

7. Godliness with contentment

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Every single crime that happens in human history originates from selfish greed. People want something for themselves. Some work hard to earn their money to get those things, but the others simply take those things by stealing or brute force including rape or murder.

It all roots from greed, because they are not content with what they have. This morning we are going to learn about godliness with contentment from the Word of God.

A. A WORD TO SERVANTS

1 Timothy 6:1-2 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. 2 And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

According to the Roman history, there were over sixty million slaves, mostly out of a result of war or poverty – half the population of the empire. Actually, slavery was an effective system for their economy. The Romans as well as anyone who got benefits from slavery considered slaves as mere properties to use and abuse at an owner's discretion.

What apostle Paul says is not an endorsement of the institution of slavery. Rather the Lord is speaking to His people who were mostly slaves under the Roman authority as well as to us in this modern day.

When we work hard and honor our employers, it glorifies God. But when we are bad workers and disrespectful to our supervisors or employers, it brings shame on the name of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:22-24 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

People will judge Christianity – who God is and what the Bible teaches – based on how we conduct ourselves as an employee.

Some of you work for most ungodly bosses who think that it is their job descriptions to give you a hard time just because you are a Christian. Regardless of their attitude, the Lord is telling us through the apostle Paul that we should honor them by doing our best on the job within the confinement of our beliefs, so that they may notice Jesus in us.

But what if the boss is a Christian? If that is the case, we should work harder. We should not take an advantage out of our relationship with them in the Lord. Don't think that you can witness to non-believers on company time. Do it on your own time. Your Christian boss is not paying you for your evangelistic outreach at the workplace, but for your service to them.

I have heard that some Christian employers don't want to hire Christians because they take advantage of them. That is a bad witness to non-believers around.

B. WARNING AGAINST THOSE WHO MISUSE GOD'S WORD

1 Timothy 6:3-5 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, 4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, 5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

We don't have to be an active opponent of God's Word to be an enemy of it. If we fail to give the Bible its rightful place in our life, we oppose God's Word.

A person can be surrounded by God's truth. He can even memorize the entire Bible, and not have it effect the life for eternity. Curiosity or interest in God's Word without submission to it is a grave danger.

But those misuse God's Word don't see or admit to their lack of knowledge. As a matter of fact, they consider themselves as the authority of the Scripture and look down on the ones who are obedient to the Word of God. Therefore they are the ones who cause envy, strife and evil suspicions.

I find that many of people who show up in Christian television programs are not only teach heresies to the viewers who don't know the Bible well, but also they manipulate their viewers to send their little money so that they can live in mansions and drive around luxury cars. What they do is not a true ministry. It is nothing more than a religious business. The Bible tells us to be far away from them.

C. GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT

1 Timothy 6:6-12 Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

We need to understand a few things before we go any further:

1) What the Bible says about contentment

God's Word portrays contentment as a desirable trait, a level of satisfaction every Christian should have experience. Yet it functions in the realm of reality. It retains responsibility and righteousness.

Contentment is not laziness, nor complacency nor satisfaction with mediocrity. Our God is a God of excellence and we should not bring Him anything but the best and it should reflect His excellence.

2) The definition

It is inner God-given sufficiency which does not depend on material circumstances.

3) The benefits of contentment

- Contentment allows current enjoyment rather than constant striving. If you don't have contentment, you can not be satisfied with anything at any given moment. Right after you get what you've been wanting for all that time, you want something else within a few days.
- Contentment gives us freedom to recognize and applaud another's achievements without being eaten up with envy.
- Contentment enables us to develop a genuinely grateful spirit to God.

We all have heard "he who dies with the most toys wins." Guess what? It is wrong. That dead person ain't gonna take one thing with him or her. I've never seen any brand new baby comes into the world with money in his hands or anyone who passed away has an U-Haul trailer following after his hearse. They can bury all the treasures in the world with the dead person, he still doesn't carry them with him to the next spiritual world.

V9 and 10 tell us about those who are discontent. These are the ones who gamble, buy lottery tickets and participate in those dumb reality shows for 15 minute fame and greed.

Please note that money itself is not good nor bad, but the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and leads us to destruction.

Let's make it clear. Nothing wrong with having nice things, but when our happiness depends on what we can have, it is wrong. However, a person who is in poor economic status is not more godly than the one who is wealthy. It is a matter of the heart.

D. STEALING FROM GOD

A minister in a little church had been having trouble with the offerings. One Sunday he announced, "Now, before we pass the collection plate, I would like to request that the person who stole the chickens from Brother Martin's chicken house, please refrain from giving any money to the Lord. The Lord doesn't want money from a thief!"

The collection plate was passed around, and for the first time in months everybody gave.

We can not have contentment if keeping rather than releasing becomes our objective. The Bible clearly teaches us that if we're not tithing we are stealing from God.

Malachi 3:8-10 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

E. TRUE RICHES – SERVING THE KING OF KINGS

1 Timothy 6:13-16 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius

Pilate, 14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, 15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Instead of pride and riches, we are told to make righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness our pursuit. These are things which are may not valued in our present age, but are very valuable to God. Going God's way – against the flow of this world – won't be easy.

The denial of God as Creator has done wide damage in our culture. Some of the biggest damage has come from the simple fact that many people no longer believe there is a Creator of the universe they must honor and be accountable to. That is why the evolution theory is from the pit of hell. People would rather believe Mr. Spock than Jesus the Creator.

Jesus is not merely a super-man, He is the God-man. He is truly immortal without beginning or end with a glory which if fully revealed would strike any human dead. He is coming back to get His born-again believers out before the seven-year tribulation and will return to the earth with full of glory after the tribulation.

One way or another, every single human being will be at the feet of Jesus. The ones who receive Him into his or her heart will sit at His feet to worship Him. But the other one who reject Him will be under His feet.

F. NOT TO BE HAUGHTY

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Do you know the American economy can go from No. 1 superpower to a country with a tremendous debt in less than a month? If we have another Black Monday in the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAQ, at the same time, China which has the biggest cash reserve in the world other than America changes theirs from American dollars to European Union Euro, and Muslim terrorists launch nuclear attacks with suitcase nuclear bombs in five major cities in America at the same time, do you think that your financial portfolio mean anything? Your entire savings will be just enough for next week grocery.

Riches can give us a false idea that is filled with pride. It is very easy to believe that we are better because we have more than another man has. God knows our tendency to trust in riches instead of in Him. He guards us against this danger because He wants us to trust in Him, not in uncertain riches.

G. A FINAL CHARGE

1 Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge-- 21 by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul referred here to the teachings of a heretical group called "gnostics" who claimed to have a "special spiritual knowledge." The gnostics actually had a doctrine that

was a strange mixture of Christianity, Oriental mysticism, Greek philosophy and Jewish legalism. Like many of the Eastern cults we see today, it offered "something for everybody."

Why should Timothy avoid these teachings? It is because some who got involved in them "wandered from the faith". We must stay close to Jesus and far away from anything that takes us away from Him.

H. APPLICATIONS

1) The desire to be rich can really only be satisfied in Jesus Christ, and satisfied with spiritual riches rather than material ones. Everything else falls short.

2) We can not have contentment if keeping rather than releasing becomes our objective.

We are most content when we're grateful for what we own, satisfied with what we make, and generous to those in need.

3) Curiosity or interest in God's Word without submission to it is a grave danger.