

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17 How can we be content? Pentecost 16 Stewardship Sunday September 12, 2010  
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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

God's Word to help us be content with His blessings is written in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:6-10, 17

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth that we remain in Christ forever. Your Word is truth.

Dear Friends, in Christ,

How can we be content? Most of us might say something like, "If I were happier, I'd be content." "If I were richer or more successful, I'd be content." The trouble is who determines where that scale of happiness needs to be? One person can be happy even in tough situations and another unhappy in the best of circumstances. Contentment is elusive. But the Apostle Paul wrote the Philippians that he had learned to be content no matter what the situation. If he had plenty or if he were in want, it didn't matter to him. (Philippians 4:12-13) We live in a country in which the advertisers tell us we can't be content until we have a certain car, the biggest TV, or a certain style. They appeal to our sinful desires to accept their product even though it leaves us wanting. So,

### **How can we be content?**

**First, we should trust in the right things.** Paul wrote to Timothy, "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (v. 17)* It sounds so easy to do, but too often we are tempted to trust in the wrong things, the temporary, earthly things like wealth, whatever that may be. Have you noticed the long lines of people waiting to buy lottery tickets? Along with every discarded stub go the hopes of those who thought that they could win big and finally have contentment. What about people who have had a winning ticket? How often does it bring happiness or does winning just add a different set of problems for worry and fear about investments?

Paul warned, "*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.*" (v. 9-10) The love of money makes it impossible to be content. If our only goal in life is be wealthy, we will fall into all kinds of temptations like cheating, selfishness, envy, discontent, and worry. The devil fools people into grasping what harmful as if it is good. Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit and ate death instead of the promised life. Remember Jesus' parable of the rich man who gathered so much and then died and ended in hell? He was rich in possessions but did not have the true riches of God.

Paul says that people who love money will be snared by it. It will close on them like a trap and for some, there will be no escape. In the early church, Christians brought the news of Christ to the foreign town of Samaria. There was a man named Simon who had been using sorcery and he was well-known. When he heard the message of Christ, he confessed his faith and was baptized. Then the Apostle Peter came and there was a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Simon offered to pay money for the power of the Spirit so he could have more honor. Peter answered: "*May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!*" (Acts 8:20) He repented and asked for forgiveness. But, how many other people still need to hear the message to save them before the judgment?

Paul put it so clearly, "*Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. (v. 6-7)* He may have been thinking about Job, who had lost his great riches in a day. Yet, Job said, "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.*" (Job 1:21) He had learned to be content. With a godly attitude, so can we. We get a godly attitude by hearing God's Word and trusting His promises.

The writer to the Hebrews put it this way: *“Keep your lives 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.’”* (Hebrews 13:5) Also, in our verses, Paul said to trust in God. (v.17) As our gracious heavenly Father, He delights in giving us His gifts and provide for us. The Psalmist said, *“Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”* (Psalms 34:10) So, we trust in God’s grace, which is that unmerited, unearned love in Christ that God freely has toward us. We are sinful people who have rebelled against Him. We were born as sinners, and we have added to a list of sins daily since the time we could walk or talk. Yet God has come to us in Christ and has claimed us as His own.

John wrote, *“This is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10) Once in a while we make sacrifices for someone we care about: give them a gift, give them a ride, or do without something so they can have it. Out of love for us God gave us His Son, who willingly gave up His life for us so that our sins are obliterated. As God’s children, He will certainly care for us! Paul wrote, *“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also along with Him graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32) How good God is to us! How great His love is for us! Trust in His promises and be content! *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.”* (Matthew 6:33)

**Second, know who we are in Christ.** There is a link between identity and contentment. If a person knows who he is, he is more likely to be content with his situation in life. There are really two ways to gain identity. One is to let the world tell us who we are, and the other is to let God tell us. If the world is dictating our identity, it will tell us that we’re important if we are winning, successful, beautiful, rich, or popular. Did you notice that these things are here one day and may be gone the next? Success lasts until someone else does better. Our money can be lost faster than we earn it. Beauty fades with ill health, stress, and worry. What about popularity? People, who five years ago were household names are now forgotten. If we let the world tell us who we are, these temporary things will leave us discontent.

The alternative is to let God tell us who we are in Christ, and He does. He says, *“You are my child. In the waters of Baptism, I made you Mine. I am your God.”* In Christ as our Savior, we know who we are and we also have a sense of purpose. God has a plan for us. Each thing that happens in our day-to-day life, each trial and problem that we experience is a part of God’s plan to fashion us more and more so that we have the attitude of Christ. In Him we are content.

In Christ, we are rich in the things of God. Paul in verse 18 admonished us to be rich in good works. How can we ever do that? Our works are like filthy rags, the Bible tells us. We can only be rich in the perfect works of Christ and His payment for us on the cross. Paul also wrote that in Christ we are rich in godliness. We reflect the love of our God to those who are around us, to our families, and to all whom God sends our way. Jesus told His followers, *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:35)

In Christ we have endurance. God keeps our faith strong as we hear His Word and receive His sacraments. In Christ we hold on when it seems that there is no end to the problems we’re facing. Paul wrote about his obstacles, *“I can do everything through [Christ] who gives me strength.”* (Philippians 4:13) Having gone through tough experiences with Christ beside us, we can better help others understand how Christ can help them not only now, for forever with Him in heaven. The more we realize our spiritual riches in Christ that last forever, the more content we will be now.

We live in a nation that has truly been blessed with so much more than the rest of the world’s population. Yet, it’s too easy for us to be discontent. With the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twin tower attack yesterday, I know that for a short time our country stopped its single pursuit of money and thought about spiritual concerns. Sadly some who died in the

attack never thought about God spiritual riches and were lost. But, some must have been trusted in Christ and were ready when Christ called them home that day. Even as we should not ever forget that attack, so we should also never forget the spiritual riches we have in Christ that prepares us for eternity. Let us trust in Him so we can be content with whatever life may throw at us, knowing that an eternity of contentment lies ahead for us. Our loving God is in control. He will work all for good so that content, we will hold to Christ. Amen.