

9. THE NINE AND LAST LESSON WHICH CHRIST TEACHES Those whom he instructs in this art of contentment is the right knowledge of God's providence ...

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. **Matthew 6:25–34** (ESV)

⁵ Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. ⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. ⁸ He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." **Jeremiah 17:5–8** (ESV)

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. **Proverbs 3:5–6** (ESV)

When a believer is convinced that God controls events in this world, how does that help them to be content in their heart?

Three final points:

A. GOD'S ORDINARY COURSE IS THAT HIS PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD SHOULD BE IN AN AFFLICTED CONDITION.

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." **John 16:33** (ESV)

B. USUALLY WHEN GOD INTENDS THE GREATEST MERCY TO ANY OF HIS PEOPLE HE BRINGS THEM INTO THE LOWEST CONDITION.

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. **2 Corinthians 12:9–10** (ESV)

C. IT IS THE WAY OF GOD TO WORK BY CONTRARIES, TO TURN THE GREATEST EVIL INTO THE GREATEST GOOD.

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. **Genesis 50:20** (ESV)

Have you experienced God transforming what was intended for evil into good?