

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Why Contentment Stems from a Thankful Heart

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### In Everything, Give Thanks

We read in [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#), “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” And this is linked to the next verse, verse 19: “Quench not the Spirit.” Surely one thing is clear. God says to us: in *everything* give thanks.

I think we can see all this in its proper perspective if we go back to [Romans 1:21](#)—“because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” This is the central point: they were not thankful. Instead of giving thanks they “became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. The beginning of men’s rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart. They did not have proper, thankful hearts—seeing themselves as creatures before the Creator and being bowed not only on their knees, but in their stubborn hearts. The rebellion is a deliberate refusal to be the creature before the Creator, to the extent of being thankful. Love must carry with it a “thank you,” not in a superficial or “official” way, but in being thankful and saying, in the mind or with the voice, “thank you” to God. As we shall see in more detail later, this is not to be confused with failing to

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stand against what is cruel in the world as it now is, but it does mean having a thankful heart toward the God who is there.

## Personal Universe

Two things are immediately involved here, if we are to see this in the Christian framework rather than in a non-Christian one. The first is that as Christians we say we live in a *personal universe* in the sense that it was created by a personal God. Now that we have accepted Christ as our Savior, God the Father is our Father. When we say we live in a *personal universe* and God the Father is our Father, to the extent that we have less than a trusting attitude toward Him we are denying what we say we believe. We say that as Christians we have by choice taken the place of creatures before the Creator, but as we show a lack of trust in Him we are exhibiting that *at that moment*, in practice, we have not really so chosen.

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## Christian Understanding of Contentment

The second thing we must comprehend in order to understand a contented heart in the Christian framework as against a non-Christian one is illustrated by Camus's dilemma in *The Plague*. As Christians, we say we live in a *supernatural universe* and that there is a battle, since the Fall of man, and that this battle is in both the seen world and the unseen world. This is what we say we believe. We insist on this against the naturalists, and against the antisuper-naturalists. If we really believe this, first we can be contented before God and yet fight evil, and second surely it is God's right to put us as Christians where He judges best in the battle.

In a Christian understanding of contentment, we must see contentment in relation to these things. To summarize, there is a *personal* God. He is my Father since I have accepted Christ as my Savior. Then surely when I do not *trust* Him, I am denying what I say I believe. At the same time, I say there is a battle in the universe, and God *is* God. Then, if I lack trust in Him, *what I am really doing is denying in practice that He has a right, as my God, to use me where He wants in the spiritual battle which exists in the seen and the unseen world.* The trust and contentment must be in the Christian framework, but in the proper framework the contentment is deeply important.

If the contentment goes and the giving of thanks goes, we are not loving God as we should, and proper desire has become coveting against God. There is proper desire, and there is proper rejection of the results of a fallen, abnormal world; but when I can no

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longer say thank you in the midst of the battle, I have forgotten that God is God and that He is my God, and I am coveting against His proper place as God. I am to be willing for my place in the battle. This inward area is the first place of loss of true spirituality. The outward is always just a result of it.

## Love Enough Not to Envy

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The second test as to when proper desire becomes coveting is that we should love men enough not to envy; and this is not only envy for money, it is for everything. It can, for instance, be envy of his spiritual gifts. There is a simple test for this. Natural desires have become coveting against a fellow creature, one of our kind, a fellow man, when we have a mentality that would give us secret satisfaction at his misfortune. If a man has something, and he loses it, do we have inward pleasure, a secret satisfaction at his loss? Do not speak too quickly and say it is never so, because you will make yourself a liar. We must all admit that even when we get on in our Christian life, even in these areas where we say we are longing for the church of Jesus Christ to be more alive in our generation, often we have this awful secret satisfaction at the loss of other men, even at the loss of brothers in Christ. Now if this mentality is upon me, in any way, then my natural desires have become coveting. I am inwardly coveting, and I am not loving men as I should.

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*The beginning of men's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart.*

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Inward coveting—lack of love toward men—soon tends to spill over into the external world. It cannot be kept in the internal world completely. This occurs in various degrees. When I have a wrong regret that others have what I do not possess, and this regret is allowed to grow, very quickly it comes to make me dislike the person himself. Surely we all have felt this. As the Holy Spirit makes us increasingly honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that often we have a dislike of a person because we have had wrong desires toward something of his. More than this, if I would be happy if he were to lose something, the next step in the external world is moving either subtly or more openly to cause him to have the loss, either in lying about him, stealing from him, or whatever it may be.

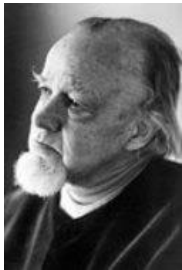
In [1 Corinthians 10:23–24](#) I am told that my longing in love should be to seek for the other man's good and not just my own: “. . . All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own good, but *that of his neighbor.*” And the same is true in [1](#)

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[Corinthians 13:4-5](#): “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not *its* own. . . .” When we read these things and understand that failure in these areas is really coveting, a lack of love, every one of us must be upon his knees as Paul was upon his knees when he saw the commandment not to covet; it destroys any superficial view of the Christian life.

This article is adapted from *True Spirituality* by Francis A. Schaeffer.

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Francis A. Schaeffer (1912–1984) authored more than twenty books, which have been translated into several languages and have sold millions globally. He and his wife, Edith, founded the L’Abri Fellowship international study and discipleship centers. Recognized internationally for his work in Christianity and culture, Schaeffer passed away in 1984 but his influence and legacy continue worldwide.

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