

# Without covetousness: ... be content ... I will never leave thee ... the Lord is my helper. (i) (Quality very good)

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Preacher: Farley, Vernon (1912-1984)

- [ 0 : 00 ] If the Lord will graciously help me, I will direct your thoughts to the epistle to Hebrews chapter 13 verses 5 and 6.
- Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have.
- For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
- Thou shalt not covet, said the Lord through Moses, anticipating this rampant evil that lives deep in the human heart.
- A sin which is the very sin of the devil. Sown it was in the hearts of our first parents in the garden of Eden.
- [ 1 : 46 ] Covetousness has its associated evil in discontent.
- They go hand in hand together. It arises from a distorted, false view of our lot.
- It is a sin of rebellion against the Lord. It is presuming to correct him.
- To suppose that we know so much better what would be good, right, and pleasing for us. It arises from a fallen base principle in the heart.
- From self-love. From self-idolatry. From that rising of the heart against the great, wise, holy disposer of all things.
- [ 3 : 13 ] It desires to be free from all the restrictions, commands, discipline, or crosses which God is pleased to lay on.
- It desires to grasp, to enjoy, to gather in those things, principles, or pleasures which God has forbidden.
- You find these two things go hand in hand. A rebellion against my lot, rising from self-pity, self-love, self-will, pride of heart, soon produced the wandering of the desire.
- Looking over the hedge. Looking through the gap. And supposing that if this and that and the other thing were altered, I should be so much happier in every way.
- Thou shalt not covet. But in spite of the commandment, in spite of all the judgments, and chastenings that have been laid upon this sin, it is inveterate.
- [ 4 : 58 ] It is rampant. If you read the third chapter of James in this light, what is said about the tongue might well be applied to this discontent, this covetousness.
- It is a sin that no man can take. You may put it in the fire. You may put it in the water.
- You may seek to banish it to the loneliest place in the earth. It will live. It will rise again. You might suppose it conquered.

You might suppose it damped and quenched. It smoulders yet and breaks forth. Discontent and covetousness in all their branches is a most rampant, inveterate, and incurable sin, I mean, apart from all mighty grace.

Oh, it is to be dreaded. It is to be marked. Look through the history of the nations since man's fallen.

[ 6 : 23 ] This great evil has drenched the world in sorrow, and tears, and blood, and death. Discontent with my lot, supposing it is so bad.

the nursing of injury, promotion of jealousy, envy, fertile seeds of robbery, violence, and the whole train of evils which now plague and distress the nations.

and we see it rising up again and again. It is with us just now of late. It is constantly manifest in our land, in our nation, at every level, discontent, and likewise covetousness.

it arises from the warped, distorted, fallen view that men have of what is good, presuming to rectify and correct the dispensations of him who cannot err.

And so early in the scriptures it breaks out in Cain's discontent, his covetousness, enmity, ripening into murder itself.

[ 8 : 03 ] See it again in Pharaoh, again in Ahab, coveting Naboth's vineyard, again in the Pharisees with the disciples.

We see it breaking out constantly in our own day. And if we are honest, you will trace it vile working in your own heart.

For it is that ground and spring of all the ill-feeling existing between man and man.

It's the sin of Satan who did sow it when he said, Yea, hath God said, stirring up our first parents to a discontent with a fair portion that God had given.

Causing the woman to look upon the tree, the lust of the eye, desire it, then to taste it, then to eat it, then to involve others in it.

[ 9 : 24 ] Since that time, since that lust and covetousness was then sown, it has never ceased to work like a a powerful leaven in the human race.

Consequently, we should view it realistically not overrate human nature.

It is there in all societies. Though it may be checked, it may be controlled for a season.

It may not be trusted, for it is there, sealing, fermenting, and working. It will go on, go on, to the end of time.

let us never think that this human nature can be repaired by human methods. All the systems that have been adopted have failed miserably.

[ 10 : 32 ] Organizations, unions, reformation, every plan devised by men as broken down, fails to mend and repair and rectify this root of bitterness deep in the heart of men.

Well, might James say, whence come wars from among you? whence do they come?

Come they not in of your lusts? So it is. Over desire, a deceived heart, covetousness.

So in the prophet Habakkuk there is a sentence very severe indeed. It says this, who enlarges his desire as hell?

intimating that as the grave is never satisfied and as hell is never satisfied, so neither is a covetous human heart ever satisfied.

[ 11 : 53 ] It's a fire that cannot be quenched. See it today. if you feed, try to quench this fire by higher rewards, by better conditions, by relaxing this, by easing that, the heart is never quiet, it is never still.

Oh, what a dreadful spirit this is. well might Moses say, thou shalt not covet.

And look too at the inward reaction. The heart that is stirred and moved, agitated by covetousness is a torment to itself.

terror to itself. No rest night or day. Look at Ahab. When he coveted Naboth's vineyard, he could not sleep, he could not eat.

No peace, no rest, no composure in that heart that is covetous for something which he desired.

[ 13 : 18 ] something which is yet withholden from it. Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have.

I've spoken of this sin as it applies to all men in a state of nature. nature. There it is rampant, there it reigns dominant, there the actions, words, life, do manifest it.

Know whence these things spring, by their fruits ye shall know them. you detect it in the conversation, in the actions, in the course of life, you need not ask whence does this come?

It comes out of the fallen heart, which is deceitful and wicked, beyond description.

but do notice that this exhortation is made and written to the godly, to the Hebrews, to these who have taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, to these who are fellow pilgrims, with the saints of old, with these who are holy brethren, believe us in Christ Jesus.

[ 15 : 08 ] It is written for their edification and instruction, let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have.

Is this necessary applicable and seasonable to the godly? Who have better principles?

It is, may depend, else why should he write after this manner? we have to solemnly acknowledge and recognize that this root, this vile root of discontent and covetousness does still live, live in the hearts of the godly.

Does it be? the difference, the difference is this, for sin shall not have dominion over you, you are not under the law, but under grace.

this dreadful root is there. It shall not reign, shall not have its complete desire, it shall not lead the believer utterly captive, it shall not be his ruin, it shall not deceive him so as to land him in hell, for he belongs to God, he belongs to Christ, and the righteous shall and must hold on his way, and he will keep the feet of his saints, and no man is able to pluck them out of his hand, or the father's hand, but, here is the precept, addressed to the saints, one and all, for all time, let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have what is the intent, what is the purpose here, why, though indeed it shall not rain, it shall not destroy, it shall not ruin the saints, it has wrought great havoc as his spirit, though it is mortified by grace, though it is controlled by almighty power, yet, it retains a great deal of vigour in the hearts, conversation, lives, of the godly, of the godly, leaving aside the history of the ungodly, we have to look far in the history of the church to see that this sin has worked great damage, great grief, and deep sorrow among the saints, because covetousness works and breaks forth from time to time, oh alas that it should be so, it has been so, arising first from the inward discontent, cherishing injury, wishing things otherwise than they are, nursing the slights against their supposed gifts, talent, place, name, excellence, arises from injured self-love, self-pity, you see, we do so tend to worship that great monster, it's so important, so dear, so close, and that we

[ 20 : 29 ] attach such a sense of greatness to it, and if at any time those desires are crossed, suspected, or slighted, then springs up discontent, injury, self-pity, and the bemoaning of our loss or our injuries in ten thousand ways.

they relate to the dispensations of God directly, say, in affliction, unless and until grace comes in laying the storm, or self-pity rises, consequent discontent, consequently covetous of a better estate.

see it in poor Job, as he passes through the various stages of the fire. See it in dear Asaph of old, as he pours upon himself too long.

Then he looks across and sees the prosperity of the ungodly and the wicked. I was envious at the foolish. my feet had almost slipped, my steps had well nigh gone, overcome, swallowed up, betrayed by this same sin.

It may arise, I say, under the intensity of affliction. when a man, a woman is very likely to greatly pity themselves and resent and dispute God's way.

[ 22 : 39 ] And suppose that it could be so much better and so much different. then arises a comparing of ourselves with others, their lot, their health, their vigour, their prospects, pouring back upon our case, magnifying it, forgetting mercies, dwelling upon one cross more than a thousand mercies.

let your conversation be without covetousness and be content.

It may arise in regard to a state and station of life when as a humble station their means and circumstances are contracted maybe for a season self-pity here at work so frequently oh that it were not so oh that I had not so much discipline consequently oh that I had a little more just a little more oh the deceitful heart that supposes a little more could fill it.

Part of the believers very capacious very wide very deep the God of spirits only can fill up the vast desires of man.

Oh and this covetousness may spring to from the comparison of gifts and position talent in the church.

[ 24 : 36 ] let us suppose your talent is one while you are gracious none of the happy effects of God's good spirit you may be content with your one talent and if you look abroad you'll see others excel if your one talent should be at any time slighted questioned oh how you'll pity yourself how you'll feel injured how you'll pour upon it what an evil is this giving rise to a covetousness and the things that associate with it envy jealousy evil speaking evil surmisings and a crying down of other people's excellency because yours is so injured alas this is a true picture of how covetousness works not in the ungodly alone but in believers oh what a rank weed this is what a festering sore and how alas how powerful how persistent it is and we may say it is so inveterate even in the saints they'll not be rid of it until they die surely said the lord this iniquity shall not be purged until he die and death which brings an end to life will bring an end to this sin and consider it in this light when you think of all the crosses that have been laid upon this sin to mortify it and all the afflictions that have been brought upon it to crucify it and all the reproofs and precepts of God's word to subdue it it is there still and raise it its ugly head to trouble the church the troublous saints to cause contentions divisions and griefs how powerful it must be that rise it up again and again that takes so much to mortify and crucify and control and subdue we find it breaking out in the choicest see it in Aaron and Miriam conspiring and speaking and murmuring against

Moses see the notice God took of it and smiting Miriam with that leprosy solemn instance wasn't it see it again among the apostles when near to the eve of Christ's sufferings they contended among themselves who should be the greatest see this sin reprov'd among the churches Rome Corinth Galatia Ephesus Philippians Colossians see it reprov'd in the revelations reminding us oh what a roof this is still lingering in the hearts of God's saints his precious people so then it accounts you see for the godly wisdom of Paul who thought it not unseasonable not unseasonable to write this to the

Hebrews and then to leave it there engraved in the scriptures for all time let not let your conversation be without covetousness ness your conversation your conversation is not only your words but your walk your deportment your carriage everywhere at home abroad in the church in the world where so ever God shall lead let your conversation be without it that's what it ought to be it ought to be completely absent there ought there should be this perfect contentment with the lot that glorious standard was only found in one person the

Lord Jesus Christ who said my meat is to the will of him that sent me and to finish his work I do always those things that please him summed off in his own blessed words not my will but thine be done he was one in whose lips there was no covetousness in whose heart there was no discontent he was the only one but for his people here is a precept which they are to strive after and seek all right means to attain never stamp this evil out of our hearts or to have it eliminated from our life and our conversation the words that go forth they do either minister grace prophet instruction or else they diffuse some bane some evil but this word this sin of covetousness is all the more difficult because it will creep out at unawares we may try to justify it try to excuse it especially along these lines well

I am content really but you see I like to improve my status I want to advance everybody does I want to grow in knowledge skill income and so on herein lies a snare I am sure that the apostle never intended to damp and discourage right industry indeed he says not slothful in business diligent in it of course but while we seek to be diligent there is such a great tendency to be over diligent over ambitious and so soon our fallen nature loses its balance even in the godly before we are aware we are caught up in the snare of the world adding field to field house to house profit profit profit seeking our treasure below instead of above here is a very fine line here is a very delicate question where does right diligence industry right ambition end and a sinful one begin where does right desire finish where does covetousness begin how straight is the way how narrow how we need the fear of the law to settle and regulate our minds our conversation that we might conform to the rule of god's word that this principle working within our breast may not break forth and plague others plague the church plague our families and work such havoc with our peace with our growth in grace and sure of this if ahab through his covetousness could get no rest nor could enjoy his food when believers get under the power of this sin they too are going to be restless they're going to be troublesome they're going to be a plague until and unless god doth mightily subdue this evil which he will and as then we contemplate the remedies it is wonderfully instructive to think of those methods the lord hath appointed they seem to be true mainly severity and goodness severity and loving tenderness if we look through the scripture we shall find the lord hath been pleased wisely to use a great deal of severity with this sin and

[ 36 : 39 ] when they consider its inveterate deep rooted ingrained nature we cannot say that the lord is too severe see how he begins early in the scriptures that case of Miriam we mentioned is an instance of what was deemed necessary to check and keep under this rampant evil that resided in the saints themselves so in asaph in asaph when his heart was running wild when he was envying the wicked the lord did bring him to a solemn heart searching discovery of himself which was sanctified work for good causing him to say so ignorant was I so foolish

I was as a beast before thee yes this is how God brings it home to his children and all along he sends the fire fiery trials intent to subdue conquer and overthrow this evil this rebel in heart it is amazing to see how even after trial after trial rear again its ugly head take Jonah there's discontent if you will with a commission God gave him to go and preach to Nineveh Jonah knows better discontent presuming to correct the will and way of God no no saith

Jonah I do not care for it I will go to Tarshish so he went in the ship to go to Tarshish well you know the issue God prepared things for him prepared a storm prepared a fish what a trial that was what a season of chastening what discipline what darkness the intensity of it was to Jonah like a taste of hell from the belly of hell cried I pretty severe wasn't it pretty deep you would have thought that the death blow to discontent and covetousness at a better portion another lot there he was in the belly of a fish literal darkness darkness in his soul and as for hope of recovery it seemed well nigh extinct no man could touch the case beyond all human assistance shut up to one thing the mercy of

God God spake to the fish generous say well now you'd suppose wouldn't you that this spirit of discontent is well and truly mortified it will never again manifest itself what do we see in fact in the fourth chapter when the Lord has mercy upon Nineveh here is Jonah after this presuming to dispute with the Lord peeved doing well to be angry making a false use of God's grace and pity and long suffering angry because the

Lord had mercy upon Nineveh you see by this how much is needful to keep under this rank evil of our hearts and by that instance you may get an understanding of why it is God's people are so often in the water and in the fire he shall subdue our iniquities sin shall not have dominion over you their lives shall be prolonged for a season and a time their dominion shall be broken this people have I formed for myself they shall show forth my praise mysterious indeed are the ways of

[ 42 : 56 ] God could sanctify his people in a moment he need not be exercised to try them every way if it was his will could prepare them for heaven take them there as he did the dying thief honey your inhibiting frequently he is pleased to work this way by a process.

He found him in a desert land, a waste howling wilderness. He led him about. He instructed him. He kept him as the apple of his eye.

By these things men live. By this process of trial and deliverance. By this long and tortuous experience Job was brought to this point.

Behold, I am vile. I lay my hand upon my mouth. I know that thou canst do everything.

I repent and pour myself in dust and ashes. Discontent and covetousness have received a mortal blow in Job through those trials.

[ 44 : 27 ] Well, here is the exhortation. God grant us to receive it. Paul said at the close of this epistle, suffer the word of exhortation.

Well for us, if our hearts are meek and to receive it, the precept so highly beneficial in order for our own peace and to preserve the peace, love and unity of the Church of God.

Amen.