Have Godly contentment 1 Timothy 6:6-10  1-17-16 bk

My dad’s family is from Mobridge, South Dakota. My grandpa worked on the railroad while my grandma stayed home to raise their ten children. As was the case with many families back then, my grandparents didn’t have a lot of money. In fact, for a time the railroad pulled a boxcar off the rails and allowed the Kom family to live in it. God took care of them; they always had a place to live, food to eat, and clothing to wear. When my dad talks about growing up it’s clear that he had a wonderful childhood full of faith, friends and fun. My dad once told me that he and his brothers and sisters didn’t even know they were poor. I’ve thought a lot about that over the years: “We didn’t even know that we were poor.” The Kom kids were healthy, had good friends and loving parents, enjoyed a solid family, and most importantly had a Christ centered home. Maybe they weren’t poor after all. They had the greatest gift of all: Godly contentment.

Today God wants to give us that precious gift as we study this part of His Word. Paul warns us that if we don’t have Godly contentment we can be in huge trouble. He wrote, 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. When Paul talks about people who want to get rich he’s talking about people whose number one priority in life is to become wealthy. Note that Paul isn’t condemning people for being wealthy. The problem is putting the pursuit of money above all else. Before we quickly decide that Paul’s not talking about us we need to examine our heart. A few months ago I read that what we daydream about is shows our heart’s greatest desire. There might be some truth to that. When you daydream do you dream about becoming wealthy or understanding God’s Word better? Do you dream about getting the big promotion at work or about growing in your Christian life? Do you dream about buying that expensive car or large house or about giving generously to the Lord? Do you dream about being popular with your friends or about being popular with the Lord? There’s a greedy, would-be rich person in all of us.

Paul warns us that if we recklessly pursue riches and possessions we’ll fall into temptation and a trap, that we’ll be plunged into ruin and destruction. How true Paul’s words are! When we spend too much money and end up with credit card debt we find ourselves in a trap that’s really tough to get out of. That debt, in turn, opens us up to the temptations of stress, anger, and worry. When we have a lot of stuff we need to store and manage it. That, in turn, opens us up to the temptations of spending more time with our things and not enough time with our family and friends. When we buy things we often just want more. Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller how much money was enough. He replied, “Some more.” That desire for more, in turn, opens us up to the temptation to put work before everything else.

To support what he had just written Paul wrote this next: 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. The old King James Version translated the first phrase this way, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” The NIV translation is better but the old KJV isn’t far of the mark! The love of money has spiritually ruined many a person. Paul tells us that many a person who is eager for money has wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. The word translated “pierced themselves” is usually used of someone wielding a sword. In this case, instead of striking someone else with a sword the person strikes themselves. They give themselves a self-inflicted wound. When we fall into the temptations of coveting and greed we are giving ourselves a self-inflicted wound! And it can be a fatal wound. Paul warns us against wandering from the faith as we pursue riches and possessions.

In the words just before our sermon text Paul wrote about people who thought that living a Godly life was a means to financial gain. There are still preachers like that today: Joel Osteen, Joyce
Meyer, and Creflo Dollar just to name a few. They say that if you live the way God wants you to
God will certainly bless you in material ways. Paul disagrees. Instead he writes, But godliness with
contentment is great gain. Living a Godly life is great gain, but not necessarily financial gain. Paul
talks about godliness with contentment. Godliness describes a manner of life, a manner of life that
puts the Lord first. The Greek word for contentment was a famous word in Paul’s day because it
was used by a group of philosophers called “Stoics”. They taught that people should be self-
sufficient and independent of anything happening around them. That was their kind of
contentment. Paul’s contentment was completely different. In his letter to the Philippians he said
that he had learned the secret of being content; he wrote, I can do everything through him who
gives me strength. For the Stoics being content was all about relying on yourself; for Paul being
content was all about relying on the Lord. Paul didn’t only know the secret of being content he
knew the secret of living a vibrant Christian life. Greed and coveting happen because we are
looking for something that we can’t seem to find. Each one of us has a God-sized hole in our hearts
that only He can fill. Tragically human beings try to fill that hole with money, power, sex,
popularity, food, and a host of other substitutes. Paul was content because that hole in his heart
was filled with the Lord and His blessings. A pile of money won’t fill our heart but the abundance of
God’s forgiveness will. A huge house won’t be the answer to our problems but the mansion waiting
for us in heave is the answer to every problem. Getting a new phone or computer every year won’t
really help us make the most important connection of all; prayer and God’s Word does that. Being
content doesn’t revolve around saying no to the things of this world or being super-disciplined.
Being content begins with realizing just how much the Lord has done for us and then realizing that
we don’t need much else.

Paul adds two statements that reinforce what he just said. He wrote, For we brought nothing
into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. Today people say, “You can’t take it with you.”
It’s like Paul is saying, “For heaven’s sake, don’t put much value on earthly things. When you die it
all says behind. It’s just not important.” How sad that people put so much effort into chasing
something that’s so temporary. How tragic that they value money and possessions over their
relationship with the Lord and with their friends and family. May that never be true of us.

Finally, Paul added this: But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. We can
be content with the necessities because that’s all we need. God has taken care of all our deep
needs. If we have a little food, some clothes and a roof over our head we have absolutely
everything! And that changes our life. Do you remember what John D. Rockefeller said when asked
how much money was enough? He said, “Some more.” Another John, Pastor John Wesley, had a
different outlook on life. He wrote that when he earned 30 pounds (he lived in England) he and his
family lived on 28 and they gave 2 away. Later he earned 60 pounds; he and his family lived on 28
and he gave 32 away. Later he earned 90 pounds; he and his family lived on 28 and gave 62 away.
You see, when we are content we begin to look at money differently. We use money to take care of
what we need. The rest we can give away to serve the Lord.

At the beginning of the sermon I talked about my Grandma and Grandpa Kom. When they died
my parents inherited what had to be their more prized possession: my grandma’s old German Bible.
It’s not much of a book anymore. It was used so much that the binding is pretty much gone; it’s
more a pile of paper than anything else. My dad says that he can remember his mom sitting in her
rocking chair in the afternoon reading her Bible. The Kom family wasn’t poor. They were amazingly
rich, rich in God’s grace. Having Godly contentment begins when we realize that we are amazingly
rich in God’s grace too. Amen.