

# The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

1 Timothy 6:3-10

In God's household people are contented in Christ rather than cravers of wealth that cannot satisfy.

LTS: Psa. 127

This morning I want to talk with you about a subject that I hope will refresh your soul and perhaps revive your heart in relationship to Christ. The topic to which I am referring is Christian Contentment. Not just contentment, but Christian contentment. Everyone on earth seeks for personal satisfaction. It seems to me that from birth every human know intuitively that we were created for something more than what we have within ourselves. So, we are constantly on the hunt for that which will ultimately satisfy the longings in our souls.

We know from Scripture that God has offered Himself as the satisfier of our souls, but possessing hearts that are stained by sin we go looking for contentment in every conceivable object or activity on earth. Some people look for it in pleasing others. Some look for it in fame, or pleasure, or status, or control. And we understand that all of these things can be bought if we have money enough to get it. Money, therefore, becomes for many the great desire of their souls because with it, it is believed, satisfaction and contentment can be bought and owned. But that's a lie. And it's a lie that from time to time all of us believe

This explains why our garages are full and our attics are stuffed with all kinds of things we don't need. But at some point in the past we thought it would make us happy. It might be that exercise bike you thought would satisfy by magically making you thin. You once thought that new car would make you happy... at least until you made your first payment or forked over hundreds of dollars for that first repair. It may have been that house, or that jewelry, or suit of clothes. But alas, NONE of it has the capacity to bring to satisfaction, true contentment to the soul.

This is Paul's concern in the passage before us. Paul wants us to learn to find true contentment in God, and avoid the disappointment and destruction that come from seeking it in what money can buy.

As always, let's begin by reading the text.

Read 1 Tim. 6:3-10

I see three themes in this text

- I. The Greed of False Godliness (3-5)
- II. The Contentment of True Godliness (6-8)
- III. The Danger of Discontent (9-10)

## I. The Greed of False Godliness (3-5)

1. Now we have already spent significant time talking about the false teachers who were causing problems in Ephesus so I don't want to belabor that subject here. Paul is using them as a foil against which he can demonstrate the difference between false godliness and true godliness. Let's just make a few observations.

- A. Paul infers that these false teachers were teaching things that were contrary to what Jesus had taught and the disciples were repeating. "Words of Christ" means words received from Christ.
- B. Their teaching was also contrary to the gospel. I get that from the word "godliness" which is sometimes used by Paul was shorthand for the gospel. For example, in 1:11, Paul says (read 3:16). Likewise back in chap. 1 we see Paul make a similar warning when he warns about (1:10-11) "whatever is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel."
- C. They teach what is "unhealthy" for believers. In verse 4 he says they are proud, conceited, they don't understand what they are talking about and they have an unhealthy (NAS "morbid") craving. Literally, they have a "sick interest" in controversy. Sick preachers make sick churches. There was something spiritually ill about the men. Their teaching didn't result in "love from a pure heart a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1:5), but in controversy, quarrels, envy, strife, slander, suspicion, and constant friction in the church.
- D. Then (v. 5) Paul gets to the heart of it when he says of these men that they have depraved minds and deprived of the truth. They are depraved and deprived. Contrast that with the term he uses for believing employers (6:2) who are "believers and beloved). And the fruit of their spiritual depravity and deprivation is "they imagine that godliness is a means of gain." In other words, These heretical teachers viewed religion as a means of making a quick dollar. Though they professed a superior godliness, they were greedy and materialistic. They exploited the church for their own profit without the slightest concern for the havoc they were creating in the church.

2. Oh my friend. I am not here to judge another man's ministry, but beware of The Greed of False Godliness.

## II. The Contentment of True Godliness (6-8)

Read 6

1. Notice the contrast: the false teachers operate on the premise that godliness (or acting like a superior kind of Christian) is a means of gain. But true godliness is great gain! In other words, the financial gain that they receive is not to be compared with the great gain that true godliness brings. Why? Because true godliness is when you find and experience the deep abiding

satisfaction that only a vital relationship with God can bring.

2. “Godliness” is a major theme in 1 Tim.

- A. (2:2) Paul exhorts us to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may live... in a godly way.”
- B. (2:10) He says that modesty is fitting for women who profess godliness.
- C. (5:4) Children of a destitute widow should show godliness by taking care of her.
- D. (6:11) Paul tell timothy to pursue godliness.
- E. But the one that parallels most closely to the verse in front of us is (4:7) where Paul tells us to “train ourselves for godliness, “for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also the life to come.” So, whatever true godliness is, it is something that we will do forever in the presence of the Lord; namely, love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength” and enjoy Him forever. That’s what godliness will look like in heaven, so start enjoying it now.

3. The word for “contentment” (6) in classical GK meant to be self-sufficient. In Plato’s teaching, for example, it referred to the state of one who supports himself without aid.”<sup>1</sup> In biblical usage, however, it meant “an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.”<sup>2</sup>

4. Do you see where Paul is leading us? He is making a contrast between coveting with contentment. The last of the 10 commandments is what... “Thou shalt not covet.” In other words, a Christian should not look across the aisle in church and think, I’m sure I would be happy if I had that guy’s wife, and that’s girl’s husband. I would finally be content if I had the car he has, or the house she has, or the job, or lawn, or even the larger ice-cream cone! That’s coveting. The dictionary says to covet is to yearn to possess something one does not have.

5. The word “covetousness” is not in this passage but it’s what this text is about. We might say that Paul’s definition of covetousness is “a desire to desire something so much that you lose your contentment in God.”<sup>3</sup> The opposite of covetousness is contentment in God. And when contentment in God decreases, covetousness for gain increases. That’s explains why Paul said in Col. 3:5 that “covetousness... is idolatry.” It is idolatry because the contentment that a person should be getting from God he tries to get from something else.

6. No wonder Jesus says, “You can’t serve God and money” (Mat. 6:24). He doesn’t say you should not, but that you cannot. Why? Because covetousness is a heart divided between two gods.

7. Think about this. In John chapter six Jesus said (6:35) “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.” In other words, what it means

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<sup>1</sup> BDAG

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 235). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> John Piper, *Future Grace*, (Sisters, Or. Multnomah, 1995), 221

to believe in Jesus is to experience Him as the satisfaction of your heart's hunger and your soul's thirst. Faith in Jesus means being content in all that God is for you in Him.

8. Witness Paul's testimony in Philippians 4. You will recall that Paul wrote that letter to thank the people in that church for their financial support. But along the way he throws in this caveat:

Read Phil. 4:11-13

9. Paul is saying, *my joy in your giving is not because I lost my contentment and the money restored it. No, on the contrary, I have learned to be content in every circumstance. And when he says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me,"* he means that he can be content whether he is well provided for and comfortable or whether he is destitute and without a penny to his name.

10. Paul could be content in hunger and thirst. I can be content when rejected, imprisoned, shipwrecked, or in any other circumstance. Why? Because the source of his contentment was not money or material comforts. He said, "I can do all things through HIM who strengthens me." To Paul, Jesus was always his bread of life and his living water. He knew that his refuge, his comfort, his satisfaction, his contentment was is all that God promised to be for him in Jesus Christ.

11. We've seen The Greed of False Godliness, the Contentment of True Godliness, and now...

### III. The Danger of Discontent (9-10)

1. Paul is teaching us that covetousness is the opposite of faith. But godliness with contentment in Christ in great gain. So don't be covetous (greedy) for things in this life that can be bought and sold. Why? Because only Christ can truly satisfy.

2. Second, don't be greedy for what money can buy because you can't take it with you. If it brings any satisfaction at all it will be a temporary satisfaction.

Read v. 7

3.. You came into this world naked and empty-handed and you will leave it naked and empty-handed. There has never been a little girl born into this world clutching a Neiman Marcus shopping bag. No baby boy ever came into the world clinging to the keys to Corvette. You brought nothing into the world, and when you die you will leave it all behind. This is the frequent refrain of Scripture:

A. Job. 1:21, Job said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return."

B. Psalm 49:17, The psalmist says, don't be afraid of a rich man "For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him."

C. Ecc. 5:15, Solomon, after amassing all his great wealth and denying himself NO pleasure, concluded at the end of his life. "As [a man] came from his mother's womb

he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.”

- D. I know its an over-used axiom, but no one has ever seen a hearse pulling a Uhaul. Whatever material possession you accumulate in this life will be nothing to you one second after you die. But godliness with contentment holds promise for this life and the life to come.

4. Someone may ask, Do you mean we shouldn't desire anything in this life? No. It just means we should be content in Jesus no matter what we possess. Paul says (8)

Read v. 8

5. And notice what happens to those who fail to heed Paul's warning.

Read v. 9

6. The word “snare” here points to the kind of nets fowlers would hang from trees to catch birds as they flew by. To be a money-lover (or a possessions lover) is to put yourself in danger of being ensnared or trapped in a lifestyle that leads NOT to contentment and joy, but to destruction.

7. The word “plunge” means to sink like a wrecked ship sinks to the bottom of the sea taking its crew and cargo with it.

8. Last night I read an article in the New York Daily News entitled Curse of the Lottery: Tragic Stories of Big Jackpot Winners. The article contained tale after tale of people who won millions in the lottery who either lost it through extreme luxury spending or lost their families due to the strife and jealousy created by the sudden onslaught of riches. The article reports that 44% of lottery winners lose their millions within five years, and a number were murdered for their money. The repeated refrain of those who actually survived the ordeal is “We wish we had never won.”

9. Do you see why Jesus, in the parable of the soils, refers to it as "the deceitfulness of riches"? (Matt. 13:22)

- A. Prov. 15:16 “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.”
- B. Hebrews 13:5 “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

10. But the real danger isn't temporal, but eternal.

Read v. 10

10. The love of money is like a tree that bears all different kinds of fruit. It can lead you into drugs, immorality, theft, murder, cheating on your taxes, falling into irremediable debt, and divorce. But more than that, it leads many into an eternity without God.

11. For the love of money some will give it all away. They will become like Judas who pretended to love Christ but who in reality loved the bag of money on his belt enough to betray Jesus to His death.

12. The lie of money is that it can buy you the thing that will bring you lasting joy and contentment, but it never does. On the other hand, the wonderful promise of God is that He is always with you be your refuge, your provider, your comfort, your delight, and the eternal satisfier of your soul.

- A. Psalm 84:11, “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”
- B. Psalm 100:5, “For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”
- C. Psalm 16:11, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
- D. Psalm 36:7-9, “How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. <sup>8</sup> They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. <sup>9</sup> For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.”

13. O my friend. Aren't you tired of searching for contentment in the things of this world? I suspect you have already concluded that they can never satisfy, but where else can you turn? Turn to Jesus Christ. He is God. He is your only hope of salvation and eternal joy. Won't you trust in Him today? Won't you give yourself to Him completely? He will forgive all your sin and give to you a vital relationship with God that will always satisfy.

14. If you are a Christian, can I ask you a question? How is your relationship with the living Christ? Are you delighting in the Lord? Are you finding the satisfaction your soul desires in Him? Perhaps it's time to admit that you have been believing the lie that money can buy you contentment. It can't. Isn't it time to revive your love for Christ and personal communion with Him? Listen to the apostle Paul: “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”