

The Destructive Power of Complacency

Creflo Dollar
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Scripture References

1 Timothy 6:6, 8	Proverbs 10:4, <i>ESV</i>
Philippians 3:12-21	Ephesians 4:18, 19
2 Peter 1:5-10, <i>NLT</i>	Hebrews 10:25
Revelation 3:15, 16	Amos 6:1
Zephaniah 1:12, <i>ESV</i>	Proverbs 29:18
Hebrews 5:11, 12, <i>ESV</i>	Psalms 34:10

Summary

One of the greatest dangers to the forward motion of our Christian walk is when we become complacent. Complacency is a feeling of being satisfied with the way things are, and not wanting to put forth any effort to make them better or to improve ourselves. This differs from contentment, which is being satisfied with where we are in life for the moment, with the knowledge that we are improving ourselves and getting better. Complacency is actually self-satisfaction; this is especially dangerous when accompanied by an unawareness of our own deficiencies. A complacent attitude is a trick from the enemy, designed to keep us from growing and maturing in Christ. If we have this kind of mindset, we are in trouble. However, as long as we continue to push forward in our pursuit of God, we will continue to mature in Him.

A. Complacency hinders our spiritual growth in Christ and traps us in self-satisfaction.

1. Complacency is a feeling of calm satisfaction with our own abilities, or our own situation, that prevents us from trying harder. This is not the same as contentment, which is about being satisfied and at ease while we are improving, getting better, and progressing to the next level.
 - a. But godliness with contentment is great gain...And having food and raiment let us be therewith content (1 Timothy 6:6, 8).
 - b. Complacency means refusing to work to improve.
 - c. Christian contentment is a mindset that, whatever happens, we are satisfied in Jesus. Christian *complacency* means that whatever happens, we are fully self-satisfied with our current personal efforts in pursuing Christ.
2. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who

mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Philippians 3:12-21).

- a. Paul warned the church about complacency. Some Christians have the attitude that they have already attained all there is to attain.
- b. Sometimes we can become complacent and self-satisfied when we look back on our previous successes and achievements. This anchors us to our past.
- c. We cannot possibly think that we have done and experienced everything there is to do and experience; there is always more. We must press toward it.
- d. We are either growing in maturity in the things of God, or growing in complacency; there is no in-between, and we are never just standing still.

B. We fight complacency by pushing forward and not letting our past hold us back.

1. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins. So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away (2 Peter 1:5-10, *NLT*).
 - a. This describes the addition of good qualities; it is what growing and going forward is all about.
 - b. Those who do *not* develop according to this description are complacent.
2. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15, 16).
 - a. God does not like complacency; it is highly distasteful to Him.
 - b. Too many people have become complacent and satisfied with their sins, and are not trying to get better.
 - c. The only thing that can stop God from bringing newer and greater things into our lives is our own complacency.
3. At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, "The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill" (Zephaniah 1:12, *ESV*).
 - a. There are consequences for being complacent.

C. Complacency creeps in when we stop pursuing God and seeking to increase in godliness.

1. About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food (Hebrews 5:11, 12, *ESV*).

- a. "Dull of hearing" is another term for complacency. This prevents the Holy Spirit from adding to what we already know and bringing us greater revelation.
- 2. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich (Proverbs 10:4, ESV).
 - a. A slack hand is a complacent hand. It stops God from working His will in our lives.
- 3. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Ephesians 4:18, 19).
 - a. Complacency results in a blind heart and an inability to see spiritually. Complacent people have stopped pursuing the things of God.

D. A complacent attitude moves us away from God and opens us up to sin. It is dangerous.

- 1. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).
 - a. Complacency leads us down the wrong path in life. It is one of the reasons why Christians forsake assembling together.
 - b. David's pursuit of God kept him from being complacent. He never lost a single battle; focusing only on his past victories could have led him into complacency and stopped him from moving forward.
 - c. Despite his faith, however, David was not perfect. Complacency kept him from joining his men on the battlefield, and caused him to linger on the balcony where he saw Bathsheba.
- 2. There are symptoms of complacency to watch for:
 - a. The satisfaction with things as they are.
 - b. The rejection of things as they might be.
 - c. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! (Amos 6:1).
 - d. Being "at ease in Zion" can be compared to being complacent.
- 3. There are four ways to overcome complacency.
 - a. The first way is to become aware of it.
 - b. The second way is to get a vision of a better future.
 - c. Where there is no vision, the people perish... (Proverbs 29:18).
 - d. The third way is to step out of self-centeredness and make a difference in others' lives. We do that by focusing on how we can be a blessing to others.
 - e. The fourth way is to seek the Lord. We must purposefully pursue the things of God.
 - f. ...But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing (Psalm 34:10).

For more on how a complacent attitude is deadly when it comes to our continued spiritual growth, click on the link below for the DVD, *The Destructive Power of Complacency*.

<https://bit.ly/TheDestructivePowerofComplacencyDVD>

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