

Contentment • 1 Timothy 6:6-10

I. INTRODUCTION

A. A Story

1. Once upon a time, there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut.
2. He tried to be patient and gracious, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down.
3. In desperation, he consulted the village wise man about what to do
 - a. the elder asked, "Do you have a rooster?" The man said he did.
 - b. "Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week," replied the wise man.
4. The next week, the man returned and told the elder that living conditions were worse than ever, with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut.
 - a. "Do you have a cow?" asked the elder. The man nodded fearfully.
 - b. "Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week."
5. Over the next several weeks, the man--on the advice of the elder--made room for a goat, two dogs, and his brother's children.
6. Finally, he could take no more, and in a fit of anger, kicked out all the animals and guests, leaving only his wife, his children, and his parents.
7. The home now seemed spacious and quiet, and everyone lived happily ever after.

B. The New Year

1. This is the last day of 2000, tonight at Midnight we click over to a new year.
2. And many of us, because it is a time of new beginnings, will resolve to make some changes in our lifestyles
 - a. some of us will go on diets
 - b. others will determine to start an exercise program and actually use the exercise equipment we got for Christmas – *three years ago!*
 - c. some will resolve to stay on a budget and reduce their debt

- d. some have resolved to spend more time with the family this year
 - e. and many have determined that they will spend regular time in reading their bibles and praying
3. This morning, as we wrap up our study in 1 Timothy, I want to set before you a worth-while resolution all of us as the followers of Jesus Christ can make.
 4. We find it in the first verse of our text for today . . .

II. TEXT

A. V. 6

6 Now - godliness with contentment is great gain.

1. Verses 6-10 are Paul's *response* to the grotesque picture of false teachers he's painted in the previous verses.
2. While we will take a closer look at those verses on Wednesday evening, it's the last part of v. 5 that we need to read this morning so that we might set the context for what we're looking at today.
3. Look at what Paul says is the fruit of false teaching in v. 5 . . .
 - . . . **useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth**, [and here is what we need to see] **who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.** [meaning financial gain]
4. In verses 3-5, Paul identifies the *error* of false teaching, the *corrupt character* of those who teach it, and then he tracks the growing evil it produces as people follow it
5. The end of this corruption is that false teachers hide behind a *mask of religion* so they can increase their wealth and power
 - a. they mouth pious words – but their hearts are dark
 - b. they maintain a godly exterior, but inwardly they are corrupt
 - c. they've gone from being *shepherds* of the flock to *fleecers* of the flock
6. They're *entrepreneurs* who have turned religion into a *business*, and spend their time figuring out new ways to increase their profit.
7. There were men right there in Ephesus where Timothy lived and ministered who had taken this route, and Paul warns him to stay away from them, and not follow in their wake.

8. But as is typical of Paul, his mention of the sham “godliness” of the false teachers moves him to speak of the *genuine* godliness of the true disciple of Jesus – so in v. 6 he says . . .

Now [as opposed to the insincere posturing of the false teachers] - **godliness with contentment is great gain.**

9. The pretended piety of heretics is aimed at *material* gain
10. But genuine godliness *is* gain – *spiritual* gain, if it is accompanied by *contentment*!
11. The first thing we need to do is define some words here.
- godliness* is a word that comes to us out of ancient religion and means to be *devoted*
 - it referred to people who were *genuinely* devoted to God, and not merely going through the motions of religion because that’s what is expected
 - in the Bible, godliness is an attitude and style of life that acknowledges God’s claim on us and seeks to live in accord with His will.
 - it speaks not only of being a *moral* person, but of showing a profound respect for worshipping Him in the manner He has ordained.
 - godliness is *more* than morality – it’s morality coupled with zealous devotion to God
 - an *atheist* can be *moral* – but he or she cannot be *godly*
 - the godly *delight* in God and live in such a way that they might bring *Him* delight.
12. In chapter 4, Paul told Timothy to *exercise* himself to godliness. (verse 7)
13. In his second letter to Timothy, he said that the last days would be marked by a kind of *powerless godliness* because while it would have the *form and shell* of religious devotion, it would only be *empty rituals* without the *inner reality*. (3:5)
14. One of the distinguishing marks of genuine godliness, is *contentment*.
- this was a word well-known to the philosophers of that day
 - in fact, it was chief among their pursuits
 - contentment* was the great goal they all longed for
 - the word literally means, “self-sufficiency”

- 1) Greek moralists taught that a wise man was one who needed no one but himself and was completely independent
- 2) the contented man or woman was someone who was satisfied with him or herself and did not demand changes in their circumstances
- e. that's the word Paul uses here for contentment – but he redefined it to mean, not *self*-sufficiency, but *Christ*-sufficiency!
- f. in Philippians 4:11-13, he gives us the perfect picture of the *Christian* idea of contentment

11 . . . I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- g. in 2 Cor. 9:8 he adds this . . .

God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

- h. for the Christian, contentment is found in resting in the sufficiency of Christ.
 - 1) it's confidence in the love, wisdom, and power of God
 - 2) it's the result of faith that when Jesus said, "It is finished" it was indeed!
 - 3) and so we rest in the truth that if God did not withhold His own Son, He will not withhold any good thing that we need
 - 4) contentment is the expectant awareness that our God shall supply all our need, according to His surpassing riches, THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, just as we are promised in Philippians 4:19
- 15. True Contentment has *nothing* to do with our outward circumstances; it's a frame of mind and heart that trusts God and *rests* in His grace.
 - a. contentment isn't tied to the amount in our bank account or what kind of car we drive

- b. it isn't determined by where we work or what position we've been promoted to
 - c. it isn't set by who we've married or what neighborhood we live in
 - d. contentment is knowing, REALLY knowing God!
16. Now, some of you may be a bit confused because Paul is calling us to contentment and yet just a couple weeks ago I preached message in chapter 3 on Ambition
- a. how do we balance being content with being ambitious?
 - b. simple; contentment has to do with our circumstances, not with ourselves!
 - c. contentment means resting in God for the necessities of life,
 - d. but when it comes to *godliness*, to *the* inner life, we ought to always be pressing on, ambitious to be ever more like Jesus.
17. Paul reinforces the call to contentment in the next verses . . .

B. Vs. 7-8

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

1. It's true, when we entered this world, we were dressed in nothing but a birthday suit!
2. On the other end of life, when we exit this world, we take nothing with us.
 - a. on their way to the graveyard, hearses tow no trailers!
 - b. it's true – you can't take it with you when you check out.
3. Oh sure, the mortician will dress you in some outfit your loved ones will pick for you
 - a. and they'll purchase the nicest casket they can afford
 - b. but the fact is, where the REAL you is going, all that is left behind in the ground
4. Paul here echoes the words of Job when he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will go out of this life.' (1:21)
5. Here's the learned testimony of the all-wise Solomon, the wealthiest man in all history,

As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand.

(Eccl. 5:15)

6. When John D. Rockefeller died, someone wanted to know just how wealthy Rockefeller had been and asked his aide, "How much did he leave?" The aide's reply was wise, "All of it!"
7. Nakedness and empty hands are the bookends of this life
8. Every so often we hear stories of those who ask to be buried in some special way
 - a. some ask to be buried in their car
 - b. others want to be dressed in some expensive designer outfit
 - c. we think of the incredible wealth and riches that were heaped up in the tombs of the Pharaohs
 - 1) Tutankhamen was only one of the lesser Pharaohs, and yet the treasure that was placed in his small tomb continues to stagger our imagination
 - 2) every year, millions of people visit his exhibit to gaze on the gold and jewels
 - 3) but friends, King Tut is gone and the treasure remains
9. In v. 8, Paul says that with food and clothing, we ought to be content.
 - a. the word clothing is literally "covering" and includes shelter
 - b. food and shelter – these are necessities – everything else is a bonus, just frosting on the cake.
 - c. if we have food to eat, and a roof over our head and clothes to wear, then we have enough
 - d. and with that, we ought to be content!
10. Christian, understand that God has pledged Himself to provide these basic necessities as you faithfully set your hand to what He puts before you in terms of work.
11. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 6 . . .

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into

barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

²⁸“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- a. my dear brothers and sisters, God has promised to take care of the necessities of our lives
 - b. of course we need to be diligent in applying ourselves to the means of provision He’s given in our jobs and such
 - c. but He will take care of us
 - d. with that said and done, with food and shelter – we need to rest and be content.
12. We only become discontent when we want MORE than food and shelter, or when we want OTHER food and shelter than what we have.
13. The problem is this – if we’re discontent because we look for satisfaction and contentment in our circumstance rather than in Christ, then we WILL NEVER, EVER BE CONTENT!
14. The reason why is because THINGS do not provide contentment.
15. They may provide *pleasure* for a time, but they eventually lose their appeal and we turn to the pursuit of something else.

16. Contentment has to do with our *hearts*, not our *surroundings*.
17. Right now, this very moment, there is a young woman sitting in shackles in a dirty, rat-infested cell somewhere in Sudan.
 - a. she was taken from her village by her Muslim captors because she is a Christian
 - b. they plan on selling her as a slave to any one of dozens of slave-traders who are resurrecting the old-practices of slaving.
 - c. she will likely end up working in the home of a rich man in Indonesia or some other third world country
 - d. but as she sits in those chains – she is faced with a challenge to trust God or deny Him
 - e. she decides to trust – and as she does, the Holy Spirit settles over her giving her peace
 - f. she is content, even though her stomach is growling with hunger and her ankles are bleeding = she trusts God!
18. Right now, this moment, there is a young woman lying on satin sheets and a plush bed in a luxurious estate in Brentwood
 - a. she is just waking up with a terrible hang-over from a wild night of partying last night
 - b. she's a graduate from UCLA, drives a red Lamborghini Diablo, and has three full closets of the latest fashions
 - c. she is surrounded by the finest and latest of every technology
 - d. but she's miserable
 - e. the day stretches out before her like some terrible nightmare
 - f. she can't wait till the night comes and once again she can join her friends in an endless pursuit of something new, something novel and entertaining
 - g. but she knows that tomorrow, will find her right back in the same place; hung-over and empty!
19. From an eternal standpoint (*which is the only one that matters by the way*) whose better off?

C. Vs. 9-10

1. Paul now turns it around and shows how wealth does not bring contentment.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

2. The heart of this passage is Paul's use of a well-known proverb of that time and this:

THE LOVE OF MONEY IS A ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL

3. Note that Paul says it's the *LOVE* of money that's the problem, not money *itself*.
4. Money itself isn't evil – it's merely a tool with which we are able to do things.
- some of these things may be good, others evil; it's how we *use* money that turns it to good or ill
 - think of a screwdriver – I can put it to good or evil use
 - I can use it to assemble a bike for one of my children or tighten a screw on my elderly neighbor's screen door
 - or I could use it as a weapon and turn it on someone – I could walk down the street and drag it along the side of each car, scratching the paint
 - the screwdriver is a neutral tool; it's how I use it that's good or evil.
4. Money is a neutral tool – but when people think that money is the way of attaining satisfaction, it becomes evil.
- when they see money as the means to contentment, then they put their affection toward money
 - and loving it, they will pursue it any way they can.
5. That's why Paul says that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare
- once again, please notice that he doesn't say *being rich* is wrong
 - but the strong and abiding urge to *be* rich results in a person trampling moral fences that he or she might otherwise never trespass.
 - we probably all know people who got so caught up in the pursuit of wealth that they defied their own conscience and got involved in things that we clearly wrong.
 - theft, graft, extortion, blackmail, embezzling, cheating; all these are driven by *greed*, by the desire for riches.

6. Paul's choice of words here in v. 9 is enlightening.
 - a. he says that those who desire to be rich KEEP falling into temptation
 - b. if we do not learn to be content with the basics and then simply rejoice with thanksgiving in the *extras* God blesses us with,
 - c. then our discontent will drive us to seek more
 - d. and wanting more, we'll come to see money as the means of acquisition
 - e. we'll desire wealth instead of God, and once we start down that road, the devil will be ever-present to provide opportunities to make more money
 - f. but each of these temptations are actually, as Paul calls them, *snares* – traps laid to catch us and get us so wrapped up in sin that we end up drowning in a whirlpool of ruin.
7. As Paul wrote this to Timothy, he could remember people that had forsaken Christ because they had turned to the pursuit of wealth.
8. But their story never ended with success in their pursuit – it always ended with sorrow;
9. And again, the words he employs are graphic and paint a terrifying picture
10. He says that their greediness had driven them to impale themselves on spears of distress and loss.
11. How this had to rip Paul's heart out – to see people who have EVERYTHING in Christ, throw it all away for the illusion of worldly satisfaction.
12. There once was a wealthy man who owned a vast estate with many fields and rich crops.
 - a. but he tired of being a farmer -
 - b. and when a traveling merchant told him of a land of were the ground was littered with diamonds, he decided to go in search of it.
 - c. the merchant had a map for sale, but it's cost was so high, the farmer had to sell his estate to acquire it.
 - d. taking off in search of diamonds, the man quickly realized that the map was hard to decipher; it seemed each new path he took and each new corner he turned led to another path and another corner.
 - e. years later, worn out and still without a diamond in his pocket,

- he died.
- f. in the mean time – the new owners of his farm were digging in his fields one day and discovered a vast treasure of guess what – diamonds.
 - g. the farmer had had what he *wanted* all along – he just never took the time to realize it!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Buying Happiness*

1. As Jesus said, our lives do not consist in the abundance of our possessions.
2. Wealth cannot buy contentment.
3. Money can buy medicine, but not health.
 - a. Money can buy a house, but not a home.
 - b. It can buy companionship, but not friends;
 - c. Entertainment, but not happiness,
 - d. A bed, but not sleep,
 - e. Money can buy a crucifix, but not a Savior,
 - f. It can buy the good life, but not *eternal* life.
4. I like what the Roman statesman Seneca said, "Money has never yet made anyone *rich*."

B. *Consumerism*

1. As we look forward to this new year – let's resolve to take a step away from the age in which we live – driven as it is by *consumerism*.
2. Let's make sure that we are not defining our lives by things like bank accounts, houses, cars and clothes.
3. Only one thing ought to define us – Jesus Christ!
4. Let's count our riches in Him – let's calculate our net worth by the Cross rather than the bottom line of a balance sheet.
5. This will not be easy because we live in a culture that is consumed with consumerism.
 - a. the whole world wants to treat you as a potential customer
 - b. TV & radio are all pervasive
 - c. and we're constantly bombarded with their incessant advertisements –

- d. every one of them shouting at us – MORE! YOU NEED MORE!
 - e. advertising companies work at making us *discontent*
 - 1) they first want to make you feel needy
 - 2) then they put their product before you telling you if you'll just buy it, *then* you'll be satisfied!
 - 3) but the fact, is, you were satisfied before you saw their ad!
 - f. think about it – if things REALLY satisfied and the advertising was true, then there'd be no more need for advertising because by now, we would all have purchased what they've been selling in the past and we'd be content today.
 - g. that the ads still run, and that people still spend by the trillions of dollars every year for everything from toothpaste to RV's is proof things do not provide contentment – and the real substance of our lives is not in the abundance of our possessions or positions.
6. To live is Christ!
 7. And to live in godliness with contentment is true riches.
 8. May this year find all of us free of the rat-race of accumulating things, and instead find us running the race of faith, in by, and for Jesus.