

Respectable Sins: Discontentment

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, September 26th. As we continue in our series called Respectable Sins this morning, let's refresh a few things that we've considered so far.

So I'm going to keep this part fairly short and sweet. But again, you can always go back and listen. So let's refresh a few things. We've considered that sin can be defined as any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, in attitude, or in nature.

Do you remember that? Sin can be reflected in our actions, our attitudes, but also in our moral nature. It can be reflected in our internal character of who we are as individuals, which is sobering, I believe.

Sin isn't something that we can brush off or minimize. It is serious and it has eternal consequences. But thankfully, we recognize that our sin can be forgiven by God.

But only one way, right? Only by confessing our sin. Only by receiving God's forgiveness. And that forgiveness we recognize was only made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

[1 : 27] And as we continue in our sermon series, respectable sins over the coming weeks, we're going to approach this topic from the perspective of specific sins we may commit.

Specific sins we may identify and address. We'll be able to look at them. And it's helpful to think of it this way. For folks who haven't heard any of the sermons in this series so far, you may look at this and go, respectable sins, isn't that an oxymoron?

Like jumbo shrimp? Or military intelligence? No disrespect to my nephew in the military? Or postal service, perhaps. Respectable sins.

Leaves us scratching our head. Well, they're the ones that we may tend to minimize, right? We've talked about that before. To disregard. Or at the very least, to tolerate.

Like a frog in a pot of water, gradually having the heat turned up, we get used to the heat. We get used to things that we shouldn't be used to. So, question right off the bat.

[2 : 35] Raise your hands if you like ads. Advertise. Commercials, pop-ups on your browser, junk mail, flyers, anyone. Raise your hands. Nope.

Nope. Just like my question last week about, does anyone have a time machine or a crystal ball to know the future? Nope. Zero response. Do you know why companies advertise?

Do you know why, if you stop to think about it for just a moment, just take a snapshot of any average day in your life, we're literally inundated with messages about what we have or we don't have.

What we need, or quite often, what we really, really don't need. Messages which often suggest to us that if only we had such and such a product or an experience, then we would be truly happy and fulfilled.

Can you recognize that? Michelle and I are big HGTV watchers, so we love to watch baking championship shows.

[3 : 43] And man, my finger is lightning fast on the mute button when they go to commercial. Because I don't care. I really don't care. I have what I need. At least, I think I do.

But advertising taps into a human tendency to forget, hear this, forget about what we have. To recognize what we don't have.

To want what we don't have. And to want what we don't really need. So hopefully we can recognize this tendency, this feeling of inadequacy or lacking that I'm describing here.

It's the central focus of our sermon this morning and it's called discontentment. In his book, Things Unseen, Living with Eternity in Our Heart, Mark Buchanan, the author, points out that how we continually live for the next thing.

And if you can remember way, way, way, way, way back in December 2018, on a certain Sunday, a certain fella came to preach to Bramard.

[4 : 55] That was me. And I talked about this concept a little bit in that pre-Christmas sermon that I gave before I came to be your pastor. So Mark Buchanan suggests that we are conditioned, here's his quote, we're conditioned not to value things too much, but to value them too little.

We forget to treasure and to savor. That's so powerful to me. That pressure of constant wanting dissipates, dilutes our sense of gratitude.

The weight of restlessness, Buchanan says, craving plunders all enjoyment. See that? But he adds a surprising thought.

He says, God made us this way. What? God made us this way, Buchanan said. He made us to yearn. He made us to always be hungry for something we can't get.

To always be missing something we can't find. To always be disappointed by what we receive. To have an insatiable emptiness that no thing can fill.

[6 : 07] An untameable restlessness, Buchanan says, that no discovery can still in us. Friends, yearning in itself is healthy.

It's a kind of compass that points us to true north. It points us to the direction we need to be going. It's not the wanting that corrupts us. What corrupts us is wanting that's misplaced.

It's placed on the wrong things. That's when we get into trouble. Discontentment.

Aside from sounding like a \$5 word a little bit, does that word have a clear meaning for you? Let's look at some definitions. It can mean dissatisfied.

Discontentment. It can mean displeased. Restless. Can you relate to that? Those kinds of concepts? Or from a more obvious perspective, the word discontentment itself makes it pretty easy to decipher the opposite of it.

[7 : 12] Doesn't it? Say it with me. Contentment. Right. It's that easy. So when it comes to our topic this morning, we can recognize that dis is the problem.

Right? So let's get at this right away with some audience participation this morning. You didn't think you were going to have to talk so much. What are some of the things a person might experience discontentment about?

The weather. Others? Family? Good. Job? Health?

Okay. How much money you have, perhaps? Or don't have? It's amazing, isn't it? That people can be frustrated by how much money they have and not know what to do with it and then frustrated by not having enough.

That always fascinates me. That the two extremes can have the same level of discontentment.

Relationship status. Family, right? A spouse or sibling.

[8 : 13] Anything like that. Some people, likes or follows on their social media accounts are devastating. My video didn't get viewed. Nobody likes me because they didn't thumbs up my post.

There's a certain generation that really resonates with. So this morning, we're going to consider three things. Here's your list. Isn't discontentment actually a good thing?

Why is dissatisfaction sin? And third, how do we call out dissatisfaction in our own lives and in the lives of other believers?

We're going to look at those three things this morning. First, isn't discontentment actually a good thing? If you're thinking that this morning already, I can see your perspective and here's how we're going to look at it.

Discontentment may actually spur us into action. Do you see that? It may ignite a drive or passion in us. It may be the force that moves us from being passive to being engaged.

[9 : 23] We want our circumstances to change. We feel discontentment. We begin to work towards that change. Okay. There's a proliferation of self-help resources out there.

They encourage people to seek to be the best version of themselves, to recognize the areas in their lives or their personal development where they can grow or improve, right?

But there are some inherent problems with this perspective, with the idea that restlessness or dissatisfaction or discontentment could or should be considered to be positive influences in our lives.

Why is that? Well, I hope we can all agree, and you've heard me say it before, that Christian life really isn't about us, right? I've said that before.

It's not really about what we want or our expectations or our personal plans for the future. Can you recognize that? It may, yes, it may involve those things, absolutely, in sometimes serious ways. [10:30] But the Christian life is more about submission and surrender to God's will. It's about submission to God's plan and his direction for our lives, far more than it is about our personal wants and needs.

I wasn't going to say this, but now I am. One thing that's driving me crazy lately is Christians saying, I should do this.

I should not have to do this. We see that in society right now. I won't get into detail. Last time I checked, my identity as a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, is to submit to his will.

It's not about my rights. Can you appreciate that? So it's worth thinking about. If you know someone who swears allegiance to Jesus on one hand and yet is asserting their rights, their perception of their own rights on the other, it's an interesting balance that I don't think can be maintained.

So worth thinking about. I've had serious conversations with people about that. So in your life, if you're feeling restless, if you're feeling unfulfilled, if you're feeling discontentment in your circumstances, consider this.

[11:51] Are you simply looking for the next thing? Are you seeking a sense of fulfillment in places where, at best, that'll be fleeting?

Or at worst, it can be harmful to you or others? We could list many people from the Bible who would have had every right to feel discontentment in their circumstances, right?

Job? No kidding. Ruth? Moses? To lead a bunch of whiners? What about Paul? The Apostle Paul? Paul was persecuted and thrown into prison for preaching the truth of Jesus. And we also read in Scripture that Paul was plagued by something he referred to as a thorn in his flesh.

And that's how he phrased it. Scholars have suggested that Paul's thorn may have been a health issue of some kind. May have been malaria, some suggest.

[12:53] May have been a physical limitation of some kind. Such as an eye disease, possibly epilepsy, the thorn in the flesh that Paul talks about. So given his life circumstances and his limitations, we would argue then, probably, that Paul would have had every right, every reason to be discontent.

Every reason to complain, right? But instead, we get a first-hand insight into his perspective in 2 Corinthians 12, verses 8 to 10.

2 Corinthians 12, 8 to 10. You can turn in your Bible or turn on your Bible or just listen as I read. Paul says, Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it, his thorn, away from me.

But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses.

so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

[14:14] For when I am weak, then I am strong. the word of the Lord. Snack that one up on you.

So rather than seizing this opportunity to complain and be bitter or strive for what he may have personally wanted in his life, we can recognize that Paul consciously, intentionally, proactively submitted to God.

God. He sought God's will. He sought God's power for his life as the true source of contentment.

We can recognize as we read Scripture, Paul was a prolific writer.

He was a deeply godly, spiritual man. Paul would have been a rock star in many schools of thought, in many arenas, in many social circles.

But we see him over and over turning the glory back to God. Can you recognize that when you're confident in your own abilities and talents, those are the times that you may actually begin to drift away from God?

[15:33] When he's calling you to draw near to him? Next week, we're talking about pride, so there's a little tiny teaser for that. Our second question this morning, why is dissatisfaction sin?

Well, I don't know about for you, but for me, when I feel discontent about my situation or my circumstances, that's when I become the most vulnerable to either misdirection or worse, misdirections.

When we become focused on our own desires and plans, that's when I believe we become most vulnerable to other voices in our lives.

And sometimes those voices can stem from our own securities, our own past hurts. People who are not going to be but we also need to remember there are other forces at work that would like nothing more than to discourage us from seeking God, to keep us from realizing our God-given potential and our calling.

As I was thinking about this this week, just as our topic of sin overall in our series seems to make Christians nervous, I believe talking about Satan can often have the same result.

[17:00] We don't like to talk about sin, we don't like to talk about Satan, we don't like to talk about hell. Right? Can you recognize that as Christians? Those are the really uncomfortable topics for us.

And yet, so I believe talking about sin can have the same, or Satan can have the same result as talking about sin. I've heard Christian leaders avoid that name.

If you are a Harry Potter person, the villain from the Harry Potter series, Voldemort, they refer to him as he who shall not be named because they fear that invoking his name gives him power.

I would argue that denying the identity of an enemy gives them power. People avoid the topic of Satan. People water down the reality that we have a very real enemy.

I would really, really like to remember where I first heard this, but I heard a theologian once many years ago, I was probably a kid even, say that the spirit world exists in parallel with ours.

[18:10] So if we could see, perceive, what is going on around us all the time, we would quite literally be scared to death because I believe there are battles around us all the time.

Angels and demons fight over us, fight against us, fight for us, all the time. This is not imaginary, folks. See, does it strike you as odd, it strikes me as odd that Christians will pray for healing.

They'll believe in angels. They'll believe that they are going to heaven when they die, which is quite clearly not down the street. They'll believe in the resurrection of Jesus, that he is the son of an eternal, immortal, all-powerful and yet invisible God.

But somehow, the idea of Satan is too much. It's weird, right? So that's a voice, a very real voice in our lives because Satan, as much as our own insecurities exist and are real voices for us, Satan plants seeds in our head all the time.

Do you ever begin to really feel worry and panic for no reason at all? Pray about it. So as we talked about worry last week, we talked about casting our cares on God and we were in 1 Peter and the very last, the very next two verses, sorry, in 1 Peter 5 verses 8 and 9 tell us Be self-controlled and alert.

[19:57] Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a lion, a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering.

By submitting to discontentment in our lives, we're in essence turning away from God. We're opening ourselves up to all kinds of temptations that may bring some temporary fleeting joy, some temporary pleasure, but will ultimately only hurt us.

These temptations, these voices in our lives that don't come from God, I think we can agree, can also come from Satan as I touched on because friends, he wants to hurt us.

He wants to break relationship. He wants to cause discontent and frustration and anger and all these sins that I'm going to be talking about in this series.

Satan loves all of this. Interesting that the lights just randomly go. He loves all of this because it's his way of getting at us.

[21:20] It's his way of wearing us down. It's his way of distracting us and pulling us off track. Peter uses this powerful image of a lion. You know, as I thought about it, Jesus, Lion of Judah, Satan, this prowling lion.

A lion is such a powerful image. But in relation to Satan, Peter uses it because lions are predators, right? They are dangerous creatures.

They pick off the weakest prey. Lions are efficient hunters, efficient killers. Because you can tell, if you ever watch a nature documentary about lions, particularly lionesses, when they go to hunt, you can see them studying the prey.

So if they're looking at a herd of animals, you can tell they're figuring out the best opportunity. They pick off the weakest prey. And here Peter is warning us to be aware of Satan's attacks, but particularly when we're feeling alone or helpless.

When we feel so focused on our own troubles, so focused on our selfish desires that we forget to watch for danger. Perhaps you can recognize that in your own life, that dissatisfaction,

discontentment quickly seems to lead to other things.

[22 : 50] Emotions, like worry from last week or anxiety, a drain on your self-esteem, you begin to question yourself, feelings of being less than, right?

We, I don't know about you, but I'm very good at self-judgment. we become irritated or frustrated with a disconnection between our perception of who or what or where we are in the reality of our circumstances versus our analysis of who or what or where we think we should be.

Can you recognize that in yourself? I remember I said one time, Gertie is not here, Gertie has had surgery and is at home healing, but there was a time when Gertie was sitting right at the back and I was preaching one Sunday morning and I talked about should and I said, my friends, don't should all over yourself.

And I remember her face got red and we talked after and she talked to Daryl and she said, he didn't, and he said, what do you think he said? And he said, no, no, no. But that's the truth though, right?

We should on ourselves. I should be this, I should have done that, I shouldn't have said that. It's a dangerous, dangerous path.

[24 : 14] Because when we're discontent we begin to measure ourselves by a false set of standards that we can usually never meet. That's something else I've talked about with us before, is that we set a standard for ourselves, we set a bar, and when we reach the bar what do we do?

We move it up next time. We set that standard and that unrealistic and false standard gap tends to spawn even more sin in our lives, right?

It spawns things like envy and jealousy and lust and addiction, these self-medicating, self-soothing sins. things that take root in our lives as we begin to seek to satisfy things, seek to satisfy desires or cravings that are ultimately insatiable, ultimately corrupting.

When we seek to fill a need that was only ever intended to be filled by God and a personal relationship with God, when we seek to fill that with anything else, friends, that leads to pain and ultimately destruction.

And I'm not overstating that. Our third point this morning. So how do we call out dissatisfaction in our own lives? How do we call out discontentment and in the lives of other believers?

[25 : 47] I have a question for you. This one can be rhetorical, I promise. Is your default switch set to complain mode?

Do you view situations and circumstances through a lens of criticism rather than encouragement, particularly when it comes to others?

Friends, that, if you recognize that in yourself, that is a very clear sign of discontentment. thing. And as the saying goes, hurt people hurt people.

See that? People who have been hurt, hurt others. People who are hurting hurt others. And we need to recognize that people who have that tendency to hurt other people, to begin from a position of criticism, have likely been hurt themselves.

And that's not to excuse that behavior, believe me, but it's to possibly help us understand it when we experience that from someone else. Personal discontentment with our own circumstances can also make us potentially impatient, critical, judgmental of other people.

[27 : 12] So when we're personally discontent in our lives, we reflect it or deflect it onto other people. So be aware of that tendency in yourself because it's a red flag.

Another question, do you find yourself caught in a repeating loop of if I just? There's your standard bar. If I just.

That's another warning sign that you may be dealing with personal discontentment in your life. If I just had a bigger house, if I just had more money, if I just had a better job, if I just had a more loving spouse, if I just had and I have a confession to make, I was sitting waiting for someone for coffee and I saw a Lamborghini and I wanted it.

If I just had a Lamborghini and it was nice. And then I thought, ah, you can't try that in the winter. That's the only joy I was able to get. then I'd be happy, right?

If I just, then I'd be happy. So when it comes to calling out dissatisfaction in others, how do we do that in a loving way?

[28 : 28] How do we do it without being offensive or seeming to be judgmental? Well, I'd suggest begin with, and this is not a pastoral cop-out, begin with prayer.

Pray for someone's heart to be changed. I've done it and it's worked. Pray for God to help you see things through the other person's eyes.

Again, if someone's been hurt and you don't know that part of their story, you don't know what triggers them, you don't know what makes them angry or frustrated or upset, try to see things. Pray for insight to see them through their eyes. grace. Pray for grace in dealing with people who may be difficult. Pray for grace in dealing with people who tend to criticize.

Friends, I also want our church to be a safe place where we can challenge each other. It's not confrontation I'm talking about.

[29 : 32] Church culture, and I've grown up in it all my life, so I've seen it many times. It tends to be passive aggressive. Can you recognize that? I'm unhappy with you, or I'm unhappy with something you did or didn't do, but rather than say, you know what, this was a disappointment to me, let's talk it through.

Church culture tends to lean towards, well, I don't know who did this, but someone should have done it. So rather than addressing directly, which is healthy communication, even if it brings tension, we tend to feel like we're doing the right thing by skirting an issue.

And that doesn't do very well. It's not healthy, it's not loving, it doesn't take the hard road to have a hard conversation.

And that kind of way of interacting with someone else, it's actually toxic, believe it or not. If you look up toxic communications, passive aggressive is right in there.

So I want to encourage us to be bold in how we interact. And that's not being unkind. Let's seek to be kind and encouraging first.

[30 : 50] But also not to be afraid to have hard conversations. And I've had hard conversations with people, I've had hard conversations people have had with me.

And you know what? Generally speaking, your relationship is better for it. When you invest, when you take the time, when you have the hard conversations, iron sharpens iron as scripture tells us, right?

You take the time to have a hard conversation and come through it on the other side as friends, as brothers and sisters, it's a very good thing. As we've considered at times, discontent or discontentment in our lives can be viewed as a positive thing.

A feeling that helps us move forward, helps us seek to be better, to do better, to want more than we have. We might even suggest that discontentment can keep us from becoming complacent in our lives.

It keeps us stirred up, right? But in striving and yearning, I'm going to come at this from a different angle. Are we forgetting to be still? Are we forgetting to value each moment in our lives?

[32 : 12] Are we forgetting to recognize that what we have has been given to us by God and to just be thankful in that? God. When we choose contentment, which I would say is a God focused posture of gratitude, we can step back from that never ending cycle of pursuing the things that ultimately won't bring us anything more than temporary fulfillment until the next time we want more.

friends, I am convinced that contentment in God is a linchpin.

It keeps the wheels from falling off our lives. And without that, without contentment in God, we seem to so easily veer off course into discontentment, into frustration and envy and anger and self-pity and self-judgment and depression and disappointment.

And man, does that list go on and on and on. Can you recognize that? And in recognizing those symptoms, rather than returning to God and his truth, we seek to self-medicate, right?

We seek to soothe those symptoms. I've often said to my kids, you can medicate a symptom of a cold or a flu or something like that, but ultimately, it's the virus that you've got to fight and that'll take time.

[34 : 06] So in self-medicating, are we missing out on the root cause? I believe we are. Paul gives us, I think, the antidote to discontentment.

In Philippians 4, 11 to 13, it's a very familiar passage. Philippians 4, 11 to 13. So to give you a little bit of context, because it starts in mid-thought a little bit, Paul is talking to the Philippian church.

This letter is written to the Philippian church. And they had given him some gifts to show their appreciation for his ministry. We don't know what those gifts were, food or money or whatever, to support his ministry.

And he expresses gratitude at the beginning, but he also continues by saying, for I have learned, hear this, to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need. And I know what it is to have plenty. I've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

[35 : 23] Say it with me if you can. I can do everything in him who gives me strength. I can do everything in him who gives me strength.

Some translations say I can do all things in Christ who gives me strength. Paul recognized that the correct focus for his life was not on what he should have or on his identity in himself, but on his identity in Christ.

Can you recognize that? And what God had called him to do, his calling in God. Friends, can you be content in everything you have, in the circumstances of your life, no matter what they are, whether they're easy or hard?

Can you rest and have peace, knowing that God is in control of all of it? If you recognize in yourself that drive to always want more, to never be satisfied, ask God to remove that desire from you.

Help you to be content. Help you to be grateful for all that he has given to you. So after suggesting that contentment, discontentment, sorry, is always an issue of selfishness, always an issue of sin, I'm going to go against that a little bit as we close this morning.

[37 : 08] I'm going to give you one free pass. There is one area in your life where discontentment or dissatisfaction can be a good thing.

And that is, I hope you're not surprised, in our relationship with God. As we seek to strengthen our prayer life, we seek to be more intentional after seeking God's will for our lives.

By seeking, by being dissatisfied with where our lives are, where our relationship is at with God, we can find contentment in Him.

See, that's so contrary to the world's message. By being discontent in our relationship with God and drawing closer to Him, we can have peace.

We can stop that endless wheel of worrying, trying to compensate, trying to fill things that were never meant, trying to use things to fill a gap that was never meant for anything but a relationship with God.

[38 : 18] By seeking contentment in God, we can be free from that constant sense of needing to catch up, needing to have more.

Because we know that only one thing can satisfy. So as we close this morning, are you experiencing discontentment in your life or your circumstances?

Ask God, and I mean this sincerely, ask God to reveal the root of it to you. Ask Him to help you refocus your life.

Not on pursuing the temporary and more of that, but in resting in the eternal. So as we closed last week, as we journey through this deeper exploration of some specific respectable sins in the weeks ahead, I want us to say these words of 1 John 1-9 together each week.

And I'm hoping, I'm not putting them up on the screen, because that's cheating. So 1 John 1-9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[39 : 37] Friends, that is the truth that I want you to receive each week in this series. We confess our sins and these sins that we're going to be looking at together. He is faithful and just.

He will cleanse us from them. And He will forgive us of them. Amen.