

The Problem of Satisfaction

PART 2

The Meaning of Satisfaction

II Corinthians 12:7-9 *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.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 about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* ^(NIV)

SUMMARY REVIEW

- Obtaining satisfaction is a fundamental frustration of the human experience. Any attainment is temporal and illusory. Even when people think themselves satisfied, problems bring them to reality.
- Many Christians experience the same frustration as the world in perpetually seeking satisfaction.
- A fundamental principle is that man cannot achieve lasting satisfaction. Eternal satisfaction is a gift.
- 2 Corinthians teaches us that the Christian life is a life of paradox.
 - *To work humility in the Apostle, the messenger of Satan was a necessary accompaniment to Paul's great revelations. There are unforeseen consequences accompanying things we desire.*
 - *God's power in His people requires a stage of human weakness on which to perform. The weapons of our warfare are not humanly impressive for we do not exhibit God's strength with the sword, external coercion or human reason but through the Gospel.*
 - *Paul boasts do not call attention to his accomplishments but the weaknesses in his life that demonstrate the fact that without Christ, he can do nothing.*
- Since we are called to this paradoxical life, satisfaction can never be the same for us as for the world.
- Paul was once perplexed by the fact that the gift of great revelations was accompanied by a messenger of Satan. Paul earnestly sought the Lord for removal of this hindrance.
- The Lord simply replied, "My grace is sufficient for you." All we need is the favor of our God.
- It is objectively true that God's grace is always enough regardless of our personal perceptions.
- Aside from this objective truth, there is a subjective lesson in this passage for God's people.
 - *The word translated "sufficient" also carries the idea of contentment.*
 - *Not only is God's grace enough, we should be content with His grace in every circumstance.*
- While Paul would rather have had the thorn removed he learned that the messenger of Satan was also a gift from God. This hindrance served God's good purpose.
- We should be satisfied with God's good purpose. As John Piper noted, the pain and suffering God ordains for His own teaches them to be more content in Him and to find less satisfaction in the world.

THE BASIS FOR TRUE SATISFACTION

The main theme in our consideration of satisfaction is that God's grace is always enough and, as a result of that truth, we should be content with that grace. Nonetheless, because we are called to a life of paradox, the world will never understand this satisfaction. For the present, our *satisfaction* is a matter of faith. We have been granted a long term perspective based on God's promise and Jesus' redemptive work. God's eternal purpose is the basis for satisfaction in the life of God's people.

The Pervasive Problem of Dissatisfaction

- The lack of genuine, lasting satisfaction is an experience common to fallen humanity.
 - *No matter what one has, something else always seems to promise greater satisfaction.*
 - *No matter how good things appear, we can always imagine ways to make things better.*
 - *Human beings often long for what others have without realizing that they are the object of envy.*
- From the perspective of fallen humanity, no matter what a person has, it is never enough.

The Definition of Satisfaction

A proper understanding of the problem of satisfaction requires a defining of terms. The Scripture does not have many instances of the word “satisfaction.”

The Basic Meaning

- The root meaning of the word group for “satisfy” has two basic meanings.
 - 1) *Filling the belly with food to satisfy hunger.*
 - 2) *The satiation of thirst.*
- Extended metaphorical uses include the gratification of physical intimacy, God’s goodness and mercy, and the satisfaction of divine justice in the atonement.
- From the basic meaning of satisfaction several observable features are evident.
 - *Satisfaction is a sensation that is temporal.*
 - *The cycle of hunger and satisfaction teaches us about need.*
 - *The feeling of satisfaction is not the goal of eating but a result of pursuing life.*
 - *Satisfaction is not the aim of one’s pursuit but a reward. Satisfaction is not earned by hungering and thirsting for righteousness. It’s is the reward of pursuing God.*
 - *With satisfaction there is a pronounced distinction between objective reality and subjective experience. One may “have enough” but still not “feel” satisfied.*
 - *Satisfaction is a self-focused concept. Therefore, we will never know true satisfaction by making it our pursuit.*

It’s Never Enough

Any sense of satisfaction one gains in this world never lasts. While this underscores man’s basic need, he seeks the satisfaction of that need by making such gratification his goal. As long as one’s his eyes are selfishly focused on himself, he will never know true satisfaction. Whatever he has will never be enough.

- Fallen man is, by nature, dissatisfied with most everything. He is discontent with his possession, circumstances, and relationships.
- According to Scripture, fallen humanity can never be satisfied (Prov 27:20).
- A full life of various experiences is empty and cannot satisfy (Eccl 1:8).
- Human attainment is empty and cannot satisfy (Eccl 2:10-11).
- Money is empty and cannot satisfy (Eccl 5:10).
- The quest for satisfaction is idolatrous.
- While God intended for His people to know satisfaction, He did not intend for them to make it their pursuit.

Prov 27:20 *Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man.* ^(NIV)

Eccl 1:2-8 *“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”* ³ *What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?... 8 All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* ^(NKJ)

Eccl 2:10-11 *I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.* ^(NIV)

Eccl 5:10 *Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.*