

Contentment is Gain

Let us turn to our Bibles, to 1 Timothy chapter six. 1 Timothy chapter six. Verses six through 11.

Let us listen attentively to the word of God, verse six. Now God in this with contentment is great gain. For he brought nothing into this world and is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, who has drowned man in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith and their greediness, and pierced themselves through it with many sorrows.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness and godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Let us pray. Lord God Almighty, may your spirit be upon us in a special manner, Lord, as we go through these verses and meditate and contemplate for ourselves, God, and not for one another as much, because we live in a day and age which we have so much prosperity in the American system, Lord, that I believe that we're all within the bounds of temptation here to always strive for more, more prosperity, more riches, more goodness in the things of this world.

Protect us, we pray, God, from such greed and lust. May these verses help redirect us and cement our path towards heaven, the path of godliness, we pray, amen. Why is America in unprecedented national debt? Why is the average American in so much debt themselves? It's been going up and up.

Studies show that the middle class that we think of, that's not so rich they don't have to work, nor so poor that they have to work all the time, they're in the middle, is shrinking quickly, especially if you add in debt, the amount of debt the average middle-class family is in. Why do businesses keep pushing for cheap labor? There are many reasons. That's true, sometimes there's not enough work, but one consistent reason I think we can all agree with, on the American scene at least, is greed.

Greed for the worker, greed for the employee, the employer, greed for the American, the sellers, the buyers, greedy government. Another way to look at this is describe the problem as discontentment, a lack of satisfaction where they are in God's providence. Many were not simply content with having less, a nice house, why not a better house, a bigger house, a more comfortable retirement than ever before, why not a cushy one instead? Why not more income? Why not squeeze out more of our workers, more of our bosses, or whatever the case is, whatever situation so many Americans find themselves in? We especially see it, of course, in advertisement, over and over again, you should be satisfied with what you have, buy our product, we know why, because they want your money, and you want that product, and so greed feeds upon greed.

Lack of satisfaction and contentment, and it's a problem within the church. We are Americans, being born again doesn't change that, we live in the American scene, in the context, which is capitalism, and it has much good to commend it, I grant, but there's this

danger of being consumed by consumerism. Wanting and going after and striving, never being satisfied, we're gonna talk about that, because this is what Paul is highlighting here.

Godly Contentment

So the first point, godly contentment, verses six through eight. Now godliness and contentment is great gain, and he gives a few reasons. We brought nothing into this world, and having food and clothing, we shall be content.

In the background here, verses three through five, it's about unwholesome teachers, false teachers in particular, verses three through four, full of bad fruit, contention, striving over words instead of substance. And in fact, he says specifically here, useless wranglings, verse five, of men corrupted minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose, who's the who, these teachers especially, but not necessarily teachers, suppose that godliness is a means of gain. They're gonna use their position in the church for profit.

Teachers turning their spiritual goals into temporary ones only. It's not about helping the church and the federal Christians, but making money, and the public accolades, perhaps, the gain of reputation. The word gain there is especially about monetary gain, but not exclusively.

Other kinds of wealth, material wealth in particular, but we know the heart of man goes even beyond that. So turning the Christian life, in other words, of godliness into godliness itself, now being a vehicle towards wealth. Godliness should be the goal instead, especially as public leaders.

We may describe such leaders, pastors, with the description of careerism. It's just a job for them, to make money. And I think of televangelists typically, when I run across this idea of greed, and avarice, and the like.

We all remember those from the 80s, maybe the 90s. I don't think there's many right now these days. There's a few who are big names, and it seems over and over again they get caught in a scandal, showing they really weren't into what it meant to be a pastor.

Something else was going on, and often it seems to be about money, about prosperity, about wealth. And even, of course, smaller churches can run across this problem, because the problem begins in the heart. I can't imagine they had megachurches back then the way we did now.

They didn't have access to large buildings other than maybe a rich person who had an upper room that you could put 120 people, probably got crammed into that. They didn't have these massive stadiums, but they still had the problem, because it comes down to the heart of man. He does not repent and follow after godliness instead of gain.

As I mentioned before, in particular for other types of pastors who think it's just a job, so in that sense, it's money, but not about the wealth, per se, because the vast majority of churches, maybe not aware of this, I want to say, last I remember, 80, 85%, are under 100

members. Very small, comparatively. You're not gonna make a lot of money that way, but you can still have a problem as a pastor and make the job as merely about gain.

It's just another way to make money. Even if I don't make a lot of money, I'm not really concerned about the godliness as much as I have a job, right? Maybe they like the prestige, in their circles they were taught being a pastor is very prestigious or something. And so they can give good sermons, maybe even some good advice, but at the end of the day, it turns out to be superficial because it was about gain, about their personal advantage, or about just raw money and greed.

And it has happened in various churches. I recall running across a description of this, it was quite sad to read this, in a confessional church in which the pastor was caught as a treasurer. And he wasn't a good treasurer.

And money was missing. And the guy who wrote about this already had problems before from another church, and he goes to this church and finds this. Can you imagine what it does to his faith to see that? It happens today, brothers and sisters.

It's really something. So he gives a reason again for, in favor of, right? You can see, I hope, the play on ideas or words here who suppose that godliness is a means, a vehicle towards a greater goal in their minds, which is gain and prosperity and money and material wealth. He says, rather, godliness with contentment.

That's gain, that's prosperity, that's the good stuff. That's what he's saying. And he gives two reasons.

The first reason is biological, the mere existence and how we find ourselves. You are born with nothing. Our baby over here knows this.

Her birthday's coming up. A year ago, she was born and had nothing. Nothing of her own.

We were, for we brought nothing into this world and asserted that we'd carry nothing out. The Egyptian pharaohs thought they could carry something out as you know, their graves have all their best stuff and their spouses and their best servant at their feet, buried at their feet, perhaps, in gold and whatnot to appease the gods and the demons. And it's still here.

We all get to see it and dig it up and say, that's pretty cool, neat stuff. That's it, can't take it with you. This alone should be sufficient motivation to squish the lust for wealth.

Now Paul used this point, shows how deep into the well of avarice and lust the public teachers fell into that he had to make this kind of argument. So remember, when you read the Bible, you don't always see the whole picture so far as we don't know exactly what they're teaching. We just know what Paul's saying about what they're teaching and how bad it is.

And when he gives such a strong argument, it shows how bad the situation is because clearly Paul isn't saying, who cares what you have since you can't bring anything with you to heaven? Why bother? Does he really believe? No one believes he believes that. And so this

emphatic argument has a specific audience, in other words. Those who are drowning in greed.

People have said, oh, you want a newer car that works? Why are you not satisfied with the clunker even though it breaks down every other day? Because you care about your family and you need a job. That's why. So people, in other words, misuse this kind of thinking and this rhetoric that Paul is arguing with.

That's why I was pointing out, what is this audience? People drowning in greed. There are degrees of heinousness of sin, right? There are degrees of greed. Person going into debt and bringing their family into debt for the rest of their life and they can never retire because they wanna make that fast buck at gambling.

That's a terrible thing. It's a serious habit, bad habit. And they bring their house into foreclosure and everything else.

That's a lot worse than somebody who's really into buying a lot of clothes and the house and you still have the money, you're still not in debt, but it's still greed. Still lust. The effects of one and the degree and the depth of the other are almost worlds apart.

So Paul is correcting the wrong goal or aim. Clearly, that man's life was obsessed with making a fast buck in gambling, living on the edge, perhaps. There's different, again, I've pointed this out before.

There's lots of different reasons why people do certain sins. Whereas the other person just has this one little area where they're struggling with, I'm a clothes horse, I buy too many things. I should slow down with this stuff.

Materialism. One place, the one guy has a lot of materialism. Has it as virtually his only aim in life.

That's a problem, that's a big problem in comparison. So Paul has to bring out the big arguments, in other words, and says, look it, put things in perspective. You're gonna lose it all.

None of this is going with you to heaven. Second reason, verse eight. Having food and clothing with these, we shall be content.

Now he means basic necessities. He doesn't mean just only food and clothing. He also means, obviously, water.

Some way to make and get access to the water. That is, my body's healthy, so health is involved in here as well. Be thankful that you have a healthy enough body that you can get food and water and clothing.

Of course he means that. He's using these as two simple ways of describing some basic things of life to tamp down the excesses of desire of these leaders, or any Christians for that

matter. Public officers using the job as merely a pathway to prestige or gain or money or wealth, to more money and the like, is a big problem that needs to be shut down this way.

If this is all we have by the hand of God, Paul is saying, that should be sufficient. But if we have more, we should thank him for that. Because Paul had more.

He had some money. He had friends. Friends that aren't listed here.

You could die alone in the desert, but you still have Jesus. But he gave him more. His point is, you should be satisfied with where you are.

And they were not satisfied. And so we need this reminder, however. Don't think, well, I'm not the guy going into debt and putting my house in the foreclosure because of my lust and greed for material gain by gambling or whatever it is that you are doing with your money.

We're all, as Americans, I think, just swimming in this stuff. It's everywhere. A little here, a little there.

All the advertisements, the books. The movies assume this. Not as bad or as deep as this problem, perhaps.

I think that's the case, and I pray it is so. But nevertheless, we need the correction, a reminder. Correction should be proportional to the error.

That's why Paul brings out these strong arguments. I'm not going to hammer you therein unless it becomes really bad. We have a sessional visit and say, why is your house in foreclosure? Get your priorities straight, buddy.

What's going on here? Nevertheless, we need this lesson, brothers and sisters, do not forget this. Meditate upon these verses and think about them when you are struggling with too many clothes, too many cars, too many computers. We shall be content in having food and clothing, verse eight, with these we shall be content.

What is contentment, you're going to ask? Contentment, of course, is there in the 10th commandment by negation, as almost every commandment is. We read, you shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

So my negation is saying, don't be dissatisfied with what you have and wanting other things that other people have. Coveting, that's excessive lust and desire for things that are not yours. That is wrong.

The opposite, however, of greed, covetousness, discontentment is contentment. Satisfaction with one's lawful place in God's providence. Satisfaction is the idea of rest, cheerful acceptance, lawful according to the word of God.

If you're in sin, you should not be satisfied living in sin. You should not be satisfied with an ungodly job. It's never the case.

It's your place that is the calling and method in one's domain in life. There, here, I have a helpful summary. The Eastern Bible Dictionary, which was written in the late 1800s, you can find it online for free.

It's written by a Presbyterian. So he'll talk about the covenant of grace. You can look it up in there and the like that you won't get in modern Bible dictionaries that are now a cooperation between dispensationalists and other people.

They'll mention it, but it's kind of like, along with this view is another view. No, this is, everything I've read in the Bible Eastern Dictionary is pretty good. He has here about contentment and satisfaction.

A state of mind in which one's desires are confined to his lot, whatever it may be. 1 Timothy 6.6 is one of his proof texts, of course. It is opposed to envy, avarice, ambition, anxiety, and repining, complaining, dissatisfaction.

It arises from the inward disposition and is the offspring of humility and of an intelligent consideration of the rectitude and the benignity, that is the goodness, of divine providence for us. Meditating and thinking upon how the Lord God has indeed brought us into this world and has given us, as we know, even more than food and clothing. And thus we should be satisfied.

An illustration, it's hard to think what we do in possible situations of difficulties that we are called to be satisfied with. So clearly the idea, the opposite of being greedy is to be satisfied with your lack of prosperity. Or goodness, if you go a little further than material prosperity, just peace and goodness and things around us, is satisfaction in our situation.

Christ has shown us his contentment with following the Lord's will to the cross. The apostles in the prison were content in saying psalms to the Lord God Almighty. And those prisons are not like our prisons.

They were showing contentment. They were showing acceptance of being in a situation where there is not prosperity. Material goods are now lost and gone and taken away.

Their rights are trampled on. And they praise God anyways, because they knew they were being persecuted for trusting in Jesus and preaching his name. For being good citizens, in fact.

As we know, all Christians strive to be good citizens. To the less severe things, troubles at church, at your work, where you end up being the one picking up all the slack, perhaps. There's an old, I don't remember the name of the guy who discovered it, more or less, but the old adage is 80%, 20% do 80% of the work.

You're like, what's the other 80% doing? It's a problem, isn't it? It's frustrating, isn't it? That's not very prosperous. There's a lot more work for you. It's a trouble, it's a hardship, but you must be content and be a good worker as unto the Lord and not unto man.

So there's a range, as we talked about in Sunday's class, of troubles and hardships, and we're called to be content whenever our lot is that we are locked in in God's providence. Because that's what we're specifically talking about. Because you can change things.

Paul changed things. He got beaten and he said, how dare you beat me? I'm a Roman citizen. I'm appealing to Caesar.

I mean, the guys were scared spitless because you can get some serious trouble beating a Roman citizen back then. But not like today. They didn't mess around when it came to the law of the land.

I mean, they brought serious punishment. You can say, Paul wasn't satisfied. I don't believe that for a minute.

I don't think anybody does. In other words, there's a time and place not to be satisfied, in this case with an injustice that's harming the preaching of the gospel, because that was his point. He wanted to preach and go further, and he was hoping maybe he could preach to Caesar maybe.

So you can change your lot in life. That's not my point here. But when you can't, and even when you can, you might be impatient with getting to that goal.

Be patient, it's a fruit of the spirit. Be content that it takes a little longer than normal to get that better job so you can provide for your family. And help the church.

If these are godly goals, then it's not automatically discontentment. As I suggested earlier, avoiding discontentment is not equal to being a doormat. There was an act 1636, the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, the magistrates have sent to let you go.

They found out who you are, you're a Roman citizen, oops. And they're saying you can go now. Now therefore depart and go in peace.

What did Paul do? But Paul said to them, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privately? Nay, verily, no way, but let them come themselves and fetch us out. Remember that? I submit again, Paul is not being discontent. Paul is saying, look, this is injustice.

He was discontent with injustice, and that's a good discontentment, right? Wickedness, you wanna fight against that. So it's contextual in other words. And the servant told these words unto the magistrate or the sergeant, and they feared when they heard that he was a Roman.

One way to abuse the call to be satisfied with God's providence is to justify laziness, excessive or lackadaisical attitudes. God tells me to be satisfied in all things, and so I'm happy here being an apostate church. No, I think we know enough of that.

Next point, verses nine to 10.

Greedy Temptation

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts, with drowned men in destruction and perdition. That's a pretty serious description and hardships there.

So the first warning here is the danger of discontentment. It's a trap. Those who desire to be rich fall into temptations and a snare, like capturing a bird, a false path or a pit with a false cover.

Wealthy Americans, wealthy Westerners are especially prone to this danger. So we grew up relatively rich compared to the rest of the world, and thus we have high expectations of more, and we slowly fall into lust and greed. We read here, in which they drown in their lust, many foolish and harmful lusts, with drowned men in destruction and perdition.

How much water does it take to drown? Right? We all know this, not a whole lot. Little puddle of water. Someone shoves your face in it, you're dead.

Doesn't need an ocean of lusts. Beware, brothers and sisters, the lust of avarice and greed and discontentment. And so that's the trap we have in the American system.

It's all around us, and it's this very subtle, growing expectation in our hearts and minds for our kids. We've got to especially watch it in the young ones. We had to watch it as places like Toys R Us were closing.

Like, all right, all those cheap toys. I was thinking, I don't want to have that many toys for my kid. No, I don't think so.

They get used to it, they get comfortable with it. That's why days of fasting are helpful. Times in which you just say no, I'm not going to go here or go there or buy this or do that, even though I have the freedom and I can otherwise.

Because I know if I go a little too much and make it comfortable, I want to go even further and further and further down. It's one of the problems we have as sinners, although sinners are saved by grace, is that lust and desire is never satisfied. More, more, it says, give me more.

But that's a trap. It's a harmful trap. They fall, many foolish and harmful lusts they are described as.

Other lusts come alongside and are birthed by greed or alongside with greed. Lusting after riches itself is already a trap that leads to further trouble. They fall into temptation and snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts.

So even more problems down the line. Maybe pride, he's thinking of. I'm richer than you now, I have more than you do.

Workaholics, harming their family because they are just obsessed with making money. It's a trap that leads down to more problems and eventual destruction if left unrepentant. Destruction and perdition.

Satan gives Adam an apple and takes away paradise. Therefore, in all temptations, consider not what he offers, but what we shall lose. Puritan Sibbes.

Another warning, verse 10. It's the root of all kinds of evil. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

All types and shapes and forms. Adam and Eve didn't have money. So clearly Paul isn't saying it's the root of all sin.

It's the root of all kinds of sin. And thus they stray from the faith, from godliness. Going after gain, they lose godliness.

They lose it all. Not necessarily apostasy. This could describe apostasy, of course, in which they finally fall away and have nothing to do with the church.

But still, avarice has problems. It can lead to destruction of your household, of your family, and eventually of your life if you keep it up. It continues to grow in your hearts and your minds.

Spiritual results from coveting material goods he describes as what? From which some have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows as though many arrows were flying through the air and into their body because they will not give up their greed and their desire for more, more, more prosperity. And it affects the family as we know, as sin does. Fretting about money, fretting about the stock market, keeping people up late at night.

We understand that when you are sick with worry and fear and obsession with whatever it is that you think is gonna make you healthy and prosperous in this world, it can affect you physically, that you end up being sick. It hurts your immune system. Those are other ways.

There's a different and sundry ways in which the piercing of sorrows comes upon us because we will not fight and give up our lust and desire for more. And it's not just money. As I said, the word there is especially about money, but not uniquely or only about money or material gain.

And so the gain of status, the gain of influence, are temptations for us as well, that people are discontent with where they are in life, that people don't acknowledge them and recognize them. This can be a problem with public leaders and pastors, of course. Talents and gifts from the Lord God Almighty, you may not be happy enough with them.

I wanna be an artist, I thought to myself. And I can continue on being dissatisfied with not being an artist. But by God's grace, I was satisfied that I could not be an artist, although I can do some drawing.

And I ended up being an engineer. But there are people who go their entire life dissatisfied with their job and the gifts that God has given them, wishing they were something else. Wishing they had something else.

When God has given what you have, we should use it to the utmost of His glory. This happens, of course, with churches that no church is ever good enough. They're never satisfied.

And so they go from church to church, wandering to and fro, lusting after things that they can never have. Godly gain, verses six and 11.

Godly Gain

I put these two verses together like bookends. Now, godliness with contentment is great gain, in verse 11. But you, O man of God, flee these things. What? Greed and discontentment and avarice and lust of money.

And on the flip side, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, and the like. Paul starts that way and ends that way. So that Timothy gets the point that we have to replace wickedness with righteousness.

The first exhortation, verse six, as I mentioned before, is a play on words there in which the officers are, these bad officers, unwholesome teachers, dissatisfied with godliness and want to use this godliness, their office in particular, for gain and prosperity. And that's a terrible thing. Rather, godliness with contentment is great gain, is the true gain, the true goal, although secondary goal, of course, greatest goal being to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

We do that, we glorify Him by what? Being godly, being holy, being righteous in thought, word, and deed. To be more like Jesus, we should desire obedience to the Lord God, and our hearts should rearrange the priorities and tamp down and control our natural desires. Because it is a natural desire to want to do good for your family, which would mean what? Get a better job.

Make things better for one another. That's different than being obsessed with getting things better. That's what? Being a workaholic, perhaps.

Never spend time with your family because you always gotta get that perfect job or whatever the case is. Desire Him is how we should obviously redirect all our desires towards Him above all. And beyond that, all the other desires in life should be properly prioritized.

Our spouse, our family, and the like, and to do good for them. Flee discontentment by pursuing godliness. But you, old man, flee these things.

Mentioned that in Sunday school class. There's a time to flee. It's not always a bad thing to flee.

It's a bad thing to flee situations in which you were called by God to fix. That's true. You have a responsibility to fix it.

Fix your family. But in other cases, you better flee because there's no opportunity to fix this problem. Never play around with sin.

There is no moral vacuum. Stop greed, that's good. Stop sinning, that's good.

But you have to replace it with righteousness, with contentment, with satisfaction with where you are in life. With the good things, he says. Flee these things and pursue righteousness and godliness and patience and other things.

In other words, to kill lust is to replace them with righteous desires. It starts with your intention. Do you want godliness? I hope so.

I think you do. That's why you're here. And many of us need a plan or support for those around us.

Of course, prayer and Bible reading is important, but you also need a plan. What are you gonna do to avoid and flee bad situations in your life that lead you towards excessive lust and desires, in particular greed and wanting more? Maybe at Christmas time, you cut back on gifts. It could be as simple as that, brothers and sisters.

I don't know your situation. You're like, it's so easy. All throughout the year, I have all these sales.

I find all these gifts. My kids or my cousins or whatever, I give them 10 different gifts. No, cut it down.

You can help them, you can help yourself. It's not always about buying things and getting things. Do you wanna fight discontentment? Pursue righteousness.

Righteousness, godliness, we read here, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. The opposite of what? Disputes and arguments over words, envy, strife, reviling, and evil suspicion that we read in verses three, four, and five, right? Replace those in our hearts and our actions, brothers and sisters, with these things that we pursue and continue on and strive for. Instead of striving for prosperity in this world, in the way in which these ungodly men were doing, that they turn godliness into merely another stepping stone towards being prosperous in the here and now for their flesh.

Rather, make godliness a stepping stone towards more godliness, more honoring of Christ and of God Almighty above. That's the purpose here. That's the point.

That's our path. And that's how we fight greed, instead of being pierced with many sorrows that God Almighty, we pray from him, will give us satisfaction with our place in life. Are you satisfied with where God has put you in his providence? Examine your hearts and examine your hands and your actions and always cling to Christ Jesus, the greatest gain and prosperity of our existence.

Let us pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, blessed three in one. We have gained much through the work of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and the gift of the Holy Spirit and your love towards us from eternity past.

May we focus upon these things, God, as we are tempted to desire to be rich. And that is a trap, God Almighty, that we should flee and step away from. A temptation and a snare in which many foolish and harmful lusts drown men and pierce us with many sorrows.

We felt it, I'm sure, one way or another in our lives. I ask that we would stand firm and take on the whole armor of God, that we may, having done all, stand against the lust to be rich. We ask these things by the power of the Spirit, amen.