

Being content with life

“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

We see this passage telling us that having food and clothing, we shall be content with these. There have been people throughout history who somehow misunderstood this passage and began dressing poorly just to express their godliness. I personally don't think this is the way we should look at it. This passage talks more about the effort we put into providing goods for us. If, for example, having a certain lifestyle, dressing well, and eating well (I am just giving this as an example) doesn't affect my dedication to the Lord and the time I have for Him, then it is fine. If, on the other hand, I need to work excessively more to provide those things for me, which results in negatively affecting my faith and not having time for the Lord – then it is wrong. This is the meaning this passage has for me. Dressing well and having a good lifestyle is not wrong in itself; the time and the effort we place into it instead is. God told us to look first for Him in this life, and doing that, He will provide for the rest (Matthew 6:33). It doesn't mean we mustn't do anything. It means we have to work, but we need to place Him in the first place. This means to have time for Him. To love Him. This is also one of the first commandments. (Matthew 22:37, 38)

Later on in the same chapter, it talks of those who are rich (1 Timothy 6:9, 10). The Bible usually addresses in a sharp way those who are rich. This, though, is not for the riches themselves but for the love they have for them. To love something means that you dedicate yourself to it. You cannot serve God and the mammon. You need to dedicate yourself to God. This happens only when you receive His forgiveness and love. Then, you understand the value He has for you. That's why the Bible doesn't speak directly against riches but against those who love them. Because the attitude is important.

1 Timothy 6:10 says: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Here, we are talking about the love for money, not the money themselves.

That's why a believer should love God above all and be content with what the Lord has provided for him. He needs to have a godliness with content. The only way for us to be content is to be satisfied with Him. We need to have God in our lives. He is the one who fills our lives. We need to taste the “living water”(John 4:13, 14). This is what really satisfies our life. We can also see how people who do not know God try to fill themselves with what the world offers, work, and overlabor to accomplish that but are still not content. Because the only way a man can be really content is with the Lord.

The Bible doesn't completely reject the goods we make use of in this life. It is the attitude we have toward them. A person can consider himself rich even if he does not have much, but he considers the few things he has as a treasure and gives them more value than what is really important, like the gospel. We can talk of a hobby or whatever else it might be, which in itself is not sinful, but it takes the first place in someone's life.

To place God first doesn't mean that we will live poorly and not have what is needed. He tells us in His word that the righteous will never be forsaken.

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“I have been young, and *now* am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.” (Psalm 37:25)

He will provide what is needed for us. This doesn't mean that we mustn't work at all. We have to work and labor, but not exceedingly more than what we have to. We have to perform our duties and provide for us and our families, but above all, we have to give priority to the Lord. This is the way also in which He promises to help us and provide for us.

Sometimes, we want to have something that is exceedingly good. More than what it is supposed to be. There is nothing wrong with some things. We need just to consider the cost. By doing that, we might neglect what is really important. Proverbs 17:1 tells us:

“Better *is* a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting *with* strife.”

There are some passages similar to this one.

“Better *is* a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble. Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.” (Proverbs 15:16, 17)

These passages speak figuratively of food, but we can address them to anything in life. Sometimes, we strive to achieve something good, something excellent in life, but with the cost of losing the peace of God. With the cost of neglecting God. That's why if we are spiritual and we value more what He gives us, we will give more priority to Him. Most people don't do that because they don't know Him. That's why they need to taste and see that the Lord is good. Those who know Him automatically give more value to what comes from heaven. Of course, that believers are also tempted to set their sight on what is here on earth, and they also might do it. If it is a “dry morsel” with quietness and peace, then we need to choose it rather than house full of feasting with strife.

We need to know that God can also provide abundantly for us. We just need to place Him in the first place. To live well and to have riches is not something wrong by itself. The love toward it is wrong. If our situation is about having a good life and even riches, but we still give priority to what is really important, then it is fine. Finally, Paul said that he had learned to live in any situation he was in.

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11-13)

He managed to do that because he had Christ strengthening him and filling his life.