. Paul carried in his heart the secret of peace and of joy, and was not dependent upon circumstances. He wrote this insightful verse in a prison; but the prison atmosphere, hardship, and restraint did not affect his inner life of contentment.

Every Christian should have in himself the same secret. We are God's children, and the strong Son of God is our Savior and Friend. Our life is hid with Christ in God. Our faith should lift us above the hard experiences of life. We may be in sorrow -- but the sorrow should not break the inner divine peace. We may have suffering -- but the suffering should not destroy the comfort we have in resting in God.

It is not our part to keep ourselves in peace -- God's part is the keeping; our part is the staying ourselves upon God. We are to let ourselves rest down upon God's omnipotence, nestling in the bosom of his everlasting love. We are to stay in the strong, warm refuge, not restlessly tossing ourselves out of it. If we stay in God's love -- God will keep us in perfect peace. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

We should learn, therefore, to be contented. That is, not to be affected by the things around us; to keep sweet in the most trying experiences, amid trials and annoyances of whatever kind. Living in the midst of cares, we should keep the care out of our heart, having there only the peace of Christ.

It may be of special comfort to young Christians, to note that Paul says he had learned this lesson of contentment. He was quite an old man when he wrote the verse, and we may suppose that he was a good many years learning it. Probably it was not an easy lesson for him, and we may suppose that he got it only through long discipline and careful training. At least we are quite sure that contentment does not come naturally to anyone. We have to learn to be contented, and usually it will take us a good while to learn it.

This may seem, therefore, not to be a young person's problem -- to be a lesson which the young can scarcely expect to learn. No doubt it should be better learned by the time a Christian reaches mid-life -- yet it is not impossible for the young to attain this grace. Contentment is not discontent worn-out and exhausted; fretfulness tired into quiet sleep. Contentment is the peace of God in the heart, diffusing its restful calm through all the life, hushing all its disturbances.

The lesson is set for the young, therefore, for it is in youth that it must be learned. To grow into mid-life or old age discontented is to remain to the end discontented.

If young people realized how lovely the spirit of contentment is, and how unlovely discontent is, they would all strive to learn the lesson, whatever it may cost them. Discontent mars the beauty in the face, makes people old before their time, makes them petulant, disagreeable, and uncomfortable companions. On the other hand, contentment gives peace, quietness, and simplicity. It makes the face sweet, and puts into the eyes a calm and holy light. It makes one a comfort to others too -- a blessing. We all know how much

discomfort a fretful person produces in a home or in any association, and how a contented person diffuses cheer and pleasure everywhere. One secret of loveliness is a sweet spirit, restful, at peace, quiet, and undisturbed in any circumstances. We all admire such a person.

Shall we not set this lesson for ourselves in the bright days of youth when we are learning to live? Let us trust God and do our duty, committing all the tangles and frets to him. He will take care of us. Though we must walk through dark ways, we shall always find light; for he who is the Light of the world will walk with us.

It is a great thing to have in one's heart a fountain which will supply all one's needs. Then one can be independent of circumstances and of experiences, and be everywhere and always the same sweet, quiet, rejoicing Christian.

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