

BE CONTENT!

1 Cor 7:17-23; Phil 4:11

“Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.”

—Augustine

“All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.”

—Blaise Pascal

I. FOR THE CORINTHIANS

- A. Heed your call (including the place assigned you by birth, country, etc.)
- B. Religious:
 - 1. Circumcised or not, Jew or Gentile, accept your situation
 - 2. Above all, keep commandments
- C. Vocational
 - 1. Embrace employment, doing good work (even as servants)
 - 2. Paul tolerated slavery (and Jesus refrained from addressing it)—some notes regarding Christians and slavery, given the reality of human nature and history
 - a. Pervasive—Chinese & Incas, Egyptians & Africans, American Indian tribes & Islamic states; Greco-Roman world, early & late, accepted it as the way the economic world works
 - b. OT tension: Exodus theme recurrent, yet provisions made for “bond-slaves”
 - c. NT allows it, but (as evident in Philemon) the tendency is towards freedom
 - d. Medieval Christendom evolves feudalism with considerable social mobility, so that slavery largely eliminated by 1000 A.D.
 - e. African slavery emerges as colonies established in the Americas
 - f. Industrial Revolution provides machines doing labor earlier done by slaves
 - g. Revolutions proclaim freedom—and Christians begin condemning slavery (e.g. Woodman & Wilberforce, along with political revolutions, transform world & slavery largely ends
 - h. American Civil War, Russia frees serfs. Brazil abolishes slavery.

II. FOR US.

- A. Discerning calling/vocation
 - 1. Inner conviction: sustained awareness of given calling/vocation—often what “your hand turns to”
 - 2. Others’ evaluation: elders/district boards, affirm gifts; employers discern skills
 - 3. Effective when given opportunity: if preaching, church planting, visible success; if craftsman, work valued; if financial advisor, goals attained
- B. Religious roots respected—avoid incessant “church-hopping”?
 - 1. Denominational heritage valued? Traditions merit respect
 - 2. Orthodox teaching essential?
- C. Social position
 - 1. Birth place—primogeniture widely followed in earlier eras
 - 2. Family standing—wealth, education

III. HAPPINESS/CONTENTMENT ATTAINED (not accidentally bestowed)

- A. Given our status as *Imago Dei*—mind and free will & need expression—deficient routes ever-evident—(hedonism; materialism; fame)
- B. Given our ingrained natural hunger—happiness our end
- C. Jesus’ recipe: beatitudes—blessed when following Him
- D. Character development secures happiness—virtue ethics a strong Christian stance
- E. Virtue ethics (outlined by Aristotle, fused with biblical views by Aquinas)
 - 1. Intellectual virtues
 - 2. Moral virtues
 - 3. Satisfaction/contentment when attain goodness for which we’re designed
- F. Gifts of the Spirit listed in Isaiah 11:2
 - 1. Thinking right—wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, fear of the Lord
 - 2. Doing good—might/strength/fortitude; piety/following commandments