

DISSATISFIED SATISFACTION

- A. Introduction: We're talking about getting control of your mind and emotions as you face life's challenges. Not only does this bring hope and peace to you in the midst of challenging circumstances, when you learn to control your mind and emotions, it helps you deal with your situation in a godly and productive way.
1. When we encounter hard times and difficult circumstances, our emotions and thoughts get stimulated. We are made in such a way that what we see and feel in the moment seems much more real than God and His invisible kingdom of power and help. We must learn to counteract this natural human tendency.
 - a. We've been specifically talking about getting control of your mouth with praise and thanksgiving—by acknowledging God and proclaiming who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do.
 - b. We praise (acknowledge) God, first of all, because it's always appropriate to praise Him, no matter what we see or how we feel. Thanksgiving and praise not only glorifies God, it also affects us.
 1. Acknowledging God brings your mind under control, as well as your emotions, because you can't say one thing and think something completely different at the same time. Praise in your mouth "forces" your mind and emotions to calm down. You regain control of yourself.
 - A. James, an eyewitness of Jesus, wrote—We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way (James 3:2, NLT).
 - B. He also wrote: If you claim to be religious (reverent toward God) but don't control your tongue, you are just fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless (James 1:26, NLT).
 2. David, who was described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), wrote: I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises (Ps 34:1—NLT).
 - A. Asaph, a Levite (priest) appointed by David to oversee choral (choir) music in the Temple, wrote: He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God (Ps 50:23, NIV).
 - B. Paul the apostle wrote: And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father (Col 3:17, NLT).
 2. Last week we added to our discussion the fact that to get control of your tongue, you must be able to recognize and deal with complaining. To complain means to express discontent, resentment, pain, grief; to find fault (*Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*).
 - a. Paul (an eyewitness of Jesus) wrote: Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe (Phil 2:14-15, NIV).
 - b. The Greek word Paul used for complaining means to grumble or mutter in discontent. Paul used this same word when he warned Christians not to repeat the mistakes Israel made after they were delivered from Egyptian slavery and on their way back to Canaan. I Cor 10:10
 1. The trip was extremely difficult because it took Israel through a desert wilderness. There was no easy way to get to Canaan because that's life in a fallen, sin damaged world.
 2. When we examine the historical record we see that they assessed their situation based solely on what they saw and felt and then expressed discontent (dissatisfaction) with their circumstances.
 3. They could have recalled God's past help, and promise of present and future provision, and thanked Him for it. Thanksgiving is an expression of contentment—I'm grateful for, appreciative of what I have and what I will have. Israel should have acknowledged God.
 3. This brings up some questions. Does this mean that we have to be happy about our circumstances when they're bad? Does this mean we can never admit that we don't like something or someone? How can we talk about real problems if we can't say that we have problems? We have a lot to discuss tonight.
- B. Many of the key scripture passages we've used in this series about praise and thanksgiving were written by

Paul in letters (epistles) sent to men and women he brought to faith in Jesus. Paul wrote epistles to believers in the cities of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae while he was jailed by the Roman government.

1. Paul wrote these letters to remind believers what they had been taught about Jesus, to address issues specific to each group, and to assure them that all was well with him even though he was in jail.
 - a. Paul was a real person writing to other real people. He had affection and concern for these people, and when he wrote his letters he did not know if he would be executed or released. These letters give us insight into his view of reality and how he faced life's hardships.
 1. In his epistles we find these statements: Always be thankful (Col 3:15, NLT); Always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:20, NLT);
 2. Do everything without complaining or arguing (Phil 2:14, NIV); Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say rejoice (Phil 4:4, KJV). We pointed out in a previous lesson that rejoice is from a Greek word that to be cheerful or to encourage yourself in the Lord.
 - b. Remember that the believers at Philippi actually witnessed for themselves how Paul responded to adverse circumstances. While in Philippi, Paul and his missionary partner, Silas, were arrested, beaten, and thrown in jail after they cast a devil out of a demon possessed slave girl. Acts 16
 1. The two men prayed and praised God while chained up in an inner dungeon. They were supernaturally delivered when a great earthquake shook the prison, doors flew open, and everyone's chains fell off. The jailer and his entire family (and no doubt many others) became believers in Jesus as a result of what they witnessed.
 2. In his letter to the Philippians, we get insight into Paul's view of reality or his perspective on his situation. Your perspective has a lot to do with how you deal with life's trials and troubles.
 - c. Paul recognized that there was more going on in his circumstances than what he could see and feel, and he knew that there is more to life than was he was facing in that moment.
 1. Phil 1:12-14—God is bringing good out of this. Caesar's entire court and the palace guards have heard about Jesus, and many Christians have been emboldened to tell others about Jesus.
 2. Phil 1:18-19—I'm rejoicing (encouraging myself) because I know that Jesus, through His Spirit, will keep me safe. He'll get me through whatever is ahead.
 3. Phil 1:21-23—No matter how this turns out, whether I live or die, it's all good. If I stay, I can help you more. If I go, I'll gain over and above anything I've lost.
2. In this epistle we find one of the most familiar New Testament verses: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13). Sadly, this powerful verse has become a cliché for many of us, in part because we don't consider the context—was in jail facing possible execution for his faith in Christ.
 - a. The Philippians sent Paul a financial gift and he thanked them (prisoners paid for their keep). But Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that he was never in need because he had learned to be content no matter his circumstances (Phil 4:11). Content means satisfied with what one has.
 1. I have learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state I am (Amp); I have learned to be satisfied in every circumstance (TPT); For, however I am placed, I, at least have learnt to be independence of circumstances (20th Cent).
 2. Then Paul stated that “whether I have much or little...I have learned the secret of living in every situation. I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me...strength” (v12-13, NLT).
 - b. Content is a Greek word that means sufficient in one's self, needing no assistance; content. We might say it this way: I'm good.
 1. Paul knew he had what he needed to face whatever circumstances he encountered because Jesus was with him, for him, and in him by His Spirit. Paul knew that nothing could come against him that is bigger than God and that Jesus would get him through until He got him out.
 2. Phil 4:13—I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me—I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me, [that is, I am self-

sufficient in Christ's sufficiency] (Amp).

3. Paul's contentment didn't come from his circumstances. It came from knowing that Jesus was his sufficiency. Sufficient means enough to meet the needs of a situation (*Webster*). Paul knew he had what he needed to deal with any circumstance because Jesus was with and in him.

A. Note that Paul had to learn this—it doesn't come naturally to fallen human flesh. The Greek word translated learn means to learn from experience, to become accustomed to.

B. To learn means to gain knowledge or understanding of or skill in by study, instruction or experience. We learn from the Bible (God's Word) who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do and become persuaded that He will get us through until He gets us out.

c. Heb 13:5-6—Paul told a group of believers who were facing increasing pressure and persecution because of their faith in Christ to be content with what they had. Content is a form of the same

Greek word that Paul used in Phil 4:13—to be sufficient, to be strong, to be enough for a thing.

1. Paul then cited a verse from Deut 31:6-8, spoken when Israel faced a situation that was beyond them—taking possession of the land of Canaan. God's promise to them was: You can do this because I am with you, and I will not fail you or abandon you. Therefore, we can rejoice (boldly proclaim) that the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man can do to me. 2.

Notice that this is not a word for word quote of the verse. This person's view of reality has changed because he has learned something: Nothing can come against me that is bigger than God. He is more than enough. He is will get me through. Jesus is my sufficiency.

3. The fact that Jesus was Paul's sufficiency did not mean that he never had negative emotions or that he liked everything he faced (II Cor 6:10; II Cor 11:27-29; etc.). It meant that Paul learned to acknowledge that there is more to reality than what he could see and feel in the moment (God with him and for him). And, he learned to encourage himself with the truth (God's Word) in his circumstances.

a. In Jesus we have a dissatisfied satisfaction. Dissatisfaction is a yearning for improvement or perfection (*Webster*). Because we live in a fallen, sin damaged world, there are a lot of reasons to be discontented. Most things are not as we'd like them to be.

b. It's natural to long for things to be different. Our satisfaction (contentment) comes from knowing that God will get us through until He gets us out and the best is yet to come in the life after this life.

1. Contentment comes from knowing that life's hardships are temporary, and one day all will be made right—some in this life and some in the life after this life.

2. Rom 8:18—In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has in store for us (J. B. Phillips).

b. Sincere people sometimes end up angry at God because they have unrealistic expectations about life in a fallen, broken world. There is no easy way through this life.

1. And God's primary goal is not to make this life the highlight of your existence. He often puts off short term blessing (ending your problem now) for long term eternal results—like the Philippian jailer coming to faith in Christ through Paul's imprisonment.

2. When you learn that all pain and loss is temporary and all injustices will be made right, it helps you be content right now. When we learn to respond to hard times with thanksgiving and praise, when we remember and acknowledge God in the hard times, it makes the journey easier.

c. Paul warned Timothy to beware of those for whom religion is just a way to get rich (or to make this life the highlight of existence). In this context Paul wrote Godliness with contentment is great gain.

1. I Tim 6:6—We have a "profit" that is greater than theirs—our holy awe of God! To have merely our necessities is enough (TPT).

2. I Tim 6:8-9—We brought nothing with us into this world and take nothing with us when we die.

Be content with food and clothing—the necessities of life. Recognizing what you do have right now, and being grateful for it, brings contentment that helps moderate the discontent.

C. If we're content with our circumstances does that mean we have to like them? Is it wrong to say: I don't like this or I'm not happy with my circumstances? Is that complaining (expressing discontent)?

1. It is normal to be unhappy with many aspects life in a fallen world where we often find ourselves in difficult, even painful circumstances that we don't like. It's not wrong to admit our discontent.
 - a. But we must learn how to live with the realities of life in a fallen world in a godly way. We must learn to live with a dissatisfied satisfaction. Phil 1:21-24
 - b. We don't have to pretend we're happy about or like our circumstances. But we must understand some things about fallen human nature. When we are in distress, far too many of us recount the problem over and over, along with how we feel, and what we think about it.
 1. This response doesn't change our situation. It makes us feel worse, undermines confidence in God, and even fuels anger at Him.
 - A. We all have a tendency to obsess. To obsess means to preoccupy intensely or abnormally. It becomes our focus, at the top of our thoughts. It seems normal and appropriate to us.
 - B. When you go over and over something that hurts, worries, frightens, or angers you, it feeds and intensifies those emotions. Then we further feed the process by talking to ourselves about it. That's what meditation is—good or bad.
 2. For most of us, the majority of our self talk is about the problem—what could happen; what should happen; what I should have said or done; what they did or said.
2. We all have a legitimate need to talk about problems and have someone assure us that it's going to okay. That's part of life in a fallen world. But you must be honest about what you say. Is your talk moving you toward a solution or are you simply going over and over the problem?
 - a. We all long for someone to sympathize with us and tell us it will be okay. It can be helpful to get feedback and input from someone.
 1. But we must learn to talk about it in terms of reality as it truly is: God with us and for us. Nothing can come against us bigger than Him. He will get us through until He gets us out.
 2. The antidote for expressing constant discontent is thanksgiving and praise—expressing gratefulness to God. There's always something to be grateful for in every situation—the good that God has done, is doing, and will do—the good that He can bring out of bad.
 - b. You get control of yourself (your mind and your emotions) through your mouth. We must learn to continually acknowledge God—when we don't feel like it, and it seems ridiculous.
3. II Kings 4—Are you familiar with Elisha the prophet and the Shunemite woman? She was kind to the man and in return, in the name of the Lord, he promised her a son. The child was born, but after a few years, died unexpectedly. Why? Because that's life in a fallen world.
 - a. She went to see the man of God. When her husband asked why, she answered: It is well (v23). When Elisha's servant asked if everything was okay, she responded: It is well (v26).
 - b. According to sight and feeling, nothing was well. But the woman kept her focus, her attention on the Lord by acknowledging Him. Her statement about her situation was: it is well, or it's all good.
 1. Well is translated from the Hebrew word *shalom* which means peace. It comes from a word that means to be safe, to be completed, uninjured in mind or body.
 2. She got her boy back in this life. Even if she had not, she would have been reunited with him in the life to come. There is no such thing as an irreversible, impossible situation for those who know God. Therefore, we can be content. No matter what happens, it's all good.

D. Conclusion: Too many of us look to our circumstances to give us contentment. That rarely happens in a fallen world. When you learn to get your contentment from the fact that God is with you and for you and the best is yet to come, it gives you peace of mind. Learn to live with dissatisfied satisfaction. More next week!