

Sunday, August 28, 2016

“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.” (1 Corinthians 10:10)

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” (Philippians 2:14)

Last Sunday, I talked about what contentment is, how we can be content, how Christ teaches us to be content, and why it’s an excellent thing. That sermon was heavily influenced by “The Rare Jewel Of Christian Contentment” by Jeremiah Burroughs, and that is also true for this week’s sermon. Today, I’m going to hit the same topic from a different angle and talk about the evils of a murmuring spirit, aggravations of the sin of murmuring, and the excuses of a murmuring heart. Last week was primarily looking at it from the positive side, that is, why you should be content. This week will primarily be from the negative side, that is, why you shouldn’t be discontent. Obviously, there is a lot of overlap between the two. I hope from last week everyone has come to the understanding that being content is not speculative, but practical, meaning that it’s not just something that you sit around and contemplate, but there is labor involved. I also hope that you have all come to terms with the fact that you haven’t been as content as you ought to be. One way to get into the right frame of mind to perform some duty is to be humbled for your lack of it. You have had a murmuring, vexing, fretful heart. You’ve had it in the past, you’ll probably have it again in the future, and some of you may even be in the bowels of it right now. Note that the word for “murmuring” in the Old Testament means “to lodge, abide.” It’s a thing that takes up residence in your heart, and you have to get it out. The first step is to be humbled at your lack of contentment, and I’m going to start by talking about the evils of a discontented spirit. There is more evil in a discontented heart than you’re probably aware of.

1. This murmuring and discontentedness of yours reveals much corruption in the soul. Murmuring (grumbling, complaining) is never a good thing. If every little trouble gets you out of sorts, that is a sign of vile corruptions in your heart. Sometimes if you get a small wound, it can turn into a raging infection. Likewise, a small trouble to a discontented man can cause an infection of the soul. Most often, it’s not the affliction itself that is causing you to be miserable – it is you fretting about it. A murmuring heart is a sinful heart – if you are murmuring, you are sinning against God. If you are in an affliction and you are murmuring about it, you must turn your attention from the affliction and address your murmuring, because that is the biggest problem in the whole situation. That will get you into more trouble than the affliction itself ever could.
2. The evil of murmuring is such that when God describes wicked men, He instances this sin. Let’s look at Jude:

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.” (Jude 14-16)

Look at this. Who will God come with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon? First in the list is murmurers, and second is complainers. What’s the difference between the two in this context? Gill suggests that murmuring is more secret and inward, “grunting out their murmurs like swine,” whining about God’s sovereignty, His providence, His doctrines, etc. And he suggests that complaining is more outward, complaining directly to God about their lot in life, and verbally showing that they are never satisfied with anything. You may not be ungodly in some things, but you are being ungodly if you are murmuring. There are a lot of scriptures about this, but this one alone should cause your heart to tremble.

3. God accounts it rebellion. Let’s look at a couple verses from Numbers:

“But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.” (Numbers 16:41)

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.” (Numbers 17:10)

Murmuring and rebellion are closely related. We even see it nowadays, whenever there is a coup d’etat. When you see an overthrow of a government by force, you know that it began with discontentment. Before there is open rebellion there is murmuring. So, will you rise in rebellion against the infinite God? You may not have considered yourself to be a rebel, but you are.

4. It is a wickedness which is greatly contrary to grace, and especially contrary to the work of God in bringing a soul home to Himself. In other words, it’s contrary to being regenerated or born again. If we have seen the sin in ourselves and how awful it is, and how worthy we are of hell, and how wonderful Christ is, why would we complain about afflictions? If we’ve seen the excellence of Christ, how can we think that a little affliction is a big deal in the sight of that? When the Lord calls us, He calls us out of the world

(John 15:19). Our hearts should no longer be glued to the world so that if we lose some worldly possession, it rips our heart apart. It is the idea of “temperance” in 2 Peter 1:6, where our affections are not set on earthly things. We can recognize that the things of the earth can possess some value, but we shouldn’t be so tied to them. We should be able to take them or leave them. We have Christ, and all the good that comes from that, and that is all that ultimately matters. When we say we believe in Him, we say that we believe in Him as Lord, so we ought to be subdued under Him, rather than complaining about His providence. We claim to have part in the everlasting covenant, but we forget that covenant when we murmur.

Please think back to times when God has turned your soul to Him in some big way. He does that for us constantly, but to different degrees – sometimes more, sometimes less. But think back to times when you have felt like Cleopas and the other disciple in Luke 24:32 – “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” And then consider that discontentment is the exact opposite of that. This is heavy stuff – when I’m saying that being discontent is contrary to grace, please don’t fall into despair. It doesn’t mean that if you are ever discontent that you are devoid of grace. Remember that there will be a battle between the flesh and the spirit as long as we are on this earth (Galatians 5:17), but we should continually aspire to be content.

5. Murmuring and discontent are exceedingly below a Christian. It is below our relation. The scripture describes us as being in several different relations to God. He is our Father, and we are His children (Galatians 4:4-7). How unbecoming is it for a king’s son to act like he’s undone over small things? We are the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9). His person is ours, and all His riches are ours. It is dishonorable to have your wife going around whining up and down. We shouldn’t be like a fighting couple – He isn’t pleased to see His spouse scowling and discontent. We are members of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). Christ is our elder brother (Hebrews 2:11-12). We are the temple of the Holy Ghost and He dwells in us (1 Corinthians 6:19). And we’re going to whine?

It is below the high dignity that God has put on us. He has made us kings and priests (Revelation 1:6). He says “all things are yours” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). God has raised us up. He died for us. He has set us apart to show His mercy. And we are whiners and discontent? We are allowing the affliction to have dominion over us, and causing us to bow down and be tread upon. It’s unseemly for a king and a priest.

It is below the spirit of a Christian. A father loves to see his own spirit in his children. We should have a lion-like spirit, like Christ. Christ never murmured. He took the most dreadful cup in history and didn’t complain, but said, “not my will, but thine, be done.”

(Luke 22:42). Murmuring spirits are like weaning children – what a stir and a vexation they cause throughout the house. When God weans us from the world, having a fretful and vexatious spirit is childish.

It is below our profession. When we make a profession of faith, we say that we are dead to the world and alive in Christ (Galatians 2:20, 6:14). We say that our life is hid in Christ, and that He is our life (Colossians 3:3-4). Yet we murmur and are discontented when we don't get what we want.

It is below the special grace of faith. Faith overcomes the world (1 John 5:4), and by faith we believe that we have inherited the promises (Hebrews 6:12). But He never promised us that we'd live at ease and have no trouble. Quite the contrary! He promised us afflictions, and told us that these are things we should rejoice in. You're discontented that God isn't giving you something that He never promised to give you. Instead, you should be satisfied with the object of your faith, which is Christ. Furthermore, you have the promises which worldly men don't – all the more reason for you to not complain about your lot.

Finally, it is below the expectation that God has for us. He expects us to rejoice in afflictions, to triumph, and to be patient.

6. By murmuring, you undo your prayers. When we pray, we recognize that we are at God's disposal. Every time someone in this building leads the church in prayer, there's a pretty good chance that the prayer is going to include some acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. Likewise every time you pray in your own closets. And of course, this is how the Lord taught us to pray! "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). So we pray for His will to be done, but then when it doesn't fall out the way we want it to fall out, we murmur. And the next verse: "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11). Note that it says "daily." Not our "weekly" or our "monthly" or our "quarterly" or our "yearly" bread. We should be content with a little that He gives us day by day. So again, we pray for it, but then we aren't content with it.
7. The woeful effects that come to a discontented heart from murmuring. First, you lose a great deal of time. You spend time where you should be worshipping God rolling discontented thoughts around in your mind. We are supposed to "redeem the time" (Ephesians 5:16) because it is a precious commodity that can't be regained or prolonged. Instead, you are squandering it with discontented thoughts.

Second, it unfits you for duty. You aren't fit for service to God when you are discontented. And if you go about to perform some duty, you will be distracted by your

discontentedness. You're supposed to do whatever you do heartily, as to the Lord (Colossians 3:23), but how can you do that when your mind is preoccupied with murmuring?

Third, it gives place to wicked risings of heart and resolutions of spirit. Imagine all of the evil things that you have thought about doing to get out of a spot that you didn't like, and how God, in His great mercy, kept you from following through. Or sometimes (also in His great mercy) allowed you to proceed, in order to teach you a lesson.

Fourth, it causes you to be unthankful. When you are discontent, it lessens even the mercies of God. His mercy isn't as important to you as the things that you are coveting. His graces are worthless in your minds, when compared to the thing that you are discontent about. He has given you many blessings, both inner and outer – but because it's not what you want, you esteem those blessings as a worthless thing. The Spirit of God makes all mercies seem great, and afflictions small; the devil does the opposite. When you murmur, you are behaving like Dathan and Abiram, who accounted the miraculous deliverance from Egypt as nothing because they ran into some afflictions along the way:

“Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.” (Numbers 16:13-14)

8. There is a great deal of folly, extreme folly, in a discontented heart; it is a foolish sin. First, it takes away the present comfort of what you have. How foolish is it to ignore all of the comforts that you have right now, just because you don't have what you want?

Second, all of your discontent cannot help you. You cannot get anything by it. And in fact, like I mentioned in last week's sermon, the usual case is that not only will it not bring mercy sooner, it will delay it.

Third, many foolish attitudes are associated with discontent. The attitudes often don't make any sense to a reasonable person. Any unbiased viewer would look at you and think that you're playing the part of a fool. It is a great shame - you bring shame not only on yourself, but on anyone associated with you.

Fourth, it eats out the good and sweetness of a mercy before it even comes. God may give you what you want, but He may deliver a punishment along with it (unless you've

humbled yourself from your discontent). You may get the mercy, but you can't take comfort in it, because it's mingled with a punishment from God. For example, Rachel wanted children – "Give me children, or else I die." (Genesis 30:1). Note that she envied her sister Leah. She wasn't happy with just one child, either – note that she said "Give me children" and not "give me a child." And of course, once she got what she wanted, she died (Genesis 35:18-19). And one more example is from Exodus 16:20. When the manna came down, the children of Israel were supposed to gather only enough for that day (except on Friday, where they gathered enough for two days). Some of the men were distrustful of God and not content to have their daily bread, so they saved some for the next day. If they did that, their manna would breed worms and stink. When they were content, it was a great blessing; when they weren't, there were worms. One of the lessons there is that if God gives you a mercy, but you aren't happy with it and you want more, or you want to keep it longer than God would have you keep it, that blessing is going to turn into a worthless or hurtful thing.

Fifth, it makes your affliction worse than it would have otherwise been. Being discontent doesn't remove the affliction. A discontented heart is a proud heart, which refuses to bow down and accept the sovereignty of God and the affliction that He has sent. Your affliction would be far easier to deal with if you were content.

9. There is a great deal of danger in the sin of discontent, for it highly provokes the wrath of God. Let's look at Numbers 14:

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." (Numbers 14:26-29)

We're sometimes in the same state as the Israelites. We have murmured. And we continue to murmur. How long do you think God will put up with it? He hears all of your murmuring, even if others don't. We see in this passage that a fit of murmuring can cost you your lives. You should humble yourselves at the very beginnings of it, as soon as the disorder arises in your heart.

The Israelites murmured over and over and over. You can read all about it in Exodus and Numbers. Look at Exodus 15-17, for example. They started off praising God for the great deliverance from the Egyptians. Three days later, they were murmuring against

Him. First they murmured because they didn't have water, and God supernaturally provided them sweet water to drink. Then they murmured because they didn't have food. So he supernaturally provided them manna. Then they murmured again because they didn't have water. So he again supernaturally provided them water. They murmured again and again, and were never humbled for their discontent. If you aren't humbled over your discontent, you'll keep being discontent whenever a new cross arises.

“Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness.” (Psalm 106:24-26)

A murmurer doesn't give any regard to the mercies of God (“they despised the pleasant land”) and they lack faith (“they believed not His word”). Don't think that there won't be consequences to your murmuring. Sometimes the wrath of God comes quickly. He can bring a plague or some other punishment swiftly:

“But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD... And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.” (Numbers 16:41,46).

10. There is a great curse of God upon murmuring and discontent; so far as it prevails in one who is wicked, it has the curse of God upon it. Grudging and discontent is one of the curses that God lays upon wicked men (Psalm 59:15, Deuteronomy 28:34,67). He gives them discontented spirits so they are never satisfied in any circumstances. What, do you want to be accounted in that group of people? You profess to believe in God, but you are going about behaving like a wicked man who has the curse of God on his head!
11. There is much of the spirit of Satan in a murmuring spirit. The unclean spirit seeks rest, and finds none (Matthew 12:43). If you see a person whose spirit cannot rest, that person has much of the unclean spirit. Satan is the most discontented creature in the universe, and you have his spirit when you are discontent.
12. If you have a murmuring spirit, you must then have disquiet all the days of your life. There will be crosses and afflictions through your entire life, and if you are not content, you will never be happy. You will never have a quiet, humble spirit.

13. God may justly withdraw His care of you, and His protection over you, seeing He cannot please you in His administration. If you are going to despise His mercies, He would be perfectly just in withdrawing them from you and leaving you to your own devices, as much as to say, “if you don’t like how I’ve ordered things, you can take care of yourself.”

It is never a good thing to murmur against God, but there are certain things that aggravate the sin. That is to say, there are certain things that make the sin of murmuring even worse.

1. To murmur when we enjoy an abundance of mercy. The greater the mercy you have, the greater and viler the sin of murmuring. Let’s consider the story of Korah:

“And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: *Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?”* (Numbers 16:8-10)

Korah and the men with him had great mercies and blessings from God, yet they still murmured against Him and wanted more. And another scripture:

“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.” (Ecclesiastes 7:14)

When you have adversity, you’re supposed to consider. Consider what? That God has set the one over against the other. You’ve had prosperity, and you’ve had adversity. You consider that God has given you both, so that you won’t know what will be coming next in your life. When you’re in an affliction, look at all of the mercies you’ve been given, and that you currently have. God may have afflicted you in one of your children, but He may have been merciful to you in another (e.g., Absalom vs. Solomon). God may have crossed you in your possessions, but He may have been merciful to you by allowing you to be employed in His service. You may be going through any number of afflictions, but He may have been merciful to you in a wife, or a husband, or a friend. You’re supposed to consider that He’s set the one against the other. And in fact, you have far more mercies than you have afflictions – if the only mercy that you have today is that you continue in grace and salvation, and that you are not currently residing in hell, that in itself is a greater mercy than all of your afflictions. If you don’t employ God’s mercies in helping you to stop murmuring, they will aggravate your sin further.

2. To murmur for small things. Like Naaman throwing a fit because Elisha told him to wash in Jordan seven times rather than calling on God to perform some miracle for him (2 Kings 5). It's one thing (and still a sinful thing) to murmur over things you need, but it's a much greater sin to be surrounded with mercies and comforts while you murmur over some small thing that you wish was different. You may become so fixated on a small imperfection that you aren't happy about that you lose sight of everything else.
3. For men of gifts and abilities to whom God has given wisdom, to be discontented and murmur is more than if others do it. Though sinful, we can tolerate it in a weak little child, but it is far worse in a man who is known for having wisdom:

“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honour.” (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

4. To be discontent when considering the freeness of all of God's mercies to us. We are at God's table daily and He gives us all things freely. He doesn't have to give them to us. We didn't earn them. So why would we be discontented? It's like someone putting you up in their house free of charge, giving you all the food you can eat, giving you a place to lay your head down at night, and you spend all of your time nitpicking and complaining. It's unseemly.
5. To continue to be discontent after you receive the things about which you were discontented before. We see this often in children, when they whine and whine about something, and then when they get it, they continue to whine about it or discard it. In the scripture, you'll recall that Israel insisted on a king. They wanted to be like the other nations. “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8:5). Then throughout the monarchy, they had a multitude of evil kings who put them into situations that the people no doubt murmured about, starting with Saul. And by the end of it, they said “what then should a king do to us?” (Hosea 10:3). In other words, “what good would a king do for us now?”
6. To be discontented and murmur when God has raised you from mean and low estates and positions. A lot of people when they are risen from a low estate are just as greedy and discontent as they were before, and often, even more so. A common thought is “if I just had a little bit more, then I would be happy.” Note that in a spiritual sense, God has raised us all from a low estate, so keep that in mind the next time you are discontented about something.
7. To be discontented when you have been a very great sinner and ungodly. Any sin is enough to condemn you to hell, but the more outrageous and egregious the sin, the

more the aggravation in your sin of discontent. You've been a great sinner, and you deserve suffering for that. If you are discontent at the providence of God in your life, you apparently have never learned what it means to be humbled for your sins. It would be good for you to view yourself the same way that Paul viewed himself, as the chief of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

8. To be discontented when you are of little use in the world. Examine your conscience – do you do little service to God compared to other things? If so, what room do you have to be discontent? You are being fed according to your work.
9. To be discontented at a time when God is about to humble you. If God is going to break your hard heart and humble your proud spirit, it will be the greatest mercy that you've ever had in your entire life. But you are discontented and fight against it. Why do you fight against God? "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:5).
10. The more palpable and remarkable the hand of God appears to bring about an affliction, the greater the sin of murmuring. You should never murmur against God in any circumstances, but if you clearly see God's hand in some unusual, uncommon work of providence, you have even less excuse. I'll use Korah again as an example. The Lord did "a new thing...and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up...and the earth closed upon them." (Numbers 16:30-33). Within 24 hours, the children of Israel were murmuring about it (Numbers 16:41).
11. To be discontented though God has been exercising us for a long time under afflictions, yet still to remain discontented. It is understandable (yet still sinful) for someone to be discontent at the beginning of an affliction, but to continue being discontented makes the sin worse. It is unseemly for an old Christian (that is, someone who is old in the faith) to be discontented. Burroughs says: "It is true our afflictions are not joyous, but grievous. Though at first when our affliction comes it is very grievous, afterwards, says the text (Hebrews 12:11), it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby. When you have been a long time in the school of afflictions, you are a very dullard in Christ's school if you have not learned this contentment."

I am going to conclude by going over some common excuses of a murmuring heart, along with some answers to those excuses.

1. "It is not discontent; it is a sense of my condition." Many hide their murmuring with this excuse. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being sensible of your afflictions. More commonly, however, it isn't just a sense of the affliction. If it was just a sense, you wouldn't be forgetting God's mercies, you wouldn't be hindered from performing your

duties to God, and you wouldn't be envious of other people.

2. "I am not so much troubled with my afflictions, but it is for my sin rather than my affliction." If it's really your sin you're grieved about, that's great...but it's usually the affliction that you're grieved about. So don't deceive yourself. The most common case is that you didn't care about your sin before, but now that you're under an affliction, you're suddenly concerned about it. And once the affliction is gone, you are no longer worried about the sin. If you cared now about your sin, you would be worrying about getting rid of that rather than getting rid of the affliction. Instead, you are adding to your sin by being discontent. If it's your sin that has caused the affliction, that is all the more reason to humble yourself and accept the punishment (Leviticus 26:41).
3. "I find my affliction is such that God withdraws Himself from me in my affliction." It is a great evil to jump to the conclusion that God has withdrawn from you. It is very dishonorable, and tempting Him ("They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" Exodus 17:7). If you find that God has hidden His face from you for a season, it's not because of the affliction that He has withdrawn Himself, it's because of how you're reacting to the affliction – fix your discontented heart, and you'll find God. What are you going to conclude that God has departed from you, so you're going to teach Him a lesson and depart from Him too? No – you should be doing what you can to seek Him. He may very well have departed from you to some degree for a time, to further your affliction, but you're going to add discontent to your sins and depart further from Him? When a mother leaves a child, the child runs after her, not away from her.
4. "I think I could be content with God's hand; so far as I see the hand of God in a thing, I can be content." Remember that God is sovereign, and He uses men as His instruments. You can't be discontented and angry towards the instruments without showing your discontent and anger towards God.
5. "The affliction that comes upon me is an affliction which I never looked for." Well, it is your own weakness and folly that you didn't expect afflictions. You may not know the particulars of your afflictions, but you shouldn't be surprised when they happen (Acts 20:22,23; 1 Peter 4:12). Remember that you also receive plenty of mercies that you weren't looking for (but which you should have been looking for).
6. "My affliction is exceeding great. If you felt how heavy this is, you wouldn't be telling me to be content." Yes, your affliction may be great, but your sin is greater. The affliction could have been more, and in fact, you deserve for it to be more. Furthermore, it is even more than it would have been because of your murmuring.

7. "However you may lessen my affliction, yet I am sure that it is far greater than the affliction of others." Why is your eye evil because God is good (Matthew 20:15)? Just because He may be more gracious to others doesn't give you a reason to be discontent. You have a greater opportunity to honor God in your affliction by humbling yourself under His sovereign hand; instead, you are dishonoring Him by being discontent.
8. "If the affliction were any other than this, then I would be more contented." Burroughs says, "You must know that we are not to choose our own rod, that God shall beat us with." Any other affliction would not be so suitable for you as this one is. Any other affliction would not get to the heart of your sin like this one is doing. And by grace, God has fit you to handle any condition, and will not give you more than you are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).
9. "The condition that God has put me in makes me unserviceable and this troubles me." This could be a good sign if the greatest part of your affliction is really that you can't serve God as much as you'd like to. Nevertheless, there is still a temptation here to murmur at God's disposal. You may be in a low condition, but you are still a useful and necessary member of the body. You are probably useful in ways that you don't even realize.

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked." (1 Corinthians 12:21-24).

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, remember that one servant had five and added five more to it, while the other servant had two and added two more. Their lord's response to them was the same: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The lowest action through faith is greater in God's eyes than all the conquests of all the great leaders throughout history, and will end in a great reward.

10. "I could bear much affliction in some other way, but it is very grievous to me that my condition is unsettled and inconstant." Some people seem to be in very stable conditions, and some seem to be in a constant state of change. Remember, "every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah." (Psalm 39:5). The word translated "best state" could also be translated "settled state." He thinks he's on firm ground and settled

in his temporal estate, but it is vanity. God may see it more fit for you to have to depend on Him daily rather than to be more settled. Often times, the worse your outer estate is, the better your soul is. You may be unsettled outwardly, but in the covenant of grace, all things are sure – the great things of soul and eternity are settled.

11. “If I had never been in a better condition, then I could bear this affliction.” Many times, this is our greatest wound, but it is unreasonable to murmur about it. Is your eye evil because God has had you to be more prosperous in the past? He’s still more good to you than He is to some others. You should be spending your time blessing God that He gave you so much time of prosperity. Everything He gives us is given freely, and sometimes He requires it back as a pledge of obedience to Him.
12. “I took great pains for a comfort, yet I am thwarted in it.” Why did you take the great pains? Was it for some worldly reason, or was it with an eye towards living in submission and obedience to God? For example, are you working at a job with a primary end of making money, or is your primary end to serve God? If you do everything in submission to God, then you would walk happily in the place that God has set you. And if He calls you into another condition to obey Him there, you would do that without complaining.
13. “I am discontented in my heart, but I don’t let it break out.” But you must have a silent, content soul. It isn’t all about what comes out of your mouth. Your heart is as words before God, and you have a duty to mortify the inward discontent.

In closing, I will quote a few words from Jeremiah Burroughs that I quoted last week:

“Contentment is the inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely submitting to and taking pleasure in God’s disposal in every condition.” And “the doctrinal conclusion briefly is this: that to be well skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory and excellence of a Christian.”

I love you. Amen.