

Session 4

September 22, 2019

## GODLY CONTENTMENT

1 Timothy 6:6-11, 17-19

It has often been said, “Contentment is not getting what you want; it’s wanting what you get.” It’s a matter of perspective. Paul said in Phil. 4:12, that he had learned in whatever state he was in, “therewith to be content.” An often-overlooked word in his declaration is the word *learned*. Even for Paul, finding contentment had been a process. He had to learn it. And part of that life-lesson involves putting things in proper perspective. These verses give us three important steps in that process. Consider:

**The humility of being human (vv. 6-8).** In this chapter, Paul gave instruction to young Timothy regarding good doctrine and godly living. Verse 6 adds the element of contentment. Paul’s reasoning is something like this: maintain sound doctrine, apply that doctrine to a daily, God-honoring life, and then be happy with it! The right perspective starts at every human’s natural beginning. The word *human* and the word *humility* share a common origin that points back to the simple and basic earth. God decreed mankind’s humility when He declared in the Garden, “For you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Job was the earliest biblical character to voice this conclusion: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life” (Job 1:21). While God stated it as a curse, and Job cited it as a resigned conclusion, Paul used the truth of mankind’s humility to remind us that we are not entitled to a life of luxury. As long as God provides the basics (v. 8), we should be thankful.

**The snare of being selfish (vv. 9-10).** The Bible is filled with warnings against greed. Jesus declared, “You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt. 6:24), and warned “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25). Here, Paul’s emphasis is more about the damage greedy people do to themselves. First, lusting after riches causes *personal destruction*. The language is very graphic, and very negative. The want of money is a “trap,” leading to “foolish and harmful desires” which “plunge” the greedy into “ruin and destruction” (v. 9). Second, the love of money causes *spiritual destruction* (v. 10). Because money so easily becomes a god, even believers stray from the faith to pursue it. The phrase “pierced themselves with many pains” is particularly harsh. The word for “pierced” means *all the way through*, while “many pains” (or “sorrows”) connotes both the continuation and the duration of the hurtful effects that chasing after money bring into life (see Ps. 16:4).

**The goal of being godly (vv. 11; 17-19).** Against the dark backdrop of a greedy life, Paul presents the bright and stark characteristics of a godly life. The “but you” draws a clear divide between the worldly and the godly. “Man of God” refers to both the one who belongs to God and the one who proclaims Him. In either case, the believer is to run from the destructive trap of worldly greed. As commentator Matthew Henry (c. 1700) put it, “Men of God should be taken up with the things of God!” In quick succession, the apostle lists those simple yet profound characteristics of godly living: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness (v. 11). It is important to note that these traits are not obtained in passing but must be *pursued* with the same fervor in which the worldly pursue their wealth. Verses 17-19 remind young

Timothy to instruct his congregation not only in the dangers of greed, but in the faithfulness of God. Those who have material wealth are to remain humble (v. 17) as well as generous (v. 18); keeping in mind that God is the provider of all.