

Contentment: The key to a healthy soul

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[0 : 00] When last did you go for a health checkup at the GP? If you haven't been for a while, it's a good thing to do. Especially as you get older, you know that it's important every now and again to go for a health checkup at the doctor.

Even if there's no particular thing wrong with you, you know that it's good for the doctor to ask you some key questions to determine that you're still of good health and that there are no concerning symptoms.

Showing up that might point to a problem that needs to be addressed. It's good to go for a health checkup from time to time. So when last did you go for a spiritual health checkup?

Ever? Well, it's just as well that there are passages in the Bible that do that for us. They raise important questions we should be asking to determine our spiritual health.

And this passage in front of us is one of those. But one of the key questions it gets us asking as we read it carefully, and it's one of the key questions that I shall be asking from now on after working on this passage this week, if anyone comes to me for a spiritual health checkup.

[1 : 24] And the question is this. Are you content? It turns out that contentment is one of the primary indicators of a healthy soul.

And yet it's something that many of us really struggle with, especially in today's world. And that's why we need to consider what this passage says about it this morning.

But first, some context. Where are we and what is Paul talking about in this letter to Timothy? Well, again, he's taking aim at the false teachers.

He's been doing that. You'll know if you've been with us. He's been highlighting the problems with these false teachers to Timothy, this young minister in Ephesus. And in this passage, he's highlighting how spiritually unhealthy they actually are and how unhealthy they make people who listen to them by their unhealthy teaching.

So if you have a look from verse 3, he says, If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words.

[2 : 48] From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions. Okay, so what Paul, who's been talking about and warning against these false teachers, is saying to Timothy here, he's saying eventually, Timothy, false teaching will be obvious.

This unhealthy teaching and what makes unhealthy teaching will be obvious because of what it produces. Namely, instead of producing godliness, it will produce fighting and arrogance.

And that's an important point, by the way. How do you know that what you're listening to is good teaching? Have you ever wondered? How can you tell? Because there's a lot of teaching you can get from TV, from radio, from the internet.

A lot of Bible teaching. How can you tell which of it is good and which of it isn't? Which of it is healthy and which of it is unhealthy? It might sound really good. It might sound convincing. But it might be unhealthy.

How do you know? Well, it's easy. Is it making you more godly? That's really the only question you need to ask. Is it making you more godly? Is it making you more into the kind of person that you know God wants you to be?

[3 : 55] Is it making you more kind? Is it making you more patient? That's how you can tell if a teaching is healthy. That's the whole point, really, of what we come to learn from the Bible.

It's meant to change us. It's meant to transform us into the people God wants us to be. And so if learning the Bible is actually making you more bitter, more argumentative, well, then you're doing it

wrong.

If studying the Bible with other people ends up being arguments over words, then you've really got to watch out. Because that is the first symptom of an unhealthy soul.

But what I want to focus on this morning is the second symptom that we see in this passage that Paul actually spends most of his time talking about.

The second symptom of an unhealthy soul is discontentment. And specifically discontentment regarding money.

[4 : 55] What we learn in this passage is that wanting more money than we need is actually a symptom of a deep spiritual sickness. And that's a problem.

That is a problem for us. Because in today's culture, we all want more, don't we? We all want more. We all tend to want more than we have.

It's so natural to want more than you have, right? The standard operating procedure in our life today is to keep striving to get more.

To get a higher salary. To get a bigger TV. To get a better phone. Whatever it is, it's instinctive living in today's world to want more.

We don't even question it. It's so part of us. But that striving to get more, which is what our culture is all about, is fueled by discontentment.

[5 : 58] The fuel that keeps this striving going, that keeps our economy turning, is discontentment. We're steeped in it. We are not what verse 8 describes.

Look at how Paul describes Christians in verse 8. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. No, we won't.

Right? In our culture today, we are not content with that. Well, let me tell you why. The reason we are not content with that, the reason we are not the people described in verse 8, is because our culture has wired us to be that way.

Our culture has wired us to be that way. Discontentment is actually the basis of our whole economy. The economy is functioned on the basis of that we must keep spending.

As this next slide shows in the background. See all those adverts? The foundation of marketing is to create a need.

[7 : 15] You know, I went to business school years ago, and we did a marketing course. And marketing says, if you want your customers to buy your products or your service, you need to create a need.

You need to convince consumers that whatever you're selling is not an option, that they need it to be more happy, to be content in life. They need your product.

And every day, therefore, we are bombarded with adverts. Numbers vary, but the last reputable study estimated that the average person sees about 98 adverts a day.

And often much more, especially if you spend a lot of time on the internet, and adverts are just popping up left, right, and center. But each of these adverts that we see, 98 per day on average, is designed by professionals to convince you that you need something you don't have.

No wonder we're discontent, right? No wonder discontentment is such a part of our life. It's so natural. It's the air we breathe in our economy, in our world, in our society today.

[8 : 27] Discontentment is the air we breathe. But it also, therefore, makes its way into Christian teachings. The prosperity gospel, which is very popular, especially in Africa today, sells Christianity as a way to get the things you want, health, wealth, and happiness, so that you can be content.

And it's not new. If we look in today's passage, written 2,000 years ago, it was happening in Ephesus. And Timothy's highlighting the fact there in verse 5.

Have a look. Right at the end, he says, These false teachers and the people they teach imagine that godliness is a way to material gain. And so you see what they were doing.

These false teachers sold Christianity as a means to gain. They were saying, you know, God wants you to be happy. Of course he does. God wants you to be happy. So if you follow us, you will get what you want.

And you'll be happy. And this prosperity gospel comes in various forms. But essentially it's all saying the same thing. That if you follow us, you'll get what you want.

[9 : 41] But it's here in the passage where Paul, inspired by God, reveals a profound truth to contrast to this discontentment and this false teaching that tells you that if you follow us, then you'll get what you need to be happy.

Look at what he says. And this is profound. Verse 6. But godliness with contentment is great gain. Think about those words. Godliness with contentment is great gain. In other words, what he's saying is that real gain is not getting what you want.

Real gain is to stop wanting what you don't have. That's what real gain is. To be content with what you have.

That is how you really gain in life. Real gain is not getting what you want, but it's to stop wanting what you don't have. And think about it.

[10 : 55] It makes sense, doesn't it? If you don't want what you don't have, then you always have what you want. It's great. Contentment is actually real gain.

If we can just get contentment right, we'll be much happier than we are. But it also says, look at this verse, godliness with contentment is the gain.

In other words, only true godliness, only faith in the true gospel can produce this kind of contentment. Paul is talking about here.

And it's not automatic. It's not automatic for Christians to have this contentment. Just because you believe in the gospel doesn't mean you're automatically going to have this contentment. Even Paul says he needed to learn it.

Listen, for example, to Philippians 4 verse 12. He says this, I know both how to make do with little and how to make do with a lot.

[11 : 56] In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being content. Whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.

I have learned the secret of being content. Now, this was the apostle Paul. It took him a while to learn the secret of being content. It's something that needs to be learned for a Christian.

The secret of true contentment. But it's here back in 1 Timothy, our passage this morning, that we learn the foundation for it. We learn the very foundation.

If we're ever to be content, we need to get this right in our head. And it's in verse 7. The foundation for contentment is properly understanding the big picture of our lives.

Look at verse 7. And then we'll dive into it and unpack it a bit. He says this. This is the foundation that we need to get right in our mind.

[12 : 59] We need to understand if we're ever to be content. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out. We brought nothing into the world.

Think about how you started this life. Think about how we all started this life. With nothing. When you were born, you had no house.

Well, not that you owned. You had no income. You didn't even have any clothes. And yet, that was okay. It was okay.

Why? Well, because you had parents. Who provided you with what you needed. Have you ever noticed a newborn's first instinct is to cling to their mother?

That clinging, that holding on is one of the first instincts of a newborn. They don't know anything. They've just been born. They've just come out of the womb. And all it is is chaos and sounds and lights.

[14 : 06] They don't know what's going on. But what they do know is that close to them is this warm, powerful being who emanates love and somehow gives them what they need when they need it.

And they cling to that. And then they're content. And they're content. One of my most special memories is when our first child, Alex, was born.

And I was there at the birth. And about 15 minutes after he was born, Gene had been wheeled into recovery.

And he was lying on her chest with this look of contentment on his face. He's just been through quite a traumatic experience.

The newborn baby. And yet he had such a look of contentment on his face. And I thought to myself, like, that's amazing.

[15 : 06] I've never seen a human so content in just such a fallen and broken world. He didn't know what he was going to face.

He didn't know what tomorrow held. He didn't know all the difficulties and challenges and problems of life. But it was okay. Because he had mom. And that's all he needed.

That is the kind of contentment people are meant to experience in God. That is the kind of contentment God designed us and wants us to experience in him.

The contentment of a newborn baby clinging to their mom knowing it's all okay. Because they have this powerful being who emanates love. Who gives them everything that they need when they need it.

God designed us to be dependent. We brought nothing into the world. We were always, from the first day, meant to be dependent on another. Ultimately on God.

[16:11] God designed humans to be dependent on him. He didn't design us to have to provide for ourselves. And that is the kind of contentment that God wants people to experience in him.

But we don't. And I'll tell you why. Because of sin. That's why we don't. Because we're sinners. And by nature we have a broken relationship with God.

That has robbed us of the contentment we're meant to find in him. But that is why Jesus came to this earth. That is why Jesus came.

The son of God. From heaven to earth. To be one of us. To die for us. And so to take our sins on himself. And reestablish that relationship with God as our father.

That we were always meant to have. So that we can cling to God again. And find the contentment.

That we were always meant to experience in him. That is why Jesus came.

[17:13] And when we do that. We can do it knowing that if you trust in Christ. If you have come to trust in Christ. And his sins have been.

Your sins have been taken on him. On the cross. That means that you have a restored relationship. With the most powerful being in the universe. Who made it.

And who loves you. And who is for you. And he is the one who provides everything. That you have. One Timothy 6 verse 17.

Which we are going to see. And we are going to get into that passage a few weeks. But he says. God who richly provides us with all things to enjoy.

You know what that tells us. That tells you that everything you have. Has only been given to you. Because God has given it to you. Everything you have.

[18:13] You only have because it is given to you. And you will only ever have as much as he chooses to give. And that is okay. And so if we have food and clothing.

We will be content with that. Because even that is already over and above what we brought. Into this world. And God made sure we had it.

That is the first reason. That is the first foundation for contentment. How we came into the world. But also. The second part of the verse.

We can take nothing out. We cannot take anything out of this world. You see the gospel also tells us.

That this life is not the ultimate destination. Real life. True life. The life that God has made us to live. Is on the other side of death.

[19:16] Resurrection in the new creation. For those whose sins have been dealt with on the cross. And so. What that means. Because that is where real life is. Because that is our ultimate destination.

Whatever you can accumulate in this life. You will lose. Whatever you can accumulate in this life. Doesn't really matter. Because as we started.

We will end. One day. Your bank balance. Whatever it is now. One day. It will be zero again. You will have nothing. One pastor.

Was at a funeral. And. I heard this story. Someone. Quite cheekily. Came up to him. Because apparently. He was also the executive of the will. And.

It was a family member. And they asked him. Right off the bat. About. Talking about the deceased person. So. How much did they leave? Pastor quickly replied.

[20:14] Everything. They left everything. They couldn't take anything with them. As one. One other person said. This life is a short walk.

Between two states of nakedness. And that's what it is. Isn't it? As. We came. We will end. And so. Whatever money you have at the moment.

It is temporary. And it is not nearly as important. As you think it is. Or as the world wants you to think it is. And so. When your car fails. When your bank account runs dry.

And you get frustrated. And you worry. And you wish you had more. Just remember this.

And just say to yourself. Naked I came. And naked I'll depart. My natural state.

[21 : 14] Is actually to have nothing. And so anything beyond that. Is actually just a gift from God. Who I know. If I'm in Christ.

Loves me. And will provide what I need. When I need it. Just as a newborn baby clings to their mom. Knowing. That this powerful being will provide whatever they need.

Because they are loved. That's what the gospel tells us. So that if we really believe that. We can be content. We can have a contentment that this world cannot give.

That can be found nowhere else in this world. And if you can't have that attitude yet. If you can't have that. If you are always finding yourself discontent.

And unhappy with what you have. That is a symptom of something wrong. That is a symptom that either. You have not yet trusted in Christ.

[22 : 15] And come into right relationship with God. Or that you have. But your faith in him is not healthy. And in that case you are in more danger than you think you are.

And that is why. Paul ends by warning us of the danger of discontentment. Have a look from verse 9. The danger of discontentment.

But those who want to be rich. Fall into temptation. A trap. And many foolish and harmful desires. Which plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And by craving it. Some have wandered away from the faith. And pierced themselves with many griefs.

See what this is saying? Do you want to be rich? I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands.

[23 : 19] But this verse is saying. In no uncertain terms. That wanting to be rich. Is spiritually destructive. Wanting to be rich.

Is terribly spiritually dangerous. Why? Well because. A desire for more.

Is a lack of faith. In God as your provider. Every time you desire more than you have. You are saying to God. That he has made a mistake.

Every time. You want more than you have. You are saying. That God is not your provider. You're not trusting him. And that is actually very dangerous.

It is unsustainable. That attitude. That attitude. Of wanting more. Wanting to be rich. Wanting more than you have. Is unsustainable. It can go one of two ways.

[24 : 19] Either you will abandon that desire. And you will learn contentment in God. Or you will abandon God. And chase contentment in other things.

It will go one of those two ways. But that. That second way. Abandoning God. And chasing contentment in other things. Is not only spiritually destructive.

It's a trap. You see what Paul says. It's a trap. They fall into a trap. Verse 9. Because. When you're trying to find your contentment.

In other things. Not God. Alone. Those other things will never satisfy you. You will always want more. You'll think.

You think that getting this thing. Will make you content. Then you get it. And guess what? You're not content. Because you want the next one. You want the next thing. So. So. So there's two ways.

[25 : 17] One true way. And one false way. To contentment. One is to. Abandon your desire. To have more. And to just trust in God.

Just. Find your contentment. In him. The other way. Is to try. Find your contentment. In things. In buying things. In having more. And that will never work. It will never satisfy you.

The only thing it will do. Verse 10. Is create a love. For money. Which will eventually destroy you. That is the warning. And so.

In closing. If you are struggling. With discontentment. In your life. And I think. We all are. To a certain extent.

You need to address it. It's a symptom. Of spiritual sickness. You need to trust in Christ. If you haven't yet.

[26 : 15] You need to. Through Christ. Come into a right relationship. With God. And realize. What it means. That he is your. Father. But if you have done that.

And you're still. A Christian. But discontented. Well then you need to confess it. You need to confess. Your lack of faith in God. As your provider.

And you need to pray. That he will teach you. To find contentment in him. And be ready for him. To answer that prayer. Pray that he will.

He will teach you. As Paul says. To learn the secret. Of being content. But it's a dangerous prayer to pray. Because. That might require.

Some difficult lessons. Very often. God has to take things away. For you. To learn. The secret. Of being content. He had to for Paul.

[27 : 16] How much more for us. When we pray to God. Help me to learn contentment. He'll go. Okay. Let me take that. Oh. You don't like that. Do you? Okay.

Let's try again. Just as you've got to teach a child. Bit by bit. To learn things in life. God's got to teach us. Bit by bit. How to be content in him. And every time we don't have.

What we think is enough. God is teaching us. No. This is training. This is how. I teach you to be content. If you come back. To me. And cling to me again. Those lessons might be hard.

But let me tell you. They are worth it. Because finding that contentment. Is true gain. And it's what it means to really believe the gospel.

And to have a healthy soul. Let's pray. Amen. Amen.

[28 : 17] Oh Lord. Our Heavenly Father. We confess our discontentment in this world. In this age that we live in.

It is so. It is so normal for us to be discontented. And Lord we realize from your word that that is wrong. Would you correct us.

Would you help us Lord. To turn from our discontentment. Would you teach us to find our contentment in you. And would you help us to realize.

That true gain is not having stuff. But true gain is finding our rest and our contentment in you. Help us Lord.

Would you teach us to do that. And would you. Would you grow our faith in you. So that we can show the world. That is so. Discontent. Just what it means. To rest in you.

[29 : 17] In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Listen. One large part is able to change. One large part would change. One large part is independent. courts needs to change. And see. One large part is he does not need to■■ par that. This is how he does not bond.

Here are things that we're looking for.