

Godly contentment

A story is told of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked.

"What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?"

"You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

1 Timothy 6:1-10 All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. ² Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves.

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. ³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴ they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵ and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ 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) Contentment in all circumstances

- At the time of Jesus and Paul, slavery still existed. Even Christian believers had slaves, and sometimes the slaves and the slave owners were believers in Jesus.
 - It is unfortunate that believers owned slaves, but it's possible that they owned slaves before becoming believers and it took some time for their thinking on the matter to change.
 - The slave trade was abolished in 1807 and colonial slavery of the British Empire was abolished in 1833 through the efforts of William Wilberforce, a strong Christian believer who was mentored by John Newton, a former slave ship captain before he came to faith in Jesus. Newton also wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace".
 - Slavery was officially abolished in the USA in 1865 under Abraham Lincoln, who wasn't a believer, but knew the Bible thoroughly and introduced Biblical principles when he was the president of the USA.
- However, while slavery existed and believers were under slave masters, they needed to know how to behave and have the right attitudes as believers.
 - 1 Timothy 6:1 They should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.
 - 1 Timothy 6:2 Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves.
 - Notice that believing slave masters were to be devoted to the welfare of their slaves.
- A person under slavery would only be able to have an attitude of respect for their slave masters because they have found their contentment in God and not in their circumstances.
- We may be living in unfavourable circumstances where life is hard – our employer gives us a hard time ; our income isn't enough ; we have family problems ; we're battling sickness ; we're having relationship problems.
 - If it's possible to change those circumstances, then do so
 - However, if you can't change them, then learn to be content within them, otherwise you're going to live a very miserable life.
 - Find your rest and contentment in the Lord who gives you rest.

2) Godliness and contentment

- 1 Timothy 6:2-4 These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.
- Generally, people aren't discontent for the sake of being discontent. There are valid reasons for our discontentment
 - We'll never be content if we're envious of other people – the feeling of resenting someone else for having something that you didn't want them to have because you wanted it or for some other reason.
 - We'll never be content if we always covet what other people have – the desire to have something that you don't have. Normally luxuries not necessities.
 - Pride – always comparing yourself with others and so not content with who God has made you to be.
 - Superiority and inferiority complexes are both rooted in pride as they both focus on yourself rather than on God.
 - We can be discontent over bad service delivery, unmet promises, unpaid wages, etc.
- Godliness and contentment
 - Godliness – adhering to godly Biblical values – leads to a life of contentment.
 - Godliness is never envious of others or covetous of what others have. We would therefore be content with what we have as we wouldn't be envious or covetous of others.
 - Godliness is God centred and not self-centred. We are then content in who God is and who He made us to be without comparison with others.
 - And when discontentment is due to something negative being done to us, we ought to be godly in our responses to them
 - It's understandable that bad service delivery, unpaid wages, unmet promises by the government can lead to discontentment. However, we ought to be godly and God honouring in our responses and not be destructive in our protests of such lack of services.
 - Overall godly attitudes in our relationships with people, rather than strife, allow for a content life.

3) Contentment with what you have

- 1 Timothy 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ 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.
- Contentment is when we are satisfied at having all our needs met.
- It's when we aren't content with our needs and want more and more that we are never content in life.
- A content person is at rest because they aren't trying to keep up with others.
 - They are helpful to assist others because they are content with what they have and see extra as being available to help someone in need.
 - They have joy because they've found their contentment in God and live lives of gratitude for what they do have.