

Steve Whitacre
**SESSION 1 | The Mystery and
Means of Contentment**

I. INTRODUCTION

“That to be well skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory, and excellence of a Christian.” Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 19.

II. DEFINING CONTENTMENT

“I offer the following description: Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.” Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 19.

III. THE CHALLENGE: CONTENTMENT IS ELUSIVE

IV. THE MYSTERY AND MEANS OF CONTENTMENT

The “mystery of contentment”:

1. The first thing is, To show that there is a great mystery in it. It may be said of one who is contented in a Christian way that he is the most contented man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world;
2. A Christian comes to contentment, not so much by way of addition, as by way of subtraction.

3. **A Christian comes to contentment, not so much by getting rid of the burden that is on him, as by adding another burden to himself.**
4. It is not so much the removing of the affliction that is upon us as the changing of the affliction, the metamorphosing of the affliction, so that it is quite turned and changed into something else.
5. **A Christian comes to this contentment not by making up the wants of his circumstances, but by the performance of the work of his circumstances.**
6. A gracious heart is contented by the melting of his will and desires into God's will and desires; by this means he gets contentment.
7. The mystery consists not in bringing anything from outside to make my condition more comfortable, but in purging out something that is within.
8. He lives upon the dew of God's blessing.
9. Not only in good things does a Christian have the dew of God's blessing, and find them very sweet to him, but in all the afflictions, all the evils that befall him, he can see love, and can enjoy the sweetness of love in his afflictions as well as in his mercies.
10. A godly man has contentment as a mystery, because just as he sees all his afflictions come from the same love that Jesus Christ did, so he sees them all sanctified in Jesus Christ, sanctified in a Mediator.
11. A godly man has contentment as a mystery, because just as he sees all his afflictions come from the same love that Jesus Christ did, so he sees them all sanctified in Jesus Christ.
12. **A godly heart enjoys much of God in everything he has, and knows how to make up all wants in God himself.**
13. A gracious heart gets contentment from the Covenant that God has made with him.

— Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 42–70.

“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for **I have learned** in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, **I have learned the secret** of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:10–13).

“Indeed, Paul makes perfectly clear in verse 13 what he means: his sense of contentment does not arise out of personal resources but comes from the one who strengthens him.” Moises Silva, *Philippians*, 204–5.

“First, the secret of contentment is not normally learned in posh circumstances or in deprived circumstances, but in exposure to both. Perhaps you have come from a well-to-do background, and you have never lacked anything. You have never had anything you valued taken away from you. The question arises whether you would be

comfortable and content if you were suddenly forced to live in poverty. But on the other side, you may have come from a really poor background. Perhaps you learned to handle the uncertainty and the deprivation in godly ways. But now the question arises whether you could be content if you suddenly fell into wealth. Would it instantly corrupt you? Or would you feel so guilty with all these possessions that you could scarcely look at yourself in the mirror?" D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 118.

"Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." (Proverbs 30:7–9).

V. CONCLUSION: A HOLY DISCONTENTMENT

"The brute fact is that Paul is content in both circumstances *because his contentment is utterly independent of circumstances*. **His contentment is focused on all that he enjoys of Christ Jesus**. That means he has learned, by hard experience, a relaxed contentment whatever his circumstances." D. A. Carson, *Basics for Believers*, 119.

"It may be said of one who is contented in a Christian way that he is the most contented man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world..."
Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 42.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained." (Philippians 3:12–16).