

BE CONTENT

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Under the reign of King Solomon (about 2900 years ago), the nation of Israel enjoyed peace and plenty. The official report reads as follows:

*²⁰ The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They were very contented, with **plenty** to eat and drink. (1 Kings 4:20-21)*

Theirs was the Land of Contentment, with plenty to eat and drink. After all, these two basic necessities for life — water and food — have long been the measure of national rest. And the lack of one or both have long been a cause of international war.

Contentment means being at peace because you have a sufficiency of what you need.

A New Driver

There have, however, always been some people who were dissatisfied with even these basics. A third component of comfortable living became the new driving force of their desire: money.

Money, for many, is the universal means of redistributing the water and food to those who don't naturally possess it. But for some, the accumulation of wealth became an end in itself — an end without end.

Whatever could turn a dollar became reasonable employment, including all manner of deceit. Even religion, for some, became a means to another end. Christianity is not free of charlatans (never has been). Listen to part of Paul's report to his associate, Timothy:

⁵ These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy.

*⁶ Yet true godliness **with contentment** is itself great wealth. ⁷ After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. ⁸ So if we have **enough** food and clothing, let us be content.*

⁹ But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:5-10)

"A show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy." How many people fall for that one?! Pretending to be godly, wearing it like a costume or make-up that could be put on for show and taken off again to return to reality, these people convince others to trust them and contribute to their cause (a cause which is no larger than themselves).

Paul's warning is stern: *"People who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction."*

Listen to me. If you are longing to be rich, if material wealth is your goal in life, you are headed for a world of hurt. If you tend to think, "If I just had one of those, or more of this, I would be happy," you

are fooling yourself. Your lack may be filled, but your desire never will be. There is no end to that deep, dark hole of discontent.

A New Treasure

The New Testament reveals a new treasure and a new measure of wealth in God's Kingdom.

⁶ *True godliness with contentment is itself great wealth.* ⁷ *After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it.* ⁸ *So if we have enough food and clothing, let us **be content**.* (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

The new treasure is "true godliness with contentment." And the new measure is "enough."

Godliness is a heart condition. It is not outward appearance — style of clothing or hairstyle or adornment. It is the inward devotion of one's heart and mind to God. Only when He is the center around which one's life revolves, may that person be considered godly — a devoted follower of Christ.

Such godliness shows up as the main criterion for decision-making in life situations ("Will this please the Lord?" "Will this honor God." "What would Jesus do?").

It shows up as the force that brings emotions under control during times of loss or betrayal or mistreatment ("I will still trust Him.").

It shows up as the compassion that moves us to reach out and help when others buckle under life's hardness.

Godliness also shows up as the champion of our energies when the road seems long and the way seems difficult.

To possess this godliness is to be rich indeed — strong, noble, compassionate, and steady. It is to be like Christ. This is the new treasure of God's Kingdom.

A New Measure

And the new measure is "enough." It is not as much as the next guy, or more than anyone else; it is enough. Enough for me and my household. What we need, not what we want. This is the new measure of God's Kingdom.

Yet we live in a society that pumps billions of dollars annually into a machine that is specifically designed to make you feel that you are lacking something. Madison Avenue marketing companies are skilled at creating unrest in your life. "More," "biggest," "better," "best," "finest," "fastest," "newest," "sexy," and "revolutionary" are some of the most familiar and attractive terms in the English language. Whatever you enjoy today will be obsolete or outdated by tomorrow, if you buy their line of thinking.

Unless you hear God's Word clearly, and steadfastly make it your guide for living, the thousand-dollar words of advertising companies will steal your heart, your mind, and your money. We have heard the saying, "A fool and his money are soon parted," but do we ever recognize our own foolishness?

God is not opposed to material wealth. But He knows that it is so elusive that many people will become "*trapped by many foolish and harmful desires*" in the pursuit of it. And He knows that it cannot provide happiness to those who are not already possessed by it. The love of money — the desire for money, the pursuit of money — is the root of all kinds of evil.

Only the truly godly, who are content with enough, can manage material wealth without being destroyed by it.

Jesus spoke compellingly to a crowd about real repentance and righteous living.

¹⁴ *“What should we do?” asked some soldiers.*

*John replied, “Don’t extort money or make false accusations. And **be content** with your pay.” (Luke 3:14)*

This is not a mandate to remain where you are and not seek a better-paying job, nor about setting low goals. It is a command to rest (not dwell, but rest) where you are and enjoy what you have. Don’t twist your present circumstance into a reason to abuse or take advantage of others.

The Kingdom’s new wealth is “godliness with contentment.” The Kingdom’s new yardstick is “enough.” And the Kingdom’s new goal is to rest with “whatever you have.”

A New Goal

Paul again instructs us from his own experience:

¹¹ *Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with **whatever** I have.* ¹² *I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.* ¹³ *For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* (Philippians 4:11-13)

Paul’s was a life led by the Holy Spirit. As he followed the Spirit, he encountered some wonderful and some terrible things. Through it all, he learned to trust in the Lord and depend upon His Word. This created rest within him. Rest in the moment. Trust in God for the next moment and all his tomorrows. “Whatever” it was, it was okay for the moment, because God was in it and God was with him, and God was superintending his life.

I hear the same devotion in the Letter to the Hebrews:

⁵ *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with **what you have**, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* ⁶ *So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* (Hebrews 13:5-6)

Resting your trust in God in “whatever you have” is the new goal of the Kingdom of God, because your life is not in the hands of men but in the hands of God, and He will faithfully help you. On that you may depend.

As you may know, Paul experienced some harsh difficulties in his pursuit of God’s plan for his life. It’s not that God’s plan requires harshness, but neither does it prevent it. “Whatever” His plan for you does require for the moment, you may be sure that it always includes His presence and His strengthening. He will “never leave you nor forsake you.”

A New Strength

When Paul once prayed earnestly and repeatedly to be freed from a particular physical difficulty, God explained His higher plan:

⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is **sufficient** for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am **content** with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Weakness, with dependence upon God, is the new strength. Let me break this down for you: the things that normally humiliate you, embarrass you, frighten you, and trouble you, DO NOT hinder God from working at all. But if you become humiliated, embarrassed, frightened, or troubled, and as a result forget or fail to trust the Lord — that hinders Him from working on your behalf, that interferes with His plan.

If, instead, you will rest in the moment, recognizing that God is bigger than your dilemma and strong enough to bring you through it, you will find a sufficiency of grace imparted to you.

¹³ The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

¹³ For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)

The Kingdom’s new wealth is “godliness with contentment.”

The Kingdom’s new yardstick is “enough.”

The Kingdom’s new goal is to rest with “whatever you have.”

And the Kingdom’s new promise is “all-sufficient grace.”

Be content. God will help you.