

Respectable Sins 2 – Discontentment

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 May 2025

Preacher: Ben Finch

[0 : 0 0] Well, if I were to pick out a topic that seems to be most fitting for one of my deepest struggles in life, it would be this.

So, I might not know much, but I do know one thing, and that is discontentment. I don't know if you can relate. So, when Walt assigned this topic to me, it felt a little personal.

And I'm still thinking that it is a little personal, and so we'll have a talk about that later. But, you know, I think people have asked me, like, Ben, why do you struggle with this? And, you know, it seems like you live the American dream, and frankly, I do, and you do too.

And maybe that means that there's more to this, that there's more to life than the American dream. So, I want to ask you, has the American dream left you satisfied? Are you deeply satisfied by this American dream?

Well, y'all just come on in. I mean, whenever you're ready. I'm just kidding, Zanna. We'll ask you to get started now.

[1 : 1 3] Yeah, thank you. Okay, now we can start. I have everything in life that I've been told that I wanted, but yet there is a root of discontentment that seems to regularly sprout in my life like untreated weeds.

So, maybe you can relate. I hope that you don't, but I'm sure that you can. So, there seems to be a feeling deep inside all of us that life hasn't panned out the way we thought, or at least we thought it would feel a little different.

We also didn't expect it to be riddled so often with pains and doubts and insecurities and frustrations. It's seen in the little disappointments that add up and lead us feeling discontent.

But it's also in the comparison. It's in the comparison as we see other people succeed while we're trying to simply pay the bills or survive the days. It's as if we see greener grass everywhere else without taking into account and realizing that regardless, we still have to cut the grass.

It's a problem. It's the sin of discontentment. So, let's see what the Lord might show us today. So, we're going to walk through this with three different sections. And so, we're going to outline it by a passage of Scripture, but the three main points.

[2 : 3 3] So, number one is discontentment is natural. Contentment is possible, number two. And there is hope for the discontent. So, number one, discontentment is natural.

So, we're going to go to Psalm 73. I've got that in your outline. But the question is, how do we define discontentment? So, biblically, discontentment is defined as a lack of satisfaction, a feeling of unrest or dissatisfaction with one's circumstances or blessings.

It often arises from ongoing and unchanging circumstances that we can do nothing about. So, even if you don't know the definition, you probably know the feeling.

Am I right? Oh, there's my family. Come on in. Discontentment is natural because we're humans, right?

So, as I was searching Scripture, I was reminded of Psalm 73. I've gone back to it many times and in different seasons. It's helped me and I think it will help us walk through this topic.

[3 : 42] So, we're going to read the first 15 verses to start. So, Psalm 73. It says, Their eyes swell out through fatness.

Their hearts overflow with follies. They scoff and speak with malice. Loftily, they threaten oppression. They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongues struts through the earth. Therefore, His people turn back to them and find no fault in them.

And they say, How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the wicked, always at ease. They increase in riches. All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

For all the day long, I've been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, I will speak thus, I would have betrayed the generation of your children. We'll dive in that a little bit more.

But statistics say this. The average person is estimated to be exposed to between 4,000 to 10,000 advertisements a day.

[5 : 13] We're bombarded with marketing messages reminding us what we don't have and what we do need. Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, famously said, People don't know what they want until you show it to them.

Jobs didn't sell products. He sold the dream of a better future. Everyone is trying to sell us a better future. And frankly, they're great at it.

Now we're not just wanting a better future in Athens, Tennessee. We're being sold a better future everywhere in the entire world. The most beautiful places by the most beautiful people who seem to not have a problem in the world.

As we look back on Psalm 73, it looks like Asaph, the psalmist, is being marketed to as well. Maybe he was spending too much time on social media.

He's watching the success of everyone else. He's envying the wicked. Comparison has stolen his joy. It sounds like his heart is in a place of distraction mixed with hurt and envy.

[6 : 19] It's a deadly yet appealing recipe. Have you been there? And are you there now? There's little wonder why you're discontent.

In the words of the great theological band, the Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger said, When I'm driving in my car and the man comes on the radio, he's telling me more and more about some useless information supposed to drive my imagination.

I can't get no. Oh, no, no. Hey, hey, hey, that's what I say. I can't get no satisfaction. Because I try and I try and I try and I try.

I can't get no. I can't get no satisfaction. I was ready for y'all to sing, but I had to do it. But I have one for the younger crowd, too. The message from the greatest showman is the same.

All the shine of a thousand spotlights, all the stars we steal from the night sky, will never be enough. Never be enough. Towers of gold are still too little.

[7 : 25] These hands could hold the world, but it'll never be enough. Never be enough. For me, never, never, never, never. For me, for me.

So what is it for you? It's very natural of us to think if I just had this, I'd do it. More toys, more attention, more respect, more food, better food, a car, more hair to replace this growing bald spot on my head.

More, more, more. For single men, if I only had a wife, then I'd be happy. Married men, if only my wife would do this or look like this, then I'd be happy.

Married women, if only my husband wouldn't do this, or if he looked more like so-and-so, then I'd be happy. For teens, if only I had a girlfriend, then I'd be happy.

If I only had my license, if I had a new iPhone, if I had a job, if I had a different job, if I could get married, then I'd be happy. It goes on and on, right?

[8 : 32] And unfortunately, and in some respects, our discontent grows with age. You ever heard of a midlife crisis? That's discontentment.

Adulthood just brings more sophisticated desires, a bigger paycheck, a better house, more recognition, better opportunities, more respect. Ecclesiastes 1.18 says, The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

It's the age-old lie that comes very natural to us, and it's the lie that the world will satisfy us. Solomon, in his day, was the richest man on earth.

He could have anything he wanted, so he went after all the world had to offer. Ecclesiastes 2.1-11 says this, I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with pleasure.

Enjoy yourself. I made great works, I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks. I had great possessions of herds and flocks more than any who had ever been before me in Jerusalem.

[9 : 43] I gathered myself silver and gold and treasures of kings and provinces. I became great, surpassed all the men before me, and whatever my eyes desired, I did not keep from them.

I kept my heart from no pleasure, he says. Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity, and striving after wind.

There was nothing to be gained under the sun. Solomon had everything he desired, and guess what? He was still not satisfied. Honestly, I never related more to Solomon.

I used to think if I could get, so I'm a photographer, I used to think if I got to the place where I travel for my work, I would have arrived. Well, guess what, guys? I've arrived, apparently. Except now, I pretty much only travel for my work, and I often wish to be home more.

I miss my family. I'm often alone in foreign places, literally in foreign places, and I'm never satisfied. It's never enough. The truth is, our sinful discontentment negatively affects our relationship with God and others.

[10 : 57] And here's how. So what contentment is, discontentment is, and what it does. So A under there says, discontentment is a lack of trust in God.

Our dear mother Eve, when she took the fruit in the garden, she did not believe that God had good for her. That God's abundant, perfect provision for her was enough.

She was discontent. The original sin was lack of contentment with what God had provided. Satan's first tactic was to highlight a good thing she didn't have and convince her that she deserved it.

And we're not exempt from these feelings. How often have you thought or someone said to you, you deserve a good thing? Deserve. We use that word all the time, right? Doesn't that sound familiar?

You deserve this. Yet in Matthew 6, 25-34, Jesus teaches that we should not be anxious or discontent about our needs or food and clothing, etc.

[12 : 00] because God knows what we need and He will provide. Look at the birds. Look at the flowers, He says. Worry and discontentment reflect a lack of trust in God's faithfulness to care for us.

Yet it's something we seem to tolerate which makes it so dangerous because in addition to the sin itself, it can open our hearts to greater sins or to great sin.

So B, discontentment can lead to covetousness. I was worried about saying that. It's kind of a tongue twister. But I nailed it. James 4, 1-3 says, it shows that desires for worldly things often lead to quarrels, to strife, and even sin because we covet and we do not have what we want.

And this can result in bitterness and dissatisfaction. Y'all know what I'm talking about, right? My wife Joy, often when we would go shopping, which I used to like to do for some reason, she would say, I'm perfectly content with my clothes and our home, etc.

until I'm at the store. And then I see all the things that I'm supposed to want. And I do want them. And it shows me things that I'm not up to date on with trends. I'd rather just stay home and be happy with what I have.

[13 : 21] I think she's on to something, right? It's true. We covet what we don't have and we find ourselves ungrateful as a result for what we do have.

If we are discontent, we leave ourselves vulnerable to desire what other people have. Right? So see, discontentment distracts from a grateful heart. Discontentment is the opposite of gratitude.

And Scripture calls us to be thankful for what we have. 1 Thessalonians 5, 18 instructs us, Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Grumbling and complaining are expressions of discontentment that show a lack of thankfulness for God's provision. And the Philippians 2, 14-15 encourages us to do all things without grumbling or disputing so that we can shine as lights in the world.

A heart full of discontentment is often filled with grumbling and complaining, which harms our witness and our trust in God's goodness. Do you grumble and complain?

[14 : 30] Is that something you find yourself? Or if you had asked your spouse or a family member, is that something that you find on the tips of your tongue? A discontented heart overlooks the blessings already given and fails to cultivate gratitude, which is vital for us being spiritually healthy.

And D, discontentment can lead to idolatry. When we are discontent with our current situation, possessions, or relationships, we may elevate those things above God, making them our ultimate desire.

I have so much content, that's why I'm kind of going through this fast. It's very relatable. Colossians 3, 5 warns against covetousness, which is idolatry.

When we pursue things as a means of satisfaction apart from God's will, we are essentially worshiping created things rather than the Creator. Luke 12, 15 says, Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Discontentment can lead to idolatry when we place our desire for material themes, status, or relationships above our desire for God. Which leads us to point two. Contentment, okay, discontentment is natural, but contentment is possible.

[15 : 59] Psalm 73, we'll go there, we'll read verses 16 through 22, but Asaph says, But when I thought how to understand this, so we remember he's envying the wicked, he's envying those who seem to be doing better than him, but in verse 16, When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God, then I discerned their end. Truly, you set them in slippery places. You make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors.

Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms. When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart, I was brutish and ignorant.

I was like a beast towards you. It's like he's realizing, Oh, when I finally got the right perspective on this, I realized their end and I'm going to soon realize my end.

But contentment is learned. Point A. It's not given. Unlike discontentment, contentment does not come naturally. It's something we must learn.

[17 : 15] And I think it's something we should teach our kids. Joy and I often would joke about how having one thing always leads to wanting the next thing. It reminds me of the book series and this is my favorite one.

You give a moose a muffin. You give a mouse a, you know, there's the whole series of these but if you give a mouse a moose a muffin, he'll want jam. When he finishes, he'll want another and another muffin until they're gone.

You'll have to go to the store for muffin mix. He'll want to go with you. He opens the door, the air is chilly so he asks to borrow a sweater. He'll notice the button is loose when he starts sewing, it'll remind him of the puppets his grandmother used to make.

He'll ask for some socks. He'll want to make his own puppets. So it just keeps going on and on and on and that's what we naturally do, right? We often joke about that.

It's comical but it's true. If you give Ben a so and so, he'll want this. Yet Paul in Philippians 4, when he's writing from prison, if you remember, he has very basic possessions, if any.

[18 : 26] It says this, Philippians 4, 11, he says, not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Right? He's been in both places and he's learned the secret of contentment. Paul teaches us and reminds us that regardless of circumstances, contentment can be learned.

It is possible. There's a quote by Jeremiah Burroughs. It says, Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit which freely submits to and delights in God's wide and fatherly disposal.

One of my favorite songs that we sing as of recent is the song All Things. It reminds us of God's work in every aspect of our lives.

[19 : 41] There's a phrase in there that says, I wondered in my blindness. You pursued me. You redeemed me. You loved me. And then the chorus, I know you are working.

You are working all things. All things for your glory and my good. Lord, you will accomplish everything you promised. All things for your glory and my good.

Love that song. Nancy Wilson says, contentment is the ability to stay satisfied with God's will in all circumstances, whether easy or difficult.

And that is something, it seems so hard, but it's something that can be learned. The Bible teaches us that that can be something learned. So let me ask you, do you find yourself anxious?

They say anxiety is thought without control. You're anxious probably because you don't feel like you have control. We can learn to be content.

[20 : 47] We can learn to trust God. Our anxieties can be relieved because we can trust God. You don't have to be in control. Everybody looked at me weird just then.

Just kidding. on July 30th, 1967, when she was 17 years old, Johnny Erickson Tata dove into the Chesapeake Bay after misjudging the shallowness of the water.

As a result, she was left paralyzed from the shoulders down, and she would say that she was left to deal with her anger, depression, suicidal thoughts, and religious doubts.

A girl who had so much potential. Her dad was a former Olympian. She had everything seemingly going for her until this accident.

Yet Johnny goes on to use her pain and difficulty to minister to those facing difficult circumstances. And she would later write this, If you are feeling restless in a painful situation, learn the secret.

[22 : 00] Make choices over and over to trust God. And keep trusting, even when it's hard. You will find contentment right around the corner.

In an interview, she speaks about Job 14 that says, Our days are full of trouble. She says, So don't even think you deserve better. If you deserve anything, she says, it's hell.

All of life is a merciful gift. Doesn't that sober your entitlement? Jerry Bridges, who we spoke about earlier, discontentment most often arises from ongoing and unchanging circumstances that we can do nothing about.

So that's why we feel this way. We feel like we don't have control, but do we have someone we can trust? Spurgeon said, Be content to be nothing, for that is what you are.

And as my buddy Mike would say, you're not going to hell, are you? So Christian, you're not. Point B, contentment is not based on circumstances.

[23 : 14] Contentment can be learned, but we have to realize that contentment does not come from ideal circumstances. circumstances may never be ideal.

God seems to often be more interested in not changing your circumstance, but rather changing you, your values, your response, your character.

We go back to Philippians 4, 12 and 13, it again says, I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstances, I have learned the secret of facing plenty, and hunger, abundance, and need, and then again, he ends, I can do all things through him who strengthens me, and you can too.

Paul's talking about contentment. Christian contentment means you are prepared to lose whatever you have. Isn't that scary?

But is it? Although everything was taken away from Job, he still chose to trust God. what he allots to you is enough. There were a couple quotes that I thought I'd share with you, I think they're on there too, that I felt were so helpful.

[24 : 29] Spurgeon in morning and evening, his devotional, he says, a man's contentment is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander the Great, with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer.

And later he says, you say, if I had a little more, I should be very satisfied. You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.

Jeremiah Burroughs, to be content as a result of some external thing is like warming a man's clothes by the fire, but to be content through an inward disposition of the soul is like a warmth that a man's clothes have from the natural heat of his body.

The warmth of the fire, that is, a contentment that results merely from external arguments, will not last long. But that which comes from the gracious temper of one spirit will last.

I love that. I love how he's comparing contentment from external things to being something that is just such a quick remedy. It's such a quick thing that passes.

[25 : 46] But when you have it in your soul, it warms the entire body and it keeps you warm. And then Samuel Rutherford in The Loveliness of Christ says, Of all created comforts, God is the lender.

You are the borrower, not an owner. So that brings us to point three. So number one, contentment or discontentment is natural.

Contentment is possible. And number three, there's hope for the discontent. Psalm 73 again. These are the last verses of that passage.

Verses 23 through 28. He says, Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel and afterward you will receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

[26 : 52] For behold, those who are far from you shall perish. You put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you but for me it is good to be near God.

I have made the Lord God my refuge that I may tell of all your works. Oh, to be near to the Lord. To know that God is your refuge.

To trust the Lord. I think we see this perspective we have to choose to believe that God puts you in circumstances and in places for a reason.

My college professor would say bloom where you're planted. Right? As I mentioned a few weeks ago at Easter I'm often reminded of the quote what God does not protect you from he will use to perfect you through.

So I want to remind you God is doing something. There's only one path to contentment and it's him. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God.

[28 : 03] Jesus died for the discontent. Amen. Therefore there is hope for you Christians. in 1 Timothy 6-10 it says but godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and to a snare and to many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

It is through this craving that we have wondered some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. Contentment means wanting what God wants for us rather than what we want for ourselves.

The secret to enjoying this kind of contentment is to be so satisfied with God that we are able to accept! whatever he is in me though I have not outward comforts and worldly conveniences to supply my necessities yet I have a sufficient portion between Christ and my soul abundantly to satisfy me in every condition.

That's very similar to what Paul said right? I might not have outward comforts I might not have what the world says that I should have or should want but man do I have a!

[30 : 07] sufficient portion in Christ. And this is my wife's favorite quote. Daniel Defoe in Robinson Crusoe If God does not forsake me of what ill consequence can it be or what matters it though the world should all forsake me seeing on the other hand if I had all the world and should lose the favor and blessing of God there would be no comparison in the loss.

If I had all the world but I did not have Christ I wouldn't have anything. So there's hope for the discontent because Jesus is near and he promises to satisfy those who hunger and thirst for him.

He says come to me right? our lack of satisfaction is supposed to lead us to something. Our lack of contentment is supposed to lead us to the one who does satisfy.

The reason you're discontent is because you're not supposed to be content or to find contentment in anything other than Jesus Christ.

Amen. So I thought I would end with a few points of suggested applications for those who are discontent.

[31 : 38] So number one, I would say this, and it's like we should do with any sin, we should repent. Repent of discontentment.

Repent of your illusion of control. Admit it and turn to trust God for your life. Number two would be trace God's providence throughout your life.

Where were you? How far have you come? I thought about this, the fact that you're in this class at church this morning and that you even have a desire to be here.

Some of you were forced to be here. It's okay. my kids looked at me. That alone is a grace of God in your life.

Look around. Of all the lives you could have lived, you get to live this one. So trace God's providence through your life. Number three, keep a journal and write down reasons you're thankful.

[32 : 47] thankful. I loved this quote. It said, not everything blooms in spring. Your season might be autumn. So keep going.

So write down reasons you're thankful. Number four would be have go-to verses. Fighter verses, right? Have verses like these, some of the ones we've shared that you revisit and you go to and you say, soul, you're discontent.

Let's find contentment in Christ today. So we fight for our souls through these verses. Next, seek out others who can help point out grace in your life.

That's why you're at church. We should be pointing out and speaking to the grace in each other's lives. When you see a spark of grace in someone's life, speak to it and fan it into a flame, as they say.

Paul Tripp always said that our self perception is like looking at it in a carnival mirror. We don't always see ourselves correctly. So we need people in our lives who speak to God's grace in our lives because we don't see ourselves correctly.

[33 : 59] I think of the verse, Proverbs 11, 25, says, whoever refreshes others, will he himself be refreshed. So be a refresher, and guess what? You'll in turn be refreshed.

And then last, preach the gospel to yourself. Remind yourself of all that is yours in Christ Jesus. Every day.

In conclusion, discontentment is not just a passing emotion, but it's a spiritual issue. and it affects our relationship with God and others.

It reflects a heart that is not fully trusting in God's goodness and his provision. The Bible calls us to cultivate contentment through trust, gratitude, and a right perspective on life.

Instead of focusing on what we don't have, we're called to rest in the sufficiency of Christ. As we grow in contentment, we reflect a heart that is satisfied with what God has provided.

[35 : 04] A heart that trusts in his goodness and a heart that is set free from the endless pursuit of comparison and the want of more. So let us strive by God's grace to find our satisfaction in him alone.

Amen.