

Godliness with Contentment (Deuteronomy 8:10-18 and 1 Timothy 6:2b-21)

11-Oct-26

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

¹⁰ When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. ¹⁷ You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

1 Timothy 6:2b-21

False Teachers and the Love of Money

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. ³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴ they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵ and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people,

eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Final Charge to Timothy

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

²⁰ Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, ²¹ which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith. Grace be with you all.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

I encourage you to have your **Bibles opened** at **1 Timothy chapter 6** – starting at verse 2.

Let's pray...

Intro

We're looking at the last section of the Apostle Paul's letter to his younger coworker, Timothy, who is a pastor in the Church in Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Türkiye)

Paul writes to encourage Timothy to remain in Ephesus, despite the significant problems he faces, particularly false teaching and opposition, and to faithfully continue to lead the church.

In this last section, Paul urges Timothy to **grow in godliness with contentment**
And it's not just something Timothy needs to grow in – **we ALL need to grow in godliness with contentment...**

So before we go any further, we need to

Define **godliness**

[Slide-godliness]

A life of reverence to God, conforming to the character, laws, and wishes of God [Cambridge Dictionary]

The Greek word is **Eusebia** which means *reverence, respect and piety towards God!*

And we also need to define **contentment**

[Slide-contentment]

Being satisfied with what God has provided, rather than constantly feeling that we need more.

The Greek word is *autarkeia* which means *sufficiency, contentment or having enough*.

Paul tells Timothy and us that in order to grow in godliness with contentment, we must...

1st point – **Discern between Truth and False Teaching** (vv2b-10)

[Slide-1st point]

Discern Between Truth and False Teaching (6:2b–10)

In this chapter Paul implies there is a standard of Christian belief – which he calls “sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v3); “godly teaching” (3b); the “truth” (v5); the “faith” (vv10, 12, 21); “this command” (v14); and “what has been entrusted” (v20)

[Slide-deviated]

Unfortunately in Ephesus there are ***false teachers who have deviated from the faith...***

Paul describes anyone who **teaches other than this standard** (v3) as *conceited* (aka arrogant) (v4) and *understands nothing* (v5). Other English versions of the Bible say “***conceited idiot***” (JBP) “***pompous ignoramus***” (REB). Strong language but remember false teachers are guilty of a serious offence and can lead many people astray!

Application: There are only two responses to God’s Word – we either humble ourselves and tremble at it – OR – we harden our hearts and reject it!

To maintain godliness – **we must not deviate from God’s Word** – to the left or the right!

[Slide-division]

Paul also says ***these false teachers are dividing the church***

He says they ***have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words*** (v4)

This leads to a complete breakdown in the relationships in the church.

Paul list five results in vv4-5:

- ***Envy*** (the resentment of other people's gifts)
- ***Strife*** (the spirit of competition and contention)
- ***Malicious talk*** (abusing those teaching the truth)
- ***Suspensions*** (they forget fellowship is built on trust, not suspicion!)
- ***Constant friction between people of corrupt minds, who have been robbed of the truth*** (v5a)

Application: When people's minds are twisted and toxic – their relationships become twisted and toxic too!

As we said two weeks ago - ***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*** (Proverbs 4:23)

Now because these false teachers have corrupt minds and have been robbed of the truth...

[Slide-love money]

Paul goes on to say – ***these false teachers are lovers of money***

See end of v5 – they ***think godliness is a means to financial gain!***

Just some background on Ephesus – the city enjoyed great opulence – and they worshipped the Ephesian goddess of Diana (known in Greek as Artemis). In

Paul's second visit to Ephesus (recorded in Acts 19:23ff) – a silversmith and his craftsmen were Paul's main opponents. They were selling silver shrines of Diana and making lots of money. But their business took a nose-dive when Paul preached against idolatry.

It seems these false teachers are only interested in godliness if it proves to be financially profitable!

Application

We can also fall into a much subtler version of this. We can become involved in church, pray, give, serve and pursue godliness because we believe God will then **make our life easier, more successful or more financially secure.**

That's getting our relationship with God backwards. **We don't follow God because of what He can give us; we follow God because He is God and worthy of all glory and honour - and worthy of our worship; and especially because He has given us His Son!**

In vv3-5 – Paul has given us 3 practical tests to evaluate all teaching:

- Does the teaching **line up with the Bible?**
- Does the teaching **tend to unite or divide people?**
- Does the teaching **promote godliness with contentment or promote covetousness!**

Now Paul turns away from false teaching to the **truth**

[Slide-godliness with contentment]

He says v6 - ***But godliness with contentment is great gain***

Paul's point is yes there is a gain in having godliness but it's not a financial gain – it's a spiritual gain! **That spiritual gain is contentment!**

Paul himself in Philippians 4:12 says “*I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want*” – that's why Paul was able to sing hymns with Silas when they were in jail in Philippi (Acts 16:22-25)

This “secret of being content” is not to be found in ourselves though - but as Paul goes on to say in the next verse Phil 4:13 “*I can do everything, through Christ who gives me strength*”

So **Christian contentment is not self-sufficiency but Christ-sufficiency.**

When we can say “*Christ is all I need – He is enough!*”

Then we have godliness with contentment – and that is the greatest spiritual gain!

(pause)

To argue his case for Christian contentment then

Paul rightly says – v7 – *we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*

Let me show you the difference between a rich person's grave and a poor person's grave

[Slide-graves]

As Job 1:15 says “*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart*” (Ecclesiastes 5:15)

Someone once asked a minister officiating at the funeral of a wealthy woman – “*how much did she leave?*” – the minister replied “*she left everything!*”

What then should be our attitude – as Christians – towards material things?

[Slide-food/clothing]

Paul tells us – v8 - *But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*

For contentment, luxuries are not essential but basic needs are.

Jesus Himself taught us not to worry about “*what to eat*” or “*what to wear*” because He promised our Heavenly Father would provide them to us! (Matt 6:19ff)

The Greek word for clothing here used by Paul (*skepasma*) can mean something that covers or protects – therefore it’s not unreasonable to include **shelter** – so **we can be content with food, clothing and shelter.**

But we shouldn’t think Paul is teaching poverty or self-denial – what he is simply teaching is **contentment rather than materialism and covetousness!**

Then in vv9-10 – Paul warns against the **dangers of greed!**

[Slide-Greed]

V9 – He says - *the desire to be rich leads people into temptation, ruin and destruction*

Paul pin points the problem in v10

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil!

This verse is often misquoted. Paul says money in itself is not a root of all evil but the “love” of money is. Because when people love money, it becomes their God, and they can’t live without it or part with it or share it. Money then

becomes more important than God and more important than the loved ones in their lives.

Paul says *some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs*

Some Biblical examples spring to mind...

- From Joshua 7 – **Achan stole a Babylonian robe, silver and gold from Jericho!**
- From Acts 5 – **Ananias and Sapphira held back money they promised to the church**
- And of course **Judas – sold out Jesus for money**

Application

- Love of money **can affect our relationship with God**: money can become our security, priority or source of satisfaction - instead of God.
- Love of money **can affect our relationship with Others**: it can produce envy, comparison, greed, competition, jealousy or exploitation.
- Love of money **can affect our ministry**: we can begin to value people according to what they have or what they can contribute financially.
- Love of money **can affect** our hearts: we can become dissatisfied with what God has given us and always want more.

My prayer is we can all discern between truth and false teaching!

[Slide-2nd point]

2nd point - in order to grow in godliness with contentment, we must – **Watch**

How We Live and What We Believe – vv11-16

Watch How We Live and What We Believe (6:11–16)

So v11 – Timothy – as ‘a man of God’ – and we as ‘men and women of God’ are to – *flee from all of this*!

[Slide-flee]

“*all of this*” means the things Paul has just mentioned – *flee from false teaching; controversies and quarrels about words; envy; strife; malicious talk; evil suspicions; constant friction and the love of money.*

These things are incompatible with the will of God and are the opposite to godliness!

[Slide-pursue]

Instead still v11 – Timothy and we are to *pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.* These are things which are often not valued or pursued in our culture but they are very valuable to God.

Pursue in Greek here literally means ‘run after someone or something’. If we want to grow in godliness we have to run after these godly values. This has to be a daily pursuit. That’s why when we pray the Lord’s Prayer and pray “*Give us this day our daily bread*” – we are not just asking for physical food to eat – we’re asking for God to feed us spiritually from His Word. And to do that we must be in God’s Word daily – read it – meditate on it – feed off it – devour it – learn from it – apply it – live it!

The important contrast is not simply what we must avoid, but what we must actively pursue.

Once we see evil as the evil it is, we will want to flee from it – and once we see goodness as the good it is, we will want to pursue it! (John Stott)

Timothy's duty and our duty is a fight as well as a flight!

[Slide-fight]

V12 – Paul calls us to *fight the good fight of the faith!*

Fighting is unpleasant business – undignified, bloody, painful and dangerous.

Fighting should be distasteful to all of us. But this is a “**good fight**” – it has to be fought. Because God's truth is precious – and out of respect and honour to Him – we must fight for His truth. Fighting for the faith is essential for the health and growth of Jesus' church.

Even the gentleness we are to pursue at the end of v11 is not incompatible with fighting the good fight of the faith (v12). We can fight for the truth and yet still be gentle souls!

When was the last time we stood up for God's truth in His Word?

When was the last time we didn't stand up for God's truth? How did we feel?

Personally: I felt convicted by this passage this week. Am I really doing all I can to flee from ungodliness? Am I really pursuing godliness? Am I fighting the good fight? Or am I just treading water!

(pause)

[Slide-eternal life]

Next Paul calls Timothy and us to *Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

Eternal life here is not just the hope we have of Heaven one day.

We can possess **eternal life now!**

Take hold here in the Greek - means: seize eternal life, grasp it, lay hold of it, make it completely our own and enjoy it and live it to the full.

It's like we live our lives as though Heaven is a reality now.

Isn't that what we pray in the Lord's Prayer – "*thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven*"

Paul gives Timothy and us **some great reasons to watch how we live and what we belief**

[Slide-sight of God]

1st reason - V13 - *we are serving in the sight of God, who gives life to all things.*

Since Paul calls Timothy and us to a difficult fight, it's good to know that the orders we are given are in the sight of our living God. Like Timothy, we have an obligation to serve the Creator who gave us life.

[Slide-accountable to Jesus]

2nd reason - V14 – *We must keep God's commands because we are accountable to Christ Jesus*, who faithfully testified before Pontius Pilate – speaking the truth about Himself despite false accusations. As Jesus Himself said "*if you love me, keep my commands*" (John 14:15)

[Slide-judgment]

3rd reason – still v14 - **Jesus will return at the appointed time and we must face judgment**

[Slide-sovereign God]

4th reason - V15-16 – We have **sovereign God** - *the blessed and only Ruler, King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone is immortal and lives in unapproachable light.*

The greatness and faithfulness of God gives us every reason to remain faithful to Him!

[Slide-3rd point]

3rd point - in order to grow in godliness with contentment, we must – **Put**

Wealth in its Proper Place – vv17-19

Put Wealth in its Proper Place (6:17-19)

What we notice here is that Paul does not tell the rich to get rid of their wealth. Instead he gives negative and positive instructions – first Paul warns the rich of the dangers of wealth – and then he gives them their obligations.

[Slide-Warning]

1st the warning to the rich – v17 – *he warns the rich not to be arrogant or place their hope in their wealth because it is uncertain.*

We shouldn't put our hope in wealth and possessions. Houses, investments, superannuation and valuable possessions – can lose their value overnight!

And it's not just wealth we can falsely put our security and hope in...

One of the Bible Study questions this week was: ***what are the things we are most tempted to put our security and hope in rather than God?***

We might be tempted to put our security and hope in:

- Wealth

- Possessions
- Family
- Health
- Career
- Ministry
- Church
- People
- Status
- Popularity
- Government
- Physical Safety - Security cameras, walls, fences

All these things are uncertain, flakey and temporary.

[Slide-hope in God]

Instead Paul says – still v17 - *we are to put our hope in God* – who is certain – consistent and unchangeable – the same yesterday, today and forever.

[Slide-Duties]

2nd the duties of the rich – v18-19 –Paul instructs those who are rich *to do good, be rich in good deeds, and be generous and willing to share. In doing so, lay-up treasure for yourselves as a firm foundation for the coming age.*

God has not entrusted us with wealth and possessions to merely accumulate them, but to use them for His glory and the good of others. **We are to rich towards God!**

Jesus gives us a picture of what this looks like in Matthew 25. It looks like feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, clothing those in need, and caring for the sick.

And notice what Jesus says when we do this (Matthew 25:40): “**Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.**”

That’s what **laying up treasure for ourselves as a firm foundation for the coming age** – looks like!

A key thing to remember about any wealth and possessions we have comes from our OT reading from Deuteronomy 8 – and that is - we shouldn’t boast about how **it was the strength of our hands that produced our wealth** (v17).

No! We need to **remember the Lord our God, for it is He who gives us the ability to produce wealth!** (v18)

We only have anything because God allowed it in the first place!

[Slide-4th Point]

4th - in order to grow in godliness with contentment, like Timothy we must –

Guard the Gospel Faithfully – vv20-21

Guard the Gospel Faithfully (6:20-21)

[Slide-Guard]

V21 - Timothy and we are **to guard what has been entrusted into our care – which is the Gospel!**

We are to guard the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus coming to die for the sin of the world, so that all who believe in Him will be forgiven and have eternal life in Heaven!) God has entrusted this teaching of this Good News Gospel to us. Like

Timothy we are to protect it from false teaching, faithfully teach it and pass it on without compromising or distorting it. **It is like we have been entrusted with the precious gem of the Gospel!**

In Paul and Timothy's day, some claimed to possess superior "*knowledge*" (v20) but had actually moved away from the truth of the Gospel and it was just *godly chatter*. Paul warns that ideas which appear intellectual, sophisticated or attractive can nevertheless lead us away from genuine Christian faith. True knowledge must remain consistent with the truth of the gospel. In other words, our knowledge must be true and line up with God's Word.

[Slide-warning]

The warning is by us not sticking to the Gospel – *people will depart from their faith* (v21) – and we will be accountable for that!

Conclusion

To finish up then

The letter finishes with the words

[Slide-V21]

Grace be with you all (v21)

The you is plural

All of us can only – Discern Between Truth and False Teaching - Watch How We Live and What We Believe - Put Wealth in its Proper Place – and Guard the Gospel Faithfully – **by the transforming and sustaining divine grace of our awesome God!**

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, help us to flee from false teaching; and the love of wealth and possessions; and instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Help us to become content in each and every situation whether we have plenty or very little. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Benediction (1 Timothy 6:6-7)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. Amen.