

True Godly Contentment

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Let's take our Bibles and go to 1 Timothy as we're talking about beautifying the bride, as I mentioned earlier in the service. This is Paul's letter to Timothy who's functioning as the pastor of the local church in Ephesus and he's doing something I hope we will do a whole lot of in the future, that is, he's appointed Timothy a church and while Timothy is actually planting the church and building up the church, Paul continues his equipping and training of him and here through writing a letter of instruction. So the letter is written to Timothy but it's written for the whole church and God in his providence has preserved it for the church today and we come to 1 Timothy 6 today, verses 6 through 10, a message I entitled "True Godly Contentment." True godly contentment.

Beginning in verse 6,

6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Now the flow of the context is false teachers and here Paul is bringing up things that are consistent with, character traits consistent with false teachers and here he takes these schemes, if you will, of the false teacher and he breaks them apart and finds application for Timothy and us in our pursuit of true godliness. Pretty amazing what Paul does. What keen insight Paul has as he takes the false teacher who claims to know the truth and who claims to teach others the way, though it's all a lie, and he takes that false teachers and those false teachings and turns them around to teach Timothy and us that their desire for gain is evil but there's a righteous desire for gain. He shows how they deny the truth of mortality but we can use the truth of mortality to be a blessing and help to us, and how they are caught in the curse of money idolatry and how we can enjoy the blessings God gives us but avoid money idolatry. So he illustrates from their false teaching the truth and the true way. Paul exposes the false teachers' error and yet uses their error to unfold God's

truth. He takes the false teacher and his teaching and turns it right side out and unveils God's truth.

Now everything in this section centers on true godly contentment which is something false teachers do not have, and so he's gonna contrast that, make a play on that, if you will, as he goes through. So in verses 6 through 10, every lesson here hinges on the truth of true godly contentment. Now I'm gonna say four things about it from the text today. First of all, true godly contentment is the key to great gain; secondly, true godly contentment has two helpers, birth and death; thirdly, we'll see that true godly contentment is the secret to maximum living on minimum means; and lastly, we'll see that true godly contentment is the protection from the cruse of money idolatry.

Alright, number 1 this morning and that is that true godly contentment is the key to great gain. It's the key to great gain. Look at it there in verse 6 again. Now, now you've got to remind yourselves of the flow of the context. He's been pointing out and exposing false teachers and what they're all about and he says, "Here's what's interesting about them," verse 6, "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." Well, what's the context? Well, look up at verse 5, these are those "who suppose that godliness is a means of great gain." Now Paul states there's an irony here that these false teachers are wrong but in a sense they're right and they can teach us something. They, the false teacher, views godliness, this facade godliness, this cosmetic godliness because they don't have really true godliness, they view this godliness they put on the outside as a means of great gain but they're actually using the wrong godliness and they're seeking the wrong kind of gain. In other words, they twisted things inside out and Paul says, "I'm gonna twist them back out right side out."

So Paul is saying in verse 6 godliness is a means of great gain if it's true godliness and the heart has been changed, and that's where true godly contentment resides also. So he says these false teachers thought, "We'll put on this show, we'll act like we're godly Christians and we'll get ahead. We'll gain a lot out of this for ourselves." And Paul says, "Well, you know, they're right. Even though they're wrong, they're right if you look at it in the right way and understand the right things." You see, true godliness, not what the false teachers had, they had a false presentation, looked true to a lot of people, wasn't real, but true godliness finds so much in Christ that they can have a true commitment in whatever place Christ puts them. That's a great key right there. True godliness finds so much in Christ that they can be at peace and have contentment no matter where God puts them.

Now the word "contentment" that Paul uses here when he makes that expression godliness is actually a means of great gain if it has also with it contentment, that word "contentment" there is the idea of sufficiency independent of others or other things. It means you've got all you need just the way you are. That's what that word "contentment" means. You see, Christ alone is all we need. Christ is true contentment. The other stuff's fine and well and good and fun maybe, but it's not our true contentment. It doesn't last. It's hollow. Christ is our sufficiency. Christ gives me righteousness and true godliness that makes me acceptable before God the Father and Christ gives me the grace to live out this true godliness that he's placed within me, then he throws in contentment onto the

balance also. So Christ gives me righteousness before God, Christ gives me the enablement, the capacity to live in godliness, you could even use the old word "piety," and thirdly, Christ throws in contentment as a bonus.

So this godliness with this contentment is great gain. Matter of fact, you've gained everything if you have Christ and his godliness and his corresponding contentment in your life. You think about it, if that's really all you have and all you need, then nothing can really hurt you. What or who could hurt Christ? This false godliness Paul's contrasting to that he mentions in the earlier verses, this false godliness of the false teacher will always end in total loss.

A couple of insights from the Apostle Paul's experience with true godly contentment. We'll look, first of all, at Philippians 4:1 where Paul makes that powerful yet simple statement, "I've learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am in." Paul says, "As I've grown as a Christian and I've experienced," and by the way, people always point out all the times Paul spent in prison and that ought to be pointed out, you or I may spend time in prison for being a Christian one day when the authorities finally say that we are a detriment to public health, when they condemn us for hate speech and breaking hate speech laws. That day could very well be coming and Paul says, "I can be content in prison," but also Paul wrote to wealthy Philemon and said, "Get my room ready." I, I actually know pious preachers who would say when you go to a place, you shouldn't try to stay in the nicest place. Well, Paul did. But he knew Philemon loved him. He knew he was welcome at Philemon's and he knew that, "Hey, for a change I'm gonna have a very nice setup at wealthy Philemon's house." But Paul said, "Here's the thing, I'm content in Christ with nothing and I'm content in Christ in Philemon's guest suite." The point is can you be content in Christ wherever you are? That's when you have great gain. Paul didn't have great gain when he at, was at wealthy Philemon's house, he had great gain because he was content in Christ. Paul had great gain because he could be content in the prison. So in other words, wherever the will of God puts you, you can be content if you know Christ and that, my friends, is great gain.

Paul again in 1 Thessalonians 2:5 showing that he did not need to manipulate and earn the praise of men and the things of this world for his contentment, says, "For we never came to you with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed." Now that's a radical contrast to the ways these false teachers came that he's teaching Timothy about here. They always came thinking, "What can I say to win their hearts? What can I say to make them love me more? What can I say?" And their whole pretext, their whole approach was, "That'll get me more out of them." You know, a lot of the false teachers in our world today, particularly in America today, you see most of them on television, some of them bring in excess of \$100 million a year to their ministries, and their modus operandi, their pretext is what will bring in the bucks. I, I believe by God's grace we've lived the reality here that God will adequately take care of your ministry and you, yourself, if you'll just stand on the word of God. He'll raise up enough people who will support it. You don't have to have a pretext for greed and a manipulative approach to ministry. That's, that's idolatry and that's sin.

So Paul says these false teachers were opposite of the way I've been functioning. These false teachers are models of discontent. They're not satisfied in Christ, they don't even know Christ. They don't have the contentment of Christ as their righteousness. They don't even fellowship with Christ. They have a facade of godliness, a facade of godliness that's nothing but a cloak for covetousness. They use their put-on godliness as a means of great earthly gain. They're striving for earthly stuff that never produces true contentment. It never lasts.

I just thought about this for a while about the way in a worldly sense we think about contentment and I thought who are some types of people that, uh, without thinking through it very much we might just think, "Well, you know, they, they look pretty content." The first group I thought about was the homeless or the street beggar. You might just glance at them and say, "Look at that, they're just, they're just happy as they can be right there. I mean, they don't have to have hardly anything and they're just at peace." Then I thought about, this was big when I was a young man and, uh, uh, these, uh, these Eastern mystic teachers, these gurus. Back in the '60s and '70s, young people used to flock to, to India or some place and they'd climb a mountain and find this guy meditating on a rock somewhere and ask him about the, the, the keys to, to life and what's, what's the meaning of life and what's everything all about. And you'd just think in your, "Well, that guy, well, he's just content up there. He's just way up on that rock, doesn't need anything, doesn't want anything. He just seems to be content." Another, another type of person that we might think is content is the very wealthy. Sometimes they like to say, "But we've just got all we need. We don't need nothing. We're content." But you know, the truth of the matter is the street beggar and the homeless guy is always looking for a better place on the street if he's not looking for the next bottle of wine or line of cocaine. What's my point? He's not really content. The Eastern mystic who sits up there and supposedly has nothing and just hums in meditating with something and supposed to teach us the meaning of the universe, he's not content. He lives off of the esteem and the praise he gets from his followers and he needs more and more of it. And the wealthy person who seems to present, they've, "I've got all I need. I'm good. I'm content." No, they're not. They get a million, they need another million. They get 10 million, they need 10 million more. Here's my point: no one is truly content without Jesus Christ. No one. There is no true contentment without Jesus Christ.

Just, uh, another word on the very wealthy, and I'm talking about the ungodly wealthy. If a wealthy person feels he's secure and content in his wealth, the Bible says he's a fool. For example, Proverbs 18:10-11, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe." The, the, the Lord is my safe place, my contentment. Verse 11, "A rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own imagination." He imagines everything's good but it ain't good. So there's a man who claims to be content, seems to seek nothing in this world, there's another man who has seemingly everything of the world and he claims to be content, yet neither of these know true contentment.

Verse 6 again, look at our text, "But godliness is actually a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." The implication and the flow of the text means in contrast

to the facade and the false godliness of the false teacher who want to use that to gain things of the world, and by the way, what does the, what is the false teacher trying to gain through putting on his facade of, of godliness and his facade of true teaching when it's false teaching? Three aspects to it and I've said this to you before. First of all, he wants the praise of men; he wants power and control; and he wants financial profit. All, I mean, every time, that's what, that's the gain they're really after and that's wickedness and that's idolatry.

Jude 11 or Jude, uh, 1:1 through 16, there's only one chapter so anyway you want to say it. But I, I told you before it's amazing how thoroughly and weighty and frequently the New Testament speaks of false teachers in the church. Jude does the same thing and you talk about heavy-duty stuff here, listen to what Jude says. "Woe to them!" These false teachers, these false professors who invade our churches. "They have gone the way of Cain, and, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam." There's the, there's the, uh, financial profit aspect. "And perished in the rebellion of Korah." That's the power and control aspect. Verse 12, "These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted." In other words, they come to you with these teachings and they just thrill you and astonish you and draw you in, it seems so wonderful but they have nothing to deliver. It's a fake. It's a lie, is what Jude is saying.

Verse 13, "wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam." What metaphors, what illustrations. "Wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.'" He says, "God's coming against these guys."

He says here's some typical attributes of theirs. Verse 16, "These are grumblers, finding fault." They come into the church and they start finding fault with the established leadership so they can get power and control. Been there and done that. Amen. There's a lot of pastors out there listening to me and right now they're in the middle of this, fighting these guys who came into the church who look wonderful, who said, "We want to help you, pastor." The pastor gives them position and gives them ear and they begin to use it to supplant the pastor God called there.

It's what Jude says. They're grumblers, finding fault, "following after," what? The glory of God, the good of the church? No, "their own lusts; and they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage." They want the popularity. They want popularity, they want power and control, they want financial profit.

So the New Testament is just full of this. So here's what Paul does, he takes that awful approach of the false teacher who thinks they can come into the church with their false godliness and their false teaching and get great gain out of it and here's what Paul says

and here's the ironic thing, they're actually teaching us a good lesson, if you have true godliness which means you also have a true godly contentment, you're satisfied in Jesus, then that is truly the great gain. So while they're totally wrong, they can teach us a good lesson. Are you getting this or do I need to start all over and go through this again? Just, just amazing what Paul does here.

That's point #1. Point #2, true godly contentment has two wonderful helpers: birth and death. God says, "I've given you some helpers here to help you rest in true godly contentment, and those two helpers are birth and death." So we have a truth from birth back to earth. Job taught us about this in Job 1:21. Job, exceedingly wealthy man who lost everything, lost everything, Job said, "Well, naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there." You say, "Wait a minute, Brother Jeff, you, if, when you die they have clothes on you." Yeah, but you didn't put them on. If it was up to you, you'd still be naked. Think about that. That's the way you come in, that's the way you're going out. God said, "I'm trying to teach." Birth and death has lessons for us to help us, not to hurt us, to help us. Then Job says, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." He just says, "Praise God." Do you know why? Because all the stuff, Job had great wealth and none of that was a sin, God just said, "Okay, I've given you great wealth and in My purposes and for My glory and your good, I'm gonna take all your wealth away. Not most of it, all of it, including your family." And Job says, "Well, praise God. When I think back on birth and death, I realize I don't have nothing anyway. I didn't bring nothing anyway so the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD." That's godly contentment. "And through all this, Job did not sin nor did he blame God." I want to live there, don't you?

Now verse 7, "we brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." So as far as worldly goods go, as far as power or fame, you came in a, having possessed or established none of this. You came in with absolutely nothing and you're gonna leave this life the exact same way. So in one sense if in this life you live your whole life and gain nothing, then you will leave with nothing so you've actually lost nothing. Think about it.

I, I said this the other day. When I came into the Gospel ministry, I didn't have anything but a little debt. The '72 Cutlass Oldsmobile I drove was totaled. A Church of Christ preacher had crashed into the back of it and somehow it was my fault. I've never figured that out yet but it was my fault, my insurance, I guess, covered his but didn't pay for mine. So that's about all I had to my name and a few pairs of clothing and, ah, and some debt, some, some college debt and thankfully I married into wealth and my wife paid that off after we got married. Everybody knows Clifford and Helen are just, they're loaded. I can tell you, whatever they do have, they've worked hard to get it, I can guaranteed that, and not by cheating God out of his tithes and offerings either. Anyway, I thought when I came in the ministry, you couldn't have more of nothing than I had. You just couldn't have more of nothing. I just had nothing, but you know what? I was very content. I really was. I was very. Not that I didn't, wouldn't like to have more stuff, that's not necessarily sin but I was content in Christ.

Now, you know, the Apostle Paul's right the opposite of me. The Apostle Paul is converted and comes into ministry with a lot. We don't know financially where he is but to be a leader of the Pharisees, it's highly likely he and his family had great financial means. Paul says it this way in Philippians 3:4-8, "although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more." He said, "Man, I had a lot, circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee." I was at the top of my people. "As to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." I was a diligent worker to keep the law at least outwardly. Verse 7, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ." That's godly contentment. "I had great stuff," and it wasn't required that he give up all of his stuff when he got saved, it was just that in his case all that stuff was against Christ. He had to, to abandon his allegiance to his family and to Judaism to embrace Christ and the true doctrines of the church. That's godly contentment.

We have two great teachers that'll help remind us that Christ is our contentment and that's birth and death. You came in with nothing, you're going out with nothing. Ecclesiastes 5:15 reminds us, and "he had come naked from his mother's womb, and so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand." The ancient Egyptians had a practice of at death, they believed you went over into another realm and so they would literally kill the wives, the associates of the Pharaoh and bury them with the Pharaoh so he'd have somebody to go with him into the other realm. They buried all kind of gold and valuables and jewels and, you know, we're still finding those tombs and finding that stuff today. Didn't do them a bit of good. He just might as well have been chunked in the ground stark naked. That's the way he was born, that's the way he's going out, that's the way we're going out.

When I was a boy, when I was a young man in the South, if you really wanted it to be known that you made it in society, you got a Cadillac. Remember Boss Hogg? He drove a Cadillac, didn't he? He had a Cadillac. There's a Southern gentleman who was quite wealthy in his area and he loved flaunting his wealth and every year he got a brand new Cadillac. So you know what he did when he died? He said, "I wanna be buried in my new Cadillac." Sure enough, they dug this big old hole, got a crane, laid the boy in the back of the Cadillac, and lowered him down into the grave. Two old boys were standing there and one of the boys, Southern boys looked at the other one and said, "Man, that's living." The other one said, "No, that's dying." If you chunked him in a hole stark naked, same difference. God says, "I've given you two helpers. Stop! Think! Contemplate! You brought nothing in. No matter what you do or what you achieve, you take nothing out." It's not in my notes but if you know Christ, you can send a whole lot on ahead, though, by using it for the Lord.

Jesus said that we ought to be done with all this stress and anxiety of wishing and working and hoping for the things of the world. This desire is the breeder of discontent.

Matthew 6:25 reminds us, "For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life," this is Jesus, "as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" Jesus' point is not that you don't work for those things and even enjoy some of those things, it's just that your primary motive and worry shouldn't be centered on those things.

Number 3 in our outline: true godly contentment is the secret to maximum living on minimum means. He says in the next verse, verse 8 there, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." Now the scholars tell us that when he says "food" and then the word "covering," the word "covering" the scholars say likely includes a roof over your head. The point here is not that these are exacting principles or, or an exacting law that Christians must live by. I've run into a few Christians along the way that would like to dictate the exact amount of money you can spend on a car, the exact amount of money you can spend on clothes, the exact amount of money you can spend on a house when the Bible doesn't give any of that. Jesus and the Apostle Paul ministered with, fellowshiped with and commended exceedingly wealthy people but the point is if that's where you find yourself, you can be content there if you have true godly contentment. If you've tried your best and worked your best, you've honored the Lord, but at the end of it all you don't have much more than some clothes on your back, a roof over your head, and adequate food, the Bible says you can be content right there. Maximum, maximum living yet with minimal means.

Again, the Apostle Paul writing this lived this out in his own life and actually learned how to grasp it, if you will, in his own life. Philippians 4:10-12, Paul says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me." What he means is, now at last you've started financially giving to my ministry again. That's what that means. He says, "indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity." I don't know what that means but he says, I believe it was in your heart the whole time but I'm just now getting the money. Then Paul says, but by the way, verse 11, "Not that I speak from want," here's the phrase, "for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am in. I know how to get along with humble means," when I don't have hardly anything, "and I know how to live in prosperity." Do you know the Greek word for prosperity means super-abundance? It means excess? But Paul didn't run from that and say, "Ahhh, I can't be in seems any place nice." No, when it was God's will and God allowed it, he enjoyed it but his contentment was still Jesus. He says, "That's what I've learned." Last part of verse 12, "in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret," secret, "of being filled and going hungry, of both having an abundance," same Greek word again, it means super-abundance, "and in suffering need." Paul says, "My changing material circumstances did not affect my contentment."

You know, somebody said Christians often pass the poverty test but it's the prosperity test they fail. You see, to teach some of you, God may need to put you in wealth so that you learn that wealth can't make you happy or content and you learn that Christ is your contentment wherever he puts you. Now that's victory because you can enjoy the stuff as long as it's not your joy. Did you get that? That's what Paul is saying.

He learned contentment. True godly contentment stays with you despite your outward circumstances. Ladies, even if you never get your house looking like Joanna Gaines's houses, you can still be content. Men, even if you never go deer hunting and do the things and get the bass boat you think you ought to have, you can still have true contentment. Nothing wrong with either one of those, the challenge is in your heart, where is your contentment?

Number 4, our last one: true godly contentment is the protection from the curse of money idolatry. The protection from the curse of money idolatry. In verse 10 he words this "the love of money" and we'll talk more about that in just a moment. But we've come to verse 9 and he uses this phrase, "those who wish to be rich." The idea of wishing to be rich is more than willing to be, it means this total resolve, this earnest desire. This means, "I've gotta rich at any cost." That's the answer. That's the goal. He said those are the kinds of people who have really really bad problems down the road. This is, this is a fatal attraction.

Then he begins to unfold all that's going to happen. If that's your heart and that's the primary drive of your heart, he says here's what's happening. First of all, you fall into temptation. You see it in your text? It's the next part. You fall into temptation. Now the idea here is not that you're exposed to temptation, it means you're already in the temptation. You're already there. You're beyond exposed, you've fallen into it already like a miry pit and it's near impossible to get out of. Being wealthy, again, is not the sin. Loving wealth and longing for it is the sin that brings along with it the temptations you've now fallen into.

He goes further, he says and it's a snare, verse 9. It's another step downward. Paul also speaks of the snare of the devil. Snare is a trap, a stronghold. It holds you.

Then he goes another level down and many foolish and harmful desires. Foolish means irrational. Then you begin to think thoughts that are just absolutely stupid, that are weird, perverse, terribly unhealthy. Foolish, harmful, it's, it's a deception that overcomes you with many harmful things attached with it. Many foolish and harmful, the word "desires." These desires are warped and perverse like I just said and they lead to harm.

Verse 9, they "plunge men into ruin and destruction." You know, the paradox here is I've met quite a number of these through the years is, is men who have significant wealth and they have their millions put away and they've got it all planned out, and they think they're bullet-proof and they're blinded because God says you're already in the, the miry pit of multitudes of temptation, you're already in a snare and a stronghold, you already have irrational foolish thinking and desiring and it's harmful and it's gonna plunge you to ruin and destruction. It's hard to find anything stronger than this in the New Testament but true godly contentment is the protection from this money idolatry and it's the only protection. That last phrase there, plunge men into ruin and destruction in verse 9, means it's never going to end well. Both temporal and eternal destruction is emphasized here but I am 100% convinced though to say men may struggle with the idolatry of money, he never ends here. He never ends up there, being plunged to ruin and destruction.

Now Paul said, "Timothy, I'm not through with this," verse 10. He amplifies it more and says, "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil." Now he did not say the possession of money. He did not say the obtaining of money. He said the love of money. He said it's the heart motive that's key here. It's like the Sermon on the Mount. There are the Pharisees who could rise up and say, "We've never killed anybody." He said, "Well, time out, have you ever hated anybody in your heart? It's the motive of the heart that God's gonna judge you for. You're a murderer already," Jesus says, "if you've hated in your heart." "Wait a minute, I've never committed adultery," the Pharisees of the day might say, "at least nobody knows it." Jesus said, "Now, wait, time out, have you ever lusted in your heart?" Which got every one of them. "Then you're an adulterer already." That's the truth here. It's the heart. It's the love from the heart that is the sin of the love of money, and this is the sin of the rich and this is the sin of the poor. Matter of fact, in my 40 years of ministry, I've seen a lot more poor people with the sin of the love of money than I've seen rich people with the sin of the love of money. Do you know why? Because there's more poor people than there are rich people. As far as the heart attitude and the heart capacity, you can be full of this sin and have nothing materially speaking, and you can have lots of stuff and be walking in good victory over this sin and idolatry. Don't be caught up in this unbiblical false doctrine of some groups, the Roman, Roman Catholic Church in particular, which teaches that material impoverishment is somehow holiness. It is not. Holiness is knowing Jesus Christ. And I don't know what your lot in life will be and there's nothing wrong with working hard and getting ahead, but you must not fall into the idolatry of the love of money.

It's a root, the Bible says, of all sorts of evil here. It didn't mean it's the only root but it's a prominent root that brings many evils along with it. It's, it's, it's, it's a, it's a root that springs forth many evil fruits. He says in verse 10, he continues, "by longing for it many wander away from the faith." Interesting. Matthew 22:36-38, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment.' Now, now pause for a second. Don't go to sleep on me here. Don't check out on me. You're all so nicely social distanced. This should be normal. It should be that every human being made in the image of God, the first moment, the first thought of the day every morning should be, "I love my God with everything that's in me and I want to honor Him and serve Him 100% all day long today." "Now Jeff, nobody lives like that." Well, it's because we're all abnormal. We're all created by this Creator to love him and honor him, but sin has marred us, corrected us, and this is no longer normal. That's the way we ought to be and we're warped.

So therefore in contrast to loving God with all your hearts, we should not love money at all but Satan has warped it. He's inverted it and now it's very very natural to love the world and love money and not love God at all unless God gives us a heart transplant and he begins like Paul says to teach us, did you hear that? Paul said, "I've learned." It didn't just happen overnight. "As a Christian I've learned to find my true contentment in God." You don't even have the capacity – listen to me – you don't have the capacity to even

begin to learn godly contentment until you're born again, then you begin learning that. And I'm gonna tell you, God can teach it to you.

I, um, since college days, I've had a very bad lower back. The first orthopedic and I've helped send many, I've helped many orthopedic and neurologists send their kids through college over these last 40 years. The first orthopedic said, "You know, you've got a congenital defect in your lower back. It's just not made the way it's supposed to be so there's weakness there and playing football and all the stuff you did just kinda ground it up and crunched it up in there." Somebody said amen on that. And I know a lot of you can sympathize with back and it just kind of cycles. I have good weeks and bad weeks, good months and bad months, and I've had some bad months lately, just, just grinding aching pain, and I said, "Lord," let me say this as a prerequisite, I saw two doctors in the last month or two and they said, "You understand, pastor, that, uh, men with backs like yours don't climb trees and shoot deer. They don't ride bush hogs all day long. They don't work on farms." I said, "Well, what am I supposed to do? Just quit?" He said, "I don't think it's hurting you but, you know, it is making it hurt sometimes." So I talked to the Lord about it and I said, "Lord, you know, I, I enjoy getting away. Matter of fact, I wrote this outline in a deer blind. I enjoy getting away. I, I enjoy doing those things. I'm an outdoor guy but it's getting really hard with this pain and ache in my legs." And the Lord spoke to me, he said, "Pastor, was it an audible voice?" No, it was louder than that. He said, did not, didn't pray and say, "Lord, all I ask is just to be effective for You in Your, in my latter days." He said, "You know, you've, hadn't you discovered that this doesn't affect your study? Doesn't affect your prayer? Doesn't affect your preaching? Doesn't affect your leadership of My work? So shut up." That's what I felt like God was saying and I said, "Hallelujah." I'm learning to be content. If you've already learned it, make it a point with me this week and get me on over the bell curve a little bit. I think I'm kinda over the edge but I want to keep going, amen?

And so honestly and I'm not, I'm not just trying to blow smoke, I'm just saying I, I just, I have a peace about it and I went and had those injections in my back and, um, I'm gonna do all of them the insurance company will let me do. And it helped quite a bit. It helped quite a bit and it was like God said to me, "See, if you'll get content in what I want you to do and in Me personally, then I might give you some of that other stuff too." So my back felt better and I went hunting twice this past weekend but I may not get to go again and that's okay. You know why? Because I'm learning to be content in him. He may let us, you know, he, God's not a cosmic killjoy. He, he may let you enjoy and have a lot of stuff that you'd like to have if you don't have to have it in learning to be content in him.

Well, let's unpack the rest of this. We're almost through. He said these people who have this love of money, it's the driving force of their existence, they pierce themselves, self-inflicted wounds they bring on themselves with many griefs. It can be translated pains or sorrows. Last part of verse 10, they have these many griefs. I'm convinced this includes, may primarily include, but this includes the gnawing griefs of their latter years. Did you hear that? Everybody thought they had the world by the tail, they were so powerful and wealthy and had it all going, and God says but there is an activity being created by my divine providence in their soul that will bring them to their latter years with gnawing

griefs. The gnawing grief of rebellious children and rebellious grandchildren because you taught them to love the world and not love God. The gnawing grief of a broken marriage because your love of stuff outweighed the love of your spouse. The gnawing grief of destroyed relationships as your love for stuff broke relationships down through the years. And maybe worst of all, the gnawing grief of loneliness and lovelessness in your latter days because when a man loves himself and loves the world, he puts himself at enmity with everyone because it's about me, and people pick up on that and he goes into those latter days with no true friends.

Warren Buffet has been one of the wealthiest men in the world for a long long time. Do you know what Warren Buffet said the other day? He said, "To be honest with you, the only thing that really matters now is being loved by the people you want to be loved by. I own half the world but it didn't really matter if you're not loved by the people you want to be loved by." You know, I thought what a gift the church is. I'm loved by all of you. Pretty good place to say amen. I'm loved by all of you and you have to love me whether you want to or not in Christ. And if I have a hurt or a need, you know about it and so many of you write notes and cards and bless me and it's just, it's just great. Isn't Christianity wonderful? What great gain that is.

So true godly contentment is the key to great gain. God's given us two wonderful helpers, birth and death. It's the secret to maximum living on minimum means, and it's the protection from the curse of money idolatry. Three words: repent, remind, remind yourself he's my contentment, repent of whatever idolatry and whatever other stuff. If you're discontent, you've got too much focus on something other than him. So repent, remind yourself that he's your joy, he's your contentment, thirdly, repeat. Amen. Can I get an amen there? How many times have I told you, I'd literally, the only way I can keep my heart halfway right is say, "God, this is Your car. This is Your truck. This is Your four-wheeler. This is Your house. That's Your bank account." I really like saying, "That's Your debt." I don't know if that works like it's supposed to. But anyone, "God, it's Yours. It's all Yours. Thank You for letting me enjoy some of this but it's not my joy. It's not my joy."

So repent, remind yourself he's your true contentment, and repeat. This is not something you do, it's something you live. You know why? You keep slipping back. Praise the Lord we can't lose in Jesus Christ. Amen?