

Don't be Deceived. Godliness with Contentment is True Gain. – Follow Up

Key Passage: 1Timothy 6:2b–10

Message Notes: Jesus opens up for us a whole new way to live life, to view the world around us, and to relate to God and each other in freedom and peace as his family, with great hope for the future. This is what the instructions Paul is giving in this letter is all about.

The word doctrine simply means 'teaching'. Paul is referring to the instructions in this letter as part of two interrelated core bodies of New Testament teaching.

1. The message of Christ 'the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Kerygma) The good news of who Jesus is, what he taught and all he's accomplished for us.
2. The teaching that accords with Godliness (teaching about living a God honoring gospel believing way of life - Didache). Christ's principles for living as his family of disciples in this world until he returns (Matt 28:20, Col 2:6-8, Heb 5:12-14).

These teachings form the foundation for a whole new way of relating to God, seeing ourselves and the world around us, and living life together as his family; because of Jesus has already done to give us eternal life.

It's common today for people to separate Paul's teachings from Jesus', but that doesn't reflect the reality of their harmony. False teachers disagreed with Jesus, not Paul. Paul teaches God's plan for saving us and Christ's plan for being His family on mission. - "how one ought to behave in the household of God" (3:15). Any differing teaching isn't Christ's plan. He is encouraging Timothy to teach these things confidently and warns against giving into pressure from religious teachers who are teaching a different message and plan.

Some Characteristics of false teachers:

- "Puffed up with conceit": They think of themselves as smarter or superior in some way.
- "Unhealthy craving for controversy & quarrels about words": They love stirring up conflict, causing divisions, and infighting.
- They view "godliness is a means of gain": They see godliness as a way to increase wealth, advance their careers, or move up in the world, viewing their teaching ministry as a path to riches.

The core of their ministry and message is viewing godliness as a means to gain—seeking health, wealth, and success in this world through religious practices. This mentality aligns with the warning about false teaching in chapter 4, where it mentions those who impose strict rules on marriage and diet; that by following religious regulations, they can secure material blessings and advancement. This contrasts sharply with Paul's teachings and the good news of Jesus, which emphasize that godliness is about what has been accomplished for us in Christ, not what we must do to earn God's favor and material blessings. This doctrine "godliness as a means to gain," is a different gospel—one not only propagated by prosperity preachers but also a mindset we call can easily buy into – Even Timothy.

So to help emphasize the difference Paul uses a brilliant play on words with the phrase “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” True godliness and contentment go hand in hand.

Discontentment, the opposite of contentment, arises naturally in our broken world where things often fall short of our expectations. This dissatisfaction can lead to a desire for material wealth, especially in our materialistic culture. In moments of discontent, we may find ourselves thinking that more money or resources would solve our problems. This discontentment serves as fertile ground for the love of money to flourish, subtly pulling at our hearts. This makes us vulnerable to false teachings that equate godliness with material gain, suggesting that religious practices can lead to worldly success.

This teaching sounds godly but it’s not really about God and his kingdom at all. It is using God to get what you really love – material blessings. ‘Godliness as a means to gain’ is just a religious expression of ‘the love of money’.

If our basic needs are met yet we continue to have this nagging discontent that what we already have is not enough, it is a sign of wrong worship. It indicates that we are looking to and depending on the created things of this world for hope, security, and salvation instead of God. Worshiping anything other than God, as mentioned in Romans 1, is the root of all sin. (6:10)

So don’t be deceived. True Godliness is not about getting more or moving up in this world. True godliness is about all Jesus has already done and freely given to those who trust in him.

If you belong to Jesus you are far more wealthy than you can imagine!

In Jesus, you are already a forgiven and beloved child of God (Gal 4:6). Jesus says, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb 13:5). In Jesus, you are already a member of his royal family (Eph 2:19). King Jesus, the ruler of all heaven and earth, says, "Seek my kingdom, and I will look after your needs" (Matt 6:33). In Jesus, you already have eternal life and an eternal inheritance waiting for you in heaven (Rom 8:11, Eph 1:13-14). Jesus, the author of life who is risen from the dead, says, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven that can never spoil or get stolen" (Matt 6:20). In Jesus, you've already been given a greater purpose and mission in life (Eph 2:10). Jesus says, "Use your life to join me in making disciples of all nations, and I will be with you always" (Matt 28:18-20).

True godliness with contentment is, in itself, great wealth.

Questions to guide follow up:

1. Have you experienced or witnessed the love of money proving to be a root of various kinds of evil? What did you observe?
2. Why does Paul use such strong language in verses 4-5, do you think? Why is the teaching ‘godliness as a means to gain’ a mentality that Christians are so easily drawn into?
3. How does the love of money pull at your heart?
4. What practical steps can you take to cultivate contentment that comes from who you are in Jesus instead of looking for it in material possessions?