

The Source of Contentment—God Himself

Hebrews 13:5-6

Halifax: 19 May 2024

Introduction:

Today we continue our sermon series in Hebrews.

- We are in Hebrews chapter 13.
- This is the last chapter of the letter to the Hebrews.
- And here we are told how we ought to conduct ourselves as we go with the people of God to God our Father's house in glory.

The general instructions about our pilgrimage were given to us in chapter 12.

- The opening exhortation was:
 - **Hebrews 12:1-2: Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**
- Jesus is the one who has wonderfully opened the way for sinners to come to God by His incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession for us at the Father's right hand.
 - He made Himself one of us and then, as our great High Priest, He suffered for our sins to secure our pardon. Now He is before the Father in our behalf, gathering and keeping us, that we may enter into His glorious inheritance in God's house.
 - We were advised in chapter 12 to expect hard things along the way—we have sin that needs to be purged and the world is opposed to our allegiance to God.
 - We were admonished to persevere, recognising that we have come to the company of God's people, the church, that enjoys the sure salvation that Jesus gives us.

Chapter 13, where we are now, tells us how to conduct ourselves as God's people, who, for the rest of our days, are en route to our Father's house in glory.

- What a joy and a delight it will be when we get there!
- But how are we to live with each other until we arrive?

I will read to you starting at Hebrews 13:1.

- I have already preached from verses 1-4. Today, I plan to preach from verses 5 & 6, so I will read from verse 1 to verse 6. Hebrews 13:1-6. This is the Word of God:

Heb 13:1-6: Let brotherly love continue. ² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained an-gels. ³ Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also. ⁴ Marriage *is* honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators

and adul-terers God will judge. ⁵ Let your conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we may boldly say: "The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

May the LORD be pleased to add His blessing to His word.

Verse 5 begins with this command: “Let your conduct be without covetousness.”

I. Here we see that there is no place for covetousness among pilgrims.

A. First, let’s look at the meaning of the words: Let your conduct be without covetousness.

1. What is covetousness?
 - The word used here means “no money lover.”
 - It refers to a sinful desire to have more than God has given us along with a lack of gratitude and appreciation for what He has provided.
 2. The word translated *conduct* here speaks of our normal state or condition—our default mode.
 - It refers to both our *frame of mind* as well as our *manner of living*.
 - This sin is one that can be hidden from others—it can ruin our souls on the inside without showing itself on the outside.
 - It can debase your mind—and make you useless where you are not able to plan or think about the things that you ought to be thinking about.
 - Instead of having communion with God, your mind is spinning in its quest to obtain, to gain more, to outdo...
 - Or it is wallowing in disappointment, seething with envy, paralysed with worry and care...
 - In either case, dragging you down so that you are unable to care about others and their needs or even about the true needs of your own soul.
 - Nor are you able to meditate on God because your heart is always on your property or your acquisition of property.
 - However, it is also a sin that can be very evident on the outside.
 - It is evident from your complaining, your fretfulness, your anger, your reluctance to minister to others, and your inability to bear hardships.
 3. Owen calls it a vice that, as the light of nature shows, debases the minds of men, making them useless, and exposing them to all manner of vile practices.
 - The minds of our western nations have been flooded with the Marxist philosophy which is aimed at making us disappointed with our condition of life and envious of others so that we will become revolutionaries.
 - Interestingly, the leftists who embrace this philosophy ordinarily don’t care so much about lifting up those who are in poverty, but are more aimed at bringing down those who have more than others. Equalization is the goal, more than actual progress.
 - It is proving to be very disruptive to our society.
- B. There are many reasons that covetousness is not appropriate for Christian pilgrims.**
1. First of all, it is contrary to brotherly love that is supposed to continue among us!
 - The covetous man is unable to love his brother because he is preoccupied with his own acquisition and condition.

2. Second, it is inappropriate for Christian pilgrims because it spoils fellowship with its constant complaining and dissatisfaction.
 - It is simply unpleasant to listen to.
3. Third, it is inappropriate because it leads us and our children into apostasy.
 - We see this with the Israelites.
 - They were such complainers that they did not obtain the inheritance that God had promised them.
 - Their focus was shifted from focus on God's city to a focus on the world.
 - They should have been delighted with God's presence in the wilderness, but as they were not, He did not let them enjoy his presence in the land of promise.
4. Fourth, it is inappropriate for pilgrims because it is contagious.
 - It spreads to the entire community. The dissatisfied person is always drawing attention to how bad everything is. It is hard not to be drawn in.
5. Fifth, it is inappropriate because it spoils our witness to the world.
 - They look at us and they say, "Those who follow Christ are so unhappy. I wonder why they follow Him if it makes them so miserable."
6. Sixth, covetousness shuts down our praise and our adoration of God.
 - Instead of seeing His goodness, we look at Him as an uncaring Father who doesn't give us what He ought.
 - This has a tendency to dry up our hope in what He has promised.

TRANS> And so I say that covetousness is not at all appropriate for those who are going to God's house in glory.

II. Our goal should be contentment with our present situation.

- A. That is what the words in the second phrase mean: **"Be content with what you have."**
 1. This is a commandment that you are to obey.
 - Do not believe the lie of Satan that is so prevalent today that you have no control over your feelings and desires.
 - Contentment is a learned behaviour.
 - You look at your present condition and you say, "I will be satisfied with this. This is what I have presently, so I will enjoy it and make good use of it right now. It will do me no good to wish that I had something different because this is what I have. I will thank God for it and be content with it."
 - But as we will see, it is not just a willingness to grin and bear it, it is a commitment to look at it in the right way so that you have true joy.
 2. Paul said that he had learned to be content with whatever estate he was in.
 - If you are deprived of all comfort and in great hardship, you can be as content as an athlete pushing his body for greater strength—he deliberately puts himself under strain and struggle to the point of exhaustion.
 - In the heat of the training, he does not wish to be somewhere else. He is there in the moment, benefitting from the trial that stretches every nerve.
 - Suppose you have a hard marriage. How could you learn to be content?

- Learn to love and care for your difficult spouse. Give thanks for the situation. It is an opportunity so that you can learn to love what is not lovely. It is here that so that you can learn to honour God and feed upon the strength that He gives you in Christ.
- Jesus loved fallen, ruined people. Love grows in and shines in a world where it is hard to love. God has given this to you so you can grow.

B. But don't misunderstand this call to contentment.

1. It does not mean that you should not try to better your situation by honest effort.
 - God has commanded us to labour for six days, and He has instructed us to do it that we may provide both for ourselves and for those who have need.
 - We have been given gifts, abilities, and opportunities to better our condition and that of those we serve, and we are actually ungrateful if we do not use these.
2. There is also nothing wrong with informing others of your trials and burdens, though you must do it in an appropriate way.
 - Paul often speaks of the hardships that we was under and expresses appreciation for the help he has received. Sometimes, he asks for help too—as when he wrote to Philemon and asked that he would release his slave Onesimus because he would be useful to him in the ministry.
 - We are a brotherhood, and it is a loving thing to share our needs with others so that they may have an opportunity to help us if they are able.
3. Furthermore, it is right for us to pray for relief from hard things.
 - God's promise is that we will be delivered from all our sicknesses and poverty when we enter His house in glory.
 - It is appropriate for us to ask, but if the answer is no, we need to be content and serve God cheerfully with exactly what He has given us right now.
 - You can't have anything different than what you have right now.
 - It is for you to be happy with that as the portion that God has given you.

C. The person who is content is truly happy.

1. Solomon said that the man who loves silver will never be satisfied with silver.
 - Silver is money. He loves it, but he never has enough of it.
 - He can't enjoy what he has because it is not quite enough.
2. The poor man, on the other hand, who is content, can find more pleasure feasting on a piece of dry bread and drinking brackish water than the rich man who is not satisfied with what he has, sitting at a fine table surrounded by his servants.

TRANS> But this epistle to the Hebrews does not stop with this.

- It moves on to direct us to the proper source or foundation of our contentment.

III. The proper foundation for our contentment is God Himself.

A. There *are* improper foundations of contentment.

1. To use an obvious example, a bank robber can be quite content with the three successful bank robberies he has pulled off over the last five years.

- He can be impressed with his cleverness and with the skill he has exercised in avoiding detection. And he can be happy about the wealth he has gained.
2. Then there is the person who labours and does quite well for himself and then enjoys his wealth.
- He does not want anything more. He is happy with his income, with his houses, his vacations, his cars, and his boat.
 - Perhaps he even enjoys sharing much of his wealth—he finds pleasure in helping out his friends or those who need a boost.
 - Maybe he even helps young families buy their first house or something.
 - But this man’s foundation is completely wrong because he glories in his riches, not in God.
 - He does not acknowledge the true God.
 - He gains the whole world but loses his own soul.
 - His contentment is actually his ruin.
 - He sees no need for God.
 - He has wronged his Creator and he has no desire to make things right with Him. He is living in a dream world, and one day he will have a rude awakening.
 - All his happiness will be lost forever.
3. The LORD warns us about the wrong foundation in Jeremiah 9:23-24 where He says:
- **Jer 9:23-24: Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty *man* glory in his might, nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches; ²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the LORD.**
 - It is possible to have contentment on the wrong foundation.
- B. Our text directs us to God Himself as the proper foundation and as the source of our contentment.
1. The reason we can be content is because **He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**
- To never leave us is, of course, to stay with us, and to never forsake us is to continue to help us.
 - If God Himself is with us—He who is the highest best companion—we have every reason to be content.
 - When barren Hannah wept and would not eat because she could have no child, **Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8).**
 - How much more is this the case with the LORD.
 - Whatever my lot in life may be, He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
 - Where could a better companion be found than the Lord Most High?

- When our life is hard, it is an opportunity for us to find sweet communion with Him.
2. Think of what He is to us—what it is to have Him with us to help us.
 - a. He is with you as your best companion and the one who should be the object of your delight and worship.
 - Who in heaven and earth can be compared with Him?
 - And you, a sinner, have been reconciled to Him that you might know Him and serve Him and have fellowship with Him and with His Son.
 - There is every reason for contentment. We can learn to enjoy His presence.
 - b. He is also with you as your helper.
 - He is there to strengthen you and enable you to bear whatever hardship, whatever temptation, whatever deprivation you may be experiencing.
 - He has the ability to uphold you, to strengthen your spirit, to renew your mind.
 - He will not allow Satan or anyone else to harm you. Yes, they may persecute—they may even take your life—but He will raise you up.
 - Nothing they do will hurt you—it will only benefit you.
 - No loss that you bear will hurt you—God is your helper.
 - c. He is also with you as your comforter.
 - Do you remember what we learned about our LORD Jesus in Heb 4:15-16?
 - Heb 4:15-16: **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**
 - He is a man—the God-man—of perfect compassion. He truly does weep with those who weep and He rejoices with those who rejoice because He loves us.
 - He is not indifferent to us in our affliction or at any time.
 - You say, “Then why doesn’t He deliver us?”
 - He doesn’t deliver us because He knows that we need the sufferings He sends to us. He is like a good coach who pushes us to our best.
 - Think of a parent who does everything for their child and gives them what they want. There is no better way to destroy them.
 - But this does not mean that He is aloof—the way we were when He came here and suffered for us!
3. Our contentment will come when we can respond to what He Himself has said.
 - As verse 6 says—let me start from verse 5 to pick up the flow...
 - **Heb 13:5-6: For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”** ⁶ **So we may boldly say: “The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”**
 - We must receive the truth and confess the truth if we are to benefit from it.

- He tells us that He will not leave or forsake us... then we must say from the depths of our hearts, **“The LORD is my helper, I will not fear. What can man do to me.”**
 - We must say that in the depths of our souls.
 - We must say that to our Christian companions.
 - We must say that even to our persecutors—the way Daniel’s friends said it to King Nebuchadnezzar when he threw them into the fiery furnace... or when Daniel said it to King Darius when he was thrown into the lions’ den.
- When we receive His promise and confess it, it will go a long, long way in helping us to be content with whatever situation we are in.

C. Much of it comes down to trust—trust in God.

1. We must trust that He will indeed be with us.
 - We must trust that He is able to deliver us. He has no limitations.
 - We must trust that He has not forsaken us, that He is not forsaking us, and that He will never forsake us.
2. But this trust is defective unless it includes trust that He has our best interests at heart.
 - That He has put us right where we are with the best of intentions.
 - That He is truly kind and gracious and that He has designed the situation just for us with perfect wisdom and tender love.
 - When that is believed, we can be perfectly content.
 - So do you see how it is not just grin and bear it or be a Spartan. It is rather an intelligent response to the one who truly loves you more than anyone else— “He is truly kind and gracious and has designed this situation just for me with perfect wisdom and perfect love.” It is hard, but it is good.
3. And let me add—this is also true when the situation is delightful.
 - Most Christians actually do better as far as their communion with God when things are hard than when they are delightful and pleasant.
 - But He does not forsake us in those times either—so that we can boldly say, the LORD is my helper, I will not fear—when all is pleasant.
 - He can keep us when we prosper if we will trust Him.
 - He is with us and we must look to Him as our companion in our prosperity—our companion who rejoices with us, who has given us all things to enjoy—who wants to have fellowship with us in our enjoyment of His good gifts—who is giving us a foretaste of the glory to come.
 - Instead of forgetting Him in our prosperity, let us learn to enjoy Him and give thanks to Him and find Him better than all His best gifts.

Conclusion: Brothers and sisters, our entire pilgrimage is about communion with our LORD. We are going to Him as brothers on the way that Christ has opened for us, looking to Jesus as our helper all the way.

- There is no place for covetousness on this road. There are solid grounds for contentment.

- We have what is best. We have our heavenly Father and His Son our Saviour.
- Let us go forward trusting Him and walking in fellowship Him in the hard times and the good times.
 - The LORD is our helper. He will never leave us or forsake us.