

Godliness With Contentment – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy regarding the importance of contentment in godliness
2. aim – to cause us to understand that contentment is an important characteristic of godliness
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:1-10

b. outline

1. Contentment for Slaves (1 Timothy 6:1-2a)
2. Contentment as a Doctrinal Matter (1 Timothy 6:2b-5)
3. Contentment in Financial Matters (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

c. opening

1. **thesis: contentment is a vital characteristic of godliness – to be godly is to have a strong sense of contentment in the circumstances God has ordained over you (note v. 6)**
 - a. **godliness** = an understanding and respect of God that affects the way a person lives; a sense of reverence for God that works itself out in a life of piety and devotion; a strong sense of the holiness of God that causes one to want to “imitate” him in all of life (**i.e.** the nature of being *godly*)
 1. **remember:** the entire book of **1 Timothy** is written as a command by Paul for believers to pursue a life of godliness – a life dedicated to the *real* purpose of the gospel
 - b. **contentment** = a sense of mental or emotional satisfaction drawn from being at ease in one’s current situation; finding “comfort” regardless of one’s present or anticipated circumstances
 1. **LOW:** believing that your current situation is adequate or sufficient; accepting whatever has been ordained over you by God as though it is “good” as *God* defines good
 - c. Paul will insist that a *correct* definition of godliness must include a strong sense of contentment – to truly understand and respect God is to recognize his *sovereignty* over the circumstances of life, and *choose* to be content in them
 1. **in vv. 1-2a**, Paul intimates that slaves should act in a way that demonstrates they are *content* in their situation, honoring their masters, especially those masters who are believers (like them)
 2. **in vv. 2b-5**, Paul turns his attention back to the **primary problem** in the church at Ephesus: the importance of Timothy teaching sound doctrine to defend against heterodox teachers

II. Contentment as a Doctrinal Matter (1 Timothy 6:2b-5)

Content

a. the command before the false teacher (v. 2b)

1. the words of **6:2b** are similar to **1:3** and **4:11** – a command to Timothy for him to “charge” or “command” or “urge” at three (3) strategic locations in the letter – **in the face of those:**
 - a. who are teaching “different doctrine” (**1:3-4**)
 - b. who devote themselves to the “teachings of demons” (**4:1-3**)
 - c. who do not agree with “the teaching that accords with godliness” (**6:3**)
2. **contentment has a strong doctrinal component – our contentment in life stems from our ability to understand the things of God**
 - a. this is how Paul connects the subject of *false teaching* to contentment = heterodoxy leads away from true contentment; sound doctrine leads to a life of true contentment *in Christ*
 - b. **i.e.** heterodoxy is focused on the *self* – sound doctrine is focused *on Christ*
3. **anything that is not primarily focused on the greatness of God and the centrality of Jesus Christ is heterodoxy, no matter how “good” it makes us feel or how “successful” it is in the church (see below)**

b. the nature of the false teacher (v. 3)

1. **note:** this is the most *blistering* of indictments that Paul brings against the false teachers in the book
 - a. probably because *this* is where the false teachers do the most damage to the church
2. Paul describes these individuals here as:
 - a. “anyone [who] teaches a different doctrine” = anyone who *explicitly* or *implicitly* teaches that which is contrary to the apostolic message to the church – a *detractor* from the true message of Christ

1. in **4:1-5**, Paul describes this at Ephesus as an unhealthy form of **ascetism** – forbidding what is good (**e.g.** marriage) and insisting on legalistic forms of behavior (**e.g.** prohibitions)
- b. “[anyone who] does not agree with the sound words of ... Jesus” = anyone who ignores or downplays or “tinkers with” the revelation given by Christ to the church through his Spirit
 1. **e.g.** those who have an *inordinate focus* on the words of Jesus in the Gospels, as though those are the *only words* that are authoritative (**i.e.** ignoring the revelation given to the apostles)
 - a. **IOW**: “you put too much emphasis on *Paul* and not enough on *Jesus*” or “you put too much emphasis on the *teaching* passages and not enough on the *helpful* passages”
 2. **e.g.** those who have a *truncated version* of the words of Jesus *as given through the apostles* – an understanding limited to a *tiny subset* of the various doctrines involved in Christianity
 - a. “*sound words*” = lit. **healthy words**; words rich in meaning, that encapsulate great truths, that are given to bring health and vitality to the follower of Christ
 - b. **IOW**: “you use words that are too big; you need to ‘dumb it down’ so that everyone can understand; you need to avoid words that may not be ‘acceptable’ to some”
 - c. **biblical words re: salvation**: decree, covenant, grace, predestination, election, reprobation, sacrifice, atonement, satisfaction, propitiation, redemption, reconciliation, calling, regeneration, conversion, repentance, faith, justification, sealing, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, preservation, resurrection, glorification
 - c. “[anyone who does not agree] with that which accords with godliness” = anyone who interprets the message of the church to be something other than a pursuit of godliness
 1. **e.g.** the modern message that the church is there to make you *happy*, rather than *holy*
 2. this is the *key* to understanding what Paul is driving at in this pericope (**see below**)
- c. **the character of the false teacher (v. 4a)**
 1. he is “*puffed up with conceit*” (*typhoo*) = extremely proud; foolish; lit. enveloped with smoke
 - a. as seen before in **3:6** – someone who thinks very highly of himself before others
 - b. **i.e.** someone who believes that he is *smarter* than everyone else and believes that he *alone* holds the “answer” to everything (**e.g.** like a layman trying to tell a doctor how to do his job)
 2. he “*understands nothing*” = *ignorant* (not stupid or incapable) – unable to truly understand what the core message and purpose of the church *really is* – assumes a purpose *in ignorance* of truth
 3. he has “*an unhealthy craving for controversy*” = thrives off of controversy; purposely stirs up people
 - a. **e.g.** always looking for *offense*; always “picking” at things because it gives them *purpose*
 - b. **e.g.** driving people and churches **away from contentment towards pragmatism** – **i.e.** insisting that the church must always be striving for “bigger and better” – what we are isn’t good enough!
 4. he has “*[an unhealthy craving for] quarrels about words*” = (**see above**)
- d. **the results of the false teacher (v. 4b-5)**
 1. “*which produce*” – the *responses* that come as a result of such people:
 1. “*envy*” = jealousy; a desire for something “else” rather than what is ordained by God
 2. “*dissension*” = strife; quarrels; jockeying with others over the direction or approach or content
 3. “*slander*” = blasphemy; evil speaking; unedifying ways of speaking to and about others
 4. “*evil suspicions*” = assuming the worst in others; not seeing others in a positive light
 5. “*constant friction*” (a unique word in the NT) = a sense of constant infighting
 6. **IOW**: a people who are *never content*, but are constantly being *pushed* to want more or different or better or bigger or “what that church down the street has”
 - a. **question**: what is the most important **metric** used to determine the *health* of a church today?
 - b. **answer**: size – the large church is *always* assumed to be healthier than the small church!
 2. “*among people who are*” – the *people* who (both) promote (and) succumb to such responses:
 1. “*depraved in mind*” = destroyed; wasting away – either 1) those who continue to think like the world because they are unregenerate or 2) those who are *being destroyed* in their thinking by the constant struggle outlined above; no longer able to *think straight*
 2. “*deprived of the truth*” = defrauded; robbed – those who are having the truth of the gospel “drawn out” of them; lit. losing their faith slowly by being drawn away from it
 3. “*imagining that godliness is a means of gain*” = those who *actually believe* that the message of the gospel *and the purpose of the church* is to promote some sort of “profit”
 - a. those who *literally* use the church as a “sales field” or use church people as a way of building up wealth through various “profit schemes”
 - b. or, those who believe that the *church herself* should “make a profit” by growing bigger (numerically) and “demonstrating” the larger giving pool in bigger buildings, etc.

e. the warning of the false teacher

1. **thesis: contentment is a vital characteristic of godliness – true contentment is found in a solid understanding of Christian doctrine**
 - a. **contentment is not happiness** – it is possible to be *happy* without being *content*, and it is possible to be *content* without being *happy*
 - b. the intention of the false teacher is to lead people to a *false sense of happiness*
 1. to teach *false doctrines* that sound good and “seem” to lead to fulfillment and happiness
 2. to “water down” the message and focus the church on “secondary” matters
 - c. the intention of the true teacher is to lead people to a *true sense of contentment*
 1. to teach *sound doctrine* that has substance, a substance that causes us to truly understand the fullness of the nature, purpose, and works of God *regardless of our circumstances*
2. **it is counterintuitive, but ... real contentment is found in a deeper understanding of the truths of Scripture – to learn and know theology is to find real contentment**

“Many Christians today have a *horror* of theology; they suppose it must necessarily be a cold and lifeless thing. As a matter of fact, theology is merely thinking about God. Every Christian must think about God; every Christian to some degree must be a theologian. The only question is whether he is to be a bad theologian or a good theologian. If he contents himself with his own *preconceived notions*, or gives free scope to his own natural *feelings*, he will be a bad theologian; he will soon find himself cherishing a miserable, imperfect, unworthy conception of God which makes God a mere creature of man's fancy ... Christianity is based, not upon the shifting sands of human feeling, but upon *solid facts*; and the apprehension and understanding of facts inevitably requires the use of the intellect.” (J. Gresham Machen, *The New Testament: An Introduction to Its Literature and History* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth, 1976] pp. 374-5. *Emphasis mine.*)