

# Hebrews

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#### INTRODUCTION:

An article from *Readers Digest* in December 1981 went as follows:

#### ILLUSTRATION:

A Jewish man in Hungary went to his rabbi and complained, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answered, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man was beside himself! There were already nine sharing the same space, why would we want to add a goat of all things? But the rabbi insisted, "Do as I say and come back in a week."

A week later the man returned looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he told the rabbi. "The goat is filthy!" The rabbi said, "Go home and let the goat out, and come back in a week." A week later the man returned, radiant and exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there is no goat—only the nine of us."

Contentment is more a matter of our perspective than of our circumstances, isn't it! But even among God's people, true contentment seems to be hard to achieve. If man could, somehow, get everything he wanted, it would be, at that very moment, that he would realize that he wanted more.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

##### **Hebrews 13:5-6 (NASB95)**

*<sup>5</sup> Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," <sup>6</sup> so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"*

#### Prayer

To grumble about our circumstances is to challenge our trust in the love and goodness of our heavenly Father. To be discontented implies that He has not provided us with what we need. Discontent was the sin of Israel in the wilderness in Exodus chapters 16 and 17. God had just miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt and yet when the Israelites got hungry, they started grumbling. He had meeting their needs by miraculously leading them across the Red Sea on dry ground and wiping out Pharaoh's army. Yet despite the proof that God was protecting them, they grumbled to Moses and Aaron about their hardships and threatened to return to Egypt.

##### **Exodus 16:3 (NASB95)**

<sup>3</sup>The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the Lord’s hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

So God sent them manna to eat. Not long afterwards, they grumbled again that they were tired of just manna. So God sent them quail to eat also.

### **Exodus 16:12 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup>“I have heard the grumbings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.’”

They were given instructions to only gather enough for each day except for the sixth day. On sixth day they were to gather twice as much. When they attempted to gather too much and saved it for the next morning, "it bred worms and became foul", When it was doubly gathered on Friday, it miraculously remained free of worms and spoilage.

### **Exodus 16:25-30 (NASB95)**

<sup>25</sup> Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup> Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *the sabbath*, there will be none.”

<sup>27</sup> It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. <sup>28</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? <sup>29</sup> See, the Lord has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” <sup>30</sup> So the people **rested** on the seventh day.

What did they do? They rested on the seventh day (the sabbath) and did not gather food. They rested from their works! Yet that was still not enough! They became thirsty and again chose to grumble instead of trusting God even after all He had done for them.

### **Exodus 17:1-3 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” <sup>3</sup> But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

The exhortation of our text may stem from what the author said in chapter 10.

### **Hebrews 10:32-36 (NASB95)**

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, <sup>33</sup> partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. (How did they do this?) <sup>34</sup> For **you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.** <sup>35</sup> Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

Perhaps after their property had been unlawfully seized, anxiety had set in. Some of them now were focused on regaining their possessions, no matter what it required. But,

pursuing material things can easily cross the line into loving the material things over contentment. So the author calls them to contentment and shows them how to cultivate this rare, but essential, Christian jewel.

### **Hebrews 10:36 (NASB95)**

*<sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*

Contentment is cultivated by pulling the weeds of greed that try to germinate in our lives by building your life on God and His promises.

## **BODY:**

### **I. Contentment Must be Cultivated.**

#### **Hebrews 13:5a (NASB95)**

*<sup>5</sup> Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have;...*

Like a beautiful garden, contentment does not grow without deliberate aim and effort. The apostle Paul wrote from prison:

#### **Philippians 4:11-13 (NASB95)**

*<sup>11</sup> Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

What is Christian contentment? Contentment is a gracious inward, quiet spirit that trusts God to generously supply our true needs and keep His eternal promises.

The world constantly seeks to make us feel discontented. All advertising, whether on TV, radio, billboards, newspapers, mail, or catalogs is designed to make you think, “I need this product to be happy!”

A PBS television program stated that the average American sees over a million commercials by age 20. I do not know how they came up with that number, but it averages out to 137 ads per day, if you start at birth! Even a fraction of that many commercials has got to affect us! So we have to fight the influence of the world, or its swift current will sweep us downstream.

Before we go farther, we should address the question that our text raises, “Is it wrong to seek to better our circumstances through hard work and a better income?” The opposite question would be, “Should we be unconcerned about material things and our financial condition?” Should we just drift through life without ambition, living from hand to mouth?

As with many biblical principles, there is a balance that we must maintain by holding seemingly opposite truths in tension. On the one hand, the Bible condemns laziness and calls us to work hard to provide for our family’s and our own needs.

Paul strongly states in...

### **1 Timothy 5:8 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

He also exhorted the Thessalonians to not encourage people who are fully capable of working and providing for their family, but refuse to do it, to not encourage their misbehavior.

### **2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NASB95)**

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

The Bible also commends wealth as a sign of God's blessing. It commands us to manage the money and possessions that God has entrusted to us carefully and to have the foresight and discipline to provide for anticipated future needs.

On the other hand, the Bible warns us about the dangers of wealth. Paul warned...

### **1 Timothy 6:9-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> But those who **want** to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

What is the sin here? It is your motive for wanting or seeking worldly treasure. As you hold these truths in tension, your **motive** for seeking more money is crucial. To seek to meet legitimate personal or family needs so that you do not become a burden to the church or society is proper. To want more money so that you can give more is also good.

But if you drift into trusting wealth rather than the Lord for present or future security, you are off course. Jesus plainly taught...

### **Matthew 6:19-21 (NASB95)**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

It is important to know that God does not guarantee riches in our life or an "easy life". And we should not question the path that God puts in front of us.

### **Romans 9:18-21 (NASB95)**

<sup>18</sup> So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

<sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" <sup>20</sup> On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? <sup>21</sup> Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

God is the perfect Father who knows our **true** needs. He will provide us with what we need, not necessarily what we think we want!

Contentment and greed are attitudes that start in your mind. To cultivate contentment, you have got to guard your thought life and constantly work at developing a biblical view of life, of material possessions, and of eternity. You have to avoid comparing yourself with others, recognizing that God is sovereign and that He has different purposes for different people. Perhaps He knows that if He entrusted more money to you, you would stop trusting Him and be spiritually ruined.

So to cultivate and maintain contentment, you must daily submit to God's sovereignty and trust Him to provide for all of your needs, and keep an **eternal** perspective.

So greed or the love of money is a dangerous weed that keeps popping up in each of our lives. You can pull it one day, and it comes back the next. You will **not** enjoy God's contentment unless you keep weeding.

To pull out the weeds of greed and to get God's perspective on money and possessions, yield it all to Him because, after all, He is the one who rightfully owns it. You need to manage it and take care of it for Him, but if He takes it away, that is His business. I know that it is painful to suffer a financial loss or to have property stolen. But it is less painful if you can say, "**Lord, they stole YOUR property!**"

If you want your heart in the things of God, invest your treasure there.

Greed is always shortsighted. It is focused on this life only. If you were to offer a man on his deathbed a billion dollars, apart from leaving it to his heirs, the money would be worthless to him. Death is not a pretty good chance...**it is a certainty!** And you **will** leave it **all** behind.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Two people were discussing the recent death of a wealthy man. One asked, "How much did he leave?" The other answered, "All of it!"

You never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul!

You cannot take earthly treasure with you, but you can store treasures in heaven by being content with what God provides.

So if God does bless us with prosperity, how can we keep it from poisoning us with greed. God's antidote for the poison of greed is giving. When we get more money, we may be tempted to spend it or keep it for ourselves. And it may be that God may be sending you more to help you get some things to make life more comfortable. As a loving Father, He does not deny His children good things. But He **may** be sending you more so that you can channel it to further His purposes. If you assume that it is all to spend on yourself, you may be misusing it. Seek the will of God.

Contentment must be cultivated, and it comes by constantly pulling the weeds of greed. But what's the motivation for this?

## **II. Contentment is Built by Trusting God and His Promises.**

**Hebrews 13:5b-6 (NASB95)**

...for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,” <sup>6</sup> so that we confidently say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”

If you are “using” God to give you what you want, you will never be content, because **things** can never satisfy our hearts. When you get what you thought would make you happy, the glitter quickly wears off, and you go searching for something else. Only God can satisfy our hearts. Israel in the wilderness craved intensely for meat. God sent them meat, but with it they got leanness of soul.

It is easy, sometimes, to be envious of the prosperity of the wicked until we consider our current circumstances in light of eternity. Build your life on God Himself and your soul will be satisfied. God hammers home the assurance that there are no circumstances, ever or anywhere, in which He abandons His children. Even when His saints go through horrible persecution or tortuous deaths, He is there with them and uses the trial to take them to be with Him in heaven for all eternity. The reality of that comforting truth enables us to be content in all circumstances. Our money, our health, or our loved ones may all be taken, but God Himself remains! Having God is all that we need for contentment!

The author quotes a Psalm to make the point, if God is your helper, what can man do to you?

### **Psalm 118:6 (NASB95)**

<sup>6</sup>The Lord is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?

Although man can torture me or kill me or my family, no one can take the Lord or His riches in heaven from you, and that is what matters. His kingdom is forever.

### **CONCLUSION:**

For many Americans, tragedy is wanting something very badly and not getting it. Many people have had to learn in their private lives, and nations have had to learn in their historical experience, that perhaps the worst form of tragedy is wanting something badly, getting it, and finding that it did not satisfy us.

Contentment comes from our mind and how we view our circumstances.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

When a contented Christian sits down to his meal realizing that he only has a little bread and some water. His response should be: “What? I have all this and Jesus Christ, too!”

If we can remember that everything that we have actually belongs to God and can continue to give Him the thanks for all of it. We will be content! We will know that God will pull us through and that He will keep His promises.

**What a Day That Will Be.**