

Love/Use • 1 Timothy 6:1-10

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Magazines

1. I realized the other day that I'm a ***mess***. Up till then, I was doing really well. But then I picked up some magazines and discovered that I'm a wreck.
2. I thought my house was great until I flipped thru *Architectural Digest*. Now my house looks like a dump.
3. I thought my car was great. But after reading *Car & Driver*, I realize I should be driving a red convertible Corvette.
4. I go to the gym a couple times a week, but after reading *Men's Fitness*, realize what I need is a NordicTrak.
5. I thought I had a good set of clothes, but didn't see any of them in *GQ*.
6. Lynn's a great cook, but after looking thru *Gourmet* magazine, the meals just haven't been as good as they were before.
7. My lawn mower has always served me well. But after flipping thru *Best Life*, I realized if I had a John Deere rider mower, I could call myself a ***real man***.
8. I thought we had a good family. Then I read *DisneyWorld* & have to wonder because we've not been to Orlando & don't own an annual family pass to Disneyland & California Adventure.
9. I always assumed I loved my wife, until I saw the ad in *Time* saying men who love their wives buy them diamonds from Jared.
10. I found out I can't even be romantic with my wife unless the light-bulbs are made by Sylvania. I Wouldn't you know, ours are from GE.
11. Yeah, I was doing fine, till I started reading those magazines.

B. Contentment

1. We have 2 more studies before we wrap up this great letter Paul wrote his friend & co-worker Timothy.
2. Today we'll look at vs. 1-10, then wrap it up next week.
3. We begin with Paul telling Timothy about one last group of people in the church in Ephesus to give some guidance to.
4. Then he returns to a subject that's been a major theme of 1 Timothy – How to deal with false teachers.
5. It's in that context Paul writes to Timothy about the importance of ***contentment***.

In the fifth century, a man named Arenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the comforts of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need. Those of us who live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 articles; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential? How many superfluous?

Philip Parham tells the story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

Be content with what you have, never with what you are.

A little girl walking in a garden noticed a particularly beautiful flower. She admired its beauty and enjoyed its fragrance. "It's so pretty!" she exclaimed. As she gazed on it, her eyes followed the stem down to the soil in which it grew. "This flower is too pretty to be planted in such dirt!" she cried. So she pulled it up by its roots and ran to the water faucet to wash away the soil. It wasn't long until the flower wilted and died. When the gardener saw what the little girl had done, he exclaimed, "You have destroyed my finest plant!" "I'm sorry, but I didn't like it in that dirt," she said. The gardener replied, "I chose that spot and mixed the soil because I knew that only there could it grow to be a beautiful flower." Often we murmur because of the circumstances into which God has sovereignly placed us. We fail to realize that He is using our pressures, trials, and difficulties to bring us to a new degree of spiritual beauty. Contentment comes when we accept what God is doing and thank Him for it.

First Timothy has two main themes.

First of all, Paul tells Timothy to beware of false teachers -

Then *second*, he gives a stirring call to spiritual maturity.

Since there is so much prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments that the last days would be marked by wide-spread spiritual deception and apostasy, and because of that people's level of spirituality would be *shallow*, 1 Timothy is an important passage for us to study today.

Though Paul wrote this to one man, the pastor of the church at Ephesus, nearly 2000 years ago, what he writes here is completely applicable to all of us today.

We see that in our last night of study - chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

¹ Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed. ² And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

The problem of slavery was a big one in the early church.

The issue was this:

While slavery reduced people to the level of mere *property*, Christianity brought dignity and worth to *all* men and women, regardless of their social status.

Slaves were often thought of as human livestock in the Roman world.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ said that God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, placed *infinite* value on each and every human being and had proven it definitively at the Cross.

God's grace and forgiveness, gained through faith in Christ, meant *freedom* from sin and death.

This freedom, coupled with this new valuation of human life meant that when the Christians assembled for worship, artificial distinctions like social status and ethnic distinctions were swept out of the way.

People sat side by side and worshipped God *together*.

But outsiders saw this blurring of social distinctions as a dangerous trend.

So "against the grain" of ancient society was this leveling among people that many critics of Christianity said it was contrary to the normal order of things and that Christianity was a dangerous sect that was seeking to bring about a radical revolution.

It was based on these charges that Roman officials in many places allowed fierce opposition and persecution of Christians.

Paul is saying here that equality in Christ does not mean a denial of the *roles* we are called to play in society.

As we saw in chapter 2, the equality of men and women in Christ had resulted in some of the women *stretching* that equality into areas where it didn't apply, like roles in the home and the church.

In a similar manner, there was a problem with slaves who were shirking their duties to their masters because they were presuming on their freedom in Christ.

Paul tells Timothy to remind slaves that while they are indeed free in Christ, in *society* they are still under a yoke of slavery – and since God called them as slaves to love and serve Him, then they are to *continue* to love and serve Him as slaves – it's just that their service of God is *demonstrated* in their service of their *masters*.

If a Christian slave shirks his or her duties, then their unbelieving master will see the deficiency in their work, and attribute it to their new-found faith in Christ, and this will reflect poorly on the Gospel.

In v. 2, Paul says, and if you give good service to an unsaved master, how much more diligent ought you be to a master who's saved?

Critics of Christianity have often pointed out how the NT fails to condemn slavery.

At points like this, it seems to almost affirm slavery.

But that is an unfair judgment and as usual denies the testimony and record of history.

The fact of the matter is, the Apostles knew that when the influence of Christianity had taken sufficient root in society, evils like slavery would be swept out of the way.

But they lived in a world where slavery was a fixed and pervasive institution and to outright condemn it would have been both unwise

and unhelpful.

If the Church of that day had taken on an anti-slavery crusade, it never would have survived the second century!

The Apostles and leaders of the early Church understood that God has *not* given us a mandate to reform the institutions of society but that we are called to preach the repentance of individual men and women – and that as we faithful stay centered on *that* task, society will be reformed as individuals are converted.

History has proven them correct!

Slavery was eventually removed as a fixture of modern society.

But only when the influence of the Gospel was widely dispersed and society itself was informed by its truths.

And at the forefront of the abolitionist movement were Christians who realized the time had come to implement the truth that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

But none of this would have been possible if the Apostle Paul had been a staunch and vocal abolitionist.

It was simply unrealistic to take such a stand at that time.

Better to do what he does here – exhort slaves to diligence in service of their masters.

The salvation of those master was far more likely if they served well rather than poorly.

There is much to learn from what the NT says to slaves.

It reveals a realistic view of things that nonetheless seeks to bring about change.

Where we can take guidance from this today is in the pro-life movement.

Every year, new legislation is brought up on both the state and federal levels that seeks to limit abortion.

And every year, along with pro-abortion groups, some radical *pro-life* groups *oppose* it.

The pro-aborts oppose it because they don't want anyone messing with a woman's right to abortion.

But the reason why some pro-life groups oppose it is because the legislation doesn't go *far enough* in banning abortion.

It may limit it to rape or incest or when the life of the mother is in jeopardy.

Some of these groups want a ban on ALL abortion, for any reason, and so though they have the opportunity to see the end of millions of abortions every year, they won't compromise.

There's a close connection between the issue of slavery and abortion because both of them have to do, fundamentally, with the *value* of human life.

The Apostles worked within the status quo to bring about a change in that status quo.

Wisdom would seem to dictate that we follow their example.

Abortion as the law of the land will not end until the people of this nation wake up to the fact that the unborn child is a full-fledged member of the human race and worthy of all the rights and respect as anyone else.

But it's only as individual men and women are converted to Christ that their thinking about the unborn can be changed.

The best way to see the end of the atrocity of abortion is to share the Lord with our neighbors and friends.

Once enough are saved, society will reform – History proves this, again and again!

In the meantime, pro-life groups ought to take any advance they can in the legal sector to save the lives of the unborn.

³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*.

From such withdraw yourself.

V. 2 ended with, "Teach and exhort these things."

As Paul moves to wrap up the letter, he means that Timothy is to teach and exhort all that has gone before in the previous 5 chapters.

Then, in one last shot at the false teachers of Ephesus, he gives this diagnosis of their error.

In v. 3, Paul says that the *first mark* of a false teacher is that they don't line up with what Jesus taught.

They teach as doctrine things that lead people astray from the pursuit of genuine godliness.

That is so true!

Look at the result of false teaching and across the board, it leads people into sin and corruption.

The Church has been wracked during its long history by splinter groups that have gone off after some novel doctrine that ends up seeing the members of the sect falling into all kinds of trouble.

Usually the group becomes a hotbed of envy and strife.

For a few years I participated in charismatic churches before attending Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa.

A couple of these churches were part of the speaker's circuit and we regularly had guest speakers.

Several of these I would later realize were false teachers – but at the time, I thought they were legit.

These churches were quite in to the use of the gifts of the Spirit and we regularly heard prophecies and tongues and witnessed so called miracles.

The pastor would call out words of knowledge for people and so on.
What so amazed me is that in the midst of all this apparent depth of experience in the things of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness of the people was appalling.
Coming in and going out was like some kind of a mad dash and people were downright rude to each other.
The envy and strife between members was obvious.

But that's to be expected isn't it?

False teachers succeed because they appeal to the flesh – and once you start appealing to the flesh, the flesh will assert itself and reveal it's ugliness.

Paul charts this in v. 4 when he says . . .

⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain.

From such withdraw yourself.

False teachers are proud, and though they think they have an inside track on truth, the fact of the matter is, they know *nothing*!

It is the height of arrogance to reject the words of Christ – yet that is precisely what heretics do!

And once they do, they end up becoming debaters – obsessed with arguing their point.

False teachers love to camp on one or two things to the exclusion of everything else.

They redefine their entire theology through the lens or filter of whatever their pet doctrine is.

I've seen false teachers do this with healing, with miracles, with faith, with the sovereignty of God, and even with the love of God.

Anytime we take one attribute of God and exalt it at the expense of others, we become unbalanced.

And yet, because false teachers affirm one thing that's affirmed in scripture, they think they're right.

False teaching is often a case of being *correct* in what's *affirmed*, but *incorrect* in what's *denied*.

Notice the progress the corruption of false teachers takes:

- 1) Pride leads to ignorance
- 2) Proud ignorance leads to endless arguments
- 3) Proud ignorant endless arguments lead to envy, strife, and then nasty insults and paranoia.
- 4) Once a man or woman gets to this point, unless they repent, they will fall to nothing more than speech void of any value and a darkness of mental capacity that leaves them empty of truth.

NOTE THAT WELL!

In chapter 4 Paul said that the false teachers start out knowing what they're teaching isn't right, but because it provides a convenient mask for their sin, they defy their conscience and teach it anyway.

Over time, their conscience stops bothering them.

Here in v. 5, Paul describes the end of this process of rejecting truth – they lose the ability to know truth at all – they become *destitute of truth*.

I said this a couple weeks ago and I want to restate it tonight because it is one of those things we need to be reminded of again and again: IT IS NEVER WISE TO DEFY OUR CONSCIENCE!

It is never a good move to willingly reject the truth and embrace error because it allows us to avoid a feeling of guilt.

Conscience is a gift we need to cultivate and keep sharp by immersing it in the Word of God, not dulling by giving heed to seductive heresies that appeal to our flesh.

The tail end of v. 5 reveals the *destination* of false teachers who give themselves over completely to their error and end up becoming destitute of truth – they turn religion into a *business* and use it solely as a source of income.

They become so corrupt they turn their heresy into a means of financial support.

Of course, we've seen this lived out in Technicolor with some of the modern day false teachers.

The massive crusades some of them hold are nothing but promotional rallies.

The slick TV shows and mailers they send out plead with people to send in money.

Just today I got a report on a false prophecy one of the most well-known false teachers gave 2 years ago.

This man said that 1999 would be a banner year for America and there would be great prosperity – but 2000 would be a year of economic trouble and collapse.

He said the economic hardships would be so great the only way to survive them was to give *everything* to God in 1999, so that He would be obligated to support them in 2000.

He told people to liquidate their assets and call in their pledges right now – that was in 1999.

He then added this solemn warning, “And one final thing, if you break your promise, here this! Some of you make a pledge and along the way you decide to forget about it. The bible says God will destroy the work of your hands if you do that . . . We can't play games with him!”

Some of today's false teachers have turned to slick marketing companies who will do almost anything to come up with new ways to increase their clients income.

Here's one that was sent out a while back . . .

There have always been charlatans who have preyed on the religious superstitions of the gullible.

But the only way anyone could ever be seduced and suckered by false teaching is if they have not been diligent to study and show themselves approved to God as a faithful student of His Word.

The best way to know a counterfeit is to be so well acquainted with the real thing that when a fake is encountered, it's easy to tell the difference.

I spent 13 years in the fast food industry, and handled a lot of money.

One time, as I was preparing a deposit, a bill passed through my fingers that didn't feel right.

A closer look, revealed it as an obvious counterfeit.

One of the ways to recognize a counterfeit teacher is that they make merchandise of God's people.

It becomes clear as they minister from year to year that they are getting rich off the support of their followers.

Paul tells Timothy to stay away from these guys.

Against the backdrop of this *false godliness*, this kind of *sham religion*, Paul goes on to talk about *genuine godliness*.

Since we covered vs. 6-10 last Sunday, I'll be brief with this tonight.

⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

Real godliness, as opposed to the sham piety of the false teachers, is accompanied by contentment.

And if we have this kind of contented godliness, then we are indeed rich – spiritually rich!

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.

The false teachers counted the success of their ministry in the assets gained by milking the people of God.

But because they lived in and for the flesh, they were never content.

Paul reminds Timothy that the criteria we use to measure life is not how many toys we've been able to accumulate.

A person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions.

We entered this world naked, and we end up leaving behind everything we've managed to acquire during our short lives.

There are only two real *necessities* – food and *covering*, which is what the word "clothing" in v. 8 means.

Having food and *shelter*, we ought to be content.

Discontent comes from wanting *more* or *other* than what we have.

A wealthy employer once overheard one of his workers say, "Oh if I only had a hundred dollars, I would be perfectly content."

Knowing that his own money had not given him inner peace, he told her, "Since I would like to see someone who is *perfectly* contented, I'm going to grant your desire."

He gave her the money and left, but before he was out of earshot, he heard her lament to a co-worker, "Why on earth didn't I say 200?"

The boss smiled, for he had made his point that money doesn't make a person "perfectly contented."

The trap so many fall in to is that they think if they could just change their *circumstances*, then they would be content. - It's the old myth of greener grass!

But contentment has nothing to do with our circumstances.

It has to do with what we are trusting in.

Since God has pledged Himself to provide for the necessities of our lives, both our lives here on earth and *eternal* life, we can rest confidently in His provision.

The only other option is to define our lives by our *surroundings*.

If we do that, then we embark on a dangerous journey toward *discontent* because no matter what we manage to acquire, it will never be enough.

Christina Onassis, daughter of famous billionaire, said, "Happiness is not based on money and the greatest proof of that is our family!"

Paul speaks now of those who think that contentment is to be found in the accumulation of things.

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.

The Apostle paints a terrifying word-picture in vs. 9 & 10 of people who get trapped by the idea that wealth is the means to contentment. Wealth itself isn't evil – in fact God prospers certain people so that they can be instrumental in funding His work in unique ways

Wealth itself isn't evil, but to longingly desire to be rich can be devastating to a person's soul.

The reason why is because this desire can override all other concerns and see a person do all kinds of things he or she wouldn't normally do.

Cheating, theft, embezzlement – all of these come about because of a desire to be rich.

Where the devil sees greed, he suggests all kinds of ways to attain more money, and as people pursue these they end up drowning in a whirlpool of ruin.

The word “snare” in v. 9 means a fowler’s trap – a snare used to catch small birds by the feet and turn them into tonight’s dinner. The folly of desiring riches is neatly summed up by the story of the middle-aged school teacher who invested her life savings in a business enterprise which had been elaborately explained to her by a swindler.

When her investment disappeared and the wonderful dream of future riches was shattered, she went to the office of the *Better Business Bureau*.

They asked "Why on earth didn't you come to us first? Didn't you know about the Better Business Bureau?"

The lady sadly said, “Oh, yes, I've always known about you. But I didn't come because I was afraid you'd tell me not to invest in it.”

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.

Paul quotes a well known proverb of the day – “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Again, money itself isn’t the problem – it’s the *love* of money that’s wrong.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it very clear that we have to choose between the love of God and the love of mammon – or worldly wealth. [Matthew 6]

We cannot serve both!

Paul re-affirms that truth here.

He had known people who had believed in Christ, but who had fallen away because of a love of money.

But in every single case, none of these people he had known who had strayed ended well.

The word “pierced” in v. 10 means “impaled” and pictures someone who’s run himself through with his own spear by placing it in the ground and then throwing himself on it.

How it had to just kill Paul to think of people who had made such a good start in the faith, and with such incredible potential, lose the battle with the world and end up turning away from the Lord because they decide they would rather acquire wealth than heaven.

I had a friend, in fact, he was one of my best friend in high school, who started going to church not long after I did.

Prior to his conversion, he was a tough nut, a real agnostic, but when he gave his life to Christ it seemed sincere.

After getting a good start in a solid church, he started going to a church that was a spin off of Robert Schuler’s Crystal Cathedral.

The people in this church were all about the trappings of worldly success.

Big cars, bigger houses, pools the country clubs.

These folk didn’t bowl – they played golf and tennis.

They even had a valet service at the church!

It wasn’t long before my friend dropped out of church altogether and immersed himself in the pursuit of wealth.

He fell away from the Lord and in one very painful conversation admitted that he was back to being an agnostic.

The last time I talked with him was several years ago.

He was living in a plush home in a ritzy neighborhood, but the hollowness in his eyes spoke volumes.

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 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.
 - a. *godliness* is a word that comes to us out of ancient religion and means to be *devoted*
 - b. 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
 - c. 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.
 - d. it speaks not only of being a *moral* person, but of showing a profound respect for worshipping Him in the manner He has ordained.
 - e. godliness is *more* than morality – it's morality coupled with zealous devotion to God
 - f. an *atheist* can be *moral* – but he or she cannot be *godly*
 - g. the godly *delight* in God and live is such a way that they might bring *Him* delight.
12. In chapter 4, Paul told Timothy to *exercise* himself to godliness. (verse7)
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*.
 - a. this was a word well-known to the philosophers of that day
 - b. in fact, it was chief among their pursuits
 - c. *contentment* was the great goal they all longed for
 - d. 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 cam 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? ²⁶Look 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.
- a. some of these things may be good, others evil; it’s how we *use* money that turns it to good or ill
 - b. think of a screwdriver – I can put it to good or evil use
- 1) I can use it to assemble a bike for one of my children or tighten a screw on my elderly neighbor’s screen door
- 2) 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
- 3) 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.
- a. when they see money as the means to contentment, then they put their affection toward money
 - b. 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
 - a. once again, please notice that he doesn't say *being rich* is wrong
 - b. but the strong and abiding urge to *be* rich results in a person trampling moral fences that he or she might otherwise never trespass.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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 where 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.