

# THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

## 1 TIMOTHY 06:06–10

### *Introduction*

Every person strives for contentment. Contentment is the one thing we all want. We want fulfilled, complete, satisfied, completely self-sufficient. But when we look around, this is not what we see. What we see is a society and a world discontented about as unfulfilled, incomplete, dissatisfied, empty, lonely and restless as they can be. Why? Why are so many people discontented? Why are few people truly contented? This is the importance of this passage: *the secret of contentment*.

- I. The secret to contentment is godliness (vv. 6-8).
- II. The secret to contentment is not money (vv. 9-10).

### **I. 1 Timothy 06:06–08 *The Secret to Contentment: Godliness***

The secret to contentment is godliness. “Contentment” (*autarkeias*) means to be *completely sufficient*, to need absolutely nothing. It means to be fulfilled, satisfied and complete. Imagine a person who feels *wholly complete and sufficient*, who lacks absolutely nothing. This is what Scripture means by contentment. What makes a person content? What brings such contentment to the human soul? Scripture pulls no punches; it unequivocally states that it is *godliness*. Godliness alone can make a person content. Godliness alone can take a person and make him...

- fulfilled
- satisfied
- complete
- sufficient

Godliness alone can give man the sense that he lacks absolutely nothing. Imagine being so contented — so fulfilled, so satisfied, so completed, so sufficient — that you sense no lack. You just sense no need whatsoever within your innermost being and soul. This is exactly what godliness does for the human soul. This is the reason Scripture declares that godliness with contentment is great gain. No greater gain could ever come to a person than contentment.

Note that Scripture wants us to think about the three stages of life for a moment:

- => there is the stage of birth. At birth we brought nothing into this world. When we entered the world, we came with only two things: our bodies and life. Beyond these we were stark naked. We had nothing else.
  - => There is the stage of death. Note that the fact of death is an absolute certainty. At death we carry nothing — absolutely nothing — out of this world. We leave this world just as we entered it, with nothing.
  - => There is the stage that is between birth and death — the stage of life. Life is entirely different from birth and death. There are some things that we need during life:
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necessities that we must have to sustain life. We need food, clothing and shelter. The Greek word (*skepsmata*) for *clothing* literally means covering: it is applicable both to clothing and shelter. In order to live and complete our lives upon earth, we *need* food, clothing and shelter. But note: we *need* nothing else. We can live and sustain life if we have these things. Therefore, a person is to be content with these. Remember the point of these verses: the secret of contentment is godliness. Godliness with contentment is *great gain*.

The point is driven home by a series of statements taken from Mathew Henry:

*“If a man [has]...enough to carry him through [this world], he needs desire no more, his godliness...will be his great gain.”*

*“Godliness is itself great gain; it is profitable to all things.”*

*“Wherever there is true godliness, there will be contentment.”*

*“The highest pitch of contentment [is] godliness [which makes the] happiest people in this world.”*

*“Christian contentment...is all the wealth in the world.”*

*“He that is godly is sure to be happy in another world.”*

*“Godliness with contentment, this is the way to gain.”*

*“A Christian’s gain is great: it is not like the little gain of worldlings, who are so fond of a little worldly advantage.”*

*“All truly godly people have learned with Paul ‘I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content’” (Ph. 4:11). (Mathew Henry’s Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 828.)*

A striking point is made by William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 150).

*“It is not that Christianity pleads for poverty. There is no special virtue in being poor, and no happiness in having a constant struggle to make ends meet. But Christianity does plead for two things.*

- 1. ‘It pleads for the realization that it is never in the power of things to bring happiness.’*
- 2. ‘It pleads for the concentration upon the things which are permanent, the things that a man can take with him when in the end he dies.’”*

**Phil 4:11** *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.*

**1 Tim 6:6, 8** *But godliness with contentment is great gain. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.*

*Heb 13:5* Keep your lives [behaviour] free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

*Prov 15:16* Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.

## II. *1 Timothy 06:09–10 Wealth, Riches and Contentment*

The secret to contentment is not money. This is shocking, for the rich cling and hoard their money, and the rest of mankind is forever seeking to get more and more money. But God is clear about the matter: money and wealth do not bring contentment. There are four reasons why this is true.

1. Money tempts and enslaves. How can money tempt and enslave? The answer is clearly seen. A person with money...

- can buy anything he wants when he wants.
- can go wherever he wants when he wants.
- can do just about anything he wants when he wants.

This is power within the world — what we might call worldly power. A person who has the power to buy anything, go anywhere and do whatever he wants has worldly power.

The point is this: a person who has such power — the money to buy anything, go anywhere and do anything — is always tempted. He is tempted to live selfishly and to hoard what he has. He is always tempted...

- to keep on buying and buying.
- to keep on going and going
- to keep on doing and doing.

The rich are far more tempted to indulge the flesh (sinful nature) and to live extravagantly — far more tempted to live selfishly and to control and dominate people through the power of their wealth.

The rich and they who would be rich are never free from the bombardment of temptation. Therefore, the rich person never has peace. He never possesses contentment, not inward completeness and satisfaction. He never feels completely fulfilled and sufficient. This is the first reason money does not bring contentment. Money brings a bombardment of temptation, and it ensnares men in sin.

2. Money can cause many foolish and harmful desires. Think how foolish and harmful some of these things are.

=> How foolish are closets full of clothing: a person can wear only one set of clothing at a time and there are only so many different kinds of clothing. How foolish is it to have closets full of clothing that we can seldom wear?

- => How foolish is extravagance in clothes? Labels on clothes? An expensive store and an inexpensive chain store will carry the very same clothing made by the same manufacturer. Is it wise or foolish to buy the expensive clothing because of a small label with a different name?
- => How foolish is extravagance in eating? Eating and eating and eating — training our bodies to crave and crave more and more food. Is it foolish or wise to damage the body?
- => How foolish is indulgence in smoking? Walking around like a smoke stack damaging our bodies.
- => How foolish and harmful is selling and giving our bodies over to intoxicating drink, drugs, immorality and greed?
- => How foolish and harmful is it to...
- crave and crave?
  - hoard and hoard?
  - secure and secure?
  - lust and lust?
  - indulge and indulge?
  - possess and possess?

How foolish and harmful is it to feed our desires and lusts with the things, possessions and niceties of this world when millions upon millions are hopeless and helpless and going to bed hungry, cold and sick — all dying from lack of food, clothing, shelter and disease? And, most tragic of all — dying without Christ and without any hope of living eternally with God. As stated, money can cause many foolish and harmful desires.

3. Money plunges men into ruin and destruction. The word “plunge” (*buthizo*) is a descriptive picture of wealth being “a personal monster, which plunges its victims into an ocean of complete destruction” (Donald Guthrie. *The Pastoral Epistles*. “Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 113). The idea is this: the person who falls into the foolish and harmful desires of this world shall be utterly destroyed and ruined, both in body and soul. And the destruction and ruin shall be for eternity (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 593).

**Phil 3:18-19** *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

**1 Th 5:3** *While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

**2 Th 1:7-9** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

**1 Tim 6:9** *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

**Heb 10:39** *But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

4. Money — that is, the love of money — is a root of all kinds of evil. Note the three reasons why:

=> The love of money causes people to covet, and covetousness is idolatry.

=> The love of money causes people to wander away from the faith. It causes people to go after the lusts of this world.

=> The love of money causes people to pierce themselves with many griefs. The things, possessions and lusts of this world do not satisfy nor fulfil a person's heart and life. Money cannot bring contentment to a person. The love of money only consumes and eats a person with grief (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 594). It pierces the heart with a void — the void of emptiness and worry, anxiety and insecurity. Money cannot buy love, health and deliverance from death. Money cannot buy God; it cannot buy assurance, not the assurance and confidence of living forever.

The point is this: a person craves the necessities of life; his very nature craves them. However, once man has the necessities of life, he discovers that he still craves for more. The necessities do not satisfy his inner craving and emptiness — his void, hunger and thirst — for something more. Therefore, man seeks to satisfy his craving by getting more and more food, clothing and everything else he desires. He eats and eats, buys and buys, and goes after more and more comfort, ease, pleasure, wealth, money, and everything else he wants. But what man overlooks is this: the craving within his heart — the void, the hunger, the thirst — is not for more material possessions. It is for *spiritual satisfaction*, the *filling up* of another part of his being. His craving is for godliness. Therefore, once he has food and clothing, he has satisfied his physical craving. Enough food and clothing for today brings contentment today — but only physical contentment. What he needs after that is spiritual food, the satisfaction of his spiritual hunger. Man's contentment comes from having both his need for physical and spiritual food met. One without the other leaves him with some emptiness, some incompleteness (Col 2:8-9). True contentment comes only from godliness.

**Thought 1.** “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” William Barclay points out that the great classical thinkers recognized this truth.

=> The great thinker Democritus said, “Love of money is the metropolis of all evils.”

=> Phocylides says that “the love of money is the mother of all evils.”

- => Seneca refers to “the desire for that which does not belong to us, from which every evil of the mind springs.”
- => Philo refers to the “love of money which is the starting-place of the greatest transgressions of the Law.”
- => Athenaeus quotes another thinker: “The belly’s pleasure is the beginning and root of all evil.”

William Barclay himself makes an excellent point that is worthy of note:

*“Money in itself is neither good nor bad; it is simply dangerous in that the love of it may become bad. With money a man can do much good; and with money he can do much evil. With money a man can selfishly serve his own desires; and with money he can generously answer to the cry of his neighbour’s need. With money a man can buy his way to the forbidden things and facilitate the path of wrong-doing; and with money he can make it easier for someone else to live as God meant him to live. Money is not an evil, but it is a great responsibility” (The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 152). ■*