

Satisfaction-Not Repression

by J.R. Miller

Satisfaction in life can only be found through consecration of all powers to God for love's service, and leading our powers out in the paths of their true craving.

Scripture: Matthew 5:6, John 4:14, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Spiritual Fulfillment", "Service to Others"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that human beings possess inherent longings and desires that cannot be satisfied by earthly means. He critiques the idea of repressing these desires, suggesting instead that they are divine qualities meant to be fulfilled through a relationship with Christ. Miller illustrates that true satisfaction comes not from denying our cravings but from channeling them into loving service and communion with God. He argues that our spiritual thirst can only be quenched by embracing our divine purpose and living in accordance with Christ's teachings. Ultimately, he asserts that fulfillment is found in active service and obedience to God, leading to a richer, more meaningful life.

Transcript

Thirst is characteristic of humanity. Wherever you find a human soul, you find in it longings, desires, and yearnings. Then it is only commonplace to say, that in all this world there is nothing to satisfy a human soul. There has been no lack of searching for a fountain of life whose waters will quench human thirst; but in vain. There is nothing which has not been tried, and yet always the result has been the same:

"Life's thirst quenches itself

With draughts, which double thirst."

The theory of happiness which Buddhism proposes, is to tear desire from the soul, and to destroy the heart's hunger. But this is not possible. A craving repressed, held in check, shut up in the heart, is not at rest. The desire still lives, though caged, smothered, and confined. Happiness never can be found in this way.

Christ came to tell us of a way in which our soul's thirsts and cravings may all be satisfied. Instead of crushing them within the heart, he would let them live, and would find perfect satisfaction for them.

These longings within us are not evil in themselves. They are the divine qualities in our soul crying out for divine nourishment. We are not bodies--we are souls, immortal souls. We bear the image of God. We

belong to heaven. It is no wonder that a fine house and furniture and pictures and sumptuous fare and rich clothing--will not answer our higher nature's needs. How could such things satisfy an immortal soul? Imagine an angel living in the house of one of our worldly millionaires, and living just as the millionaire lives. How much comfort would he get from it all? It is because we have in us the divine--that earth cannot satisfy us.

A traveler tells of holding in his hand the egg of a rare East India bird, which was so near the hatching that the bird inside was pecking away at the shell. He could hear it struggling to get out. It was shut away in the darkness, cramped, confined--but it was not content to stay there. It seemed to know that there was a larger life for it outside, that on wings it might soar away to greet the morning light, that it might put on splendors of beauty, that it might look on mountain, valleys, and rivers, and bathe in the pure air of sunny skies.

This bird in the shell is a picture of the higher nature which is within every human life. It is not satisfied. It is a prisoner longing to be liberated. It is conscious of a wider freedom, a larger liberty which is possible to it. We are made for communion with God. The mission of Christ to us--is to bring us out into this larger, fuller life. Instead of vainly trying to satisfy our spiritual needs and cravings at earth's fountains--he leads us to heaven's fountains. He reveals to us the love of God. He tells us that we are God's children, and brings us into intimate relations with our Father in heaven. He gives us intimations of a future for ourselves which is full of blessedness and glory. He calls us to this larger life.

So the hunger for love in our beating heart, is the prophecy of a satisfaction of love which is possible in Christ. The longing for holiness, for strength, for beauty of character, for power of helpfulness, for Christ-likeness, is a revealing of our capacity for noble living, and of the spiritual growth to which we may attain and shall attain, unless by unbelief and sin we stunt, choke, and smother the immortal life which is ours as Christians.

Take another illustration from nature. The dragon-fly is born at the bottom of the pond, and for a time lives there--a low, meager form of life. It does not know of anything better--that there is a higher sphere where insects and other creatures have wings, and fly in glorious freedom in the sunny air. But one day there comes a wondrous change. This dragon-fly of the darkness and the mire--now breathes heaven's sweet air. It has wings, which unfold under the impulse of the new life into which it has emerged, and spread themselves out in shining beauty, and the lovely creature soars aloft. It is dead to its old life in the ooze--and lives now in the brightness and the fragrance of the fields and gardens.

This, too, is a picture of the new life in Christ to which human souls may rise. Satisfaction can never be found in mere earthly conditions. In these we are like dragon-flies, living at the bottom of the pond--while our true place is up in the sunny air, with wings outspread, soaring in blessed liberty. Thus only in this new life can our thirsts be satisfied.

There are mistaken thoughts of what we must do with our cravings and longings. The Buddhist says we must crush them. Many Christian people have the same thought. They suppose that many of their desires and yearnings are sinful and must be crucified. But this is not true. Our longings are parts of our greater nature. God has not put a single yearning or desire in us, which needs to be destroyed. Our passions, appetites, and affections are not depraved qualities in us. They may become depraved through our efforts to gratify them in mere earthly or in sinful ways--but in themselves they are not evil. They belong to our divine likeness, and are all meant to be satisfied. But this satisfaction can come, only in true uses of our

powers.

A man found a wild torrent in the mountain. It could work only waste and ruin as it rushed, uncontrollable, down the gorge. He built a flume for it, and carried its wild floods in quiet streams down into the valley, where they watered the fields and gardens, gave drink to the thirsty, and turned many a wheel of industry. That was far better than if he had dried up the torrent. It was far better, too, than if it had been left to flow on forever with destructive force. Now it was flumed and made to do good, and make the world richer and more beautiful. That is what God wants to do with the cravings, the desires, the passions, the longings, and all the mighty energies of our nature. They are not to be destroyed. Yet they are not to be allowed to work waste and ruin in efforts to find gratification in merely earthy channels, in unbridled license. That is sin's way. Rather, these great forces in our nature are to come under the yoke of Christ, and are to be led by him into all holy service for God and man.

Years ago there were in southern California, great stretches of burning plains, covered with dry sand, with scarcely a living thing growing anywhere upon them. Meanwhile, up in the mountains, there were streams of running water, produced by the melting snows, running to waste, oftentimes causing damage as they rushed down the gorges. Men saw that if those wasting and destructive streams could only be carried down into the valleys, and made to distribute their waters over the burning sands, the desert could be changed into a garden. Today great orange orchards grow on what, twenty-five years ago, was barren wastes.

This is an illustration of what the forces of human nature, which now in so many lives run riot in dissipation, doing harm to others, and hurt to God's kingdom, might be trained to do, if all their energies were but turned to noble and beneficent uses. That is what Christ proposes to do with those who come to him. He sets them free, not by unleashing them to live without law or control--but by brings them under his own yoke, where in true and holy serving and obedience they will not only find rest and peace for themselves--but will also become means of carrying blessing to others.

In no other way can the longings and cravings of human hearts find satisfaction. These were not made for idle rest--but for healthful activity. The affections can find satisfaction only in loving--and in loving purely, truly, unselfishly. Love is not a sinful passion; it is sinful only when it is perverted from its true end and debased, and becomes unholy lust. Nor is love an unworthy or an unmanly quality. God is love--love in its true sense is the whole of living. We can never find satisfaction until we have learned to love in a Christ-like way, as Christ loved us, giving our life as he did to be consumed in the flame of love.

The mind can never find satisfaction for its thirst--except in learning. The desire to know is part of the divine likeness in us. On all sides books are lying open, and we are bidden to read. The voices of wisdom are evermore speaking in our ears, and we are bidden to listen. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." One of the first words the great Teacher speaks to those who come to him to find rest for their souls is, "Learn--learn of me." Our minds are made to know, and they can find rest only through knowing. There is no true peace in ignorance. It is only an empty and shallow "bliss" which is found in not knowing. Our minds are made to think, and can be satisfied only in thinking. Satisfaction can come to any function of our being--only when it finds the use for which it was made, and devotes itself to that use.

The spirit can find satisfaction only as it attains the character which belongs to it. There is a beatitude for those who hunger and thirst--for those who long for righteousness. Such thirst is a mark of life. The dead have no longings, no desires. They are satisfied. Wherever there is spiritual life there is unrest,

dissatisfaction, and a hunger for larger life, richer, fuller, and holier. Such thirst can never find satisfaction, but in ever new attainments of holiness, in forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to the things which are ahead. Complete satisfaction will never come until we reach the full stature of Christ, until we see him, and are made like him; but in the Christian life on earth the beginnings of this perfect satisfying are realized.

So it is with all the powers of our being. Longing is a quality of true living, and a mark of health. It is the upward looking and striving of our nature. We can attain satisfaction only as our powers find their right functions and their right uses, and train themselves to run in the channels in which they were made to run. The word of Augustine is true enough almost to be an inspired word: "Our souls were made for God--and can find no rest until they find it in God." But not always have our teachers explained to us the full meaning of this divine truth. Too often they have given us only half of it. It is not enough to come to Christ, and nestle in his bosom in the joy of reconciliation and forgiveness. Sometimes that is as far as our teachers lead us. Satisfaction can never come in inaction, however holy the state may be. The powers of the life must be disciplined and trained, and then led out into active service. They must find the use for which they were made. Knowing and doing must go together, or there can be no fullness of life, nor any true rest in living.

It is not enough to seek attainments merely for the sake of the attainments. That will bring no satisfaction. Learning merely to know neither enlarges nor truly enriches the mind. It is only when we desire more knowledge--in order that we may use it in living more nobly and in doing greater good to others that we are led into deeper peace. Says Froude: "The knowledge which man can use is the only real knowledge which has life and growth in it, and converts itself into practical power. The rest hangs like mist about the brain, or dries like raindrops off the stones." The same rule applies in all our longings. To desire to be good merely for the sake of being good, to stand up among men in holy beauty, but with no wish to make one's goodness a power is honoring God and in blessing the world, will bring no true and permanent satisfying.

After all, satisfaction can come only through the consecration of all the powers to God for love's service. Deeper amid the laws of our immortal being than any of us can ever know in this world, lies the must of service. "I serve. I must serve." must be our motto. "Not to be ministered unto--but to minister," is the divinest law of moral and spiritual life ever enunciated by any teacher. This is the way, the only way, to satisfaction. The powers of the soul must be led out in the paths of their own true craving, to lay hold upon the things which they were made to attain. They must not be repressed or destroyed--but must be drawn out, directed, disciplined. Then all the life must reach its divine purpose in becoming as Christ to the world, living to bless others, giving itself in utter abandonment to help save the world.

This is the way, and the only way, to the satisfying of human desires. The water which Christ gives can alone quench the soul's thirst. Only as we return to God, and to the place and service for which we were created, can we be at peace. Obedience, Christ-likeness, service, are the key words of spiritual life. Earthly satisfaction at the best is incomplete; but the well in the heart in this life springs up into eternal life. What we call dying--is but entering into fullness of life and perfection of blessedness.

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