

Productive Contentment

Cultivating Contentment

Gen. 1:26-28 & Eph. 2:1-10

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I. Introduction: Static Contentment

When you think of the idea of contentment, what often comes to mind is the image of the monk or the hermit, living off in the middle of nowhere, eating figs and crickets. It is a _____ contentment. It doesn't really _____ anything. This is not the kind of contentment we are called to. Scripture presents to us a much different picture of what healthy, godly men and women, rooted and content in their God, should look like.

II. Created to Work (Gen. 1:26-28)

From the very beginning, we learn that mankind was made to _____. Work was not part of the curse. It was not a burden that was laid upon us after the Fall as though had we not transgressed the covenant we could have spent our days in stoic contemplation. In Gen. 2, we see that Adam had a task. He was to tend and keep the Garden, and his wife with him. Gradually that tending and cultivating effort would extend out into all the world, until mankind multiplied and filled it, exercising dominion over all of it. This was our task.

How did sin affect this? Sin changed the _____ of our work—but it did not change the _____ of it. Our work became harder; in fact, we were given more work as a result.

III. Re-Created to Work (Eph. 2:1-10)

Jesus did not come just so that you could be forgiven and go to heaven when you die. Jesus became man, took upon Himself the full weight of our sin, so that we could be made _____—and not only us, but so that everything could be made new. In Christ, God was making all things new. This newness of all things broke into the old, cursed cosmos when Jesus rose from the dead. He is the firstfruits of that new world, and we who have come to know Him have been raised with Him into that newness. Our bodies are old and growing old by the day, and they will pass away. But our inward man is renewed and at the resurrection we will be made completely new.

The New Testament gives us a good picture of what this newness should look like *now*. It does not look monkish. It does not have the feel of retreatism. It isn't inert and passive and stagnant. How does Paul envision the life of the Christian in Eph. 2:1-10? He describes the man who has been brought from death to life, who has been saved by grace through faith. This is what he says about this renewed man, v. 10: "We are the _____ of God, created in Christ Jesus for _____, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

God saved us in Christ Jesus, He delivered us up out of all our idolatries, planted us in Him, and then said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Do good. Walk in the good works prepared for you since the foundation of the world." In Christ, we are reconciled to God, and re-created in Christ so that we can live in the way we were originally made to live—to live a fruitful, productive life.

IV. The Work

What is this work? First, in accordance with the cultural mandate, our work should contribute to mankind's exercise of dominion over the earth: to mankind's expanding, productive work of seeing this earth bring forth its riches in praise of God. And, secondly, our work must be _____: qualitatively it must be morally pleasing to the Lord. This means that your heart—in whatever work you pursue—has to be upright. You can contribute to mankind's exercise of dominion over the earth by any number of ways, but if your heart's not good in it, then your work is rejected by the Lord. In all that we do, we should seek to serve the Lord, and aim to receive the glory and honor and praise that comes from Him.

V. Productive Contentment

1. Godly contentment rests in the _____ extended to us in Christ.

When we lay our burden at the cross of Christ, we are freed from the gnawing of a _____ conscience. We get to plant down and get busy. We no longer are compelled to make lies and darkness our refuge. The men and women who rest in the forgiveness purchased for them by Jesus Christ are well-positioned for the good work we are called to.

2. Godly contentment rests in our _____ status. The Christian is content with the rules of the game. He is content with reality, that is, with how God has made him and this world. He is content with his own finitude. He is content and grateful for the work set before him. He can, therefore, steadily and faithfully apply himself to that work, not falling into the ditch of _____ on the one side, nor of despair on the other. We have our work cut out for us, but it is work that we can actually do. It's what we've been made for. It's work that God has prepared for us. And so, we with godly zeal and a joyful heart can apply ourselves to it.

3. Godly contentment rests in the pleasure of our _____. The slave works out of _____. He serves a master who will throw him out and replace him if his work is lousy. The fundamental drive is fear in such a case. But as sons and daughters of God, we have a better motivation. We don't just serve our God because He is our Lord—He is—but we serve Him because He's our Father. We've "received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" He delights in us, and we delight in Him. And we delight to work hard for Him as we have the privilege of being a part of His redemptive plan of making all things new.

4. Godly contentment rests in Christ's _____. The godly man rests in the provision of His Lord in every area. As we abide in Him, committing our work to Him, lifting up our needs, relying on His strength, we are productive in our work, and we prove to be His disciples (Jn 15:8).

VI. Conclusion