

5 Keys to Christmas Contentment and Comfort

Read Time: 5 Minutes 20 Seconds

Around Christmas, you hear the wonderful carol “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen.” It was first published in 1833, by Williams Sandy.

The message is evident throughout the song that remembering the birth of Jesus Christ is joyful and comforting because belief in Jesus Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-5) has set us free (Gal. 5:1).

As good as that melody is, however, there is something more beneficial for you than comfort. The following information does not imply something needs to be improved in the song because it presents an excellent message that what Jesus did for us is comforting and fantastic.

The problem is what our mind pictures when we use or hear the word “comfort.”

The word comfort most often relates to something external, creating a sense of rest and relaxation. It is like the comfort of a warm fire, a pleasant comment from a friend or watching the sunset.

In other words, something external creates an internal sensation or emotion. Consider “comfort food” as an example. Food is associated with good memories or a feeling of well-being. And when we want to “comfort” someone, we hope to help them move to better feelings.

If that is how you use the word comfort, you depend on what is external to yourself. That does not mean seeking comfort is wrong. It does mean that comfort does not go far enough.

Contentment Is a Better Option

Contentment is something you learn. It does not appear to be a gift from the Lord. It requires dedication and self-governance to make it part of our life. Of course, walking with the Lord and utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit is part of the learning process. To support the fact that you learn contentment comes directly from what the Apostle Paul says:

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content,” (Phil. 4:11).

Definitions are critical for understanding any word or context. Our definition of contentment is adapted from “The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment,” written by Jeremiah Burroughs in 1648:

“A sweet, inward, quiet, gracious, active frame of spirit that freely submits to and delights in God’s wisdom and perfection in all circumstances.”

Let’s look at the words in this definition.

Sweet, Inward

Contentment is not about what shows on or comes from the outside, even though it will show externally. Instead, contentment is part of the essence of who you are. King David gives us his foundation, which may be about contentment.

“My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him,” (Ps. 62:5).

Quiet

Contentment supports reality and truth. Accepting reality and facing the truth is not acting like you are not in a difficult time. It does not ignore facts. Instead, it faces reality and recognizes that this difficulty is part of growing and becoming the vessel God desires.

It is reasonable to communicate to God and appropriate friends that you see a situation as painful and difficult. You end up going wrong when you complain about your circumstance. Note, however, that contentment does not limit you from pursuing support. But be careful; your sin nature turns your communication into a pitiful and needy attitude. Worse yet, praying for a situation to be removed may be like praying you do not want to look like Jesus!

And remember this, contentment opposes murmuring and complaining, fretting and worry, inner turmoil, an unsettled spirit and so much more. Unfortunately, doing these things demonstrate that you doubt God's plan and desire for you. That is not contentment.

Gracious

Contentment is a grace that renews your thoughts about God and permeates the essence of who God desires that you become—the image of Christ. This contentment is a grace that demonstrates your authentic and genuine character to the world. People will ask you for a reason for the hope they see in you, (1 Peter 3:15) because you are different from their expectations of you.

Active

It is easy to assume that being content means you are dull, stoic and unemotional. It is the opposite because your thinking is not dragging you into depressing, discouraging, irritating or anxious feelings. Your thinking is actively honoring God by accepting His perfection in the face of all your circumstances and pain. You consistently trust in the power of the Lord, who walks through circumstances with you and makes you more like Jesus. Therefore, contentment is highly active!

Frame of Spirit

Frame implies a structure your thinking follows as a path of least resistance. That frame of spirit is first from your thinking which becomes your values and beliefs, then shows up in your feelings and actions.

Freely Submits

For clarity, “freely” is somewhat redundant when in front of submission. Why? Our definition of submission includes the essence of freedom: “an internal, voluntary act of the will to yield to another.” The world’s view of submission is not the biblical view of submission, nor is it ours. Contentment follows our definition of submission, a voluntary act of the will to yield.

Delights In

“Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass” (Ps. 37:4-6).

Those verses are misused to think that anything a person desires, they will get. But that is not what the verses say. The primary clause is “Delight yourself also in the LORD,” which means everything that follows depends on that phrase. Contentment is only possible when built on delighting yourself in God’s desires and ways. It is best because His desires and ways are perfect.

God’s Wisdom and Perfection

When you read Proverbs, God states what is wise for you. Also, He provides glimpses of the vastness of His wisdom through the ways He instructs you to live daily.

It is difficult to accept the perfection of God when you look through human eyes because no human understanding is available to interpret any situation as best for you. Contentment that you learn as you walk with God helps you see a situation

through His eyes and trust His absolute perfection. Contentment is impossible without trusting your perfect Father God.

All Circumstances

Contentment is possible in all circumstances, big and small, important and unimportant, and painful and pleasurable. It requires belief in a perfect Father God Who pursues your best in all circumstances. But faith is the thing that pleases God (Heb. 11:6). It takes faith to believe ALL circumstances are for your best. Unfortunately, trusting what we see ignores faith.

5 Key Lessons

Finally, here are five essential thoughts from “The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.” There are many more, but these are worth noting.

- Contentment is learned—it does not just happen
- Contentment is internal and not external—it is deep within, unrelated to the external
- Contentment is subtraction, not addition—subtract everything except God
- Contentment seeks to please God—because He is the source of contentment and rest
- Contentment accepts what God is doing to us—not what we are doing for God

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