

Sacrifices Pleasing to God: Contentment (Hebrews 13:5, 6)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (2/18/2018)

Introduction

1. We repeat: the exhortations of 13:1–17 are not just closing comments but guidance for Christ’s priest-kings in offering to God acceptable worship (12:28) in His new covenant temple, the church.
2. Acceptable worship centers on continuing brotherly love as instigated under the old covenant (Leviticus 19:18). The evidence of our love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5) is our love for those who bear His image (1 John 5:1).
3. The apostle lists two great evils that block our ability to love others and show Christ-like compassion to those in need—*moral uncleanness* (v. 4) and *covetousness* (vv. 5, 6). The biblical remedy for moral uncleanness is honoring biblical marriage and not defiling the marriage bed.
4. Today we take up the second evil, *covetousness*, and its biblical remedy, *contentment*.

I. The Vice Forbidden

The apostle employs a word play that is missed in the English translation altogether.

A. Brotherly love is opposed by the love of silver—*philadelphia* vs *philargyria*.

1. The scope of meaning for both terms is also much broader than at first glance.
 - a. Brotherly love is a *mental state*, not just warm feelings toward a close family member or friend. It involves the desire to render sacrificial obedience to Christ in living out kingdom principles in this fallen world. Brotherly love demonstrates God’s own compassion to those damaged by the evils of sin—suffering and oppression.
 - b. The love of silver (see also 1 Timothy 3:3) is also a mental state, not just lusting after money or material wealth. The AV has it, “*Let your conversation (manner of living) be without covetousness.*” (See 1 Peter 1:15 and Philippians 1:27.)
2. Believers are not to let covetousness rule the heart and regulate life.
 - a. Covetousness is defined as an *abnormal* dissatisfaction with one’s life and possessions. This issue is very tricky because ambition is not wrong if it is Spirit-driven desire to serve God by doing His will. On the other hand, contentment with one’s lot is not necessarily good if it is the fruit of selfishness, laziness, and oppressive reverse pride.
 - b. An inordinate love of money and things creates a discontentment that leads to obsessing over what one would like to have.

B. This sin is clearly condemned in Scripture as vile (Exodus 20:17; Psalm 10:3; Luke 12:15; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; James 4:2).

II. The Virtue Enjoined

The apostle argues that the remedy for covetousness is spiritual contentment. Not only are we to keep our lives free from covetousness but we are also to be content with what we have.

- A. One who pursues a godly and holy life through the Word and Spirit will be content because he knows that he is in the will of God.
1. What he has is what God has provided and that is all he needs (Psalm 81:16; Isaiah 58:10, 11; Matthew 5:6; Philippians 4:11–13, 18, 19).
 2. Paul’s testimony of Christ’s sufficiency must be our testimony as well (Philippians 4:11–13, 18, 19).
- B. The wonderful and powerful truth that is the foundation of Christian contentment is the promise of Jesus, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
1. If I have Jesus, I have everything; but if I have all the wealth, power, and honor that the world could give without Jesus, I have nothing at all.
 2. Christian contentment also gives one full confidence based on the testimony of God’s Word: *“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* (quoting Psalm 118:6).

What can we take away?

1. The school shootings that have taken place are a symptom of the consequences of sin that have resulted in the destruction of our culture. Last week we spoke of the sins that destroy marriage and the home. We witness these consequences on the culture in the nightly news. Satan has destroyed the culture with broken homes and neglected kids. Gun control is not the answer, restoring the culture is. That will be done through rebuilding Spirit run churches through whom God can restore the culture based on the Christian faith, strong families and sanctified marriages.
2. The enemy is also destroying the church with covetousness. People are working themselves to death because they want the latest things—a bigger house, better clothes, new boats and campers, or whatever. Everyone has to keep up with the Joneses. Credit cards are maxed out, so both parents work two or three jobs. Parents have little time for family, and where does that leave the church? On top of that, the churches are caught in the vicious cycle of having to get more—bigger crowds, better facilities, and all that that costs. So the truth is compromised and dependence on God is abandoned for better entertainment, all for the purpose of keeping folks coming. There is no power from heaven and no influence over the culture. So, we have school shootings.
3. Can we trust Him who said *“I will never leave you or forsake you?”* Can we believe God when He said that He *“will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus?”*

“Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money (philargyria) is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:6–10).