
The Best Investment is Contentment (1 Timothy 6:6-16)
A Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



Are you tired of worrying about money? Are you sick of working so hard but never seeming to have enough? Do you want to have financial freedom? Then I have just the solution for you! No, I'm not going to ask you to join a pyramid scheme.

Instead, I would like to share a different solution your financial situation. In fact, this is God's path to great gain. Today, our God wants to show us that the Best Investment is Contentment.

Have you eaten today? I remember hearing once that in some cultures instead of greeting people with "How are you doing?" or "What's up?" they say, "Have you eaten today?" Can you imagine? Many of us have probably never missed a meal unless we chose to because we were too busy with something else, but there are many people in the world who literally do not have enough to even eat every day.

Can you even imagine that? I have a hard time imagining life without a phone, or without a car, without electricity or without a grocery store just a short drive away. To be honest, it's hard even to imagine life without a variety of food and clothing. All of us live such abundant lives, while so many people in the world and throughout history have lived with so little. We have so much, but how often do we still wish we had more?

The apostle Paul has a lot to say to us today in 1 Timothy 6:6-16. The very first words already say so much. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Godliness, Paul explains that more in verse 11, but what he means by godliness here is living our lives according to what God tells us; listening to God's Word and doing what it says. Living a godly life, that is worth pursuing, that is what will truly bring us great gain.

But notice what Paul is not saying here. Paul is not saying that if we live our lives according to what God says, then we will make a lot of money. In fact, one verse before our lesson, in 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul talks about wicked people who saw godliness as a way to make more money.

There are still people who believe that to this day; people who believe that if they follow what God says in the Bible, then they will find so much money and success! Paul speaks directly against that here. He says, "*godliness with contentment is great gain.*" Paul explains what is far more valuable than obtaining more money; and that is this: to live our lives according to God's word and to do so content, satisfied, happy with what God sees fit to give us.

Paul continues to explain why the pursuit of more money is not all that we make it to be. First off, a very simple argument. We were born with nothing and we'll die with nothing. We can work hard all our lives for more and more money, but in the end we cannot take it with us. Just like in the parable of the shrewd manager, how will we respond to that? Will we keep pursuing more and more money, or will we use what we have for our eternal benefit?

Then Paul makes this statement that seems so difficult. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Really Paul? Just food and clothing? What about health insurance? What about payments on my house? What about a car? What about a phone? TV? Internet? College? I've got a vacation to save up for! I need new hunting gear! The list goes on and on.

But God, through the apostle Paul, encourages us to ask ourselves: do we really need all those things? Remember those people throughout history who did not even have enough food to eat every day? But God cares for them. Won't he also take care of us, even if we don't have all the luxuries that we often mistake for necessities? Will God stop caring for us if we cannot pay that last bill? Will God stop caring for us if we go bankrupt? God will certainly continue caring for you, will certainly continue providing for you, even if we lose some of these other things.

Paul continues, "Those who want to get rich..." Let's pause right here. I think it is easy for us to hear these words and think that Paul is talking about some greedy person who just happens to be richer than us. Paul is talking to us. When we refuse to be content with what God has given us, when we want more—and let's not kid ourselves by saying, "Well, I don't want to be rich, I just want a little more." We are rich. We have more wealth and luxury than kings had back when Paul wrote this!

When we want more, even if we kid ourselves by calling it a little, when we refuse to be content with what God has given us, as Paul says, we are walking ourselves right into temptation, we are walking right into the devil's trap.

Paul says it even more severely, "Those who want to get rich fall into... many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction." When we fail to be content, we put ourselves into the same danger.

Let me put it another way. How many decisions have you made in your life that served the purpose of making you more money? Many of us have moved to a new location, with one of the main purposes being making more money. Most of us have spent years going to school, and many of us even spent thousands of dollars on school again with one of the main purposes being so that we could make more

money.

Now, I'm not saying that it's a sin to find a better job or that it's wrong to go to school. But it is good for us to ask ourselves, "How readily would I make the same commitments to follow God's Word?" If I am willing to move to a whole new city to make more money, but I hesitate to drive twenty extra miles to get to church, what does that say about my view of money? If I am willing to spend thousands on making more money, but I am not willing to give a portion of my money for the spread of God's kingdom, what does that say about my view of God?

Paul wants us to be very clear. "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." If money holds any sway over our hearts, it doesn't end there. That sin will grow into more and more sins. Countless thousands of people have pursued money until it destroyed their faith. Untold numbers, because of that seemingly innocent pursuit of something we do need, untold numbers by that have pierced themselves with many griefs, not only in this life but eternally in hell.

But you, people of God, flee from all this. Paul changes his mood here. The love of money has destroyed so many people. But now, Paul is talking to Timothy, who was a man of God. And now, I am talking to you, you who are the people of God. We are not those who have wasted their lives chasing dollars. We are not those who have destroyed our faith by our love for money. Whatever our prior commitment has been to money, God has made us one of his people through Jesus. We are God's people and this is what Paul has to say to God's people.

"Flee from all this." Paul doesn't say, stand up and fight the love of money. Paul says flee from it. Sin is not a battle we can win. When temptation comes our way, we need to recognize that we are outmatched. We need to run like the main character in a horror movie runs from the monster. We need to run from sin and temptation.

We are to run away from the love of money and toward love of God. Paul tells us to *"pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."* All of these are different ways to talk about hearing and doing what God tells us in his word.

These are worth our pursuit. These are worth our sacrifice. It is far better for us to work daily to obtain righteousness, godliness and faith, than to work daily for a party on the weekend. It is more valuable for us to save ourselves for love, endurance, and gentleness, than to save up for retirement. This is far more to our profit than anything money can buy.

Paul continues, *"Fight the good fight of faith."* Our battle against sin is not won

by our fighting, but by Christ's fighting. Our fight is the fight of faith; that is, simply believing that our God has defeated sin for us. When the temptation for riches comes our way, we are to flee to God's promises to provide for us, we are to flee to God's promises about the riches of heaven. And Paul wants us to keep fighting that good fight of faith until we finally take hold of the eternal life to which we were called when we made our good confession.

Paul talks to Timothy about the good confession he made and he says that Timothy's good confession was the same good confession that Jesus made when he stood before Pontius Pilate.

That confession Paul speaks about is not a specific set of words that we have to mouth. No, the good confession is simply telling who God truly is. That confession is telling what God has done. That confession is the same confession we make when we recite the Creeds. That confession is the same confession we make when we tell who our God is and what he has done for us.

When we pronounce that God is our Provider. He created us and everything we own. He still provides for us and gives us all we need, therefore I can be content with whatever he decides to give me.

God is our Savior. He was born, the son of Mary and the Son of God. He died on the cross to take away our sins and rose to life again three days later, therefore I can be content knowing that I have eternal riches waiting for me in heaven.

God is our Preserver in the faith. He through the Word and Baptism and Lord's Supper has created and sustained faith in our hearts. He, through those same Word, Baptism, and Lord's Supper gives us power to line up our lives more closely with his Word, therefore I can be content that God will preserve me from the temptation to love money.

We can be content that God will keep us fighting the good fight of faith until that day when we take hold of the eternal life to which we were called. God will keep us in this command without spot or blame until Jesus Christ comes again. As Paul says, *"To him be honor and might forever. Amen."*