

## “DEFEATED BY DISCONTENTMENT” (Ezekiel 28:11-19)

Discontentment is a problem of the mind that afflicts every man in every continent, in every century, and in every culture. It is particularly prominent in our generation. Our favourite words are, “If only...” We now live in a world that people are increasingly more discontent. Advertisements feed this craving by attempting to make us dissatisfied with our looks, our position, and our circumstances.



The dictionary defines discontentment as “a longing for something better than the present situation.” It was said that a hundred years ago the average person had about 70 things he desired to have. Today, similar surveys reveal that he had nearly 500 things he desires to have. This discontentment feeds into all kinds of sin such as adultery, theft, gambling, and running up unmanageable debts.

Many Christians sadly are chronically dissatisfied with their families, their churches, and their lives. No matter how many blessings the Lord has showered on them nothing is ever good enough for them. There is always a fly in the ointment that if they did not immediately recognise they search till they found it. Some even go to church and sing “Great is thy Faithfulness” and “Joy to the world” and go out through the door to complain to all and sundry how bad things are. True contentment is rare today even amongst Christians. They continually murmur against their fellow believers, their spouses, their children and even GOD!

### ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Finding the source of any problem is the key to dealing with it. Discontentment did not begin in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in materialistic societies. It is rooted in the first sin that occurred in God's creation. This occurred first in heaven and then on earth. For discontentment was what led Lucifer to rise up against God in heaven. The story of Lucifer's fall is described in two key Old Testament passages - Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14.

**DISCONTENTMENT IN HEAVEN** - The name “Lucifer” has the idea of light-bearer, shining one, or even morning star. The Bible tells us Lucifer was a powerful and glorious anointed

cherub. This may well mean that he was the angelic being who was in the closest proximity to the throne of God. The Bible describes him this way, “*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*” (Ezekiel 28:15) So Satan was originally without sin and discontentment when he was first created. The Lord had given Lucifer an important job, “*Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.*” (Ezekiel 28:14) Despite this exalted position and glory, Lucifer became discontented and proud, “*Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness?*” (Ezekiel 28:17a) Lucifer began to become proud of his own beauty, intelligence, power, and position. He then fell because he was dissatisfied in his pride with God's Sovereign appointment for him in heaven. Isaiah reveals that he reasoned in his proud heart that he would subvert God,

**For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:13)**

Lucifer was no longer content with the gifts and glory God had given him. He wanted more. Lucifer did not want to serve; he wanted to be served. The sin that corrupted Lucifer was self-generated pride that led to discontentment. Lucifer wanted to steal some of God's rightful glory. This was the point, as far as we know, that sin entered into God's creation for the first time.

Satan likely guessed that discontentment might rise in their hearts when he entered that garden to communicate with Eve. Our first parents Adam and Eve were granted the right to eat of all the delicious produce freely by a benevolent Creator. Every day they were surrounded in paradise and enjoyed unrestrained spiritual fellowship with God and each other. But they wanted precisely what they didn't have. They wanted to be like God and became discontented with God's perfection in the Garden of Eden.

**DISCONTENTMENT IN EDEN** - Satan approached Eve indirectly. His first words are seemingly an innocent and interested inquiry, “*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” (Genesis 3:1) But underneath this inquiry the devil is hinting in a subtle but unmistakable charge that God is not giving all you could have. He's withholding what you are entitled to. Satan cleverly turns the positive command, “*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.*” (Gen. 2:16b-17a) and inverts it into a negative, “*Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden.*” He wants Eve to focus on God's prohibition rather than His generous provision. The latent message the devil wants to get across is that God is trying to limit your pleasure in an unnecessary bondage. He is subtly hoping to get Eve to question this restriction as unkindness and then see the devil as the one acting in her best interests to promote her freedom. The goal is to make God's law seem hard and unreasonable and insert a wedge between her and God. By posing it in the form of a question, “*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” the devil is testing the heart of Eve whether she is discontent or, if not, open to persuasion that she is losing out on something.

Eve was drawn into Satan's line of thinking and naively entered into a conversation with her adversary, “*And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*” (Genesis 3:2-3) She had no excuse or motivation to distrust God, as she had all of

creation witnessing to her of the goodness of God. All she knew was blessings from the Lord. But there are some hints even here that Eve is weakening and wavering in her first reply. She does not say “every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat” just “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden” by omitting “every” and “freely.” She seems to be forgetting the bountiful provision of God and is beginning to focus on His restrictions, which is what the serpent wanted. This is a subtle but important shift in emphasis. She particularly adds to the strength of the restriction in her focus, “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it.” This suggests that even an inadvertent slip would result in a harsh punishment. However, God did not forbid man to “touch” the tree but just not to partake, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it” (Gen. 2: 17a).

This is the first time Eve has had the thought that God is not perfect in goodness and grace. She had never questioned His restriction or thought anything but wonderful thoughts about Him. However, once the devil can get you to question God’s character, it is much easier for him to get you to distrust God’s word. When you add or subtract from God’s word is to take away from His authority in your life.

Eve then makes another subtle change to God’s word. God had warned Adam, “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). The force of the Hebrew grammar here is absolute. It is literally “dying thou shalt die.” Eve downplays the emphasis by stating, “God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” This expression “lest ye die” and omission that the judgment will happen immediately “in the day” suggests a diminishing in her mind of the reality of God’s certain judgment. Eve has magnified God’s restrictions, diminished His goodness, and reduced the force of His judgment in her mind in just a sentence. It is all too easy to make ourselves vulnerable to the devil and not even know it.

**DISCONTENTMENT IN HISTORY** - In the book of Esther we read of a man called Haman, who was an Amalekite yet rose to effectively second in position to the king of Persia. Haman is a profound illustration of the dissatisfaction of the things of this world. He boasted to others “of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king” (Esther 5:11).



Haman had everything he wanted but he admitted he still craved more, “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate” (Esther 5:13). Considering he was an ethnic minority, this man should have been humbled with his incredible rise to power among the

Persians. Instead, he found that the more he had, the more he craved. God’s blessings often brings out the worst in people.

Before we condemn Haman we need to ask ourselves whether we are discontented? Do we crave more? If we are honest, we find that the spirit of Haman is in all of us. The Bible reveals that even believers can become discontented with God’s goodness in their lives. Lot became discontented living with Abraham as a wandering pilgrim. Deep down Lot yearned for the good life but not the hard life of a faithful pilgrim. His heart was continually drawn to Sodom and Gomorrah because of the wealth and prosperity it promised. Abraham trusted God, Lot trusted his economic senses. He was determined to do the very best for Lot. Lot’s carnal decision will be very costly in the long run. It will nearly cost him his life and will ultimately cost him his testimony, family, and the wealth he so much craved. The story of Lot is an inspired example of how easily the world is able to influence a righteous mind and the devastating consequences. His life is a monumental tragedy. Many have repeated his mistake.

King David was given great spiritual and physical blessings from God. The Lord reminded David of the blessings He showered on him, “

**And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. (2 Samuel 12:7-8)**

But David let the sin of discontentment and lust grip his soul. It led him into his greatest sin with the murder of Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba. Solomon followed in his footsteps in becoming discontented with the incredible blessings God had showered on him. It led him into rampant polygamy, greed, and idolatry. Even the disciples of the Lord Jesus were often discontented. Despite their proximity to the Master and witnessed His impeccable life of service and selflessness, they strove with each other for greater prominence and position.

### RESULT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the Fall, covetousness, discontentment, and murmuring are natural to us. It lurks in each person’s heart and is rooted in pride and covetousness. We now are a dissatisfied and unthankful race of people. We always want something different, as we find no lasting satisfaction in the things of earth. This devilish spirit of disgruntlement and unhappiness has been one of Satan’s best weapons ever since the Fall. He uses it continually to attack our minds. Hubbard points out how we are so like our first parents,

“So too with us. Every morning, the sun enters his sky pulpit to preach God’s glory (Psalm 19:1) - and we complain about the weather. Every evening, God scatters the stars like jewels across an inky cloth (Psalm 147:4) - and we murmur over the dishes. Every moment, the eternal melody between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit plays in surround sound through creature speakers (Psalm 104:24, 31) - and we sigh because of the traffic. We have become what Augustine dubbed *incurvatus in se* - curved in on ourselves. Our eyes used to drink in God and all his gifts; now we’re too busy looking inward to notice either. We are Adam

and Eve's children, stumbling through a world of wonders with grumbling on our tongues."

The mind of man is a battlefield every moment of every day. We are assailed by the world, the flesh and the devil. There are three great sinful thoughts that cause discontentment in our minds - pride, rebellion, and unbelief. For discontentment flows from a heart that says, "I deserve better than God has given me. If only I were God I would have given me more." This is the clay arguing with the potter, "*Why hast thou made me thus?*" (Romans 9:20b). Discontentment is rooted in unbelief that God is being really fair and that He knows best. It is the rebellious declaration to the One who has saved us and provided abundantly for us that "Sorry, Lord, but You're just not enough for me. I want much more." God is angered by this pride, rebellion and unbelief and warns, "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*" (Romans 9:20a). Kay Harms points out,

"While my discontent yields the dandelion-like blossoms of jealousy, envy, bitterness, comparison and strife, at the root is something much more serious. Discontentment grows from the toxic seeds of unbelief and distrust in God. A discontented heart has decided that God either cannot or will not sufficiently provide. It is sceptical of God's goodness and faithfulness. And it has grown weary of waiting for those things that God has promised but not yet delivered."

The best place to demonstrate the sinful fruits of discontentment is hell itself. The Bible pictures hell as a place of eternal dissatisfaction and frustration. Sinners are perpetually angry and dissatisfied, "*But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30). The rich man in hell is in torments seeking the merest of comfort to alleviate his terrible sufferings in Luke 16, "*And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*" (Luke 16:23-24)

### REMEDY FOR THE PROBLEM

The Apostle Paul writes to the Philippian believers, "*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*" (Philip. 4:10-12) I am so glad that the Apostle Paul wrote, "*I have learned...*" There were clearly times in Paul's life that he was tempted to be discontented. He was a brilliant scholar and a man that always kept himself busy. There were times when he was beaten and even imprisoned for long periods. This must have been hard for such a busy and cultured man. But now after all these failures and times of discontentment, Paul had found the source of true contentment. It wasn't it what he had materially but in the ONE he had who was with Him and was leading Him all the way to heaven.

The word "*content*" actually means "contained." It is a description of the man whose has found peace from within his heart so that he is not shaken by circumstances without. Contentment is not natural to us. We have to train ourselves, like Paul, to be content. Like a garden, the weeds of discontentment must be plucked from our minds and the flowers of contentment encouraged

to grow and flourish. CH Spurgeon instructed his people, "Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in it." There are a numbers of ways to remove discontentment from our minds:



(1) **BE THANKFUL** - One of the ways to be content is to have a thankful heart for what we have. The Apostle Paul told his readers at Philippi, "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.... Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" (Philip. 4:4, 6) Ingratitude is one of the normal features of pagan depravity, "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful*" (Rom. 1:21). A thankful heart is a choice you make. So today let us remind ourselves that God has been so good to us all these years. Truly we can affirm we have been blessed abundantly. Instead of searching around looking for things to murmur, let us pray to have a genuine, child-like, breathless, enthusiastic spirit of thanksgiving. That doesn't mean we simply dismiss the problems of life but let us never forget the wonderful aspects of our lives that we so easily take for granted. There is an old saying that is so true, "I complained about having no shoes, until I met a man with no feet." We are blessed so much here on earth and never forget as the old puritans used to say, "all of this, and heaven to come." Someone said to me once that they were very depressed. My advice was to write down a list of blessings they have. This person asked would I list a few as he couldn't think of any. I wrote a simple list: (a) salvation (b) good church (c) freedom of worship (d) loving family (e) health (f) good mind to study (h) Word of God in my own tongue (i) people who care for you (j) food to eat (k) money to live (l) jobs (m) heaven to come.

A "discontented Christian" is a living, breathing oxymoron for we cannot walk with God and despise His abundant grace. Ironically, often those who are most blessed are most discontented! A disgruntled and complaining spirit should never characterise a Christian, as we are commanded, "*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*" (1 Thess. 5:18). We are called to live joyfully in our grumpy world. May our eyes be opened to see how we are surrounded by God's blessings! If you pause to think, you'll find cause to thank the Lord. So before you grumble today, thank God first for your many blessings.

(2) **BE A SERVANT** – The Apostle Paul exhorted the saints at Philippi, “*Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.*” (4:1) In other words, if God has called you to be a wife and a mother be the best one you can be. Whatever job you have been given in the home, church or workplace do wholeheartedly unto the Lord. Discipline your mind and will to follow the path laid out for you. Most days nothing exciting happens. Life is predictable and mundane. It was the same for the saints of God in the Bible. Hannah spent her life as a wife and mother. She did no miracles. But don’t let that fact demotivate you to simply slacken and become unhappy. It was God’s will for: Ruth to glean in the hot sun, David to care for the sheep on hills of Bethlehem, Joseph to work in Potiphar’s house, Peter to throw out the fishing nets, and Paul to weave the tents.

Every day we get up and face a choice of going one of two ways. You can go the easy way or the hard way. Our natural instinct is to head to the easy road. But God is calling all of us to the hard road. That is where He is waiting for us. A chain of seemingly mundane events often facilitates many great blessings and opportunities. The Bible teaches that the steps of all God’s people are ordered of the Lord. As Christians we must be faithful and patient in all the places the Lord puts us. Then we will be also able to testify like Abraham’s servant, “*I being in the way, the LORD led me*” (Genesis 24:27). For it is as we walk in the revealed will of God, that He then unfolds His perfect will of us in other areas, “*In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.*” (Proverbs 3:6). George Muller put it well, “If our circumstances find us in God, we shall find God in our circumstances.”



(3) **BE A GIVER** – The more we give the more we are like Christ who continuously gave to others. Paul picked up this aspect of giving from the words and example of the Saviour and instructed, “*I have blessed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*” (Acts 20:35; cf. Rom. 12:13a) Now that’s seems upside to the natural man. Maybe your old flesh recoils even as I state these words and argues that its foolishness. The world teaches us that its always more satisfying to take and to receive than to give. Why is it more blessed to give than to receive? Because it makes you more like the heart of God who gives us salvation and life, “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*” (James 1:17)

(4) **BE MINDFUL OF YOUR DESTINATION** – We need to continually remind ourselves that life is a pilgrimage where the final destination is in heaven. So many times we forget how wonderful heaven is going to be. It’s not just a little bit of an upgrade from earth! Heaven is a place of perfection. No sickness, no pain, no death, no disease, no aging, no sin – everything is unimaginably wonderful The Apostle Paul put it this way, “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*” (1 Cor. 2:9; cf. Isaiah 65:17) We want heaven now but God says be patient. You’re here for just a very short time – then its eternity in heaven. We are blessed so much here on earth and never forget as the old puritans used to say, “all of this, and heaven to come.”

## CONCLUSION

Solomon was the richest and most famous man on the earth. He once wrote this, “*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). What we say and do depends on what we believe. We must never panic in our storms. God will bring us through. There is nothing worse than a Christian with a complaining and unthankful life. It’s the very opposite of true Christianity. Worst possible testimony. A discontented Christian has lost sight of what Jesus described as the greatest commandment: “*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*” (Mark 12:30)

King David was a man that was brought up as an insignificant shepherd boy on the hills of Bethlehem. He had just a few sheep there to care for. When Samuel visited his home, his father didn’t even bother to call him. Later God promoted him from such obscurity and insignificance to become Israel’s greatest king. David never forgot what God had done for him. He never became arrogant or complacent. He wrote in Psalm 103, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. . . . Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” (Psalm 103:2, 5) Then you will see and agree with Paul that, “***Godliness with contentment is great gain***” (1 Timothy 6:6).

