

Friday, December 22, 2017

## Contentment

## 1 Timothy 5-6

*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 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. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Paul continues to teach. As he teaches Timothy, he leaves a wealth of knowledge for me. In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul states that he has learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. In his letter to Timothy, he expands on the teaching of *godliness* by adding *contentment*. Contentment added to godliness is great gain. Again, it is being content with the temporary situation while waiting for the riches of heaven. My contentment lags when I try to find the comfort of heaven on earth. That leads to discontentment. The pursuit of success and comfort and the desire to be rich is nothing new. Paul makes it clear here that there is nothing wrong with having money. But having a love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It robs a person of the contentment they can have with who they are in Christ. If a person has a love of money, it impacts all they do—even their pursuit of godliness. There were apparently some in Ephesus who were using godliness to pursue wealth. Paul says that that type of person has a corrupt mind and has been robbed of the truth. Truth sets us free. If a person is robbed of the truth, they will not find contentment. It is important that I strive to be content with what I have been given, even as I wait for what is yet to come!

*Father, help me with this. Help me to be content with the things I have here while I wait for the riches of heaven. Remind me that the riches I have here are best used as I invest them in ways that help proclaim Your truth and Your gospel. Amen.*

Saturday, December 23, 2017

## Join me

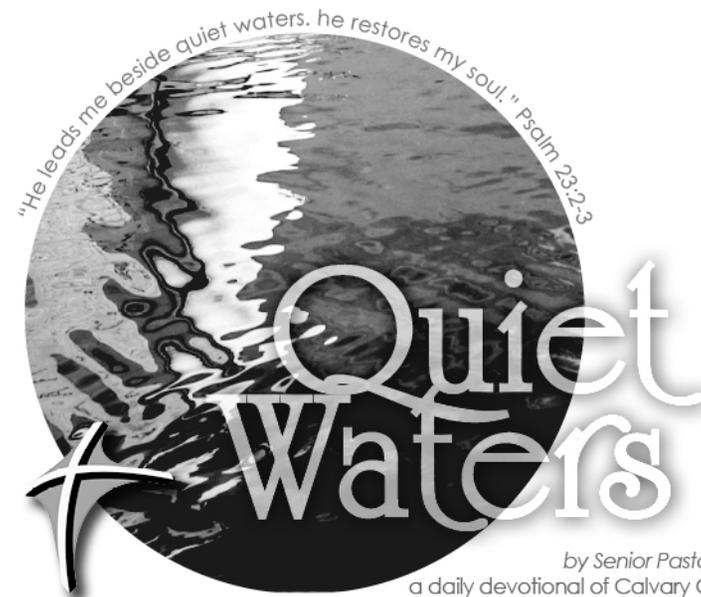
## 2 Timothy 1-2

*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.* 2 Timothy 1:7-9a

Paul encourages Timothy to join him. This would be an incredible invitation. I think of what it would be like to join Paul in his ministry, joining with the man that God used to spread the gospel to the known world. I can imagine joining him in his passion for the Lord. I can imagine joining him in the successful rallies and crusades that he went on as he boldly proclaimed the gospel. I can imagine joining him in making tents and having significant conversations with others about the Lord. But that is not the invitation. The invitation is not to what seems to be successful ministry. The invitation is to join him in suffering for the gospel. Paul understood well that success would bring suffering. Am I truly ready to join Paul in this? Am I more interested in my comfort than in the advancement of the gospel? Many times that answer is yes. It is a constant battle that rages within me. If something begins to feel like suffering, I want it to go away. Too many times, my prayers seek to have God make me comfortable instead of having him use my suffering for His glory and for the advancement of the gospel. But my heart is to join Paul and God is changing me! I want God to use me for His purpose and His grace.

*Father, help me join with all the others who are suffering for the gospel. Lord, I need Your help to keep me from seeking comfort above all else. The mission is too important for me to keep quiet. Help me not be ashamed to proclaim Your truth. Amen.*

December 18 - 23, 2017



Monday, December 18, 2017

## Children of...

## 1 Thessalonians 3-5

*But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.* 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10

The Lord Jesus is coming again in victory to take us to be with Him, just as He has promised!!! This letter helps in the understanding that Jesus will return and will bring with Him those who have died in Him (fallen asleep). When He returns, all of those in Him who are alive will join Him in the air in response to His command, the voice of the archangel, and the sound of the trumpet. Those who are in Christ are children of the light and children of the day. They have been rescued from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of light (see Colossians 1:9-14). But they are also the children of a new day—the Day of the Lord. Paul tells his readers that this should make a difference in the way they live. Instead of living according to darkness, they should live according to the light. They are to be alert, living out their faith, hope, and love (notice again this triad of words). Paul then reminds them (5:10) that in Christ, whether alive or dead (awake or asleep), the children of God will live together with Christ! What a great hope! This is the hope that allows me, as a child of the light and of the day, to live a life worthy of our Savior, encouraging others by my love for God and for them.

*Father, thank You that I can be sure that Jesus will come again. Help that great hope to encourage me to live out my life as a child of the light and of the day. Amen.*

Tuesday, December 19, 2017

## Truth

## 2 Thessalonians 1-3

*But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.* 2 Thessalonians 2:13-16

Thessalonica was a very large city—more than 200,000 people lived there. That's a city about the size of Madison, Wisconsin. Not only was the reception to the gospel there harsh, the Thessalonians actually followed Paul to Berea, a city 50 miles away, to make a stand against Paul teaching truth there as well. There was great opposition to the gospel. Acts 17 records these events. It would seem, from this letter to the Thessalonian church that the persecution continued and became even more intense. But Paul is quick to commend them for their faith in the midst of the persecution. He then reminds them of the hope that waits for them. He also wants them to know truth. Some have been giving them false information that has caused them to be deceived. He reminds them of the things they have learned from him. He encourages them with the truth. It is so very important for me to know the truth so that I am not deceived. The best way to know truth is to know the truth God has revealed and preserved for me in the Bible.

*Father, help me to know the truth so that I am not deceived in the times I live in. Help those around the world who are experiencing persecution to stand strong in Your truth. Amen.*

Wednesday, December 20, 2017

## Trustworthy saying

## 1 Timothy 1-2

*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.* 1 Timothy 1:15-16

Paul is writing a letter to the person he has left to oversee the church in Ephesus. Timothy is very special to Paul. Paul starts his letter with “a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.” I love this. It is Paul speaking to his student, teaching him the foundational truths. This is where I can learn the foundational truths that can hold me. I need to pause, read carefully, and then ponder all that this saying contains. Paul begins by reminding Timothy of a saying that had become well known and trustworthy. It is still a very trustworthy statement. “Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This is indeed trustworthy. As Paul writes this letter, it is to tutor Timothy to carry on while he is gone. He then shows him how to live humbly. Paul modeled well a life that was lived recognizing that from which he had been saved. He saw his sin as heinous. But rather than go into a morose place, he recognized that God saving him revealed the mercy of God to the world. If God was merciful to Paul, He could be merciful to anyone. He could become an example. It is the same for me. When I see my sin as God does, I will be reminded of God's patience and the great forgiveness I have been given. I will be far less likely to judge another person's sins. I will leave that to the mercy of God—which I can tell them about! I will have His patience with them. This is indeed a trustworthy saying.

*Father, thank You for Your patience and Your mercy. Thank You for forgiving my sins. They are so many and so great. I repent before You and ask that I would be an example of a person who has received great mercy so that people will believe in You and share in the amazing gift of eternal life! Amen.*

Thursday, December 21, 2017

## Alive

## 1 Timothy 3-4

*Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.* 1 Timothy 4:7-8

As he continues to mentor Timothy, Paul reveals his priority. Notice that it is not one of several priorities. He tells Timothy to train himself to be godly. It requires work and training. Paul equates it to physical training but makes it clear that training for godliness is of greater importance than physical training. This does not mean that we do not train physically; it is just that we need to make sure not to get distracted by it. These earthly bodies—no matter how well trained—will not go to heaven (see 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9). But training for godliness will benefit me very well now and will be significantly used by God here; and then it holds promise for the life to come as well. It is important for me to remember that I need to keep my eyes fixed on the eternal and do all I can to ensure the strength of my soul—even as I care for the body that has been entrusted to me for this little while on earth. I am an eternal being. The greatest priority is work on the things that will last forever. I need to keep an eternal perspective that will keep me from getting distracted by the temporary.

*Father, help me to work hard to train myself for godliness. Please keep me from getting distracted! Amen.*