

# Godliness With Contentment – Part 3

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy regarding the importance of contentment in godliness
2. aim – to cause us to understand that contentment is an important characteristic of godliness
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:1-10

### b. outline

1. Contentment for Slaves (1 Timothy 6:1-2a)
2. Contentment as a Doctrinal Matter (1 Timothy 6:2b-5)
3. Contentment in Material Matters (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

### c. opening

1. the difficulty of preaching about **contentment** in an age of discontentment
  - a. everything around us *screams* that we should be discontent:
    1. **e.g.** advertising (driving us from what we have to what we should *want*)
    2. **e.g.** social media (driving us to comment on every *imaginable* circumstance of life)
    3. **e.g.** politics (driving us to find offense in every position that doesn't match ours *perfectly*)
  - b. because:
    1. we live in a world that is *fallen, corrupted* in every way by sin and evil, and ...
    2. we are *physical creatures*, utterly *dependent* on the material world for survival, thus ...
    3. we have a strong tendency to migrate *in focus* from what we *need* to what we *want*
  - c. **e.g.** Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), *Wall Street*, 1987: “greed, for lack of a better word, is good” – the impulse that drives us to want more, thus exerting the effort to better our condition
    1. all fine *if explored under the creation mandate of God (i.e. Genesis 1)*, but horrible when extended by sinful men into a constant state of displeasure
    2. **LOW**: discontentment is common in a world of sin – it permeates every aspect of the human experience in a fallen world, *even within the church herself*
2. **thesis: contentment is a vital characteristic of godliness – to be godly is to have a strong sense of contentment in the circumstances God has ordained over you (note v. 6)**
  - a. **godliness** = an understanding and respect of God that affects the way a person lives; a sense of reverence for God that works itself out in a life of piety and devotion; a strong sense of the holiness of God that causes one to want to “imitate” him in all of life (**i.e.** the nature of being *godly*)
  - b. Paul will insist that a *correct* definition of godliness must include a strong sense of contentment – to truly understand and respect God is to recognize his *sovereignty* over the circumstances of life, and **choose to be content in them**
    1. **in vv. 1-2a**, Paul intimates that slaves should act in a way that demonstrates they are *content* in their situation, honoring their masters, especially those masters who are believers (like them)
    2. **in vv. 2b-5**, Paul explains that contentment has a strong *doctrinal component* – our state of contentment in life stems from our understanding of the things of God *as they are revealed*
      - a. **e.g.** the false teachers believe that their “teachings” are a means that can produce “*gain*” for them – they can “satisfy” their discontentment (or yours!) through means other than the doctrinal or theological components of the apostolic message
    3. **(now) in vv. 6-10**, Paul confronts the most *obvious* area of discontentment that we face

## III. Contentment in Material Matters (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

### Content

#### a. the contrast of contentment (v. 6)

1. **note**: the textual variant in the KJV and NKJV: “*from such withdraw thyself*”
  - a. most modern translations *do not* include the phrase (or even a footnote) – they assume from *older* manuscripts that the phrase is not original
  - b. however, the “spirit” of the indicative would be in keeping with the intention of the Apostle, even if it was later added by a scribe as simply a “commentary” on the verse
  - c. so, even though it is difficult to know if it is *original*, the inclusion (or non-inclusion) of the phrase does not alter the basic assumption of the paragraph: avoid people who are in it for the money!

2. Paul will use a *slight* play-on-words between **vv. 5-6** to make a point
  - a. both verses use the Greek words for “godliness” (*eusebeia*) and “gain” (*porismon*)
  - b. however, the *addition* of the word “contentment” changes the connotation of **v. 6** entirely:
    1. **in v. 5**, Paul uses “gain” pejoratively – a *form of gain* that is inconsistent with being a Christian
      - a. **i.e.** gain that is entirely *material*; gain that is entirely *selfish* (or *greedy*)
    2. **in v. 6**, Paul uses “gain” positively – a “*great*” form of gain that Christians should be all about
      - a. **i.e.** gain that is entirely *spiritual*; gain that is entirely *good* in the sight of God
  - c. it is the inclusion of “*with contentment*” that makes the point: a reverence for God (godliness) that is willing to accept *whatever* has been ordained by God rather than a *form* of religion (“godliness”) that is constantly pursuing what is “better”
    1. **IOW: contentment is a vital characteristic of true, biblical, Christ-honoring godliness**
- b. the elements of contentment (vv. 7-8)**
  1. **question:** so, what should this contentment look like – how it is **defined**?
  2. Paul gives in **v. 7** one of the most *obvious statements of truth* ever printed on paper:
    - a. something so **obvious** that it shouldn’t even have to be said ...
    - b. specifically, we brought nothing *material* with us into this world, and we can take nothing *material* with us out of this world (**e.g.** you never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul; bags of **paving material**)
      1. true, there are many born into wealth and privilege, but that wealth *was already here*
      2. and, in death, we leave *everything material behind* – even our own bodies to the grave
    - c. however ... is there something *greater* “under” this verse that Paul may be driving at?
      1. a Christian worldview sees human beings (**see above**) as physical creatures, created from the dust of the ground and endowed with the *Imago Dei* – *both mortal and immortal*
      2. in death, the mortal and immortal, body and soul, *are ripped apart* – it is an “unnatural” severing of the two intertwined elements of human existence (the curse of sin upon Adam and his race)
      3. upon dying, we bring only one (1) thing with us into the presence of God: the **state of our immortal soul** – our material bodies fall back to the dust of the ground
        - a. either we bring a soul that remains in utter rebellion and hatred towards God, or one that has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, that loves God and pursues knowledge of him
      4. there was only One who was able to bring *both* into the presence of God: Jesus was able to bring *both* his immortal soul *and* his body (now made immortal) to the right hand of God
        - a. because he was obedient to the *Council of Peace* between himself and the Father, Jesus was *vindicated* in both body and soul at his resurrection – he brought both at his ascension
        - b. a Christian worldview holds a high view of the *resurrection of the body*, since that will be the moment in which God restores the immortal soul to an *immortal* body in which we live forever
      5. so ... *on this side of the day of resurrection*, everything that we pursue that is *material* will be left behind in death – it is an *utter waste of focus* to pursue *material “gain”* only to leave it behind
        - a. **IOW:** our focus (as believers) should be *on the things of God* rather than on the things of this world – the only thing that matters is the state of our soul
    3. Paul gives in v. 8 one of the *difficult statements of truth* ever given to Christians
      - a. the “*we*” confirms that Paul assumes the statement applies to *believers*
        1. Paul had experienced a number of times when he had to learn contentment (**Phil. 4:11-13**)
 

*“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things [i.e. be content] through him who strengthens me.”*
        2. so, Paul states this as though it applies to followers of Jesus *unquestioningly*
      - b. namely, that our *material lives* should be so focused on eternal matters that we are “concerned” only about our basic needs – everything else is unimportant (as was Christ; **Matt. 8:20**)
 

*“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”*
    4. these verses are a “commentary” on several statements of Jesus himself on wealth and spirituality:
      - a. **Matt. 16:24** – “*what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*”
      - b. **Matt. 6:19** – “*do not lay up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy ...*”
      - c. **Luke 16:13** – “*no servant can serve two masters ... you cannot serve God and money*”
      - d. **Matt. 19:24** – “*it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man ...*”
    5. **principle: it is the pursuit of the eternal that matters – material contentment is a vital characteristic of the soul that loves God**
  - c. the lure away from contentment (vv. 9-10)**
    1. the “*desire to be rich*” is one of the strongest “pulls” on fallen material beings in this world
      - a. (**see above**) the tendency of sinners to migrate from what we *need* to what we *want*

- b. **clarification:** Paul (nor Jesus) does not specifically condemn wealth itself – money is simply an *amoral thing* – in and of itself, it is not evil – what makes it evil is our *intention towards it* (i.e. to focus more on wealth than on God)
  - 1. Paul does not say in v. 9 “to be rich” is in error, rather the “*desire*” to be rich
  - 2. Paul does not say in v. 10 “*money is the root*” of evil, rather the “*love of*” money
- 2. the “*desire to be rich*” and the “*love of money*” is a great **lure** away from the things of God
  - a. into “*temptation*” = unnatural desires never intended to be good for humanity
  - b. into “*a snare*” = trapped in the endless cycle of *procure* and *protect*
  - c. into “*senseless and harmful desires*” = *additional* forms of sinfulness that come from being wealthy
  - d. into “*ruin and destruction*” = the loss of both *material* things and *eternal* things (**Matt. 16:24**)
  - e. into “*all kinds of evil*” = all of these things that lure the wealthy away from godliness to sin
  - f. into “*wandering away from the faith*” = having abandoned the gospel to pursue wealth (apostasy)
    - 1. **note:** Paul is *probably* thinking in this statement of the false teachers at Ephesus (**see 1:19**)
  - g. into “*pierced with many pangs*” = now living a life filled with anxiety, worry, sorrow, loss
- 5. **principle: it is the pursuit of the eternal that matters – to love the material things of this world is not true contentment, and it is not characteristic of the soul that loves God**