

1 Timothy 6.6-12 NET / COB / 01.17.16

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Title]** Many people think money will make them happy, yet some of the saddest people on the planet are rich. Some people think they need money to be happy, so they give up all the things that would make them happy to get money.
- The Bible talks a lot about money and about happiness or contentment. Of some of this, many of us are ignorant; other parts we ignore; and some we misquote or mistake altogether. One of the Bible's most often misquoted verses is in our passage today. Who knows what the Bible says is the root of all evils? It is not money, it is the love of money.
 - Jesus said if we loved money as our master, we would come to despise God; but if we love God as our master, will we come to despise money or just materialism, the love of money?
 - Money is a means to an end. We say money is power, because with money we can subvert the populace to elect the person with the most ads, we can influence politicians, corrupt juries, or even in innocence buy influence and prestige in our community, even sometimes in a church.
 - Money also is the ticket to leisure and to the material things and travel that augment our enjoyment of leisure. Money can bail us out of a bind, it can empower us to provide and bless, it can sustain us when we no longer can work. And in the economy, money is necessary just to make the wheels turn, to make trade far more frequent and possible than if we had to barter.
 - So we need money, and Jesus never said differently, but both Jesus – as we saw last week – and Paul – as we will see this week – warn us against becoming too fond of the stuff.

[Slide 2: 6.6-12] Here is what Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6.6-12 NET: Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that. Those who long to be rich, however, stumble into temptation and a trap and many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains. But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for, and made your good confession for, in the presence of many witnesses.**

- † From this, we will derive three points today [if you are filling out your handout]: we should be content with what God has given us; we should avoid the love of money; and we should pursue godliness. Let's pray and then we will analyze this passage in its parts...

[Slide 3: 6.6-8] **1 Timothy 6.6-8: Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that.**

- † We will come back to godliness and deal with contentment first. I'll tell you why: because if you are not content, you will struggle to be godly.

- This is particularly true, considering what we learned last week in Jesus' teaching from Matthew 6: if you are not content with what you have, you will focus your mind and efforts on becoming content, on obtaining more in the hope that you would be content, and that means your focus will not be on the things of God. This is the economic concept of opportunity cost: you cannot pursue both God and money at the same moment.
 - You can be a godly person at work, I do not deny that! But if you are not content, you will be concentrating on pursuing what you think you should have, instead of concentrating on the work God has given you and trusting in his provision. Furthermore, if you are very discontent, you will feel tempted not only to what we call "bottom line" fleshly pursuits, but to use "bottom line" fleshly methods to succeed in them.
 - Let me remind you how this graphic works. In any situation, you have two choices: you can live by God's revelation, responding to it with faith and obedience; or you can rely on fleshly decisions about what your goals should be and what methods you will use to obtain them.
 - The top line, walking with God, brings tremendous spiritual blessing, but no guarantees about what you will get materially, except that God does promise he will meet your needs. If you walk with God, then God gets to choose the set of blessings you receive. So you might get peanut butter instead of prime rib; a civic shelter instead of a chateau.
 - The bottom line is sinful, because you are going your own way, not God's, you are pursuing your own goals, instead of his; so there likely is spiritual harm and certainly you walk away from the guaranteed blessings inherent in walking with God; but you might be able to get what you want in this life, whether that is wealth or something else.
 - If you are not content, you will be tempted to not only walk on the bottom line path by making materialism your fleshly goal, you will feel tempted also to use bottom line fleshly methods of obtaining wealth. That might include some subtle dishonesty, like taking supplies home from your employer, cheating a little on your taxes, getting paid under the table; or it might involve cutting corners, with get rich quick schemes, financial involvement with shady characters, or gambling your savings, instead of applying yourself steadily to biblical financial principles.
- † **[Slide 4: 6.6-8 highlights]** So let's talk about contentment. Paul wrote to Timothy: **"we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that."** Everything here is temporal and thus temporary, as we said last week, so we cannot take any of it with us into eternity.
- Paul looks at what is eternal – his salvation, his relationship with God through Christ – and he says, since God has given us that already, if God keeps his promise to provide us with what we need temporally and physically – that is, food and shelter – we will be satisfied with that.
 - Would you be satisfied if your material provision from God was only food and shelter, say a spot in a shelter and access to a soup kitchen? When you are homeless and hungry, you long for shelter and food, but once you have that, you want more.
- † Most of us think it would be easier to be content if we just had a little more. Come on, admit it! Don't you think that way? But did you catch the flaw in that reasoning? *Most* of us think that: whether we are poor, rich, or anywhere in between, we always think with just a little bit more, we could be content. Our expectations adjust as our circumstances do.

- I have never lived on the street, but I have lived on people's couches and relied on their gifts of food. At that time, I thought if I could just find a steady job that would pay the bills, I would be content. When God gave me that job, at first I was elated; but after I had settled in, it started to trouble me that I didn't own a house. LeeAnn did own a house, so when we got married, that desire was met, but then I started to be concerned that we had no retirement savings, and no cash to do what we wanted to do with the house or travel or schooling. Now I dream of owning a ranch, of investing in businesses located in the borough, of fixing up our church building. We always adjust to want more, it's natural.

† **[Slide 5: Philippians]** So this is not really a question about how much we have or how to get enough to be satisfied. Rather, it is a heart issue, a question of our perspective, our thought life, our willingness to be content with whatever God gives us, because we trust in his provision and in his discretion. That is, we trust that whatever he chooses to give us, that is best.

- Let's look at what Paul told the Philippians in Philippians 4. In v.10, he said it brought him joy that they had sent him provisions while he was in prison. Then he said in **Philippians 4.11-13 NET: I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.**
- Paul was writing from prison. He had been in prison several times, been beaten several times, at least once so badly he was left for dead. He had gone hungry, he had depended on gifts to see him through, and he had worked day jobs to get by when he could. Whether God gave him abundance or left him in need, he had learned the secret of contentment. That secret was to depend on Christ to strengthen him.
- Paul used the language of Greek Stoic philosophers, but turned their philosophy on its head. Contentment was the goal of Stoicism, they aspired to be above need and abundance, to be free of distress or serenity from circumstances, to not respond emotionally to their circumstances. They sought in this way to be self-sufficient. Paul used their terminology, but notice where he ended up, not with self-sufficiency, but Christ-sufficiency! Paul's source of strength to endure was not within himself, but within Christ.

† **[Slide 6: Philippians/top line]** Last week, in Matthew 6, Jesus said we should feel free to pursue God's kingdom and God's righteousness, because God would provide for us. Among other things, this was the answer to relieving our anxiety about provision of the necessities.

- Paul said something similar to the Philippians. Paul was living on what we call the top line, living by faith and obedience, such that Christ is everything, such that he not only was devoted to Christ but also dependent on Christ, trusting in Christ, so he experienced the spiritual blessing of true contentment.
- He was not anxious over provision, not even about being freed from prison; he was not upset at his hardships or deprivation like most of us would be; rather he was content. He totally trusted in Christ and was devoted to Christ's work, so he was at peace, content with any circumstances.
- So to Timothy, he advised, if God is providing you with what you need in food and shelter, be satisfied with that. Don't yearn for more, don't covet, don't even dream about it, stay focused on God and his work, and be content. That is very similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 6. Paul elaborates in vv.9-10...

[Slide 7: 6.9-10] 1 Timothy 6.9-10: Those who long to be rich, however, stumble into temptation and a trap and many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains.

- † Roger Waters, lead singer and song writer for Pink Floyd in the 1970s and 1980s, wrote the hit song, “Money” which you heard as I was stepping up to the pulpit. Being an anti-religion atheist, it should not surprise us that he misquoted the Bible about money: he wrote, “Money, so they say, is the root of all evil today. But if you ask for a rise, it’s no surprise, that they’re giving none away.”
 - What’s his mistake? 1 Timothy 6.10 is one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible: many people think it says that money is the root of all evils, but it doesn’t! It says “the love of money” is the root of all evils. This is hyperbole, exaggeration to make a point: not every evil has the love of money as its cause, but our love of money certainly is the root of many evils we bring upon ourselves and our society.

- † **[Slide 8: temptation]** Paul notes that those who long to be rich stumble into temptation. As we said earlier, if you long to be rich, if you are discontent with what you have, you already are tempted to walk on the bottom line path by making materialism your fleshly goal. Furthermore, you will feel tempted also to use bottom line fleshly methods of obtaining wealth. That might lead you into dishonesty, crime, get rich quick schemes, gambling, or other poor decisions.
 - Paul says such a longing to be rich can lead you into a trap. Maybe he means materialism in general, that you will always yearn for more and thus always be focused on chasing wealth instead of building treasure in Heaven by seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness. Maybe he means the emotional and spiritual toll of being caught up in the rat race, of keeping up with the Joneses, of leveraging yourself with debt or needing to work fully half of every day.

- † Paul said longing to be rich resulted in senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.
 - If you love money, you won’t want to give up control of it, so you will be stingy in your giving though you might be extravagant in your consumption. Money and material things can become so important to you that you focus on them more than you focus on God. Are you living to build material success or living to serve God? Are your biggest desires for new stuff or for seeing people grow closer to Christ? Are you in danger of making money, wealth, or material things an idol in your life?
 - **[Slide 9: root]** Paul says, **“For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains.”** That’s how bad it can get: your focus on material things and money can result in your mind and heart becoming consumed with materialism and greed to the point that you are straying from the things of God, even growing to resent, despise, hate God, in part because God teaches you should not love your money, nor hoard it for yourself.
 - This can lead to all sorts of problems, from losing the blessings inherent to God’s way of life to experiencing the ravages to your soul brought on by sin. Love of money is bottom line, fleshly, sinful, destructive, the wrong path.

- † **[Slide 10: Proverbs]** Proverbs 30.8b-9 NIV are a prayer: **...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' [when you see LORD all in capitals, that in Hebrew is Yahweh, the name of God.] Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.**
- This is biblical wisdom, top line revelation. Not too much that we get to thinking we are self-sufficient; not too little that we are tempted to resort to immoral means. Notice what is enough for the writer of the proverb: meeting the daily need. There is no mention of more.
 - We should be content with whatever God has given us; and we should avoid the love of money; now let's finish our passage as we consider godliness.

[Slide 11: 6.11-12] 1 Timothy 6.11-12: **But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for, and made your good confession for, in the presence of many witnesses.**

- † That sounds a lot like what Jesus said in Matthew 6! Jesus said we should pursue God's righteousness; Paul says pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Paul likes lists.
- Paul's command to compete well for the faith sounds a lot like Jesus' command to pursue the kingdom: live it out! go full immersion! give it your all! do the work God commands us in scripture! be 100% passionate and committed to God and his way of life!
 - Paul finishes with **"lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses."** What does he mean by "lay hold of your eternal life"? He often talked that way: in another place [Philippians 2.12 NET] he wrote, **"continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence."**
 - I think the point is that Christ did everything needed for you to have spiritual life. If you have put your faith in who Jesus is and what he did for you in his crucifixion and resurrection, then you are saved to eternal life. Now live that out! lay hold of it, work it out in day to day living! Live like a saved, transformed, born again citizen of Heaven instead of like the average pagan American. If you are a person dedicated to God, as Timothy was, keep away from the earthly, materialistic stuff, the love of money; instead pursue God's way of life in relationship with him.
- † Last week, Jesus taught us to pursue God and his ways, instead of money, and this would relieve our anxiety about provision; today Paul teaches us to pursue God and his ways, instead of money, and this will lead us to contentment.
- Would you like to feel content and not feel anxiety? The solution is to take the top line path of trust and obedience, pursue your relationship with God and living God's way.
 - Earlier, we said that if you were not content, you would struggle to be godly, but pursuing godliness is the way to become content! If we trust and obey God enough to take the top line, to walk in his ways and pursue his goals, our trust will lead to contentment as our obedience leads to godliness, because we will learn to trust that not only will God provide, but whatever he chooses to provide is for the best.
 - That relieves not only our anxiety about meeting our own needs, it relieves the pressure of measuring up as successful in our own eyes or in the eyes of others. Whether you are rich or

poor or in between, you have what is right for you right now to live out God's plan to bring him glory and to serve Christ.

- Now we know godliness does not come instantly, and neither does contentment. But as you pursue godliness, as Jesus becomes everything to you, you will grow to be more content, to experience more Christ-sufficiency. Part of this is learning to care more about Christ and trust more in Christ than we do with regard to the material world. Part is our continual transformation, what we call progressive sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit to make us more like Christ, that is to make us more godly.

† **[Slide 12: Hebrews]** The book of Hebrews contains a lot of Paul's theology, along with a lot of Peter's. **Hebrews 13.5 NET: Your conduct must be free from the love of money and you must be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you and I will never abandon you."**

- God has made provision for you, for your eternal life and for your temporal life. Trust in that. Trust in it enough to not worry about money; trust in it enough to give up your love of money, to give up striving all the time for more.
- I'm not saying you shouldn't work: you should work, and work hard as unto the Lord himself, but make the focus of your day about God, make the purpose of your life about God, make the goal of your work to glorify God and bless others, rather than to pile up toys for yourself.
- I love the top-line / bottom-line graphic, because it makes the choice clear. You get to choose: will you be intimate with God or walk apart from him? will you dwell on the things of God or on the things of the flesh? will you trust in God's provision or in your own? will you yield to the Holy Spirit and be led by the Holy Spirit or stubbornly go what you think is your own way, but really is the way of the world? will you become Christ-sufficient and content or continue to attempt self-sufficiency and remain yearning?
- When we talk about salvation, we say that every person is a sinner, who is in a pit mostly of their own digging, with no way out, so when God offers the gift of lifting you out, it is silly to resist it, ignore it, seek other ways – your own ways – out. This is so similar! You might be eternally saved, but you still struggle with sinful attitudes, which include material lust, greed, covetousness, over indulgence. You are in a pit, one Paul described as temptation, a trap, and senseless and harmful desires. God is offering you the gift of lifting you out, all you have to do is learn to walk with him by faith and obedience.
- Let us learn to be content, even with little, so we can live truly godly lives, for **godliness combined with contentment brings great profit.**
- Let's pray . . .