

Devotional Thoughts :: Discontent even in Paradise!**Discontent even in Paradise! - posted by Gwammy (), on: 2007/8/12 14:09**

As my beloved readers know, I am a fan of ancient writers. It is my unquenchable belief that principles are set in stone, and these dear old authors knew their principles. I doubt they knew what political correctness was or, if they did, they had the courage to say with Luther, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise." Every generation tries to move the boundary stones, but there are a few that can't be budged, for God won't allow it.

Recently I have been reading certain writings by Thomas Watson, who died in 1686. Two outstanding treatises are "The Beatitudes, An exposition of Matthew 5:1-12", and "The Art of Divine Contentment, an Exposition of Philippians 4:1-1". Since we live in the Age of Discontent, I'd like to share a few of Thomas Watson's gems from the one on contentment. Mr. Watson's writings can be downloaded from Internet. What constantly amazes me is the universality and applicability of these authors' writings. Human nature has remained the same since Adam and Eve decided they knew best. We still make decisions on that tremulous limb of knowledge without wisdom.

"Our first parents, clothed with the white robe of innocency in paradise, had not learned to be content; they had aspiring hearts, and thinking their human nature too low and home spun, would be crowned with the Deity, and 'be as gods.' Though they had the choice of all the trees of the garden, yet none would content them but the tree of knowledge which they supposed would have been as eye salve to have made them omniscient" (Watson, Contentment).

The operative words here are "though they had the choice of all the trees. . ." Imagine, all those beautiful, majestic trees laden with diverse fruits, and these two wanted the ONE tree God had told them they could not have, on penalty of death (every parent knows that the secret to a child's quicker obedience is to tell the child not to do something, and his/her great desire will then be to want or do the exact opposite). This sounds so much like our ads on TV. We must have the latest gadget, or else our life will be valueless, headless, heartless, etc., etc., etc. I recently heard an astute speaker say that advertising is here for the express purpose of making us discontent, and that was the exact word he used.

And remember when you woke up healthy and ready for whatever the day offered? Just turn on TV and listen to the ads for medicines, and see how well you feel after hearing about every ailment from head to toe, with a few new illnesses thrown in for shock effect. My husband and I are among the aged now, and we laugh, literally, at the side effects of these new medicines that are supposed to make us young and vibrant again. Who can resist taking a medicine that gives you constipation and diarrhea at the same time--seriously, we actually heard that! The woman in the gospel who spent "all her living upon the physicians" (Luke 8:43) would be spending it even faster today. That wonderful hymn "He Touched Me" has been renamed "Advertising Will Kill Me."

But I digress. The apostle Paul had "learned in every state to be content." We live in the state of Florida and during hurricane season we become discontented for a few months, praying that we will be spared the winds and water this year. This is when we should be content and grateful for the many months of beautiful weather. But, like the children in the marketplace, we groan. I imagine the folks in the Midwest states aren't too happy during tornado season. We tease our son who lives in California, reminding him every chance we get about his four seasons, one being earthquakes. We had a minor one here in Florida recently so we took that teaser off the table.

"Care, when it is eccentric, either distrustful or distracting, is very dishonorable to God; it takes away his providence, as if he sat in heaven and minded not what became of things here below; like a man that makes a clock, and then leaves it to go for itself. Immoderate care takes the heart off from better things; and usually while we are thinking how we shall do to live, we forget how to die" (Watson, Contentment). Here Mr. Watson reminds us that we do a great dishonor to God Himself by not knowing--or indeed even caring--that He has the whole world in His capable hands.

Mr. Watson mentions Haman, the epitome of wickedness in the midst of much for which to be grateful. In Esther 3 we read about his perfidy. When I think of Haman I think of that saying, "Hoist by his own petard." In building a gallows for Mordecai, he unwittingly built his own means of death. We would do well to remember this when we are tempted to take revenge into our own hands because we are discontented about this or that. Haman wasn't content to do in Mordecai, he wanted to take out an entire nation while he was about his dastardly work. That should even things up! It is amazing to what lengths wounded pride will go. The man had everything and wanted more. "Justice is said to blindfold herself that she may hold the scales evenly, not knowing what has been put into each; but revenge shuts both eyes that it may see

There are no scales at all. What monstrous disproportion between the offence and the penalty, to avenge a small personal affront received from one Jew by causing to perish in one day all Jews, old and young! (Anonymous).

Following are a few choice quotes from "The Art of Divine Contentment, an Exposition of Philippians 4:11":

"A contented spirit is like a watch: though you carry it up and down with you yet the spring of it is not shaken, nor the wheels out of order, but the watch keeps its perfect motion: so it was with St. Paul, though God carried him into various conditions, yet he was not lifted up with the one, nor cast down with the other; the spring of his heart was not broken, the wheels of his affections were not disordered, but kept their constant motion towards heaven; still content. The ship that lies at anchor may sometimes be a little shaken, but never sinks; flesh and blood may have its fears and disquiets, but grace doth check them."

"Murmuring is nothing else but the scum which boils off from a discontented heart."

"Contentment is a divine thing; it becomes ours, not by acquisition, but infusion; it is a slip taken off from the tree of life, and planted by the Spirit of God in the soul; it is a fruit that grows not in the garden of philosophy, but is of an heavenly birth; it is therefore very observable that contentment is joined with godliness, and goes in equipage."

"Contentment is an intrinsic thing; it lies within a man; not in the bark, but the root. Contentment hath both its fountain and stream in the soul."

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The sin of covetousness is the root from which discontent grows. I share with you this gem from Biblical Illustrator, Luke 12:

Christ's warning against covetousness: —

I. Covetousness is an INNATE sin. It was a principal part of the first transgression. In this first preference of temporal good to spiritual obedience and the favour of God may be seen, as in a glass, all after covetousness. From that fatal hour to the present, mankind universally have, "by nature," "worshipped the creature more than the Creator," proving themselves to be influenced by an innate propensity to grasp at earthly things, and to follow them in the place of God.

II. Covetousness is a DECEPTIVE sin. The same may be said indeed of all sins; but of this more especially, because it is a decent sin. Other sins alarm, because of their interference with the passions and interests of our neighbours; and have, on that account, discredit and shame attached to them. Lying interrupts confidence, and weakens the bonds of society; murder lays its hand on the persons, and theft on the property of men; adultery invades the most sacred rights and breaks the dearest ties; even drunkenness, by its brutality and offensiveness to peace and order, is regarded with general disgust and odium. But where is the disgrace of covetousness? How regular a man may be, how sober, how industrious, how moral, and yet be the slave of this vice!

III. Covetousness is a MULTIPLYING sin. This also may be said of most other sins, but eminently so of covetousness. It leads to prevarication and falsehood. Then comes hardness of heart. He that sets his affections on money, will love it more than he will love his fellow-man. He will have little pity for the sufferings of the poor, or if he have a little he will stifle it, lest his pity should cost him something. Still less will he compassionate the spiritually wretched.

IV. Covetousness is an AGGRAVATED sin. It is not merely an omission of duty, or a transgression of law; but it is an abuse of much mercy. For who gives a man power to get wealth? whence come health, ability, and labour, skill, opportunity, success; — come they not from God? — could any man earn one shilling if God did not enable him? — and if any man have property, not of his own earning, could he have been possessed of it but for the kind providence of God? And we know that He bestows it that it may be employed in His service and for His glory. But covetousness refuses so to employ it.

V. Covetousness is a GREAT sin. It originates in mistrust of God, and unbelief in His word.

VI. Covetousness is a DESTRUCTIVE sin. Other sins slay their thousands, but this slays its ten thousands. Many other

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sins are confined to the openly ungodly, and have their victims exclusively from among those that are without; but this sin enters into the visible Church, and is the chief instrument in the hands of Satan of destroying the souls of professors. (Essex Remembrancer.)

Finally, following are suggestions from Mr. Watson that are quite up-to-date:

- *Advance faith
- *Labor for assurance
- *Get an humble spirit
- *Keep a clear conscience
- *Learn to deny yourselves
- *Get much of heaven into your heart
- *Look not so much on the dark side, as on the light
- *Consider in what posture we stand here in the world
- *Let not your hope depend upon these outward things
- *Let us often compare our condition
- *Bring your mind to your condition
- *Study the vanity of the creature
- *Get fancy regulated
- *Consider how little will satisfy nature
- *Believe the present condition is best for us
- *Do not too much indulge the flesh
- *Meditate much on the glory which shall be revealed
- *Be much in prayer

And remember – Adam and Eve were in PARADISE and sinned!