

September 24, 2017

“Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain”

Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 6:1-10 (NASB)

Cross References: Job 1:21-22; Ecclesiastes 5:15; Matthew 5:19-21, 24, 33; 16:26; Luke 12:15-21; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22 – 4:1; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:14-18; 3:15-17; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:18-21; 2 Peter 2:1-3

Lesson Idea: We need to seek to gain godliness instead of wealth.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Sept 17 Daniel 7-9	Sept 18 Daniel 10-12
Sept 19 Hosea 1-7	Sept 20 Hosea 8-14
Sept 21 Joel 1-3	Sept 22 Amos 1-5
Sept 23 Amos 6-9	Sept 24 Obadiah – Jonah 4

Background:

The first two verses in this chapter feature Paul’s instructions about how Christian slaves should respond to their masters. The system of slavery in Roman times does not necessarily refer to people being forcibly enslaved. Many of the people chose to be under a yoke of slavery as a means of providing for themselves and their families in much the same way as our employment system. Of course, there were abuses and mistreatment of conquered people groups, but the Bible never condones that. People, who were not wealthy nobles or land owners in the first century, would have to resort to pledging themselves to work for those who were. It is good for us to apply these principles to our contemporary situations of employee and employer (boss) relationships.

These ten verses speak strongly about centering our lives around godliness instead of wealth. We should be reminded of our Lord Jesus’ instructions to store our treasures in heaven not on earth, because where your treasure is, your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters—you cannot serve God and money. He also instructed us not to worry about the necessities of life, “but seek first His kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 5:19-21, 24, 33)

Read Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22 – 4:1; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:18-21 to see more of Paul’s instructions to slaves and masters.

NOTE: For a good discussion of the history of slavery and what the Bible says about it, see David Platt, “*What about Slavery, Paul?*” in *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy* (Nashville:B&H Publishing, 2013), pp. 97-109.

1 Timothy 6:1-10

1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. 2 Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

DISCUSSION:

- V 1. According to God’s Word, how were slaves supposed to regard their masters? Why? Why is this passage not an endorsement of slavery?
- V 2. Why did Paul fear that slaves who had Christian masters might treat them disrespectfully? Why should having Christian masters cause them to “serve them all the more?”

- If you are an employee, how should you treat your boss? Or if you are the boss, how should you treat your employees?

NOTE: from David Guzik:

So that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed: People will judge Christianity – who God is (the name of God) and what the Bible teaches (and His doctrine) based on how you conduct yourself as an employee... Each Christian should ask if they are leading people to Jesus by how they work, or if they are leading people away from Jesus by their bad work and testimony at their job...

Christianity arose in a social setting where slavery was commonplace. There were some 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Some slaves held privileged positions; other slaves were treated with great abuse. Paul and others in the New Testament did not call for a violent revolution against the institution of slavery (which would have failed miserably). Yet through the gospel, they did effectively destroy the foundations of slavery – racism, greed, class hatred – and made a civilization without slavery possible. The church itself was a place where slavery was destroyed. It was not uncommon for a master and a slave to go to church together, where the slave would be an elder in the church, and the master was expected to submit to the slave’s spiritual leadership! Such radical thinking was an offense to many, but glorified God and eventually destroyed slavery.

- Why was Timothy charged to “teach and preach these principles?” (note that Paul first gave this instruction in 1 Timothy 4:11, so he is probably referring to the complete teachings of this letter, especially chapters 4-6, and not just these two verses concerning slavery.)
- V 3-5. What does Paul say about those who advocate different doctrines than what he was sharing? How does God’s Word guide us to know what we should consider as “sound words” and doctrines that “conform to godliness?” (Paul has already addressed this in 1 Timothy 1:3-7; see also 2 Timothy 2:14-18; 3:15-17)
- V 4-5. What are some of the characteristics of false teachers that we should watch for?

- V 5-6. What do false prophets think godliness is for? (2 Peter 2:1-3) Why should that make us wary of the popular teachings of the “prosperity gospel” preachers? What does Paul teach godliness “actually is,” and how is this true? (see 1 Timothy 4:8)

NOTE: from Guzik:

Very commonly, Christianity is presented today on the basis of what you will *gain* by following Jesus: personal success and happiness, a stronger family, a more secure life. These things may be true to some degree, but we must never market the gospel as a product that will fix every life problem.

When the gospel is marketed this way, it makes followers of Jesus who are completely unprepared for tough times. After all, if the “Jesus product” isn’t working, why not try another brand? Also, this sales approach takes the focus off Jesus Himself, and puts the focus on what He will give us. Many have their hearts set on the blessings, not the One who blesses us.

While not ignoring the blessings of following Jesus Christ, we must proclaim the need to follow Jesus because He is God, and we owe Him everything as our Creator. What is right before God, and what glorifies Him, is more important than whatever benefit we may gain. We need to see Christians who are more concerned with what glorifies God than with what benefits me.

From such withdraw yourself: Timothy is told to deliberately *not* associate with those who receive or present the gospel with this kind of marketing approach.

- V 7. This verse is quoted often, even outside of Christian circles. What does it mean? (see Job 1:21-22; Ecclesiastes 5:15)
- V 8-9. What should we be content with, and why? What happens to those who seek to get rich in this life? (see Matthew 16:26; Luke 12:15-21)
- V 10. Many people misquote this verse to say that money is **the** root of **all evil**. What does it really say, and why is it true? How have you seen this verse come true in your life or in the lives of others? (see Hebrews 13:5-6)

APPLICATION:

- ✓ What are you seeking to gain in life? How does your life reflect the importance of godliness?

Lesson by Bro Stan