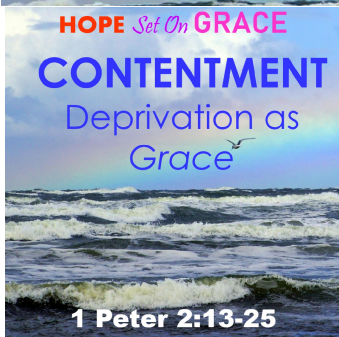




Lesson Eight Handout

CONTENTMENT
Deprivation as
Grace

1 Peter 2:13-25

INTRODUCTION

It's amazing how much more tolerant some people are today. Tolerant of limited store hours. Tolerant of limited inventory in the stores. Tolerant of limited, if any, services available at various kinds of service establishments, from health care to auto care to personal care. Tolerant of limited everything, it seems.

Many people are reluctantly learning to adjust to a "new normal," which is much less convenient, less instant, less accommodating than in the recent past.

Not everyone has become reluctantly accepting of the new circumstances. But many are.

Why are some people more tolerant? The answer is obvious. They have no choice. So they might as well accept the new reality.

I'm reminded of the Kubler Ross stages of grief theory. Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. In the context of the current virus pandemic, a reluctant acceptance of fewer options, a reluctant acceptance of fewer conveniences, and a reluctant acceptance of new – and often silly – limitations on just about everything.

In short, many people have gone from being entitled consumers who demand and expect instant gratification, to being folks who are, in many cases, seemingly glad enough to be alive to be at least somewhat grateful for those comforts that are available as they become available.

For followers of Christ, it might be appropriate to add to the Kubler Ross list. Not all might apply. But maybe after reluctant acceptance, might be gracious acceptance. Then gratitude, and maybe even contentment.

In 1 Peter 2, Peter is alluding to this when he directs us to not only be subject to, but also honor, our government officials. And to not only respect our employers and those with authority over us, but also to do so graciously.

This lesson considers the state of mind – and state of heart – that followers of Christ are commanded to have, and draws in part from New and Old Testament ideas about contentment.

OUTLINE

1. Discussion:
 - a. Besides subjecting ourselves to government, what else is required in order to "honor" those in authority?
 - i. What does this have to do with the Gospel?
 - ii. What does this have to do with the state of my heart?
 - b. How is being "graciously" subject to an employer, different from just being subject to an

employer?

- i. What does this have to do with the Gospel?
 - ii. What does this have to do with the state of my heart?
 - c. What is “contentment” for a follower of Christ?
 - i. How is being “content” in Christ different from being “at peace”?
 - ii. What does the Bible have to say about being content in Christ?
 - iii. For a follower of Christ, is contentment a fruit of the Spirit?
 - d. How is being “godly” different from being “godly with contentment”? (1 Tim. 6:6)
 - i. What does this have to do with the Gospel?
 - ii. What does this have to do with the state of my heart?
 - e. How can we be godly with contentment
2. 1 Peter written to Elect Exiles: Chosen to be subject to ... with contentment
3. A little help from Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (1651)
 - a. Download in .pdf –
<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/burroughs/JewelofContentmentJeremiahBurroughs.pdf>
 - b. Audiobook on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_VSoTP4Snc
 - c. Example: “A contented man, just as he is the most contented, so he is the most unsatisfied man in the world. You will say, ‘How is that?’ A man who has learned the art of contentment is the most contented with any low condition that he has in the world, and yet he cannot be satisfied with the enjoyment of all the world... though his heart is so enlarged that the enjoyment of all the world and ten thousand worlds cannot satisfy him for his portion; yet he has a heart quieted under God’s disposal.”
4. Discontentment and sin
 - a. Unholy discontentment (coveting) as the foundation of sin: What’s a necessity?
 - i. Garden of Eden / Cain and Abel / Lot’s wife / etc. etc.
 - ii. Murmuring, fretting, dissension-sowing, discouraging others, shirking responsibilities and duties, being “angry” at God
 - iii. Externally affected (what about ME?), versus disposition of the heart
 - iv. Easily triggered despite general demeanor
 - v. JB: ““What, it says... will you be above God? Is this not God's hand and must your will be regarded more than God's? O under, under! Get you under, O soul! Keep under! Keep low! Keep under God's feet! You are under God's feet, and keep under His feet! Keep under the authority of God, the majesty of God, the sovereignty of God, the power that God has over you! To keep under is to submit!””
 - b. Unholy discontentment as a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 6:3-10)
 - c. Holy discontentment:
 - i. Waging war (call to battle): JB “The world thinks the way to contentment in affliction is to be rid of your burdens (i.e. to have the affliction removed). No...the way to contentment is to add another burden (beyond your present difficult circumstances), that is, to labor to load and burden your heart with your sin; the heavier the burden of your sin is to your heart, the lighter will become your affliction to your heart, and so you shall be content.”
 - ii. Desiring the righteousness that comes through Christ: Philippians 3:8-9
 - iii. Desiring nothing but God: Psalm 73:25; Psalm 47:4;
 - (1) JB: “Not so much by adding to what he would have, or to what he has, not by adding more to his condition; but rather by subtracting from his desires, so as to

make his desires and his circumstances even and equal.”

- (2) JB: “The way to be rich is not by increasing wealth, but by diminishing our desires. Certainly that man or woman is rich, who have their desires satisfied.”

5. Godliness with contentment

a. Phil 4:11-13

- i. “I have learned” – JB, “If the attainment of true contentment were as easy as keeping quiet outwardly, it would not need much learning.”
- ii. Learning enabled by grace – “If the children of God have their little taken from them, they can make up all their wants in God Himself... If anything is cut off from the stream (a godly man) knows how to go to the fountain, and makes up all there. God is his all in all.”

b. 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

- i. JB: “A contented heart looks to God's disposal, and submits to God's disposal, that is, he sees the wisdom of God in everything. In his submission, he sees God's sovereignty, but what makes him take pleasure is God's wisdom. The Lord knows how to order things better than I. The Lord sees further than I do.”

c. Coveting (lack of contentment) – looking at the cross and saying “not enough”

- i. Compare:
 - (1) Recognition of affliction, persecution, desperateness
 - (2) Crying out to God in prayer
 - (3) Proper, lawful efforts to deal with affliction
- ii. Deprivation as grace: “Since God is contented with Himself alone, if you have Him, you may be contented with Him alone, and it may be, that is the reason why your outward comforts are taken from you, that God may be all in all to you. It may be that while you had these things they shared with God in your affection, a great part of the stream of your affection ran that way: God would have the full stream run to Him now.”

6. Conclusion: Psalm 131 (ESV) I Have Calmed and Quieted My Soul A Song of Ascents. Of David.

1 O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.

3 Oh Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way (William Cowper) <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/675>

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.