

The Lord Is My Helper • Hebrews 13:5-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Panama*

1. Some years ago, a major company had trouble keeping employees working in their assembly plant in Panama.
2. At the time, the vast majority of Panamanians worked in the fields and the economy was based on barter.
3. The factory workers were paid in cash and made more money in one week than most of their countrymen had ever seen.
4. So they would quite after just a couple weeks work thinking they had made it for life.
5. The company quickly thought up a way to keep their workers on the job –
6. They shipped in and passed out a truckload of Sears catalogs!
7. Soon, none of the workers quit because they all wanted the previously un-dreamed of things they saw in the book!

B. *Today*

1. As we wrap up our studies in Hebrews this morning, we find a solemn warning about the danger of *covetousness*.
2. And what we find here reminds us that some of the things we battle with as Christians are subtle and difficult to see in ourselves.

II. BODY

A. *Vs. 5-6*

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

6 So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

1. We do well to remember the original setting for this letter.
2. At the time it was written, the Church was a tiny dot in the Roman world.
3. Compared to the general population, Christians were a teeny, tiny

- minority.
4. And like a ship in the midst of the ocean, they were weathering a storm of opposition.
 5. That opposition took two forms;
 - a. while they were facing *outright persecution* at the hands of their fellow Jews –
 - b. they were also facing the *more subtle pressure* of living in a world whose ideas all too often lie in direct contrast to the Kingdom of God.
 6. So in the first 3 verses of chapter 13, the writer tells them *how they are to treat each other as shipmates!*
 7. Then in vs. 4-6, the writer turns to warn them that they make sure their ship isn't swamped by the stormy waves they find themselves sailing through - meaning the world's ways of thinking don't infiltrate and capture their minds and hearts.
 - a. in v. 4, he tells them not to think about *marriage* and *sex* as the world does
 - b. then in vs. 5 & 6 he warns them of thinking about *money* and *possessions* like the world.
 8. In v. 5 he says . . .

Let your conduct be without covetousness;

- a. the word "*conduct*" means lifestyle, one's manner and mode of living
 - b. "*covetousness*" is literally – *affection for silver*; we would say, "the love of money."
9. Now, this is interesting – because the love of money is an *issue of the heart*, but here we're told to not let the love of money control our *behavior*.
10. How can a love of money affect our *actions*?
- a. first of all, a love of money leads to a life of *continual striving for more* . . .
 - 1) you see, the problem with a love of money is that it is *never satisfied, never content*
 - 2) it always wants *more* and feels that if it could just acquire some magic number, *then*, and *only then* would it be satisfied.
 - 3) when John D. Rockefeller was a young man, a friend asked

him how much money he wanted.

a) Rockefeller replied, “A million dollars.”

b) after he’d made a million dollars, the friend asked him again how much money he wanted.

c) the answer this time was, “Another million.”

4) covetousness and greed follow a principle of *increasing desire* and *decreasing satisfaction*, a form of the law of diminishing returns. [\[1\]](#)

5) Eccl. 5:10 says, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity”

6) the more you *get* the more you *want*.

7) when we *focus* on material things, our *having* will never catch up with our *wanting*.

8) I remember something that took place at a family Christmas party some years ago

a) 8 of us were gathered round the tree and passing out presents

b) as the last of the presents were passed out and opened, a young nephew began to cry

c) he sat there in the midst of a *mound* of toys and opened presents but he began to weep!

d) his sadness was due to the fact there were no *more* presents to open!

e) I must admit that I wanted to shame him for his behavior, but it suddenly dawned on me – I remembered feeling precisely that way when I was his age!

f) as a youngster, on Christmas morning I would sit in the middle of a pile of expensive toys and clothes and when there were no more presents to open, I felt empty and cheated.

g) you see, for a week prior to Christmas, I had anticipated the joy of securing the toys I so desperately thought would complete my life.

h) the night before Christmas, I barely slept I was so excited.

i) then, once all the packages were open, the sense of satisfaction I had *anticipated so long* -- never came.

j) why? because *things* do not satisfy! *Things* do not bring

happiness – they only distract us for a time from the true longing of our hearts – which is for God.

- 9) Jesus said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for life does not consist in the abundance of one’s possessions” (Luke 12:15)
 - 10) while demonstrated most clearly in a child on Christmas morning, really, I don’t think we ever grow out of this!
 - 11) most of us know what it’s like to long for something and then once we acquire it to have that nagging sense that what we thought we’d find in the acquisition has proven itself illusive.
 - 12) there’s nothing like getting a brand new car or house; and while these things do provide a certain thrill – there’s still a nagging sense that we didn’t get it quite right!
 - 13) maybe it was a different model or color we needed or a different neighborhood!
 - 14) if we allow ourselves to think that *more* is the answer to our need, it will never be enough and we’ll spend our lives striving after the acquiring of things!
 - 15) so, first - a love of money leads to a life of *continual striving for more!*
- b. second, a love of money will inevitably *sour our relationships with others.*
- 1) they’ll sour because of the *inevitability of envy*
 - 2) as sure as night follows day, a love of money is followed by *jealousy*
 - 3) if I come to believe that happiness lies in the abundance or quality of my possessions, then whenever I see another who has more or better, I’ll become envious.
 - 4) I’ll envy others of their *possessions*, their *position*, and their *persons*; meaning the people in their lives, like their children, their mate, and their friends.
 - a) have you ever been envious of someone else because of the way their children behaved?
 - b) have you ever been jealous because of who they were married too?
 - c) have you ever looked across a room at someone talking to someone else and been envious that they weren’t chatting

it up with you?

- 5) *covetousness* – a *love of money*, is really a manifestation of our hunger for peace and an *abiding sense of satisfaction*.
- 6) once we start to realize *things* don't satisfy, we can be deceived into thinking it's position or people who will meet our craving for significance.
- 7) but again – they don't.
11. The writer tells us to not let our lifestyle fall into the trap of pursuing satisfaction through the acquiring of possessions, position, or people.
12. "Rather," he says . . .

be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

13. When we have God, we have *all* that we need.
 - a. the material things of life can decay, break or be stolen,
 - b. but *God* will never leave us nor forsake us.
14. The writer quotes two passages from the OT in which God promised His unfailing presence to His people. (Deut 31:6-8 & Joshua 1:5)
15. No doubt he was also thinking of Jesus' promise in Matt. 28:20, where He said He would be with us, even to the ends of the Earth and the age.
16. God will neither wander off, nor turn His back on us. He has pledged Himself as our Eternal Companion!
17. Therefore – we can be content with what we have, having utter confidence that what we have is what God has ordained for us at the *present* moment.
 - a. the future may indeed see more or less than we currently have
 - b. but the future, my future, your future is in *God's* good hands
 - c. for the *present*, God's presence means God's provision!
 - d. If He would give us HIMSELF to us, do we think He would withhold whatever else we genuinely NEED?
18. You and I are faced with a choice this morning:
 - a. *Contentment* or *Covetousness*!
 - b. now – understand that contentment is *not found* in our surroundings or circumstances.
 - c. that's the mistake we make – we think contentment comes by

- being in the right physical location; the right house, the right neighborhood, the right career, the right marriage, the right school, the right social level, the right vehicle – whatever.
- d. we cheat ourselves by thinking contentment is “*out there.*”
 - e. but contentment is not “out there” it’s “in here;” it’s a heart issue – a choice we make to *define our lives* by of our relationship with God rather than the world.
 - f. the story is told of a powerful and wealthy king who had sought long and hard to find contentment.
 - 1) frustrated, he finally called the best and wisest of his counselors together and asked them what he should do
 - 2) they told him he needed only to wear the shirt of a contented man!
 - 3) so the king called in his armies and sent them forth to search high and low till they discovered a contented man, and return with his shirt
 - 4) for a year they searched, and finally found the man they were looking for in a distant village.
 - 5) but he had no shirt!
 - g. the moral of the story is this – contentment is not found in possessions; it’s in resting in the knowledge that God possesses us and we by faith, possess Him!
19. You & I can be content today because God has given us a promise to abide with us.
20. And since we were MADE FOR HIM – HE IS ALL WE TRULY NEED!
21. If we have God, and we do, through faith in Jesus Christ – then we have everything we need.
22. The writer is telling his readers, if they already have the best, then why settle for less?
- a. let me use a rather silly example that ought to nevertheless get the point across
 - b. if I have a Sony 6 foot wide-screen HD plasma TV and a Nakamichi 7.1 Dolby digital THX theater system with Boston Acoustics speakers in my living room, am I going to long for a 9 inch black & white Samsung TV? NOT HARDLY!
23. Our faith in Christ has resulted in the eternal, unfailing presence of God!

- a. and God, by His very nature is perfect – perfect in all He is, including His provision of our needs!
 - b. we must pull our eyes off the world and put them on the Lord!
 - c. we must, as the writer says here, not allow the world’s way of living and thinking distract us from truth we have in Christ.
24. When Moses stood before the burning bush and asked God what His name was, God replied, “I am that I am!”
- a. there is so much conveyed in that name it staggers the imagination!
 - b. but one of the flavors, one of the shades of the way God stated His name means that He is the “*Becoming One*,” that He IS for us whatever we need!
 - c. if you’re sick, God is Healer; if you’re lonely, He is Friend
 - d. if you are hungry or thirsty, He is Provider
 - e. if you are needy, He is Satisfaction!
25. Friends, contentment is found in one and only one place – in the intimacy of fellowship with God.
- a. and that’s why we will never find lasting happiness or satisfaction in the things of this world – even the good things!
 - b. we were made for God and our souls are restless until they find their home in Him.
 - c. in Colossians 3:2, we’re told to set our minds on things above, not on things on this earth.
26. Here in Hebrews 13:5 he says -

be content with such things as you have.

- a. in Luke 12:30, Jesus said about food and clothing, “Your Father knows that you need these things.”
- b. God knows what we need long before we’re conscious of it.
- c. and He will move to ensure that we have what we *need*.
- d. He will provide our *needs*, but not our *greeds*!
- e. our faith in God must extend all the way to trusting that what we have is part of His plan for us.
- f. a lack of contentment is really a lack of faith in God
- g. it’s saying that we think we deserve *more* than we have and that God has somehow *overlooked* us and not supplied what we need.
- h. a lack of contentment hinders my being a good steward with

- what I *do have* because I refuse to see what I have as God's *allotment* to me.
- i. when I am busily looking around at what others have and comparing my pile to theirs, I'm not being diligent to how I can use what I *do have*!
 - j. those who lack contentment are always putting off faithfulness to the Lord to tomorrow, when they finally have enough for themselves.
27. I want to ask a question. I admit to you that it's a question that troubles me!
28. Are you content with what you have?
- a. are we really content this morning?
 - b. is God enough, or are we caught in the Modern American Christian Materialist Trap of defining my life by "God & . . ."; you fill in the blank.
 - 1) God & Career
 - 2) God & House
 - 3) God & School
 - 4) God & Whatever
29. I think that we face a battle with this the writer of this letter would find difficult to fathom.
- a. living in 21st Century America, the temptation to define our lives by the world's ways is even stronger.
 - b. the omnipresence of modern media means we are incessantly barraged with the message that if we will just *buy* this, *do* that, *go* there – *then* our quest to find happiness will be advanced.
 - c. if we use the right toothpaste, wear the right shoes, and drive the right car, the secret of success will be ours.
 - d. satisfaction comes in a package and costs 3 monthly payments of just \$19.95; call now, operators are standing by at 1-800-Don't Be A Loser!

B. He Says, We Say

- 5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

6 So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

1. Notice the link here
 - a. *because* He has said “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
 - b. we can *boldly* say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
2. Our lives are based on the Word of God.
 - a. our contentment is centered on His promise!
 - b. because God *has* spoken, we can live - boldly and confidently!
3. Here is God’s promise – “I am with you always! I will never leave you!”
4. So here’s what we can say as we get up each morning, “The Lord will help me today!”
 - a. here’s what we can say when we turn on the news and hear the latest report of anthrax – “I will not fear!”
 - b. when the warning comes of a possible terrorist attack – “What can man do to me?”
 - c. think about that – what can man, at his very worst, do to the Christian – kill them?
 - d. no – they can only send us to heaven!
5. Through Christ we’ve already overcome the *worst* this world can throw at us.
6. And no matter how dark it gets, no matter how deep the valley or stormy the sea, we have this promise still ringing in our ears – “I am with you.”
7. I love the story of the disciples on the Galilee Lake in the midst of the storm
 - a. they were panicking because the waves were sloshing over the sides and it seemed they might go down
 - b. but Jesus was fast asleep in the bow
 - c. in terror they finally woke Him up, desperate that He do something
 - d. He rebuked them saying, “Why are you so fearful - O you of little faith!”
 - e. then He turned and calmed the storm so that the waters were at immediate peace!
 - f. why the rebuke?
 - 1) isn’t it normal to fear a fierce storm?

- 2) maybe, but there ought to be no fear if Jesus is with me!
 - 3) did they really think there was a danger of drowning?
 - 4) they were in that boat, on that lake , in the midst of that storm because they were FOLLOWING JESUS!
 - 5) He's the one who told them to get in the boat in the first place and to go to the other side of the lake!
 - 6) but during the trip, they lost sight of Jesus and saw only the storm!
 - 7) and that's when the fear set in!
8. Friends, having Jesus present in your boat doesn't guarantee smooth sailing
 - a. but it does mean when the storms come, He will always move to make sure they never destroy us.
 - b. following Jesus isn't the promise of trouble-free days – but it is the promise you will make it safely to the shore of heaven.
 - c. because God had said, **“I will never leave you nor forsake you,”** Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-Nego could stand before the Babylonian King and boldly say, in effect - “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
 - d. for their boldness, they were thrown into the fiery furnace – and there they discovered the truth of God's presence!
 9. In v. 6, the writer quotes Psalm 118 which is a victory chant about God's deliverance from adversity.
 10. He says,

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

- a. what a great promise – the Lord is on my side!
- b. isn't that a comforting thing to know?
- c. do you ever feel like life is one long battle?
 - 1) it seems every day is another struggle
 - 2) we face a constant battle with the world, the flesh and the devil!
 - 3) it seems like the wind is always in our face and we wonder if it's ever going to let up
- d. it makes all the difference to realize that God is ONE OUR SIDE!
- e. I'm reminded of the story of Elisha and his servant

- 1) one morning the servant woke up and went outside to find the entire city surrounded by the armies of their enemies who had come to capture the prophet and take him to their king.
 - 2) he came running back in and woke his master saying, “Oh no – we’re surrounded. We’re doomed!”
 - 3) Elisha just rolled over and said, “Lord, open his eyes.” And went back to sleep.
 - 4) the servant went back out and then saw that a mighty army of angels encircled the enemies positions with multitudes *more* than the enemy force.
11. May God open our eyes to the fact that He is on our side and will provide the help we need.

C. The Helper

1. In John 14, Jesus said,

16 I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

2. Jesus was giving the promise of the Holy Spirit who would come to indwell them after His death and resurrection.
3. The Holy Spirit is our *Helper*, our Advocate, our Comforter, who takes up residence in us the moment we turn to faith in Jesus Christ.
4. It was Ben Franklin who wrote, "God helps those who help themselves," in the *Poor Richard's Almanac*.
 - a. he couldn't have known that the phrase would still be used over 200 years later
 - b. many people quoting it as though it came from the Bible.
5. It leads us to a good question - Whom does God help? Who gets His assistance?
 - a. does God help those who help themselves –
 - b. or does He help the helpless and leave all those who *can* to help themselves?
 - c. God helps those who cast themselves in complete dependence

- on Him!
- d. He defends those who leave their defense to Him
 - e. He rescues those who cry out to Him
 - f. He provides for those who look to Him as Provider.
 - g. and He becomes the *satisfaction* for all those who look to Him and Him alone for contentment!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Mural*

1. It seems that the choice between contentment and covetousness is a constant struggle for the people of God.
2. I say that because of the frequency with which we are confronted with it in scripture.
3. The prohibition against coveting is one of the 10 Commandments
4. The OT is filled with stories of men and women who coveted and the devastating fruit it bore
5. Jesus regularly challenged his hearers with choosing which master they would serve, God or mammon.
6. The NT letters are filled with warnings against the love of money and the deceitfulness of riches.
7. The Apostle Paul even claimed that he thought he was a righteous man by the measure of the law until he read the command not to covet, then he realized how desperately wicked his own heart was! (Romans 7:7)
8. So I realize when I preach a message on covetousness – living as we do in an age that’s bombarded by advertising whose whole aim is to incite desire and move us to define our lives by the abundance of our possessions – that I’m much like a dentist who’s touching a raw nerve.
9. If you find yourself uncomfortable this morning, don’t be angry at me – recognize the work of the Spirit doing some heart surgery.
10. I was thinking about this and an analogy came to mind
 - a. picture an artist whose spent every day of three years of his life painting a fabulous mural on a brick wall.
 - b. then one day along comes a guy who tells the artist, “This wall is coming down in a week. The City has plans to turn this lot into a park and this wall has to go.”

- c. that artist is going to be crushed and angry!
- d. but would it be just for him to be angry at the man who told him his continuing labor is pointless seeing as to how it's a waste of time?
- e. no – he's just a messenger, and if the artist is smart, he'll cease his efforts and invest them in something worthwhile, something lasting!

B. Investing

1. What are you investing in? What are you living for?
2. Are you painting a masterpiece on a brick wall that is destined for the scrap heap?
3. Is your life centered on making your pile of stuff higher, newer, with better brand names?
4. This word is sent to us today as the message that in the final analysis only one thing is worth living for and that is the Lord.
5. The time, talent, and treasure each of us has can be invested in the temporal or the eternal.
6. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and rust decay and where thieves can break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and rust cannot decay and where thieves cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

[\[1\]](#) John MacArthur's comments