

The sermon

Intro

We're on to contentment this morning. We'll seek to understand what Paul's saying. We'll look into our own hearts along the way.

READ PASSAGE (6:3-10)

BIG IDEA: What happens inside the heart is more important than what we possess.

Body

Point 1: Be content with little (6:6-8)

But godliness with contentment is great gain, – 6:6

The false teachers see godliness as an opportunity to get rich. But godliness is supposed to create contentment.

Here “godliness” is shorthand for the Christian faith. “*the mystery of godliness*” was a set of beliefs about Jesus.

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. – 1 Timothy 3:16

Contentment

So what exactly is contentment? It's being satisfied with my lot in life. Satisfied with my circumstances. Satisfied with what I have. Not wanting more stuff.

Great gain

Paul's saying your life will be better off if you're not constantly lusting for more. The riches desired by the false teachers are merely “gain.” But contentment is “great gain.”

Meaning inner contentment is better gain than riches. It's more beneficial for us to **be content with little** than it is for us to acquire more wealth. Paul's saying pursuit of contentment should trump pursuit of wealth. Because **what happens inside the heart is more important than what we possess!**

for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. – 6:7

“for” indicates an explanation. Paul's using logic here. Paul assumes this logical argument will help set us free from material longing. He's aiming at our thought life.

The idea is simple. A newborn baby comes out of their mother's womb with absolutely nothing. They don't come out holding a suitcase with \$20,000 and a bag of gold coins. They come into the world holding absolutely nothing.

And when they die they take nothing with them. The body rots in the grave. The soul either goes to God's presence (2 Cor 5:6-8) = believers or a place of torment called Hades (Luke 16:19-26) = non-Christians. Christians don't take their guns and their jewelry into God's presence. And non-Christians don't take their cars and their fine china into Hades.

Everything we accumulate in this life gets left behind.

I think we get the concept about taking nothing with us when we die. But what about coming in with nothing? I think the idea is owning stuff isn't what makes us human.

The beauty of humanity is the inner being, not the stuff that we own. Being created in God's image, we reflect God in that we think and feel and love and we're relational beings, creative beings, ruling beings. What really matters is what we love and how we relate to others and what we do with our abilities and opportunities.

The advertisers say what you own defines you. God says otherwise.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. – 6:8

Paul answers the question, when should I be content? When my bare necessities are met. "*food and clothing*" indicate those things we need to stay alive and function in society. We need food to keep living. We need clothing to keep warm and go in public.

In America today "*food and clothing*" means water, food, clothing, a roof over our head, a car, a phone with apps, a computer, and even the internet. There are certain things you need besides "*food and clothing*" to be employed. No car generally means no employment. For some of you no home internet means no employment. No cell phone with apps means no coaching kids or Driver's Ed.

The point is, if you have the things necessary to survive and function, **be content with little.**

Point 2: Longing for wealth will ruin your life (6:9-10)

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. – 6:9

Contentment is "great gain." Those who long for wealth ruin themselves.

The progression is: want to be rich → desire for wealth creates temptation → temptation leads to the person being entrapped → temptation leads to destructive desires → destructive desires brings the person into ruin.

So desiring wealth is the initial desire that ruins people. "*desire to be rich*" creates temptation which is equated with a snare. A snare is a trap used to catch birds with a loop of wire or rope. When the bird sits on a perch, you pull the cord and the bird's feet are caught.

The picture is desire for riches leads us into a trap. Greed imprisons us! Trapped by greed, a person "*falls...into many senseless and harmful desires.*" Longing for wealth creates "*senseless and foolish desires.*" Desires that don't make logical sense. Desires that harm us. In the end, these "*desires...plunge people into ruin and destruction.*"

"*ruin and destruction*" = synonyms frequently used to describe the future punishment of sinners and the Antichrist, man of lawlessness, beast of Revelation on the day of the Lord (Matt 7:13; Rom 9:22; Phil 1:28; 3:19; 1 Thess 5:3; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:3; 2 Pet 2:3; 3:7; Rev 17:8, 11).

Here they signify the pains people bring upon themselves when they long for wealth.

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. – 6:10

Paul essentially restates what he just said. The root means "*the love of money*" causes "*of all kinds of evils.*" The root is the unseen part of a plant that's underground. The root is the cause of the crop we see with our eyes. The "*love of money*" in the unseen longing in the human heart that produces the sinful conduct we see with our eyes.

Craving for money has two results: abandoning Jesus and self-inflicted harm.

“*some have wandered away from the faith*” because they craved money. Meaning some who professed faith but were never actually born again abandoned the church and the Christian faith because money held their hearts. These same people “*pierced themselves with many pangs*” = impaled themselves with griefs (pierced = impaled).

Children, in the extended edition of *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, the evil wizard Saruman is stabbed by Grima then falls 200 feet where he’s impaled by a spiked waterwheel. The spike goes through his back then his chest. Paul’s picture is we thrust ourselves through with many griefs when we long for wealth.

This is a warning. Why would you do this to yourself? Paul’s saying no Christian who understands what’s good for them would ever desire to be wealthy.

Why do we want money?

1. So we don’t have to worry about paying our bills.

Security. Peace of mind.

2. So we can have nice stuff.

Boats, cars, clothes, furniture, guns, kitchen counter-tops, snowmobiles.

3. So we can do fun things.

Boat cruises, Celtics games, Disney World, trips to Europe, Hawaii, or Israel.

4. Because we think money will make us happy.

Food, clothing, and Jesus isn’t enough.

5. Because we think our worth is found in wealth and possessions.

I matter because I have money.

There are biblical motivators for money.

6. So we can provide for our family.

We need money to survive. The problem isn’t wanting to have enough. The problem is wanting a lot. Wanting more than we need.

7. So we can have money to be generous.

To the church or the less fortunate.

What temptations, snares, senseless and harmful desires, and griefs do we bring upon ourselves by longing for wealth?

1. We find our security in money rather than God.

We look to money to provide what we fear God can’t or won’t do for us. Security becomes our functional god.

2. We find our identity in money rather than God.

I matter because I have money. I am my bank account.

3. We find our purpose in the pursuit of wealth and possessions rather than God.

Our consuming ambition becomes the pursuit of wealth. Maybe to stockpile. Maybe so we can have everything we've ever wanted without restraint. Life would be good if I had...

4. We still our troubled souls with activities and things rather than God.

Some turn to drugs and alcohol for comfort. Others turn to leisure and possessions. And we need money for these. In either case, we're not bringing our hearts to God.

5. Pursuing wealth makes us self-centered people.

Life becomes a selfish ambition. The needs around us fall to the wayside.

6. Sometimes the path to wealth requires moral compromise.

If money's my god, I'm willing to cheat on my taxes. If I'm a YouTuber and having biblical convictions if going to cost me advertisers, I'll go against the Bible to keep the paychecks coming. If the pursuit of money is the purpose of life, I'm okay scamming the elderly out of their money.

I long for an object sold at Walmart. But I don't have the money to buy it. And I'm not content without it. So I steal it. Bringing punishment upon myself. Impaling myself with many griefs.

There's many ways love for money leads us to sin.

7. Sometimes the pursuit of wealth requires a neglect of duty.

The father in search of wealth works as much as he can and does whatever's necessary for the promotion that guarantees more wealth. Neglecting his wife and children and church in favor of money. Money is his god.

8. In the end, money becomes our master.

Jesus no longer rules me. Money does.

Point 3: What we love runs our lives (6:9-10)

We humans are driven by our hearts. Our hearts are steered by what we love. Sometimes love for God reigns supreme. Sometimes love for money rules the day.

*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. – **Matthew 6:19-24***

Jesus argues that treasure in heaven: immortality, entry to the heavenly city, dwelling with God, individual eternal rewards for faithful service in this life. These are secure. They can't be destroyed. They can't be lost. But earthly treasures aren't secure. They can decay or be stolen.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Your heart follows what you treasure. If your heart treasures money, your heart will follow the money. If you treasure Jesus, your heart will follow Jesus. What we treasure steers the ship. That’s why longing for wealth is so dangerous.

The eye illustrates perception. How we see, how we perceive directs our lives. And what we treasure shapes our perception. It’s all back to **what we love runs our lives**.

Jesus concludes, *“You cannot serve God and money.”* He assumes it’s one or the other. The point is loving money prevents us from serving God. Because money rules our life. That’s why *“the love of money”* is so dangerous. Love for money turns everything upside down.

Idolatry

In Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5, Paul equates covetousness (love of money) with idolatry. Why? When money rules our hearts, we’ve become idolaters. *“love of money”* kicks God to the curb in favor of what we really want: wealth.

Contentment

So Paul urges contentment because:

1. Contentment is good for our spiritual health (*“great gain”*).
2. Owning stuff isn’t what makes us human.
3. Earthly possessions are temporary.

and

4. Craving money will impale us with many griefs.

So what does contentment look like?

If I’m just barely getting by, if I have a job and car to get me there and clothing and food and warm shelter, it’s okay. It’s enough. *“one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”* (Luke 12:15).

If I have a lot, if I have 20 acres and a 401K and a paid off home and working vehicles and working lawn mowers and a bunch of tools and a bunch of guns and a bunch of jewelry, it’s okay. It’s enough.

It’s being satisfied with what I already have. Whether I have plenty or the bare minimum.

What about possessions?

I have inexpensive tastes. I’m pretty simple, except for a passion to be precise in sound doctrine and know God deeply. I don’t care about traveling to Europe, going to a Patriots game, improving my home, my lawn, skiing, boats, guns, snowmobiles, tools, etc. I want the cheapest car possible that operates in a dependable manner. I once bought a house without knowing the color.

But that doesn’t mean contentment isn’t an issue. I like to collect relatively inexpensive things like action figures, DVD’s, and video games. In 2007, I was stationed in Virginia and my wife bought me some action figures at a yard sale because she saw me looking at some Star Wars stuff in Target. I bet she wishes she never did. That sent me into toy collecting from which I’ve never recovered.

I wanted some from this line. Then some from that line. Then everything from that line. That’s the type of artwork I appreciate in my simple tastes. I “needed” everything. I have to conclude it’s coveting. It’s lacking self-control. It’s not being content. Paul speaks to me too.

There's a balance. There's a time to enjoy things with thanksgiving. I wasn't pursuing wealth. I reported my income earned in Virginia when others didn't and my accountant harassed me not to. You don't have six kids on a single income if your goal is amassing wealth.

But there's a time so say I don't need it. I can live without it. I'm already out of space. I need restraint. I'm too selfish. Collecting is controlling me.

Non-Christian

We were created to know and love and serve God, not money. Because Adam violated God's command and brought sin into our world, we're born into the world with a sinful disposition. So we find ourselves having disordered desires. We follow these desires and choose to do life our own way, which the Bible calls sin.

In his great love, God sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross as a substitute.

That whoever believes in Jesus would not face judgment but rather experience forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And not only to forgive us, but also to transform our desires. To rescue us from ourselves. So that we don't impale ourselves with many griefs because money rules our hearts. The Bible calls this being born again.

There's two ways to live. We can go on rejecting God and living our own way. Or we can humble ourselves by asking for forgiveness and trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection and joyfully submitting to God's rule.

If you turn from rebellion and believe, you're totally forgiven of every sin you've ever committed and you're born again with a new heart to fight sin. Let us know if you do!

Christian

Christian, if "*the love of money*" or the craving of possessions is ruling your life, meditate on the damage it's doing. Meditate on the spiritual ambitions, goals, pursuits you should have. Confess your sin to God. Share with some trusted believers. Ask for their prayers. Be settled in your mind what God expects of you. Ask God for help to do what he commands. Ask God for wisdom in determining what's thankful enjoyment and what's enslavement to material things.

What does your heart long for? Is Jesus in the picture?