

## **Rich Temptations**

part 15 of Serving Jesus Together

January 28, 2018

Kent Crockett told the following story in one of his books. A beggar standing on a street corner commented to his friends, "If only I had a hundred dollars, I would never complain again."

A businessman walking by overheard his statement and interrupted the conversation. "Excuse me," the businessman said. "Did you say if you had a hundred dollars, you would never complain again?"

The beggar replied, "You heard right, mister."

The businessman pulled out his wallet, handed the beggar a hundred dollars, and said, "I'm glad I can have a small part in bringing happiness to the world."

After the businessman walked away, the beggar turned to his friends and remarked, "I wish I had asked for two hundred dollars!"

Kent Crockett, *I Once Was Blind But Now I Squint*,  
Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2004, 25

Not too many weeks ago there was a lot in the news about the Powerball and Mega Millions lottery games. The big prizes had gotten much bigger than usual. And the higher it goes, the more tickets people buy. There are lots of people who want to get rich.

Many people assume that being rich would solve most of their problems. But it has been shown that winning can bring as many negative consequences as positive ones. Winning the lottery would change your life in negative ways you cannot imagine. You could live to regret winning it big.

Today's sermon is about the danger of wanting to be rich instead of choosing to be content. Now you might be thinking, "I don't want to be rich. I just want a little bit more." This morning, God wants to warn us away from such desires.

We are in a series of sermons from the Bible book of 1 Timothy. This book is actually a letter that one missionary, a man named Paul, wrote to a younger missionary named Timothy. Timothy was serving in the church in the city of Ephesus. Let's begin reading in 1 Timothy 6:6.

### **1 Timothy 6:6 (NIV) "... godliness with contentment is great gain.**

We should all want more. And this is the more we should want. We should want to be godly. We should want to be content. Godliness with contentment is a great blessing. Happiness is found in godliness and contentment.

We have looked often at this word, godliness, because it appears more in this letter than anywhere else in the Bible. Let me summarize it for you again. Synonyms for godliness are devotion and piety. As a Christian virtue, I define it as follows.

### **Godliness = Christian Godliness is living out the will of God.**

We also need to look at the word contentment.

**Content = happy enough with what one has or is; not desiring something more or different;**

To be content is a choice we can make. Likewise, to be discontent is a choice. We get to choose. Everyone gets to decide on what basis they will be content.

**1 Timothy 6:6-8 (NIV) "... 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.**

Paul says he will be content with food and clothes. He has no desire for anything beyond this. And he is recommending this to Timothy.

Paul's statement about being satisfied with having food and clothes makes it sound as if he is almost broke, homeless, and owns nothing but the clothes on his back. I believe there is more to the story than that.

We know that he was a tentmaker by trade. That is, he made and repaired tents and sold them for a living. In many of the towns where he planted churches he supported himself by making tents (Acts 18:3). To do so he would have to have tools. He would have to have materials. He could probably buy tent making materials in the major cities. But he may have carried leftovers with him from town to town. I believe we should assume as a tentmaker he had a sample tent to show his work. This same tent could be what he sleeps in as they travel from town to town. Why should a tentmaker sleep under the stars in the wind and the rain?

It is okay to live in a house instead of a tent. And whatever we live in needs to be repaired from time to time. We also need fuel to cook with and for heat in the winter. You might assume, by Paul's comment about food and clothes, that they lived in a tropical climate. They did not. In Ephesus, where Timothy was serving, and Paul had lived, the average January temperature is 35. The lowest reached is 18. That isn't as cold as Maryland, but it is still pretty cold.

Paul is not calling for Christians to be homeless or own nothing but clothing and food. So what IS the message he wants us to get? He is cautioning Timothy to restrain any desires to live beyond his basic needs. Food and clothing both need to be re-supplied from time to time. That is why he mentions those. I don't believe he was limiting us to those two things.

Paul is NOT warning against the desire to earn money in order to meet your needs. He is warning against the desire to have more and more of the things of the world. He gives several reasons to choose contentment over discontent.

**1. Discontent has you chasing something of no lasting value.**

**1 Timothy 6:7 (NIV) For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.**

A preacher tells that many years ago he was talking to a young stranger. As he listened to the man's story the young man said, "My uncle died a millionaire."

The preacher responded, "No, he didn't."  
"What do you mean?" said the young man. "You don't know my uncle."  
The preacher said, "Who's got the million now?"

Nobody dies a millionaire. We all die paupers; we leave it all behind. We leave all material things behind. Not only do you leave the money in your pockets, you leave your pockets. You cannot take anything material with you when you pass away. That is why Jesus preached that we should lay up spiritual treasures in heaven instead of material treasures on earth.

Christians are fabulously wealthy in spiritual things. Paul cautions us to be content with them since they have lasting value.

## **2. Discontent leads to more problems, not less.**

**1 Timothy 6:9 (NIV) 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.**

The desire for more is never satisfied for long. Surely you have seen that in your own life. You desire something and work and work to get it. And after you have it for a time, the joy fades. And then you start desiring something else. It always goes this way when we look for material things to make us happy. When you get something of value, then you are tempted to protect it, to preserve it, to replace it if broken or stolen. It becomes a part of you and then you become a part of it. It gains a hold on you.

I have seen this in trying to downsize my possessions. Even things that I don't use anymore are hard to get rid of. Why is that? It is because once you own something, it begins to own you too.

Our true happiness is to be found in God. We were made for Him, to know Him, to enjoy Him, to be blessed by Him. The blessings we have in Him are spiritual, not material. And His promise is that if we seek Him, then He will provide the material things we need. Jesus stressed this promise in His Sermon on the Mount.

But the seeking after things will never satisfy us. It just creates more problems, not less.

## **3. Discontent will distract you from what counts.**

**1 Timothy 6:10 (NIV) 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.**

Verse 10 begins with one of the most misquoted statements in the Bible. It is the love of money, not money, that is the root of all evil. That is the most misquoted verse in America. We hear all the time that money is the root of all evil, but it is not. Money is a very necessary commodity in life; it is impossible to get along without using money in one form or another.

It is "the love of money" that the Bible is warning us against. The love of money is the desire for more and more, craving for riches. It is the constant focus on money. Money becomes the main focus of our lives, instead of God. The words "the faith" means our relationship to God by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is faith in Jesus that is the basis for our relationship to God. He often refers to this simply as "the faith."

This faith is our lifeline. It is faith in Jesus that secures us forgiveness of sin. Faith in Jesus is the path to eternal life in heaven. Yet, some who have known this truth get distracted by their desire for things. Jesus warns us of this in one of His parables.

**Matthew 13:22 (NIV) The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.**

The constant planning of how to get another buck, the dreaming of what you will do with it, the lack of contentment it builds in your heart, the dissatisfaction with what God has provided you. All this moves you away from God, not towards Him.

**Discontent is a form of idolatry, a dissatisfaction with God and His provision.**

Seek to know and live God's will. Choose to be content. Godliness with contentment is a great spiritual blessing.

Don't let discontent ensnare you. Seek a right relationship with God by faith in Jesus. And trust in Him for the happiness you seek. Be content in Him.

If you are in need, trust Him to meet that need. Pray for it. Ask Him to do so. And trust Him to do so.

### Invitation

God loves us very much. And He desires to bring us into a right relationship with Himself. But He cannot ignore our sin. He cannot just overlook our sin. Sin demands a penalty.

So God Himself provided a means of dealing with our sin. He sent Jesus to die in our place. God accepts the death of Jesus as a substitute for our own deaths. Jesus died to pay the penalty of our sins.

Put your faith in Jesus, and God gives forgives your sin. You will be brought into a right relationship with God and will inherit eternal life.

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Choose to be content.

Psalm 119:36; Proverbs 15:16; 17:1; 23:4; 30:7-9

*"Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor."*

-- Benjamin Franklin.