

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 7.9.2023

PART 18 - TRUE CONTENTMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

1 Timothy 6:2b-10

Teach and urge these things. 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 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. 10 For the love of money 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.

II. ORTHODOXY VS. HETERODOXY

Three charges Paul brings against the false teachers:

- First charge is that they teach a different doctrine.
- Their teaching is heterodox. It is contrary to orthodox teaching. Orthodox means right or accepted teaching. Heterodox means different from orthodox beliefs.
- What constitutes the different doctrine that they were teaching?
- It was teaching that *“does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness.”*
- There is sound doctrine, which is the teaching of Christ and the apostolic teaching that accords with Christ’s teaching and promotes godly living.
- And there is unsound doctrine because it deviates from the sound words of Christ and does not promote godliness.
- Paul refers to this orthodox teaching in a variety of ways in his letters: the faith, the good deposit, the sound doctrine, the gospel, the truth, the good doctrine, the teaching, the stewardship from God.
- There was an already agreed upon and established body of doctrine in the early church.
- 2 Peter 3:15-16 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom

given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

- Paul's analysis of the false teachers is that they are arrogant and they are ignorant.
- In 1:7 he wrote about those teaching a different doctrine that they were, *"desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions."*
- Confronting the false teachers was the charge Paul gave Timothy in ch1.
- 1 Tim 1:3 "remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.
- Anything that is heterodox needs to be confronted. That is one of the main responsibilities of elders in protecting the flock of God.
- Second charge is that they are divisive.
- "He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words,"
- If this kind of behavior goes unchecked, it leads to a breakdown in the relational unity of a church.
- Paul lists five results that the divisive conduct of false teachers produces: "envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth."
- Paul says these characterize those who are "depraved in mind and deprived of the truth..."
- Everything about their lives is twisted and corrupted. Their doctrine is twisted and their relationships are twisted.
- Third charge is that they are lovers of money.
- "...imagining that godliness is a means of gain.
- The false teachers are after financial gain from their twisted teaching.
- They're not really interested in the teaching that accords with godliness, but will use godliness in so much as it is financially profitable for them.
- Paul doesn't tell us how they were exactly doing that.
- Example of Ephesus at the times of Paul's visit in Acts 19.
- Paul was constantly trying to differentiate himself from those who were taking advantage of the flock.
- 1 Thess 2:5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.
- These false teachers were greedy, and were using the church as a cover for their greed and gain.

THREE TESTS TO EVALUATE ALL TEACHING

1. Is the teaching compatible with Christ's teaching and apostolic teaching?
2. Does the teaching unite or divide the church?
3. Does it promote godliness with contentment or covetousness?

III. FINDING TRUE CONTENTMENT

- Paul's response following this indictment on the false teachers and their greediness to profit from the religious enterprise gives some important principles which apply to all Christians in every culture.
- 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,
- Paul doesn't contradict the notion that godliness is a means of gain.

- In fact, he confirms that it is a means of great gain, providing that you add contentment with it.
- But it is a spiritual gain, and not a financial one.
- 1 Tim. 4:7b-8 Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

CONTENTMENT

- The word Paul uses for contentment is the same word that the Stoics used for “self-sufficiency which is independent of circumstances.”
- Though Paul uses the Greek word the Stoics used, he is not advocating for a passive approach to life.
- Paul writing in Philippians says, *“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. Whether my tummy is full or I am going hungry, in every circumstance, whether in times of plenty or in times of lack. With a good roof overhead or homeless. I have learned the secret of facing every situation.”* (Phil. 4:11-12)
- The Christian does not find contentment in self-sufficiency.
- The grounds of Christian contentment is not self-sufficiency but Christ-sufficiency.
- It is not independence but Christ-dependence.
- Paul declares, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* (Phil 4:13)
- He grounds his contentment in his union with Christ.
- Here’s what Paul learned and what he knew to be true: the all-wise and sovereign God ordained everything in his life, be it abundance or scarcity, and in whatever circumstance he found himself in, he could find strength in Christ.
- That’s why Paul’s formula works, godliness + contentment = great spiritual gain.
- Christ is our godliness, Christ is our sufficiency, so we are truly rich!
- That is the secret key of contentment that flows from godliness, if you have nothing but have Christ, you have everything. If you have everything but don’t have Christ, you have nothing.
- No matter the situation, circumstance, trial, difficulty, hardship, challenge, tribulation—He is more than enough!
- Do you believe that?

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS MONEY AND POSSESSIONS

- What is the proper attitude the Christian should have as it pertains to money and possessions?
- Paul has established that these false teachers are greedy for gain.
- But it is not so with the one who has placed their hope in Christ, they don’t need to crave anything else, they are content.
- Here’s why the formula holds true, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.
- The bookends of our life, birth and death, is the reason we can have contentment in life no matter the circumstances.
- It makes no sense whatsoever for a true follower of Jesus Christ, who has placed his hope in the gospel, who is looking to Christ for all-sufficiency, to be greedy for material gain.
- We came into this world with nothing and we will exit this world as we came into it.
- This perspective should influence our economic lifestyle and it should influence our spending habits.
- Job 1:21 “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the

name of the Lord.”

- Job understood what Paul understood and what we need to understand—money, material possessions and stuff are temporary, why would we place our hope in them, covet them, pursue them, and live for them?
- The teacher of Ecclesiastes knew this all too well, writing of the rich person who lost everything in a bad business venture and the reality that he will leave this world exactly as he came into it, with nothing despite all of his hard work (Ecc. 5:13-15).
- Your possessions are not the stuff of eternity. It is destined to perish.
- It's why Jesus commands his disciples to not to store up treasures here on earth, but to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

- So here is the biblical perspective: 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.
- The biblical perspective reminds us that true contentment is not found in having more stuff than we need.
- Godliness with contentment is great gain and getting more stuff has nothing to do with godliness.
- We spend a lot of time in the pursuit of more stuff. We are anxious about not having more stuff.
- Matthew 6:25-33 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Paul is not arguing for utter destitution. No one can be content that way. If you don't have food or clothing, you're destitute.
- He also is not saying that all that the Christian should have is food and clothing and nothing else.
- He's not establishing the upper limits of a Christian's material possessions, merely the minimum that a Christian should have in order to be content.
- Anything above that we are to enjoy as they are good gifts from God.
- We just don't need more than the essentials in order to be truly content.

THE TRAP OF LOVING MONEY

- 9 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. 10 For the love of money 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.
- He is not addressing the contented but the discontented, the covetous, who are motivated by a sinful love of money.

- Look at the downward trajectory of those who love money.

- First, they fall into temptation. When you have a craving for money and material possessions, many times you will be tempted to do things to get what you want.
- Greed is a trap. It's a snare of materialism and moral compromise.
- Second, the downward trajectory leads them into many senseless and harmful desires.
- When you open yourself up to covetousness and greed it breeds a whole host of other harmful desires.
- Third, the downward trajectory ends in the final stage of plunging the covetous into ruin and destruction.
- The sinful desire for gain will eventually lead to their utter loss. They have gained the whole world yet forfeited their soul, as Jesus said (Mark 8:36).
- Paul enforces the warning with the famous proverb, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."
- This is often misquoted as "money is the root of all evil," and has led to some misunderstanding about money and possessions.
- Money is not the problem. The love of money is the problem.
- And the love of money is not 'the' root it is 'a' root of all kinds of evil.
- Loving money is a root that will sprout off a whole host of evils.
- Now Paul is only going to concentrate on two evils which spring from the love of money.
- First, "through this craving some have wandered away from the faith..."
- Jesus said, you cannot serve God and mammon, (mammon is deceitful riches, money or possessions).
- Second, they have "pierced themselves with many pangs."
- This craving, the love of money, is like getting pricked over and over again by a thorny brush.
- In what way? Paul doesn't say. Worry, stress, anxiety, depression, remorse, the moral compromises that may have been made, the realization that money and possessions cannot truly satisfy.
- The love of money is a self-destructive evil.

CONCLUSION

- Our constant challenge is going against our culture of consumerism, materialism and greed.
- How do we combat the ever increasing desire to have more?
- How do we fight for contentment in the little or much?
- I've already said it but I'll say it again—by seeing that Christ is enough!
- He is our greatest treasure. He is all the riches we will ever want or need.
- Is he your greatest treasure?
- Paul is arguing for a simplicity of lifestyle in the Christian.
- We should be content with the basic necessities of life. Are you?
- Or are you tempted to believe that God owes you more than you have?
- What's your relationship like with your stuff? If you lost everything, but still have Christ, can you see that you will still be rich beyond measure?
- What would the church look like if we all lived simply, counter-culturally, truly content with the basic necessities of life, and enjoying everything over and above without being mastered by stuff?
- A body of believers that has godliness with contentment will live not just simply but also generously.
- I think a reason that most Christians don't give financially is because of discontentment, fear, and a lack of trust in the Lord who richly provides.

- If we are truly content, when we have an increase of income we don't increase our standard of living, we increase our standard of giving.
- Living simply and generously breaks us from the death trap of the love of money and the pursuit of stuff.
- We live with an eternal perspective.

- Godliness with contentment is great gain!
- Jesus is all we need! Ground your contentment in his all-sufficient strength!
- If we have him, we gain everything!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?