



Episode 4-2: Contentment

Resources:

Books

[Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment - Jeremiah Burroughs](#)

[The Secret of Contentment - William Barclay](#)

[The Power of Christian Contentment - Andrew Davis](#)

Website

[Vision of Hope](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Okay. Welcome back. I'm here with not only my lovely cohost, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn: Hey, friends.

Janet: But Also with a good friend of mine, Adam, who I asked to come on the podcast because boy, it's probably been over a year, maybe two years ago now that I took a class at my church that Adam was teaching on contentment. And I was surprised at how practical and encouraging it was. I already knew I wasn't as content as I should be. Conviction was not surprising, but the fact that it was encouraging was. So we've asked Adam to come on and just answer some questions and maybe help some of our listeners think through the area of contentment as well. Adam, can you just start by telling us who you are and maybe a little bit about your family and ministry and work?

Adam: Yeah. I'm the husband of one wife.

Janet: The most important thing about you.



Adam: And the father of four children and ranges from 28 to 12. And so we have a large group at home that we're trying to shepherd. I guess what I would say about just the parenting side is we have a lot of levels and seasons of contentment at home.

Janet: And maybe the lack thereof.

Adam: That's right. And so there is a lot to work with in terms of how are we doing with that. But we've been a part of Faith Church since 2001 and I work in the ABF ministry, Adult Bible Fellowship Ministry, and we have a class that we're a part of that tends to skew older.

Janet: Yes.

Adam: We're called the Peacemakers. Not the Pacemakers. The Peacemakers. We know what everyone says behind our backs.

Janet: Okay. I never thought of that. But I will think it every time now.

Adam: Sure. Ha. Ha ha. Yeah. And with that class, we find a lot of encouragement, a lot of community in terms of struggles, joys.

Janet: Yeah.

Adam: And it's a great group to learn and grow with, which is what church is all about. And so when you have a topic like contentment or a prayer or other things that are things that as you mature in faith, you really need to look around and see how everyone else does it. That's a group that helps you do that and we all learn together so it's a great setting. For work, I work for the city of Lafayette and I've done that since 20 or 2008 and I've actually been in the nonprofit field since 1999 so about, 24 years or so working with affordable housing. But my current involves working with the homeless. I work with people that are chronically homeless that have been either living outside or in a place not meant for human habitation for at least the last year and then we find housing solutions for them with Case Management. And very soon I'll be transitioning to a new position with the Lafayette Police Department as a social worker.

Jocelyn: That's exciting. I didn't know that.

Adam: Yeah. Yeah. And we're feeling out exactly what that will be, but we're going to take a team based approach for people that have law enforcement engagement and trying to make sure that they have the resources that they need. So when the officers are done with the enforcement part, there's still families and children that aren't connected to resources. And that would be the follow up is how can we get you connected where things can be the most helpful for you. So that's the next phase of things, but that's where I'm coming from.

Janet: So given that why did you study and want to teach on contentment?



Adam: The subject has been interesting to me for a while. What I noticed, though, was my interest when I was a younger believer was more academic or helping me make sense of just the ups and downs or whatever. But as I got older, I realized that when I was the most interested in the topic of contentment, I was probably the most content I ever was. So the older I got, the less content I found myself, and that is as I studied more and more, it seems to be a very natural thing. The older we get, the more reasons we have to be less content.

Jocelyn: It's actually very encouraging to hear because I've been feeling very convicted about that lately. I'm old, I should be happy. And I'm like, but now I'm old and my body is falling apart and there's way more reasons to be unhappy.

Adam: And we should know better, right?

Jocelyn: I know.

Adam: And we talk a good game. We know all of the reasons why we should or shouldn't, or at least we have a lot of reasons why we should or shouldn't, but that's not the same as doing the work. And what I have come to discover is unless you do the work, this does not come naturally and the topic was interesting to me, but then as I got into the actual material, I got a lot more interested because a lot of that has to do with the approach of the primary resource, which is Jeremiah Burroughs and *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*.

Janet: Amazing book.

Adam: And I have read other Puritans, John Owen, in particular, *The Mortification of Sin*. That is a dense work. That takes a lot. You got to slow way down, look a lot of words up, not try to bite off more than you can chew. But I found Burroughs to be more conversational, easier to understand, and it's no wonder that a lot of people turn to him and his work when they talk about this topic. I also really enjoy how you can read about this subject. And he has everything soaked in the Bible so much you're going along and he mentions, Samson's riddle or twins wrestling in the womb of Rachel. He just throws these phrases out that just makes you pause. Oh, yeah. That story does relate or it brings a lot of the corner of your Bible reading to a topic that you didn't expect. It's a very surprising approach.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: All right. Why don't you start by giving us the biblical definition of contentment that you're using and help us understand the different components of it?

Adam: Yeah. So this is one of those surprising elements, right off the bat, a Puritan will give you a definition and you're thinking, do I really need a dense, detailed, long definition for something? Give me the high level, whatever, and I found that his definition is very helpful only because you can slow down, pick it apart, and there's a lot there a lot of meat. So this is what he uses. He



says, Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

Janet: I mean, right now, though, as you say that, there's something in me that goes, I want that. I have to think about it forever, what all that just said, but it's attractive.

Adam: Yeah. Yeah. And the you hear the sovereignty in it right off the top and you hear the stability of all that, but then it's also a little dense. So how do I get there? And so you just take it word by word. So when he says it's inward. That means it's not outward, meaning that it's not about what's going on around me. It's not circumstantial. It has nothing to do with my circumstances, has everything to do with what's in my heart. And he uses the example of someone being content or satisfied or joyful because they're wearing clothes that had been sitting by the fire. So yes, you're very warm, but if you have a cold heart. Those clothes get cold very quickly.

Jocelyn: That's a very vivid illustration.

Adam: Yeah. As opposed to wearing cold clothes with a warm heart, they get warmed up and they stay warm and you're more comfortable for the long haul. And his approach is all about trying to work inward out instead of outward in. When he says quiet, what he means is that you are someone that is calm. You are handling affliction without the tumult. A person that is not quiet in spirit, they're going to murmur, they're going to mope, they're going to get bitter, they're going to worry, they're going to get distracted, they're going to seek relief in a sinful way. That's not a quiet spirit. This is more acknowledging that you're in pain, acknowledging that things aren't right, but also relying and trusting on the Lord to be your anchor. He talks about a frame of spirit. And I really like that. It's the idea of do I feel content or do I have a frame of spirit that is content, which are two entirely different topics when I feel content, then it almost sounds like joy and it sounds like I arrived there. I work myself up into feeling content or joyful. A frame of spirit says this is my structure. This is my skeleton. I had this frame and obviously that takes a lot of work, but it lasts longer. It's more substantial. It's gracious, meaning that it comes from the Lord. You have a freeness there's a liberty to it that you free, freely submit to God's will and you even delight in it and it's in every condition, no matter what. And so such a wide ranging definition that kind of hits so many points that it's worth just savoring in your mouth.

Janet: Yes.

Jocelyn: That's really cool. One of the reasons I knew I needed to work on my own contentment was because of the lack of quiet I was seeing in my soul. Like I found myself like getting worried and having bubbling up problems. So that's interesting that contentment is a sweet inward quiet.



Adam: And have you noticed too that when it just comes to, someone would ask, how's it going? How's your Christian walk going? And it's all peaks and valleys. And the the younger you are in your Christian walk, there's high peaks and low valleys. And then as we mature, we're trying to flatten that out, not as a way to plateau, but just to change the length or the heights of the variation. So we're constantly working our way upward, but with fewer undulations. And the way that he approaches it, it feels like that matches where we're trying to go. I'm not trying to get on top of the mountain every day. I'm not trying to ride the wind here. I'm trying to get to a stable place where I can plant my feet, but it's going higher and higher. Knowing that it's going to continue on a high plane as opposed to I'm just waiting for the next dip.

Jocelyn: That's cool.

Janet: One of the sections that you taught on that I really benefited from was the beauty of contentment. Can you just take a little bit of time to explain what you mean by that? And what that would look like in the life of a Christian that was struck?

Adam: Yeah, and the reason I like that approach of his is he talks about contentment is more art than science, right? And when you think about what the appeal of contentment is, he talks about things like beauty and mystery is so appropriate because if we can fall in love with it. If we can just enjoy it, we're going to find it. It'll be easier to do the hard work that's involved. So when he talks about beauty, it's things like, contentment is worship. A contented person is pleased with what God is doing. And there's this sense that as believers, we can either bring God fame or we can defame God depending on how we react to what God is doing. And the worship part is glorifying him even when he's doing something difficult. The defaming is when we're complaining and we're moaning and we're resisting what he's allowing. And so he talks about it.

Janet: You say that because I don't think, I don't initially, and I don't think many do, think of defaming as not responding right to my circumstance. Defaming is saying Jesus isn't God or murdering someone when I know I shouldn't. But you're right. When I am not living a contented life and instead I'm murmuring and complaining, that is defaming.

Adam: Yeah. Because we're saying that He's not enough. We're saying He's not good. We're saying He's not trustworthy. We're saying He doesn't keep His promises or I don't believe He can be trusted to satisfy me. There's a lot that we're saying, even though we're not using those words, but everyone gets the message.

Jocelyn: And if we're not pleased with what God is doing, we will be doing the opposite of contentment, like grumbling, murmuring, complaining, slandering, being bitter.

Adam: Because our natural bent is to slide towards those. So it's almost a thing where if I'm not making the effort to reduce or to fight against the slide.



Janet: Yeah.

Adam: I'm giving license to my heart to defame.

Jocelyn: It's interesting to say it like it's a slide because it's not like anyone ever says, you know what I should do? Let's grow in bitterness. Wouldn't that be a great goal? Or how about if we complain today? It just, you naturally go there.

Adam: Yeah. Yeah. And it's deceptive too because complaining feels like you're being real, being authentic.

Jocelyn: Transparent. Yeah.

Adam: So you hear a lot of people say, look, I'm just being brutally honest, which is a very I highly disagree with that phrase. I know what they're trying to say. They're speaking what's on their mind. They're not holding anything back. They're not trying to sugarcoat anything, but to be brutally honest many times is not honest at all. Being honest is being honest. Being brutally honest says that unless I hurt someone with what I'm saying, then I'm not being honest. And what that means is you don't know how to be honest without hurting.

Jocelyn: Because you can be pleased with what God is doing and speak honestly about a situation, but it won't come out as bitterness and it won't come out as slander. It will just be facts like there are facts about the situation and the facts are not ugly. God, I am pleased with what God is doing and so these are just facts and then I can address whatever needs to be addressed.

Adam: And brutally honest people tend to be out of balance. They'll tell you all the ugly parts, but they won't tell you about the beauty and that is not being honest. It's just being brutal.

Jocelyn: That's true. That's true.

Adam: So contentment is worship. That's one of the ways it's beautiful. He also talks about contentment being a priceless treasure because a contented Christian, for lack of a better word, is a more useful Christian, but in a beautiful way. So for example, he says a contented Christian is the most ready to receive grace and mercy. So imagine you're the Lord, trying to pour in some grace into someone's life, but they're so discontent. They're so angry. They're so bitter. It's like their cup is shaking with anger. Imagine trying to pour anything good into a cup that won't sit still. And, if I had that still quiet spirit, then you ready yourself for the Lord to pour great grace into that cup. It's a great picture. He also talks about them being the most prepared to serve. And that's the idea that when I'm focused on loving, when I'm focused on other people instead of my tragedies, which sometimes those are real tragedies, big tragedies. More often than not, they're not nearly as big as we claim that they are. That person is in a better position to serve.

Janet: Yeah.



Adam: They're also less difficult to tempt. When I'm discontent, I am the most ready to sin.

Jocelyn: That is so true.

Adam: And when I'm more content, I'm the least ready to sin. And that's beautiful to the Lord, right? It's also, he describes contentment as one of those virtues that inflames all the other virtues. So you have the fruits of the spirit, which are all glorious in their own right, but contentment is not one of them. But when you have a contented person, all of those all of those attributes, all those fruits of the spirit glow brighter, and so they all feed on each other. It's one of those principles or those virtues rather that feeds everything else you're trying to do.

Jocelyn: It's like humility or meekness. Yes. That's cool.

Adam: Yeah. Similar to that. And then contentment is a picture of Christ because He was perfectly content, but also a picture of Jehovah. The idea that I am, that I am. One of the commentators made the point that God did not create man because He was bored or that He needed us, right? It was out of His contentment as an overflowing. Someone like us is made or creation occurs. It doesn't fill a lack, but it's an overflow of the contentment that was already there. There's this picture, this common idea that contentment can be lazy. It can be passive. And the picture in scripture is that contentment actually can lead to very effective action. And properly understood, things like zeal and enthusiasm come from a contented heart as opposed to passivity, laziness just letting anything happen because none of it bothers me attitude. That's not a biblical picture of.

Janet: That's apathy.

Jocelyn: Very interesting. Very interesting. So if you have a heart of laziness, it could be tied back to a lack of contentment because why does it matter? Who cares? Like we're going to let the chips fall where they fall.

Adam: That's right. And there's a lot of biblical pictures of contentment in people because you don't see contentment as a phrase coming up that often, but once you have that filter in your head, who looks content in scripture? You're going to find it. There's this time when King David leaves Israel, leaves Jerusalem because his son essentially kicks him out. And on his way out, he receives a mercy from a guy named Barzillai.

Janet: Yes.

Adam: And out of his abundance, he provides aid to David. When David returns almost a month later, David asks Barzillai what he can do to serve him. And he says, I don't want anything. I'm too old for all that. The food, I'm sure it tastes great, but I'm too old to taste it. The music's I'm sure great, but I'm too old to hear it. And so you have this picture of someone so content. That he's generous. He wants to be generous out of the contentment of his heart. In that same journey,



David also runs into Mephibosheth, who on the way out is left behind by his servant on the way back. He was cheated and when David tries to do whatever he can to write the wrong there,

Janet: Mephibosheth

Adam: answer is, look, I don't care about all that. I only care that I see you. And so you have this picture of contentment that suffers well and doesn't seek its own gain, but seeks the community or the fellowship of another. Those are pictures of active contentment that the Lord loves. That is the picture that we all want is generosity and suffering.

Jocelyn: That is just really powerful.

Janet: Isn't that powerful?

Jocelyn: Very powerful.

Janet: Because I will tell you when I've read that about Mephibosheth, I have thought sometimes, yeah, but it's not right. So that's not fair that they didn't. And I think that's true. It wasn't right. And if it's in your power to do justice, we should, but that his perspective was that's not my priority.

Jocelyn: It's not what you're going after.

Janet: And that would certainly make you not be content when not right things are happening that you can't fix, that's your priority. So yeah, that's beautiful. So the week that you talked about the opposite of contentment. It was very revealing and convicting for me. One way we can consider whether we're content is to examine how much of the opposite's true in our lives. So share with us just a little bit about what does the opposite looks like for those who are going, I don't know if I'm content or not.

Adam: If you're wanting to diagnose yourself. Just read about the Children of Israel.

Janet: And see who you relate to.

Jocelyn: Serial grumblers.

Adam: Or exhibit A. Actually, exhibit A, B, C, D. All of the examples are there. And it's in technicolor, what it looks like to be discontent. The scandal of it is that we allow small, what we consider small versions of that to creep up into our hearts and out of our mouths the moaning, the groaning, the complaining, I think even in the class we came up with, it seemed like well over 50 synonyms for grumbling.

Jocelyn: Wow.



Adam: And each of them, when you get to the dictionary, they're all slightly different. It goes on a long ways.

Janet: We're creative in our grumbling.

Jocelyn: We are our own exhibit.

Adam: To the point where, sometimes it's not what I say, it's what I do. It's what I look like. It's how I stand. It's how I pause. It's how I gesture.

Janet: Roll my eyes.

Adam: That's right. It's all there. We know how to communicate. And sometimes we are so comfortable doing it. We're not understanding how we communicate it constantly. It's not a, okay, now I'm going to. It's a, this is what I naturally do. And so what Burroughs does is he talks about how absolutely ugly that is. So he talks about the beauty of contentment. But if you understand how beautiful contentment is almost as much as when you compare it to how ugly discontentment is. So one of the reasons he really points out is that murmuring reveals corruption in the heart. I murmur not because the circumstances are so bad, but because it reveals how corrupt my heart is and how much it's true that unless I get what I want, I'm going to do what I do. And here we are. It's that if you want to see how ugly your heart is, just listen for the discontentment and it'll come out. It'll show itself.

Janet: It's sad though, is you're right, but we make that reasonable. If you understand what's going on in my world, it's reasonable for me to murmur. And I don't think of it as the corruption of my heart. I just think of it as the only reasonable response to the disgustingness of my day or whatever.

Jocelyn: To the things I've had to deal with.

Janet: And instead of being honest with that's just the ugliness of my own heart.

Adam: I think it's fair to pause just as we say that. When we're counseling someone or we're listening to someone's grief or their pain, you're going to leave a lot of room for the complaining.

Janet: Right.

Adam: Because where some of that is just a matter of getting out the hurt and talking about what's real, what's really going on. But, six months down the line, if we're saying the same things and we still can't see the Lord working in it then there's a teachable moment for you right there. So when I think of these principles, I'm much more focused on my own heart rather than trying to explain to someone else why I don't need to hear your complaining, which half of that is



me not wanting to hear the complaint. Because it's ugly. But on the other hand, there's so much sin in this world. You have a lot to choose from.

Janet: Yeah.

Adam: The pain is very real.

Jocelyn: There's a lot of trouble. Yeah.

Janet: And we did a session with Mark Vroegop on lament. That would be good for people. We are not saying don't lament.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: But I loved how he said lament is like a roundabout. There's all these exits off. So you get in order to get off and you're saying if six months later you're still on the roundabout.

Jocelyn: You're missing the point.

Janet: That's not biblical lament anymore. We're now discontent.

Adam: That's right. And his material in particular focuses on the element of trust. Every lament ends in trust and a contented Christian will lament. You couldn't help yourself, but to lament. There's too much sin not to lament. But they give themselves over to the, Burroughs would say they melt their wills into God's will. And they not only give God room to do what he's going to do, but then they find a way to delight in it, which is definitely a step of growth I have not taken.

Jocelyn: It was reminding me of that phrase that you said there, that someone who's content is pleased with what God is doing. And you can't murmur and be pleased with what God is doing because you're not pleased with what God is doing. And it comes out of your mouth.

Adam: Yeah. And no one's being fooled.

Jocelyn: Right.

Adam: So as ugly as murmuring is, and he gives a lot of reasons, he gives two reasons why it's especially egregious for a believer. First of all, it's very egregious for someone to murmur and complain when they've been shown great mercy. That a person and you yourself, when you're really complaining a lot, you have not truly balanced and put into perspective what you've been forgiven and what you have that you did not earn, what you have received that you did not produce. All of the grace, all of the mercy is completely out of the equation for a murmurer and a complainer. And Christians have been forgiven and received more grace than anyone. So you see a non believer murmur and complain, that's one thing, but they haven't been forgiven when we've been forgiven. And if our sin really is as bad as the Bible says that it is, then it is very



egregious that a believer in Christ would murmur and complain and make that a habit of their life. The second thing that he says is it's especially egregious when we murmur and complain for small things. And the example he gives is Naaman, who complained that he could be healed from leprosy if he would only dip in the water seven times. And after six, he, it's too much, it's too far. And it took his servants the lowest members of his household to convince him that isn't this just a small thing to do. And that's us. It's we murmur over the tiniest of things and that's half of our excuse. It's just a small thing. It's just a small murmur. That makes it all the more egregious.

Janet: Wow.

Adam: There is no small thing compared to all of that we've been forgiven, all that we've received, but then that small complaint, even in a small matter, is all the more egregious to Burroughs.

Janet: Instead of something to be excused. That's even worse, that you would complain over something, someone cut you off in traffic, when it doesn't even really matter. That's convicting.

Jocelyn: Okay. Do you have some favorite Bible passages that flesh out any of these concepts for us?

Adam: So without question, the book of Philippians gets you further in the study than anything, the whole book, as you think about each chapter, especially Paul writing from imprisonment, while he's saying what he's saying. So you take the whole thing with the lens of contentment, the whole book, which is funny because you tend to think of the book of Philippians is the chapter of joy or the book of joy. But when you think about it with contentment, it's I'm not getting joy unless I'm content. It's all there. But in particular, Philippians 4:11-13, I think have the best teaching and the most practical elements of contentment. It reads. Not that I speak from want for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. 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. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. And as you pull that apart, almost like you pull apart Burroughs definition of contentment, you just see lesson after lesson. So obviously contentment is not natural if you have to learn it. And he has to repeat the word learn twice to really drive home the point you got to work on this one. This is not the default setting. This is not where you're going to get to when you get old enough and get mature enough. And it just all of a sudden, oh, I guess I'm content. It doesn't work that way. You have to decide to be content and to do the steps it takes to be content. And I would also add at that point. There are a lot of people, Christians, that haven't necessarily worked on the word contentment, but you see it in their life. And so there are a lot of ways that, I'm working on joy, I'm working on peace, I'm working on other fruits of the spirit, and that gets me in the ballpark. I'm working on contentment, but, so taking all that in stride, it's still something I have to learn. I have to intentionally go that way.



Also that contentment, it's possible just to know that God every trial is going to be designed in such a way that it's possible for you to be content in it. So I receive a lot of freedom in that because now, my complaint to the Lord, and I say that without apology, my complaint to the Lord, not to other people, my complaint to the Lord is here it is I don't know how to be content here, but you promised that I could be in every circumstance. So I'm obviously missing something, increase my faith, help my lack of contentment, and that's just a prayer request that you can repeat and rely on. If I trust you for everything, then that means also I trust you for me to fulfill your commands and to respond to every situation. What's interesting about Burroughs is he wrote in the 1600s at a time when it was difficult to be a Bible believing Protestant. And there were a lot of changes in leadership in the monarchy during that period of time. So there'd be a Catholic, there'd be a Protestant who wasn't his type of Protestant, there'd be a Protestant who was this type of Protestant. So there's just a lot of upheaval. So he spent zero time talking about how to be content in prosperity. Cause that just wasn't in the cards. Everyone that heard his sermons were, that just wasn't an issue. So more modern writers have filled in that gap. It is our number one problem. It's hard to be content in adversity, but I think there is a lot of theology and a lot of teaching about how to approach that and it's available. There isn't nearly as much said about how to be content in prosperity and Americans, and I know that anyone listening to this podcast isn't necessarily from the United States, but Western, Society, that's our problem. We're way too prosperous and we are not disciplined very well on how to be content when things are going well. It's not enough. There should be more and the complaints.

Janet: The fear of losing it.

Adam: Oh yeah. There's a fear of losing the blessing, which is, the more you step back from that statement, the more preposterous it sounds, but when you're in the middle of it, it's everything.

Jocelyn: It's totally logical.

Janet: Yeah.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Adam: It makes sense. The Lord gave this to me. I'm a bad steward, if I lose it, which may still be true, but I still need to be content. What He's going to allow, even if I lose the good stuff. And then there's other points of teaching in those verses, but I find those verses to be really helpful. I also find it really helpful to find my examples in scripture that teach me about contentment. And one of my favorites is in Acts 16, when we have Paul and Silas in jail. And what I have to keep reminding myself is this is the first time we read about Paul and Silas, and Paul in particular, in jail. And my natural thinking there was Paul's kind of an expert at being in jail. It's no big deal. But, let's just say it's his first time. And it was particularly egregious. He was arrested while preaching. Of all the times, he's in the flow of his ministry and he can't do his ministry while in jail. I would, if I'm him, I'm thinking that way. So Lord, you've now removed



me from my primary purpose and we're seeing converts, we're doing good things on this ministry trip and yet you're taking me out of commission. And so I could be pretty upset about that. And yet in that encounter, they're up late at night singing and everyone's listening and the earthquake happens and the Lord frees him. But his contentment and Silas as well is such that they don't leave. They don't take the opportunity. They've been freed by this earthquake and they don't take that opportunity. And of course the reason is their goal wasn't to get out of prison. That wasn't the goal. The goal was to do what the Lord had them to do. And literally their mission field just changed without them being a part of the conversation. The Lord just decided, okay, I'm done with you preaching outdoors, it's time to go indoors. And we see the result of that. The jailer, the family, yeah, but only after we've read the whole story. None of us knew at the time and then he's freed a second time because the jailer who has been, who has ministered to the wounds, it has come to, to faith, then says, you guys are free to go. And again, the answer is no, we're not leaving until someone in greater authority or the people that threw us in here answer for what they did. Which is an incredible act of not just wisdom, but contentment, because what he's really doing is serving the church because at some point Paul's going to hit the road. And what will they have when they leave? This kind of puts a different standing, puts a different political situation to bear for the church that remains. So he's literally staying in jail to serve people on the outside of jail. And then, so finally, the third time they beg him to leave and he does, but that's a picture of contentment. I'm here to do the Lord's work. Even if I didn't come here to go to jail, the Lord put me in jail. So Burroughs talks about this part of our mission when we're in trial is to do the work of our trial. And here is Paul and Silas doing the work of their trial, which is an outgrowth of their contentment. And that created great fruit that they never could have anticipated. It's exactly what the Lord wanted them. He just probably didn't tell 'em ahead of time it's gonna look like that.

Jocelyn: Yeah. It's so interesting to think about people who don't do the work of their trial are people whose discontent leads them into idolatry. Think about how so many bad habits can get started when you just don't like the life that you've been dealt and you end up numbing yourself or buzzing yourself or whatever your thing is to get through the trial instead of saying, this is the trial that God wants me to do His work in the middle of. And it doesn't include using idolatry to get out of it.

Adam: That's right. And we can have a lot of good reasons why it's not fair we're in the trial and we can be right on all of them, but none of them change the fact that we are in that trial. And so for every good reason we have, there's still the consideration of what would God have me to do even when none of it is fair.

Janet: Yeah. I was thinking about it would be so easy for Paul to be thinking, what my need to do is get out of here. They're hindering my faith is to do all that I can to get out of prison and how easy it would be to believe that and how do I know when I'm supposed to try to get out when I don't? And I think I have to start with already being content because if I'm not I'm



already deceived and any decisions I make after that are based on that deception. So how does he know whether to just leave when they tell him to leave or whether to stay? I don't know all that went through his mind, but because he was already content where he was free to just think what's the best thing to do out of love for God and love for others right now.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: Instead of, this may be God getting me out of here because all I really want is that.

Jocelyn: That's what I really need.

Janet: Yeah. So to think we're so easily deceived, but we need to start with what I'm going to ask you in a moment. How do we work on that? We need to start with how do we build that framework of contentment so that in those moments we're not deceiving ourselves.

Adam: Yeah. I like the way you use the word free. Because the freedom of being content means I have all of the ministry responses ahead of me. And when I've decided that this is about me getting out of jail, this is about me feeling different, this is about me ending the controversy, silencing the critic, all that kind of stuff. When that's my goal, I might get the goal. I might actually achieve it, but I will have damaged something along the way.

Jocelyn: That is profound.

Janet: Yeah. I love that. So if we're beginning to see, and I hope our listeners are, I know I am, the beauty of biblical contentment. And if we want to avoid the opposite more and more because it's ugly and it's blinding, so we can't even make good decisions. What advice do you have for how can we practically begin to grow in this area?

Adam: So every good Puritan, Jeremiah Burroughs, will give you a list upon list. So

Janet: If you like lists, get his book.

Adam: That's right. And the 15 ways for this and 13 reasons for that and all the other. And those are all interesting. Some more interesting than others, but I would just highlight a few that I found very helpful. One thing that is talked about and Burroughs hasn't quite phrase it this way, there are a couple of books that have been written since then, relatively recently that I found helpful to not modify as in change, but more translate what he was trying to say to a more modern context and help me get my mind around how do you take a list of 15 and melt into something I can do tomorrow, but they talk about a few things. One is call it contentment by addition, the idea of adding a new burden to my current burden. That would be my sin, which is incredibly counterintuitive. You know what I am. Discontent is because I don't like where I'm at. I don't like my situation. I don't like my burden so why add more of a burden and the logic goes that since I haven't added sin to my burden, whatever I think is so heavy it seems heavy to me.



But if I add sin my own sin into the equation. That other stuff doesn't feel nearly as heavy. I'm more impressed by the weight of my sin than I am impressed by the weight of my circumstances. That's really what we're talking about because we're very efficient at making our sin lighter and more lightweight, especially when we're talking about personal conflicts. If my part of the conflict is 5% and there's this 95% , although many times it's reversed.

Janet: But not in my way of thinking.

Adam: But not my way of thinking. I do the math and whatever and what Burroughs and others are saying, it's not about that kind of math. The 1% is enough. Add your sin into the equation and you will find your contentment rising because you realize that it's not nearly as unjust as you think and you've got a lot to work on. You're busy already. Instead of changing the world or changing that person, you need to be working on changing yourself. And so that's one way that he talks about it. The other way he talks about it is contentment by subtraction. So it's the idea of making my desires equal to my circumstances. And he uses the analogy of a guy with a three foot leg and a six foot leg. So his left leg is three feet long and his right leg is six feet long. Now imagine that guy walking in a straight line. He can't do it. He'll walk in circles his entire life. So if the left leg. Is his reality and the right leg, the longer leg is his expectations that he needs to shorten his expectations so he can walk according to his reality because he can't change his left leg. It's always going to be three feet long, but if my expectations or my what I expect life to give me is so much larger than what the Lord is allowing, or what's even naturally possible, then I need to make the change where I can, and that's on my expectation. So it's a contentment through subtraction. And then he mentions another contentment by subtraction, which is rooting out ungodly desires. And that's where you, it's not navel gazing. You're not just looking at your heart just for the sake to do it. It's not a purely academic process, but it's getting real about what is it I really want? What is it I'm really wanting right now? What's really driving my discontentment? And it's doing that surgery, it's doing that hard work of working on your ungodly desires. In addition to all that, then he gives, I think, a list of 12 what if I was already content? How do I keep content or how do I maintain the gains and contentment that I have so far? And he has a lot of those. My favorite though, is he talks about adding ballast. So ballast is that theory in ship making that in order for a ship on a stormy water to stay stable, it needs weight underneath the waterline. So up, up above the water line, if all of your weight is up there then you're top heavy. And so when the wind goes and the waves go, you're going to tip from one side to another. You're going to tip front and back, but when most of the weight is below water, you're more stable on the water. And so the idea of ballast is what's in your heart, what are you putting in there to weight your soul down so that when things get tough or when your thoughts go in all the different directions, you're more stable. Maybe not perfectly, but a whole lot more. And God's word goes right there.

Janet: Yes.



Adam: And you put it in deep. When we talk about scripture memory, when we talk about meditating on scripture, when we talk about faithfully, maybe even systematically studying and reviewing scripture, you're not just doing it for fun. You're not just doing it for points. You're storing that up for the stormy day. And that will make it far easier, even for a contented heart to not be thrown off course to when Hebrews talks about being the anchor of the soul, it's the same idea, being connected to something heavier.

Jocelyn: That's so profound because I find, at least in my world that I live in, so many people around me are just consumed with anxiety. And what they're anxious about is that they won't be able to handle something or it's going to be too hard and they won't know what to do with it or they're anticipating how it will probably be hard and instead of that being how they handle it, if they were to add ballast, then they would be like, I know I'm going to have hard days and hard times and hard situations so I'm going to prepare for it. That's way different than being anxious about it.

Adam: What I've noticed and maybe you have too, is that, when I get really complainy, grumbly, mumbly, it's over these things that come up and I, at the, in the moment, it's this came out of nowhere, but if I slow down and kind of replay everything, maybe even write it out. I realized this is the same thing I got mad about two months ago. This is the same person. They said the same things. It was a similar situation. So it's one thing to get very discontent over something that happens out of nowhere, but by and large, far and away. We get mad about the same stuff from the same people in literally the same circumstances and when you have a robot and you push a button and they're always reacting to the button people know where your buttons are. So even if it's not the same, they figured it out. They know what buttons to push or whatever. And so now the onus is on me. So I need to lock things into my heart that address that. Remove the button. It's going to happen again. You're going to get upset, and it truly doesn't come out of nowhere. It comes out of the same where.

Janet: Right.

Jocelyn: And you can reprogram the button. So a different response comes out when the pressure is applied.

Adam: That's right. And those verses can help you do it. And that's also a good spot for godly counsel. When we find there's patterns in our life and we can't break that pattern, a godly believer can help us apply scripture to it and to get ahead of it.

Janet: Yeah.

Adam: To anticipate.

Jocelyn: Yeah. Yeah.



Janet: And I think this is a good point to mention that we have asked our listeners this year to challenge with us to read through the scriptures. And at the end of the year, then we will have a little gift for everybody that tells us that they've read through the scriptures and just here's another reason to do that.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: I'm adding weight.

Jocelyn: Yeah.

Janet: To my heart and preparing it for whatever else might come up if I'm continuing to ingest the word.

Jocelyn: When you're just placing God's word deep into your heart it provides ballast, like you said, and that's only going to come by actually reading God's word.

Janet: That's right.

Jocelyn: I'm excited about all the ballast that our listeners are going to be adding to their hearts this year.

Adam: Gaining weight is not always bad.

Jocelyn: Did you hear that? That should be on our.

Janet: Below the waterline.

Jocelyn: That should be on the.

Adam: Below the waterline.

Jocelyn: That should be on the little present that we give out to everyone.

Janet: That's right. That's right.

Jocelyn: Gaining weight is not always a bad thing.

Janet: Just as we close if somebody is wanting to read more, you've mentioned Jeremiah Burroughs book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. I will tell you I think, and you'll know this better than I would, if that actual book has been updated to more modern language. I do think that it can be a little difficult language wise to read, but I loved that book and just wondered if you could share with us some resources so they could continue to think.



Adam: There are a couple of authors that have tried to update it. I'm not sure that you're going to find the actual book from Jeremiah Burroughs in a so well updated.

Janet: Okay.

Adam: Whatever you find free online is probably going to be just fine. But. William Barclay has a book called, *The Secret of Contentment*, and I found that to be very helpful because of his categories, because he added in as I mentioned the idea of being content and prosperity, for example.

Janet: Yes.

Adam: So some of the more recent authors will add more. There's also a book from Andrew Davis, and I know that you'll have some of these notes in the comments below. So there are several treatments that you could go to for a more modern adaptation of what he has. But I just encourage the listeners to, get those books, but go ahead and grab the free Burroughs one.

Janet: Yes.

Adam: And just go slow. What's the rush? There's enough to work on. There's enough meat there. You don't have to finish the book in a weekend. Just slow down, make it devotional if you want, just take a little section or take one.

Janet: Read it with some other people.

Adam: Oh, that's a great idea.

Jocelyn: Have a little discussion group.

Janet: Yeah.

Adam: Yeah. So I think the books on contentment are, I believe, the best resource in my opinion. I've not found other resources that exceeded what they have provided.

Janet: Excellent. Thank you for taking the time to help us today. And I hope that it's given our listeners, as it did for me, just a desire to want to grow in this area.

Adam: Thank you for having me.

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