

Content In Christ

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Introduction

Paul continues to give guidance and instructions to young Timothy. The chapter began with instructions to slaves and masters (vv.1-2) and warnings about troublemakers and false teachers (vv.3-5) and now broad instructions to all and eventually to the rich (vv.6-19). Paul wrote of the false teachers who suppose that godliness is a means of gain (v.5)—and will contrast that thought—godliness as a means of gain—with the thought of godliness as a means of contentment (v.6). Paul has already written (1 Timothy 4:7); “But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness” or *discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness*”. *Exercise or discipline yourself toward godliness*. In the original language the word exercise mean to be ‘oriented toward godliness—that is structured, set up, organized, toward the goal of godliness.

Why bring this up? Because godliness requires training, discipline. We are to develop the inner qualities and virtues that reflect the fruit of the Spirit and the character of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit and the character of Christ must express itself in how we relate to God and others.

Paul warns that people who want to use godliness as a means of physical and financial gain **will remain discontent. Money doesn’t bring contentment. Christ brings contentment. A godly life is a contented life.**

Paul told the Philippians from jail, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11 KJV).

In the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans they had a sense of what constituted “contentment”. In that world as well as our own contentment meant self-sufficiency. Paul clearly does not believe that. Our sufficiency is not in self but in Christ. Paul’s repeated declaration is that sufficiency is found in the Lord Jesus; “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13).

Godliness: Contentment’s Secret And Source (v.6)

1 Timothy 6:6–10 (NKJV)6Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

What does Paul mean when he uses the term godliness? I think Paul means actions consistent with God’s character and Christ’s work. The Lord called Joshua and David men after His own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14). We might find some insight by thinking about **godlessness**.

Godlessness is the absence of God and the absence of goodness. Godliness incorporates Christ-likeness and God-centeredness which leads to a God honoring life-style.

Steve Brown used to say; “A little is as much as a lot, if it is enough.”

“Contentment is a pearl of great price, and whoever procures it at the expense of ten thousand desires makes a wise and happy choice” (John Balguy).

The word contentment (*autarkeias*) means to be completely sufficient—to need absolutely nothing. It means to be fulfilled, satisfied, complete.

Paul provides the secret of contentment; godliness—coupled with contentment fulfills, satisfies, makes complete is sufficient.

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The Life Application Bible Commentary (1&2 Timothy & Titus) adds:

“To have *contentment* in Christ requires four decisions about the events and possessions of our life”

- (1) We must focus on what God has already allowed us to have.
- (2) We must disregard what we do not have.
- (3) We must refuse to covet what others may have.
- (4) We must give thanks to God for each and all of his gifts (4:3-4).

The writer adds; “If we fail to make these decisions, our contentment will diminish” (see p.123).

Focus On What You Have In Christ

What is it that God has allowed us to have? Health? Wealth? Material provisions? But what if our focus becomes what God has given us in Christ Jesus the Lord? We are forgiven of our sins in Christ (Eph.1:6-8). We are reconciled with God in Christ (Rom.5:10). I am known by God, redeemed by God, bought with a price and belong to God. I am saved, accepted, free, secure, sealed.

Forget What You Don't Have

Saint John of the Cross was a Spanish Catholic mystic who was a major figure in the counter-reformation movement (b.1542-d.1591). He wrote; “The children of Israel did not find in the manna all the sweetness and strength they might have found in it; not because the manna did not contain them, but because they longed for meat.”

We easily forget what we have when we long for what we don't have.

Forsake Covetousness

Covetousness is wanting more and more of what you already have enough of—it is the desire to have what others have—and you somehow feel less because of what they have. We are right to be content with what we have—and we are wrong to lust after what others possess.

Forever Thank God For His Gifts

Magnify the Lord. Praise Him. Give Him thanks.

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The false prophets were preoccupied with “useless wrangling of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (v.5). Spiritual gain? No! Financial gain and personal enrichment? Yes. “From such withdraw yourself.”

What motivated the false prophets? Financial gain. Earthly profits. All these things would be left behind. **What brings great gain? Great gain comes from those values that have eternal qualities.** “When material treasures become our focus, we quit contributing to our eternal accounts. Whatever gains we may experience in this life mean nothing if they cause us eternal bankruptcy (see Matthew 6:19-24)” (ibid).

Necessities: Contentment’s Satisfaction (vv.7-8)

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

Paul clubs the false prophet with hard facts. You brought nothing into this world. You will not be able to transfer your wealth or assets into the next world. Kings and Pharaohs may have demanded that their servants and treasures be buried with them. But make no mistake—gold and silver will not make the journey with you.

If it had a beginning it will have an end. Money, houses, land, clothing, cars, treasures, jewels, won’t last. If it can be broken, stolen, burned, or ruined we can’t take it with us.

We are born into this world naked and vulnerable and helpless. We have two things; our bodies and our souls. We rely on parents to feed us, cloth us and change us. And there is a certain exit—a journey towards our death. We exit the world the same we entered it. Our body remains and our soul returns to the God who made us.

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

In between birth and death we have our life.

There are luxuries and there are necessities.

We need food and clothing (KJV raiment—literally covering). I think it applies to physical clothing and shelter—but also there is a profound sense of covering for sin and guilt. We don’t really need anything else. Others might argue—not so. We require what sustains life. Matthew Henry long ago wrote;

“If a man (has) . . . enough to carry him through (this world) he needs desire no more, his godliness. . . will be his great gain.” “Godliness is itself great gain; it is profitable to all things”.

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“Wherever there is true godliness, there will be contentment.” “Christian contentment. . . is all the wealth in the world.” “All truly godly people have learned with Paul: “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content” (Matthew Henry VOL 6, p.828).

William Barclay adds;

“It is not that Christianity pleads for poverty. There is no special virtue in being poor, and no happiness in having a constant struggle to make ends meet. But Christianity does plead for two things.

1. It pleads for the realization that it is never in the power of things to bring happiness.
2. It pleads for the concentration upon the things which are permanent, the things that a man can take with him when in the end he dies.

I heard the bizarre story of a king who was suffering from a malady and was advised by his astrologist that he would be cured if the shirt of a contented man was brought for him to wear. People searched the far reaches of the king’s kingdom to find such a man—and after a long and difficult search they found someone truly happy and content. But he didn’t even possess a shirt!

Riches: Contentment’s Sorrow (vv.9-10)

9But 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.

Have you ever said, “I want to be rich.” “I want to win the lotto”. “I want to earn a billion dollars” (a million just doesn’t buy what it used to)?

Here the emphasis is on those who “desire riches”. The contrast of course is between a desire for godliness verses a desire for riches. Does godliness lead to riches or do riches lead to godliness?

Paul says “but those who desire (read *will*) to be rich.” In what sense? Their first preoccupation is not with Christ but with money. The person who desires to be rich or wills to be rich is the person who begins their day and ends their day with how to make more money. **The vast majority of their attention is directed towards securing wealth, managing wealth, maintaining wealth. Their attention begins with wealth and invariably ends with wealth.**

This person will invariably fall into temptation and a snare (read trap).

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2 Corinthians 8:9; For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

10For 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.

Read the text. The love of money is not the root of all evil. The love of money is *a root of all kinds of evil*. Some suggest that money is neutral—it is neither good or bad—but that is probably not true. **Does money contain within it something inherently corrupt, broken, defiled? What is money?** Jesus called money “Unrighteous mammon” (Luke 16:9, 11). Paul called it filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7,11).

We know that money can be used to meet needs to further the gospel. We also know that it can become the focus and fascination of people to the point where Christ, the gospel and eternal matters simply fade away. All ten commandments can easily be broken over the issue of money. For the love of money and desire for it—to have it—and what it promises to give—people have denied God, blasphemed His name, stolen, lied, murdered, committed adultery, and the list goes on and on.

Some have strayed from the faith—in their greediness—and pierced themselves through with many sorrows—the image is pricking your finger on a thorn—or piercing your foot with a nail—or lancing a part of the body with a spear! A lust for material things makes it easy to wander off the beaten path of discipleship. **The person in love with money looks for pleasure but often finds pain and sorrow.**

Abraham Lincoln was certainly no theologian. He said, “You can tell what God thinks of money when you see the people he give it to.”

Conclusion

John Wesley famous said about money; “Get all you can, save all you can and give all you can.”