

# Exodus Chapter 20 v 17

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      come to worship him and to praise him and remind ourselves of who he is. And Psalm 27 verse 1 says this, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? I wonder what is it that you're afraid of? Have you come here this morning with certain fears? Fears for the future, fears for the week ahead, fears for your job, your health, your family, your finance. Well for those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ we're told that we do not need to be afraid. If God is our light, if he's our salvation, if he's our stronghold then we've got nothing to fear. We're in safe hands, we're in the hands of the Lord and he is our hope.

And our first hymn encourages us to lift our voices, to worship and to praise God for who he is to us. 625, O my soul arise and bless your maker for he is your master and your friend. 625, let's stand as we sing.

725, let's stand as we sing. 725, let's stand as we sing.

725, let's stand as we sing. 725, let's stand as we sing.

725, let's stand as we sing. 725, let's stand as we sing.

[ 2 : 0 3 ]      Let's come to God in prayer together. Let us pray. We thank you again this morning, O Lord our God, that you are indeed our light and our salvation, our refuge and our strength. We thank you that you are indeed all that we ever need, for you are everything and everything that exists has come from you. You are the God who creates and makes. You're the God who provides and gives. You are the generous open-handed God and open-hearted God and we thank you that this morning we are here because we have all received from your gracious and loving care. Every single one of us this morning has been given breath that we might breathe.

You are the one who has caused our heart to continue to beat and pump the blood around our bodies. You're the one who's given us the strength to be able to get out of our beds and make our way here to meet together with your people and worship you. Though wherever we go you are, whether we are in our bed, whether we are in our home, whether we are on the road, whether we are at work, Lord we cannot escape you. We cannot get away from you nor would we want to for Lord it's our great joy and delight to know that you are with us and have promised never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. We ask again oh Lord that even this morning as we gather that we might be especially aware of your Holy Spirit amongst us. We might be especially aware that you are here to meet with us and to deal with us, to speak to us, to minister to us, to help us, to guide us, to direct us. Lord we thank you that whatever our particular concern or need this morning is, you are the one, you are the one alone that we should talk to, you are the one alone that we should look to, for you are the one alone who has the truth and the life and the power. And so we pray that indeed in this time we might know you speaking and that Lord we might leave this place being able said we have met with the living God, how good it is, that we might be able to leave our fears behind and our concerns, our anxieties, that we might again have our faith strengthened, renewed, revived, that again oh Lord we may walk by faith in the living God who does all things well. So Lord receive our worship, receive our praise, receive our thanks and help us oh Lord again to give you the glory and the honor and the worship you deserve for we ask these things in and through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

1 Timothy and chapter 6 and if you've got one of the red, one of the red church Bibles like this one then it's on page 1195, page 1195, 1 Timothy, sorry 1194, beg your pardon, 1194, 1 Timothy chapter 6.

And we're going to read from verse 1 through to verse 16. In fact no we'll read the whole chapter, we'll read the whole chapter together, that would be good. 1 Timothy chapter 6 and beginning at verse 1, here is God's faithful word.

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers.

[ 5 : 44 ] Instead they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves. These are the things that you are to teach and insist on.

If anyone teaches otherwise, does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.

They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind who've been robbed of the truth and do think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[ 6 : 55 ] Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.

I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time. God the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

To him be honor and might forever. Amen. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

God command them to be good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and be willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

[ 8 : 37 ] Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed, in so doing have departed from the faith.

Grace be with you all. And we thank God for his very relevant word for us today. We're going to be looking at 1 Timothy 6 a little later on, in a few moments, but our thoughts particularly are to the 10th commandment.

I know that with the children, if you're a visitor, then you'll wonder what's going on, but the children we did the 9th, because we're a week behind with the children, but with the rest of us, we've been looking at the 10 commandments as we go through Exodus.

And here is the 10th commandment, as recorded in Exodus 20, verse 17. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

A little story to begin with. Shepherd had some sheep, and he used to move them from field to field. He had a few fields up on the hills to give them fresh pasture.

[ 9 : 58 ] Just adjacent to his fields was a fenced-off area used as a football pitch by the local team. That football pitch always looked pristine.

It always looked well tended. And one of the sheep couldn't help but notice how the grass on that side of the fence was so wonderfully green.

In fact, greener, brighter, more lustrous than the grass that was in the field where she would be grazing. And that sheep used to moan and complain and say, it's not fair.

Why can't we go onto that field? The other side of the fence, the grass is so much nicer there and looks much more lush. And so in the end, this discontented sheep hatched a plan, decided that as soon as the shepherd was distracted, usually when he was moving the sheep through to the next field, she would make a bolt for the football pitch, this patch of grass, and she would leap onto that wonderful, lush patch of grass and eat as much as she could before the shepherd came and dragged her back.

That's just what she did. The next day, when the shepherd wasn't looking, she ran towards the fence, found a small enough gap that she could squeeze through, leapt onto the pitch, and it looked even greener then from a distance.

[ 11 : 21 ] It looked so lovely. She took a huge bite of the astroturf that covered the ground. The motto of the story is this, the grass may be always greener on the other side of the fence, but that doesn't mean it's edible.

It's because we are like sheep, and God often speaks of us as being like sheep in the scriptures, that God has given us that tenth commandment, you shall not covet. The Hebrew word, simply translated, means you shall not eagerly desire to want something, and in that sense, it's a neutral thing, to want something.

It's not neither good nor bad to want or to desire certain things. We have natural desires which God has placed within us, natural appetites, so we want food, and we want drink, and we want warmth, and we want love, shelter, and so on.

These are natural desires. In fact, even in the Bible, we're told at times that we should eagerly desire certain things. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes that we are to eagerly desire the greater gifts, the greater gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So why does God include and conclude his commandments with this commandment, you shall not covet? After all, if coveting is simply a strong desire, a longing, or a wanting of something, it's a matter of the inward.

[ 12 : 47 ] It's not a matter of the hand like murder. It's not a matter of the body like adultery, or disobedience, and so on. Surely, it can't hurt anyone. Surely, it's not like the other sins that God forbids.

But I would put to you that actually, this commandment is by far the most important of the list, and for that reason that God has put it at the end. It's so important because if we don't get this commandment right, then we shall fall down in every single one of the other commandments as well.

Think about it. Think about the obvious fact that every sin begins with the heart. Every sin begins with a covetous desire for something that we do not have.

nobody commits adultery without first coveting another, or desiring another lover. No one steals from their neighbor unless they are covetous of that other person's property.

No one murders another unless in their heart they have first hated that person, and so on. A child wants to have their own authority rather than their parents.

[ 14 : 01 ] They covet that. Of course, this commandment goes much further even than the extension that God gives to it about servants and possessions and so on because it's not just the coveting of things that is the problem, isn't it?

In all honesty, our covetousness extends to people's gifts and abilities. We covet their intellect or we covet their skill. We particularly covet those things which earn for them popularity or fame or praise or honor.

We covet their looks. We covet their hair. We covet their whatever it may be. This is not just a problem within the world.

We know it's a problem for ourselves. It's a problem also for those who are in Christian service. A common temptation amongst pastors is to covet another minister's preaching ability or another minister's congregation or apparent success in seeing people converted.

I would ask you to pray for me in this matter because it is a sinful temptation that all ministers face. And this commandment is not just about those previous five about how we relate to people.

[ 15 : 22 ] This commandment also has a bearing upon our relationship to the Lord our God. Remember the very greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.

To love God and want God before anything else. You shall have no other gods before me is the first commandment. But if we covet a particular possession a thing a car a house if we covet another person someone else's husband then ultimately we are breaking this commandment because we are putting that person or that thing before the Lord our God.

It's becoming an idol to us ultimately. We worship it before the Lord. We spend more time and energy that we might have that thing that we might earn that particular rise or promotion.

So we place an idol before the Lord our God. And don't we in so doing very really cheapen and lessen the honour that belongs to God and to His name?

And don't we work harder and more unceasingly to have that thing so ultimately we break the principle of the Sabbath day because we do not give ourselves rest because we must have that which we covet so much.

[ 16 : 41 ] So I hope you see that this commandment far from being though it is the last is by far from being the least to something that we struggle with every single one of us we desire something more than we have whatever it may be as I say not just material not just monetary but it may be very personal to us even the Apostle Paul confessed he had the problem with coveting in Romans 7 he says there's sin in me produced in me every kind of coveting we see something on the TV and we want it we see someone's popularity we desire it and so on covetousness is a very curse of our society in fact the problem is that it is encouraged it is enforceably encouraged it is acceptable to covet in fact many people would say the only right action the right responsibility of a person living in material world is to want more the national lottery that we have exists only because of covetousness so does every other form of gambling the modern translation we might say of the word covetousness is greed credit cards loans mainly taken out because we covet something we do not have every burglary every robbery every mugging every theft would cease if it wasn't for covetousness so too would every act of sexual immorality likewise stop if it was not for covetousness covetousness is what makes society miserable it steals our joy from daily living and it creates a permanent feeling of frustration a permanent discontent which permeates every sphere of society from the houses of parliament down to the very school playground covetousness is everywhere and its curse is on everyone so we see again why God gave this commandment

God gave this commandment out of his great love for his creation his great love for us he doesn't give his commandments to bind us but he gives his commandments to free us he doesn't give his commandments to rob us of joy but to actually give to us the most glorious the most sought after the most ungraspable thing contentment contentment that's what the commandment is that we might be content in heart and in life not that we might be frustrated so again as we've seen all the way through in the other commandments this commandment teaches us of the very nature of God God is in himself supremely happy God in himself is supremely happy he doesn't covet anything doesn't long for strive for desire with an ache in his heart anything at all for everything that exists he has created and therefore belongs to him but more than that he is not like us who is frustrated at being able to have what he wants he is perfectly content for everything is working out according to his will and purpose the psalmist in Psalm 115 says this our God is in heaven he does whatever pleases him the foolish picture of God being someone who wrings his hands in grief and sorrow because the world is in such a terrible state is far from the scripture yes God hates iniquity and he hates sin but God is pleased

God is content God is satisfied in all that he is that lovely phrase that we have here in 1 Timothy chapter 6 God the blessed blessed well we know what the word blessed means doesn't it mean because we're told when we look at the blessed is he the peacemaker the beatitudes it means happy content fulfilled satisfied God the fulfilled the satisfied the happy so much so that we're told there back in verse 17 that God is the God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment when have you heard that have you read that lately provides everything for our enjoyment this is the God that we worship the happy in the truest sense of the word blessed content satisfied God and so when we look at the life of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the very personification of God the very personification of God's character the very outliving of God we see again that he is someone who kept this commandment he never coveted he never wanted we're told that he had nowhere to lay his head but he never moaned about it or complained about it he never was frustrated in that sense in fact rather we find that our Lord

Jesus Christ kept this commandment because in his life he always put his love of God first and his service of God first there's that incredible passage in Philippians chapter 2 which expresses his attitude verse 6 who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage rather he made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being found in human likeness being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself but becoming obedient to death even death on the cross his first purpose and desire of his life was to please the father wasn't to please himself wasn't to get things for himself or accrue honor for himself when we find him at the garden of Gethsemane not my will but yours be done our Lord Jesus was content even to lay aside what he had as we read there the riches he himself was God and all things were his and yet he laid them aside 2 Corinthians tells us of our

Lord Jesus Christ though he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor that through his poverty we might be made rich the very life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one which was free from covetousness free from dissatisfaction and discontent but of course wonderfully and this is where we see as we come to God's word again and again and have seen in every one of these commandments the Lord Jesus Christ keeps this commandment by enabling us to find the fulfillment of this commandment for every commandment has that negative aspect which projects the positive so negative is thou shall not covet but what God is saying is this you shall be content you shall be happy you shall be satisfied that's the very purpose of God's word and his law that's the very purpose that God created us that's the very purpose that Christ came he came for that one reason to give to us what was what was robbed from us by sin and selfishness and greed he came to give us peace in every sphere and in every way

[ 24 : 31 ] Jesus himself declares that he came that he might satisfy our deepest longing and desires with his grace in John chapter 3 sorry John chapter 6 verse 35 he says whoever comes to me will never go hungry whoever believes in me will never be thirsty and he's not talking simply about those physical elements those physical desires he means in every sense the thirst for power the hunger for love the craving for acceptance everyone craves everyone covets material things earthly things and the reason why we covet the reason why we seek after things the reason why our society and our world is taken up with covetousness of wanting more and more and more and more and never satisfied is because the great emptiness of the soul it is only when we have the spiritual nourishment and fulfillment of what it means to be a child of God that those cravings fall away and those cravings that are satisfied are not like God sticking a nicotine patch on our arm to overcome the cravings of nicotine and cigarettes no what happens is this that

God by his grace and by his spirit puts within us a new heart a heart which no longer is thirsty and hungry but a heart that is filled the curse of sin that came into the world is the curse of never being content think of that in the lives of Adam and Eve when they saw the tree they had all the garden Genesis tells us all God's good gifts there was just one thing and because they couldn't have it they wanted it sin came into the world and dear friends how many people's lives have been blighted by wanting that one thing they could not have how many people here perhaps even this morning are people who are dissatisfied and discontent because there's one thing that they wish that they had but they've never had it and all their life has been all their life has been spoiled all the good things have been have been ruined simply because they do not have that one thing if only I had that then my life would be complete but that's been the journey of your life throughout the whole of your life it's just gone from wanting one thing to another if only I could have that relationship with that person then my life would be content and for a moment or two it seems to be happy but then well I need something else that isn't enough I need that house because I need that to make me content and then he managed to get that and then

I need that car and he managed to get that but you're just going from step to step from discontentedness to discontentedness to one degree of emptiness to another filling up the void which can only be filled with the living God with those things which always dissatisfy when our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world he came to bring to us the spiritual blessings that we yearn for and long for the spiritual blessings that we try to as it were compensate for with the sawdust and the rubbish of the world's possessions but can never know till we feast on the abundance of God's grace so how do we live as contented people in this materialistic age how do we as believers live in such a way notice and I'll draw your attention then to 1 Timothy 6 which is why we read there verse 6 is an incredible verse and it leads on to very helpful teaching about how we can be contented people notice that godliness with contentment is great gain godliness with contentment is great gain they are they are two sides of the same coin they belong together if you have godliness then you will have contentment and if you have contentment it's only because you've got godliness you cannot have contentment without godliness but this is what most people seek for they must operate together and they must go in that order it must first be godliness and what is godliness ultimately simply put godliness is seeking the mind and the will of god it's putting god first it's living a life which says god i want to live for you in putting him first in living for him rather than self we find that contentment follows when we live for self when we live for those things which we hope will make us content then we never ever find it this is the lie that the world in which we live is constantly told if you have money if you have possessions if you have power if you have influence if you have popularity if you have fame if you have celebrity status if you if you if you then you will be much happier and people take that hook with its bait right the way down and sinker and they are never never satisfied discontentment makes rich men poor while contentment makes poor men rich how do we do this how do we how do we seek to be content how can we learn the art of contentment paul says i've learned to be content a man who knew what it was to go naked and hungry shipwrecked and beaten a man who knew what it was to suffer all sorts of loss to have nothing not a not a shilling as it were to his name but a man who was content how do we learn it well we have some help here in these verses that continue from verse seven first of all contentment begins with looking at the world around us as passing and temporary for we brought nothing into the world verse seven and we can take nothing out of it it's the reality isn't it no matter how how rich your parents were when you were born you were born naked with nothing and when you die there's nothing you can take with you the pharaohs filled their tombs with all sorts of gold and even servants and incredible treasures but they didn't take it with them their bodies and their treasures stayed where they were see everything in this world is temporary everything that you have and i have is only for a time we've only got it on loan while we're here and most of the time it's only for for a while while we actually are here as well think about the brand new car that you bought five or six years ago

well it's now beginning to not be quite as good as it was it's eventually in a few years time we'll be on the scrappy you've got it for a little while even the blessing of health that we have as we get older we begin to lose that can't do the things we once did we haven't got the strength we once had everything filters away but if we fix our eyes on our maker the eternal god we find contentment because we always have him hebrews 13 never will i leave you never will i forsake you when we come into the relationship with the living god what does god do does he just give us various bits and pieces does he give us the extras that we need no he gives himself that's the wonder of christ coming into the world god so loved the world he gave his own one and only son he gave himself god gives himself to us and everything that he is becomes everything that he has becomes ours everything that is god's is yours and to never lose the thing that wants and only satisfies we read that verse there to put their hope in god who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment what is everything for our enjoyment it is not every rich every material thing every physical need met it means we find enjoyment in him he is our delight he is our treasure he is our joy he is the one that puts a smile on our face he's the one that makes every day worth getting out of bed for augustine that wonderful christian from the fourth century or so he says he wrote this speaking of god you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you let me ask you what have you been living for so far in your life what is it that you have been striving for working for to be a good provider for your family that that's that's noble to to be a good parent to your children those things are good to provide for them and so on to do well in business and to work and to give yourself to quality and so on these things are all good but dear friends they're all passing children grow up and leave the home you retire and you finish your work there's only one thing that ultimately is worth living for it's worth living for with all your heart and soul and strength it is the lord your god secondly we see that contentment comes not only by seeing what we have is temporary in the world and permanent in christ but seeing also by looking at what we already do have verse 8 if we have food and clothing we will be content with that you see we can be so preoccupied at looking what others have that we fail to see what we have the abundance that we have and that's particularly true of us here in this congregation in whitby in 2017 in the uk every one of us has had a bed to sleep in every one of us has got clothes to wear every one of us has had something to eat and will have something to eat later on today every single one of us has got more and more than we could possibly want or need or use living by faith in the lord our god means trusting him to provide for every need at the right time in the right way in fact this commandment is really the epitome of what it means to live for christ it means having faith in god why haven't you got that new car that you so long for well god doesn't want you to have it

why is it that the things that we seek and strive for and long for actually we do not get because more often than not if we were to have those things they would have a bad effect upon us a detrimental effect upon us we are to be those who are content in god in his provision as we've read and let me keep pressing that on god who richly provides for us everything for our enjoyment could it be that actually the reason that you aren't enjoying the things that you have is because actually they're not the things that are meant to bring you joy the things that are meant to bring you joy are the things that you've neglected and the things that you think will bring you joy are the things you concentrate on but they let you down and thirdly as well we see surely contentedness we grow in contentedness when we look at the mess that greed makes of other people's lives those verse 9 those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs how many examples do we need around about us that are thrust upon us by the media and society to see that men and women who seek to after and covet after and run after these things are miserable with a trail of broken marriages behind them with a trail of suicides behind them what more do we need to see that when you seek after these things you are never going to be satisfied is there ever a greedy man who is satisfied and who says no that's fine



[ 37:13 ] I've got enough money I don't need any more no there isn't they don't exist because the very purpose of their lives is to accumulate wealth the sad truth even for believers even for Christians who've not learnt the lesson of contentment who've been sucked in to the lie of this world even as Christians Paul says there are those who've wandered from the faith they've lost the riches and the joy of Christ because they've concentrated on the things that the world exalts and they've lost themselves and those have pierced themselves with many griefs I want to close by asking you to turn with me to Proverbs and chapter 30 we learn contentment by seeing that that everything around about us the material things are just for a while but what we have in Christ and in God is eternal we learn contentment by thanking God and rejoicing in and delighting in what God has given us and we learn contentment by looking at the mess that greed has made to other people's lives we learn those lessons

Proverbs 30 it's page 667 if you find verse 7 there's a prayer here of this man Agur his name is Agur son of Jehka we don't know much about him but he is the author of this penultimate chapter and he's got this wonderful prayer in verse 7 two things I ask of you Lord do not refuse me before I die keep falsehood and lies far from me well that's the commandment previous isn't it that we looked at the children give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord or I may become poor and still so dishonor the name of my God wonder if you're able to pray that prayer do not give me too much Lord and do not give me too little just give me the right amount and trust the Lord that he hears that prayer and answers that prayer let's do that even now let's spend a few moments in quiet prayer before the Lord and respond to his word as he's spoken to us our loving father in heaven we bring to you those wrong desires of our hearts those things that we've coveted perhaps for many many years we've just thought them as being harmless maybe but when we think about it so often our lives have been driven by them our joy has been spoiled by the lack of them and we have found ourselves so often thinking of them rather than thinking of you we've even held you to account and thought of you as a unloving heavenly father because you haven't given those things that we want we've judged you wrongly Lord because we thought that you've withheld them because you do not love us or care for us but you've withheld them for our good because you always give us Lord those good gifts and everything that we need for enjoyment

Lord we pray that you would help us to find our joy in you our pleasure our delight in you just as you find joy and delight and pleasure in yourself help us to Lord find and delve into and delight in the riches of your grace to us in Jesus how could we possibly want more than the love of God how could we possibly want more than the very nearness the friendship that the the the care of the living God how could we want more than all that you've promised and held out to us in the Lord Jesus life now and abundant of life to come oh Lord help us in this materialistic world in this covetous world help us not to be drawn in to follow the crowd like sheep help us oh Lord we pray to rejoice in you and thank you for all that you've given us make us Lord not only grateful grateful but generous as well and that we might give and share of the riches you've poured into our lives we ask these things in the name of your dear son the Lord Jesus who came for that very purpose that we might have life and have it abundantly amen be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus

Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ for he chose us in him before the creation of the world be holy and blameless in his sight in love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves amen God bless you whom