



## TEEN TREE OF LIFE

### The Secret of Contentment

Part 2

October 24, 2021

**Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."***

We're continuing to look at an interesting and important doctrine: The Secret of Contentment. The specific contentment we're studying is how to feel self-satisfied and in control of yourself regardless of your circumstances, while still enduring the emotions which often accompany adversity and suffering. The idea here is that as human beings, we'll always feel anger, sadness, and fear during difficult times, but we should still feel an underlying sense of contentment. A vital part of this doctrine is that we should never forget that it's impossible for those who are apart from Christ – and very difficult for those who are not mature in Christ – to experience this type of contentment. So, the only way we'll achieve this is to study and apply God's Word and remain in His Plan for our lives.

The apostle Paul wrote about how he learned to be content and self-satisfied in all circumstances. He learned to be content whether suffering adversity or prosperity, whether hungry or full, or whether he was in need or had an abundance. Paul also learned to be in control of his emotions. He got to a point at which he was no longer bound by circumstances like a puppet being manipulated by what was occurring around him, or even directly to him. He didn't need any changes to occur in order to fulfill the purposes of his life. Paul had learned the secret of no longer being someone who reacted to his environment based on what was going on around him.

Let's look at what Paul wrote in **EPH 2:1-10 (New American Standard Bible): *And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that***

***is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.***

If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then you are dead in your trespasses and sin. That means that you are separated from God, and you are living in sin. A person may have spiritual feelings of one sort or another, but if you have not been made alive together with Christ, if you have not been saved by God's Grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ, then you are, in reality, spiritually dead. You do not have a personal relationship with God. Your spiritual feelings are towards some entity that is posing to you as God. Being spiritually dead, you cannot do what God has commanded, nor can you please Him. Instead, your life is lived according to the cosmic system – Satan's system. And Satan is your god.

Paul explains that prior to being saved, we lived and indulged the "*lusts of the flesh.*" Lust simply means "*strong desire*" and coupled here with flesh, it's referring to what your physical body craves – food, pleasure, and comfort, for example. Aren't these the things that we think bring us contentment? That's why people struggle so much over eating a healthy diet, or why they give in to sexual temptations, or are obsessed with trying to find whatever it is that would make life most comfortable for them. Now, always remember, there's nothing wrong with being comfortable or striving to be healthy. It's the lusting after those things which then leads to that lust becoming the focus of all you do that is the problem.

Paul also mentions indulging the desires of the mind. He's referring to those times when we allow ourselves to have whatever desire comes to mind. We seek to gratify our personal mental appetites. Personal mental appetites include anything that absorbs our mental attention and energy, including becoming famous, or just having a successful career, or all types of entertainment, amusements, etc.

Those who are spiritually dead and who are, therefore, controlled by Satan have no hope of contentment. Of course the desire for contentment is ingrained in us. And because of this, we search and search for a way to try to find it. Satan uses our ingrained desire to find contentment as a way to get us out of God's Plan for our lives. In fact, Satan has devised various world views so that the spiritually dead person can try to make some sense out of his existence and in doing so, attain a fake contentment. But remember, it's FAKE and fleeting. None of the things available to us from the cosmic system can bring about real contentment. All they offer is a temporary substitute to quell our search for it.

Now you may be thinking, "Wait a minute. That may be true, but I'm no longer dead in trespasses and sin. I have been made alive in Christ. I have received His Grace through faith, and His Sacrifice on The Cross for my sins. What does this have to do with me?" Well, while it may be true that you are a Christian, the question persists whether you are truly in God's Plan or not. You may be a new creature with a new nature, but are you living according to this new nature or are you still living in the flesh? Are you following your lusts or God's Commands? Why do you think Paul had to make so many statements calling for Christians to quit acting like they did before they were saved, and to stop living as if they were still spiritually dead? Why do you think he had to keep reminding us to move forward and live in the power of Christ, day by day, moment by moment, as a new creature? Look at what Paul wrote in **ROM 6:1-2 (The Message Bible):** *So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good?*

**The Message Bible** presents a variety of very cool answers to the questions posed in **ROM 6:12** (above) in **COL 3:1-8:** *So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ. And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That's a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It's because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn't long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it's all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.* And do you see the connection between these verses and what Paul wrote about back in **EPH 2:1-10**? Here, he tells us to kill off everything connected to the indulgences in the desires of our mind which were part of our lives outside God's Plan. He provides a cut and dried answer!

The problem we face as Christians is that we slip back too easily into old habits and pre-Salvation ways of thinking, or we succumb to the pressure of society to get us to take on their opinions and practices. This is why Paul's words ring to true in **ROM 12:2 (New International Reader's Version)** when he writes: *Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.*

{to be continued}