

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (James Buchanan Dunlop) 138217

Godliness With Contentment Is Great Gain, Godliness With Contentment Is Great Gain (6:6-8)

This implies that there may be a kind of contentment without godliness, and in that there is of course some gain.

What is godliness? "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

True godliness is God-likeness as in the above portion, and in Ephesians 5:1 linked up with Ephesians 4:32. Christians are to be followers, (literally imitators) of God — be God-like or godly, ever giving ourselves up to God for others, as Christ did on the cross — of course excepting what only Christ could do making atonement. But our godliness, our walking in love is to have no lower standard than this. The Holy Spirit too in the First Epistle of John teaches the same standard as to us Christians loving one another in chapter 4:16.

Then godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

Godliness not only has "promise of the life that now is," but also, "of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8), and both are "gain." So godliness with contentment is great gain. Where there is not this "contentment," the heart is not satisfied — not resting in the joy of communion with the Father and the Son.

Satan knows this well, and tries to rob us of this joy by stirring up covetousness. So we are exhorted in Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation (conduct as a Christian) be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and again, "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6:7-10).

But what am I to be contented with? Food and clothing. Hear too, what our Lord teaches as to this in Luke 12, and what we are to consider! We are to consider the ravens, and the lilies, and how He feeds the one, and clothes the other (Luke 12:22-30).

What is covetousness? In Scripture there are different words in the Greek all translated by the same English word "covet or covetousness."

Five Greek words for "covet" and "covetousness" are found in the New Testament. In only two scriptures, namely, 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 1 Corinthians 14:39 is the word used in a good sense, and here only the word "zeloo" (to be zealous for) is used. By far the commonest word is "pleonexia" meaning "the greed for more" or "greed for gain."

Of the other three words philarguros or "love of silver" is found in Luke 16:14; Hebrews 13:5, and 2 Timothy 3:2. In 1 Timothy 6:10 it is translated "love of money." Epithumeo or "fixing the mind on" is used in Acts 20:33; Romans 7:7 and Romans 13:9. In 1 Timothy 6:10 it is oregomai or "extending the arms for."

In Luke 12:15-20 it is "greediness for gain," in Hebrews 12:15-17 also. And in 1 Corinthians 5 we are told to put away, not only a fornicator, or drunkard, or railed, as a wicked person, but one greedy for gain, a covetous person. Does not all this show how hateful greediness for gain is to God? It is idolatry (Col. 3:5). How it robs God of His proper place!

And how it robs the soul of the great gain of godliness with contentment, and the joy of the Father acting a father's part to those who are separate from any unequal yoke with unbelievers! Some lines come before me that illustrate the above, and I pass them on to the reader:

Said the Robin to the Sparrow, "I should really like to knowWhy these anxious human beingsRush about and worry so." Said the Sparrow to the Robin, "Friend, I think that it must beThat they have no heavenly Father,Such as cares for you and me!"

But the sparrow was wrong, believer. Humans have a heavenly Father but they do not trust His Almighty love and care for them, so they "rush about and worry so."

But not only does covetousness produce restlessness of soul and worry; it so hinders quiet happy communion with the Father and the Son, that joy is lost, and there is no strength for either worship or service, except perhaps in a legal way. And the Christian becomes dull and cold and shows little sign of life. Such are seldom heard to open their mouths either in the worship meeting or the prayer meeting to God the Father or the Son. Yet the Son says, "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song of Sol. 11:14). If the Christian goes on indulging this spirit of greediness for gain, God tells us that such a one "falls into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in destruction and perditionBut thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:9-12).

But does not all this need power, spiritual strength? Certainly it does, and it is to be found in the risen, ascended One, to Whom we are united, as well as in Whom we are accepted, and to Whom we belong. For all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and we are filled full, complete in Him, and, His "grace is sufficient" for us — His "strength made perfect in weakness." So we must neither excuse ourselves nor be discouraged. We "can do all things through Christ which strengthens" us, those who look to Him — to Him Who loves us as a man loves himself, as part of Himself.

So let us not be misled by a frequent misquotation of those words in Romans 12:11 as telling us to be "diligent in business." It does not say so. Read it carefully for yourself, and if you have a New Translation, read it there also. For I am persuaded that many of us are, by misquoting

this scripture, falling into the snare of covetousness, or greediness for gain, and are not only being robbed of much joy in the Lord, but are injuring the assemblies where we meet, and are turning others out of the way by our example.

Our Blessed Lord in Luke 12, already referred to, says to us, if inclined to anxiety as to providing necessary things for self or family, don't take anxious thought about these things; and in Matthew speaking to His own, in the sermon on the mount, tells us to seek first the things of God — the Kingdom — and all that is necessary — that which we are to be contented with, that which the ravens and lilies get from Him — shall be added unto us. And that precious expression of His loving care for us comes in to encourage us, "For your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Luke 12:30).

O to trust Him then more fully, Just to simply moveIn the conscious, calm enjoymentOf the Father's love;

Knowing that life's checkered pathwayLeadeth to His rest, Satisfied the way He taketh Must be always best.

Just here let me notice again the scripture that is often misquoted, and is by this means used by Satan to incite God's dear children into this snare of yielding to "greediness for gain." Instead, we are told to go on quietly with God, content with making a living, and "provide things honest in the sight of all men." I refer to Romans 12:11,17. The 11th verse is generally quoted to say "diligent in business," etc. It is no such thing, but "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"; a very different thing from diligently giving all time and energies to making money, greedy for gain, and little or no thought of serving the Lord in business.

Alas! how much we Christians, and gathered Christians too, have failed, and are failing in this ensnaring engrossment with our own things, instead of the things of the Lord Jesus! This happens even to the point of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, and encouraging one another in the weekly prayer meeting and the reading meeting, some turning up only at the Lord's day morning meeting for breaking of bread, on the day when even the world lays aside its business, because in this country business is not conducted on Lord's days.

Dear Christian reader, consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. May His great and gracious and unchanging love for us, told out on the cross, which still goes on towards us now up on the throne, so constrain our hearts that we may put Christ and God's things first, and live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again, enjoying the great gain of godliness with contentment.

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