

## 1 Timothy 6:3-21 Dangerously Discontent

We're finishing up 1 Timothy this morning and what have we seen? Paul has been telling Timothy what should and should not be done in Ephesus, and much of it has focused on believing the right things and then doing the right things. But this morning we get to look at what was going on in the hearts of the false teachers Timothy was sent to confront; why were they accepting and then teaching all this false doctrine? The answer is, they desired something other than what they had in Jesus. They were discontent.

And discontentment is a dangerous thing because it is a sucking black hole in your life that can never be filled. If discontentment grips your heart it can keep you on a life-long search for the mysterious thing, or person, or experience that should finally satisfy you.

It's a trip filled with many rest stops but no final destination. You get little snippets of satisfaction every now and then, things seem like they're at rest and all your efforts have paid off, but then, just as you settle in, the bug comes back and you realize, that while this is pretty good, it would be even better if...

Let me ask you this morning, how would you complete the following statement, *"I'll be satisfied, or I'll be content, when..."*

Or if you feel like things are pretty good right now, you're not dealing with too much restlessness, finish this statement for me: *"I'm content because..."*

This morning we are going to look into the idea of contentment and consider, where do we look for it, and where can it truly be found?

[3](#) 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.

[6](#) 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.

There are many tools that we can use to try to deal with our lack of contentment. The first we'll look at is the one we see here: religion. Did you know religion can be used as a tool to

help get what we want? Especially religions that are full of formulas and works that can be done.

People will try to pray using some specific prayer to get their way, or they'll fast, or they'll make some kind of sacrifice, not primarily to please their god, but because they hope that they'll crack the code to satisfying their god **and as a result**, get what they really want.

Mady and I were watching the Human Planet series a few weeks ago, and they featured this mosque in Mali, West Africa – it's the world's largest mud brick building, it's 62,000 square feet. And every year they have to recoat it with mud. So the film crew filmed that – the whole city gets involved and it's this huge festival – kids running through the street screaming, carrying mud up from the river where it has been stored, and then everyone working together to cover the thing. And the man in charge of it all says how much everyone loves to participate and looks forward to it, because as a result, they will be assured an answer to prayer that year.

*But which one?* Does Allah issue you a ticket that you can redeem for one answered prayer of your choosing?

You see, people will use religion to get what they want. I'll do something for my god or gods, especially if I know that means my god will then do something for me. As Paul points out here to Timothy, people will go astray and can be led astray if they believe that some new version of "godliness [will be] a means of gain."

And what if Scripture or truth gets in their way? No problem, they'll just find some loophole or method of reinterpreting it. Notice here that Paul says they wouldn't consent to wholesome words, "even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ." But look at the consequences of all this: pride, "knowing nothing," disputes and arguments, envy, suspicions (vs 4). So Paul says, don't have anything to do with them.

Of course, religion isn't the only thing we use to try and salve our discontentment. I'll give you two more – love and money.

One of the reasons some people love the feeling of being in love is that it gets you the feelings you want – feelings of comfort, acceptance, belonging, being needed or wanted. But if all we're really concerned about is meeting our own needs, solving our discontentment, then we'll crush someone else by expecting them to keep us happy, or we'll abandon them because someone else comes along that offers more of what we want. Tell me that's not true – you've never dumped somebody, or been dumped by somebody, in order to trade up for a better model, or to get away from what was turning out to be a clunker.

Its sad but true, and it shows how we can use love to try to solve our lack of contentment.

And finally, one of the obvious idols we turn to in an effort to find “happiness” is money because money is power – it enables you to achieve your desires; the way you spend it reveals what your heart truly desires.

Now, many of you in this room have gone through background investigations for security clearances or for other reasons. One of the sections they typically ask you about in all those forms you fill out is for all of your financial information. Why is that? It’s because they want to know if you are going to be susceptible to being bought off.

People will betray their country for the love of money. They don’t feel like they’re appreciated enough or compensated well enough, so they feel justified in doing what it takes to earn a little more.

And that’s just one of the dangers of desiring money, there are many more. As Paul writes in verse 10, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Which is ironic, because as he also writes “we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”

Even if you try – how many times have archeologists from Egypt to China discovered tombs and pyramids that were raided centuries ago and emptied of all their valuables? The fact that the treasures were stolen is one thing, but the fact that they were still there to be stolen is even more interesting, because it just goes to show, that wealth doesn’t matter in death.

So, here’s what I’m saying in all of this: the search for the promise of contentment pushes us to the edges of our ethical envelopes. Discontentment can lead you to abandon all of your greatest loyalties. In love, in religion, in patriotism. It’s a powerful force, and yet, the things that it leads you to pursue don’t have any lasting value.

This is one reason why Proverbs 4:23 encourages us to “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it [spring] the issues of life.”

If your heart desires the wrong things, it will drag the rest of your life along in pursuit of its desires.

So what’s the proper response?

It sits there so clearly, so comprehensibly, so undeniably in vs 6 – “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Can you just relax and rejoice in Jesus? Can you?

[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. [13](#) 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 pursuing outward adornments or tools that you think will get you a step closer to satisfaction, Paul urges Timothy to pursue the intangibles – “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness.”

You see, what we typically try to do is cure the disease of discontentment by finding things we can add to our lives, we try to change things from the outside in, but true Christianity is all about changing from the inside out.

I have been growing in my conviction lately that God is nowhere near as concerned about the products of our lives as He is about the processes. In other words, God isn't as concerned about how high you climb the ladder as He is about what you did day to day. We tend to focus on the milestones but God is examining the moments.

It's something that Paul talked to the Philippians about. Turn with me over to Philippians 4 - [10](#) But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. [11](#) Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: [12](#) I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. [13](#) I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Christ was the key to Paul's contentment vs 11 “for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Whether things were good or bad, Paul knew Jesus was there and that Jesus had endured far greater suffering but was also offering far greater riches and rewards. For Paul, nothing on earth compared to Jesus. He really understood, from experience, that “Godliness with contentment [was] great gain.”

Paul was satisfied to know and be known by Jesus “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see (in the fullness of His glory) to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

Better than any other New Testament author, Paul knew of the contentment that comes from knowing Christ because of all that is ours in Him. According to Paul's letters, from Romans to Philemon, we learn that we are:

justified in Christ - Romans 3:24

dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:11

in Christ we receive eternal life. Romans 6:23

[There is] therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ – Romans 8:1

Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ – Romans 8:38

we, [being] many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Rom 12:5

We have reason to glory in Christ – Romans 15:17

We have fellow workers in Christ Romans 16:7, 9, 10.

We are sanctified in Christ 1 Cor 1:12

We have hope in Christ, not only in this life, but also in that to come 1 Cor 15:19

We are established by God in Christ 2 Cor 1:21

We are led in triumph in Christ 2 Cor 2:14

the [veil] is taken away in Christ 2 Cor 3:14

Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Cor 5:17

in Christ [God is] reconciling the world to Himself 2 Cor 5:19

we have liberty in Christ Gal 2:4

the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles in Christ Gal 3:14

the covenant was confirmed before by God in Christ Gal 3:17

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ Eph 1:3

In the fullness of time God will gather together in one all things in Christ Eph 1:10

We will be raised up, and made to sit together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Eph 2:6

So that God can show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Eph 2:7

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Eph 2:10

the dead in Christ will rise 1 Thes 4:16

We have the promise of life which is in Christ 2 Tim 1:1

God has saved us and called [us] with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began 2 Tim 1:9

Yet, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:12

And there is so much more that could be said. The phrase “in Christ” occurs 87 times in the Bible. (All but three from the pen of Paul: Acts, 24:24; 1 Peter 3:16, 5:14).

Now tell me, after all of this, how is it that we get so easily distracted and become so thoroughly discontent!?!

A large part of the answer is that we spend so much time looking at the things around us and so little time considering the Truth above us. As we have said so many times, right thoughts drive right actions. What we fill our minds with affects our hearts and our hearts in turn direct our actions.

If you are struggling this morning with feeling discontent – the only effective answer is to remember your place “in Christ.” It might take some time, you’ve probably been staring at your issue or contemplating your hunger for a while, so it might take a little time to turn things around, but if you would pray about the issue, if you would take up your Bible and be reminded of it’s promises, if you would grab an hour of silence and pray until your thoughts and your heart settle down enough to think straight and hear clearly, you might be refreshed in Christ.

But we don’t usually want to do that. It’s easier to plan, or to worry, or to ask for a prescription. It’s hard to walk by faith. God knows that. That’s why He has filled the Scriptures with the command to do it - so you don’t forget and so you don’t miss it.

Instead of worrying, instead of itching, instead of always wanting more, newer, better, or different, God wants you to settle down and relax in Him, and then, He wants to use you to help others.

As Paul prepares to close his letter, he gives Timothy another charge to show how all this should work out:

[17](#) 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.*

Instead of stressing out all the time about how you can get what you want, God wants you to be seeking Him about how and what you can give away. In his commentary on this section of Scripture, Kent Hughes wrote “Greed for the Christian is irrational. It makes no sense at all.” How can you hold on to what you have so tightly when you know that all you have is a gift from God and He has the ability to give you much, much, more?

Remember, money just allows us to express what is already in our hearts. So how are you using yours? Are you just storing it up for yourself, or are you asking God to show you how to use it to bless others? You brought nothing into the world and you can’t take anything out, so how are you using it while you’re here? Does anything that you are spending it on have eternal value? And are you just as content with it as you would be without it?

Last words:

[20](#) 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.

Here we find a summary of everything he has said throughout this letter. Know the truth and live it out. Now, again, for those of you who are struggling with a feeling of discontentment this morning, notice what Paul says: GUARD the truth – you know it, much of what I have said has only been a reminder of things you know. But if you don’t guard it, the truth can slip away from you.

There are two main reasons why you guard something – because it is valuable, and because it is threatened. The truth that you have in Jesus is valuable, and it is under attack by the world you live in. Everywhere you go, and in practically everything you do, the message is there – if you only had this, your life would be better. You need to confront that lie and ask yourself, how does that compare to what I already have “in Christ?”

Or, maybe all of this is new to you, and you’re wondering what I’m talking about. You can identify with a feeling of discontentment because like U2 sings, you’ve tried all kinds of things, but you still haven’t found what you’re looking for. Can I tell you, what you’re looking for is Jesus. The One who made you and the One you have been made for.

You spend your life doing things your way when you ought to be doing things His, that’s called sin. After a life of doing what you want to do, you will receive your wages – and the Bible says that the wages of sin is death – it’s what you earn by doing your own thing. But the free gift of God is eternal life “in Christ Jesus.” If you will confess that you have been living for yourself and living life your way, and that that is wrong, and ask for His forgiveness, and surrender your life to Him, then He promises to be wholly yours and you can lay claim to all those promises I read to you which are found “in Christ.” And you can do that right now, all by yourself, in your seat. No raising your hand, no coming forward, you just settle it between yourself and God right here, right now.