

When Paul took the Gospel to Thessalonica (Acts 17), and people were turning to Jesus, the Jewish leaders started a riot, and had some of the Christians dragged before the authorities, and they said, “**These men have turned the WORLD upside-down, and now they’ve come here!!!**”

And I’m here today to tell you that their accusations were pretty-well right, at least from their perspective... From their perspective, becoming a Christian does turn the world upside-down. Nothing is the same. Everything changes. But of course, from God’s perspective, we’re being turned the right way up.

And whether we’re still a bit upside-down (because we’re harbouring some of the perspectives of the world), or whether we’re now right-side-up, will pretty-much determine how we’re going to take today’s Bible reading.

You see, to become a Christian – to become a disciple of Jesus, isn’t about making a few adjustments to one’s life – it’s about being born again to a complete new life, and into a completely new Kingdom.

Today, we’re going to delve into the first 10vv of Chapter 6,, but we read the **whole** of chapter 6. And the reason we read it all, is because the key to understanding the first 10 verses, comes later in the chapter. The key to this Chapter, and in fact, the key to living the Christian life, is: The Good confession – It’s what we truly believe, because we’re living by faith.

But, what is the Good confession? What is this faith we hold onto? Paul said, in V¹³ Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession...

What did Jesus confess to Pilate? Well, in John 18:

(ESV)³⁶ "My kingdom is not of this world. ...

He said that if His kingdom **was** of this world, things would be very different, and He said:

³⁷ ... "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Alright, the good confession of Christ:

- "My kingdom is not of this world";
- It's very different to the world;
- Christ was born, to bear witness to the truth; and
- Everyone who is of truth, listens to Jesus.

Alright, so that's a little glimpse of next week's message, and it's the key to understanding what we're studying today. So, let's begin.

The topic for today is summed up in V⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain...

It's about finding our contentment in Christ.

As a Christian, do you have contentment? Or are you looking for something more???

Actually, let me change that question, and let me put it simply: "Are you content?" And I changed the question because I don't want us to start thinking of life as having different compartments, and so we judge our level of contentment in:

- our family life;
- our working life;
- our recreation life;
- our financial position;
- **things** we have;
- things we wished we have;
- our spiritual life....

But let's not do that. Let's not divide our lives up into compartments, because our whole life belongs to God. Let's just ask the question, "Am I content?"...

And overall, a lot of people might say, "Yeah, I'm content."... But then they look at all the little compartments, and they say, "I'm not content with this, and I'm not content with that..."

And many of us will have plans; dreams; and ambitions (in all areas of our lives) and until we achieve these, we're not content... But the thing is, when we chase contentment, a common practice, is to keep changing the goal-posts... And nowhere is this more noticeable than when it comes to finances. I'll be content when:

- I've saved up a deposit for a house; and then

- when I've paid off the house;
- when I've upgraded to the house I really want;
- when I can retire;
- when I can travel;

....

Are you with me??? We keep changing the goal-posts.

When is enough, enough? When are we going to be content?

- How much land do I need to be content?
- How many cattle?
- How many rental properties?
- How many shares?
- How much in my super-fund?

How much is enough? What is it going to take for me to be content?

The story goes, that JD Rockefeller (at the time, the richest man in the world), was asked by a reporter, "How much money is enough?" And he responded, "Just a little bit more."

But for some folk, contentment isn't found in money or possessions – their contentment might be in "achievements"...

- writing a book;
- setting a record;
- winning a medal;
- having followers on social media;
- having health;
- achieving political ambition;

- having a certain level of fitness;
- just being able to do what they enjoy...

So, let me ask you the question again: Are you content?

Because, when we **are** content, all the little compartments that (when we think about them) could be improved upon, they don't matter.

Contentment. **godliness with contentment is great gain**
All we need is godliness. Are you content with that? If so, great gain.

If your godliness meant that you had to give up everything else, would you be content? Are you content that Jesus gave His life for you – He redeemed you from sin? Are you content that you have eternal life?

You see, as disciples of Jesus, “our contentment” – it’s not about “self-sufficiency” – it’s about “the sufficiency of Christ”. And the contentment we have in Christ – Godly contentment, is very different to **worldly** contentment.

And the contentment we have in Christ, stretches far beyond our cravings for money/possessions/achievements. It even breaks into the realm of what we might consider as “rights and freedoms”...

You see, when you become a Christian, a lot of things are going to change in your life. But not all of your circumstances

will change. And yet, even in the same old (sometimes harsh) life circumstances, you will find your contentment in Christ.

The first 2 verses really highlight this for me.

There were slaves in Ephesus (Paul is writing to Timothy who was pastoring a church in Ephesus), and some of these slaves became Christians. What do you do with that? Imagine this:

- You're a slave; but
- You've been set free of your sins in Christ; and
- Your experience of the church is something new and marvellous, because within the church, there are no classes.
 - The slave and the free are brothers.
 - In the church, a slave can be an elder; or
 - a preacher;
 - he could be teaching his master...

But his circumstances in the world have **not** changed. The slave remains a slave.

And Paul is saying here, that every slave who bears the yoke (a picture of severity / harshness)... But you make sure you give your master δεσπότης (despotas) (one who has complete power and authority over another) – You give your despot/master full respect/honour.

That would make some people's blood boil... What about my rights!!! What about my freedoms!!! Hey, it's not about our rights and freedoms... That's the attitude that people of the world have. That's the sort of thing that people of the world

find contentment in... (My rights; my freedoms; my stuff)...
But as a disciple of Jesus, the kingdom that **we** belong to, is not the Kingdom of this World – it's the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.. and **our** hearts are set on eternity.

And so our contentment is in Christ, and our contentment is found in serving Christ – living for His Kingdom...

And so, what Paul is telling the slave, is “submit to your despot (master)” – no, more than that, “**Honour** your despot (master), for the sake of God and the Gospel.”

A slave, was subject to **forced** loyalty/honour. But the Christian slave **chooses** to be loyal/honour, for the sake of God and the Gospel.

You see, if God and the Gospel was seen to make slaves disrespectful and poorer workers, that would give a very bad impression of what being a Christ-follower is about.

So, how would this apply today? Well, we're obviously not slaves (unless you work for your parents)... But as an employee, be the best employee that you can be. Honour your boss; Be a hard worker; Give him value for money...

We bring glory to God, when our bosses recognise that disciples of Jesus are respectful workers, and that they work hard.

Why? Because our contentment is bigger than rights and freedoms; Our contentment is in Christ. Whether you are an

employer/employee/slave, as a Christian, your contentment is in Christ.

He even goes on to say, “Even if you’ve got a Christian master (or for us, let’s think of having a Christian boss), Don’t use that as an excuse for laxness – work all that much harder, because the one who’s benefitting from your good service, is a believer and beloved of God... In other words, bless your Christian boss, by giving full respect and working hard, because he’s a brother in Christ...

I think what we’re being shown here, is the concept of Christian servanthood, which is something which is very much missing, in the minds of many in the church today.

The Kingdom of this world would have us strive to elevate ourselves at all costs, and stand on the fingers of others on the rungs of the ladder as we climb the ladder... But the way of Christ, is to be a servant of all.

The Apostle Paul says:

Teach and urge these things. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

There are so many strange ideas of “what being a Christian is”, today... In fact, many of gospels that are being taught,

bear no resemblance at all, to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and their teaching is **not** the sound teaching of Godliness...

You see, the words of Jesus and Godly teaching remind us that the Kingdom of God is not of this world. And they remind us that the ways of the Kingdom of God are very different to the ways of this world... They remind us that our eyes are fixed on eternity and the coming Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.... And we're also reminded that His Kingdom is breaking into this world now...

But the rot sets in, because the kingdom breaking into this world now, is completely misunderstood. Some view the kingdom as an agenda of reform in the political realm... But the kingdom breaking into the world, is disciples of Jesus turning the world upside down, because we're being turned the right way up. And because we are being turned the right way up, our contentment in Godliness. We ourselves are:

- Changed...
- Renewed...
- Transformed...

As we live with selfless godliness, the Kingdom of God is breaking into the world.

And anyone who presents a version of the Gospel, that does not have this in view, is puffed up, and knows nothing...

Now, Paul describes here, the characteristics and the motivations of a false teacher.

Their characteristic:

- puffed up with conceit
 - full of themselves
 - I know stuff that you don't know
 - God's given me special revelation;
- but they understand nothing
 - they just don't get it;
 - they're seeing things from a worldly perspective
 - even spiritual blessings, they're processing from a worldly mindset; and
 - They do not know the ways of Jesus and the teaching of Christ.

And their motivations – what is it that drives them in their false gospel:

- they actually crave controversy.
They love to be able to teach something new and controversial
- they crave quarrels about words
Twisting the Gospel by re-interpreting God's Word;

And when a false gospel is taught, this is the effect:

- envy;
- dissension;
- slander;
- evil suspicions;
- constant friction;

And here's the kicker:

- imagining that godliness is a means of gain...

How could a person ever come to that position on the Gospel? We have the example/teaching of Christ? How could I draw out of something so selfless, that “godliness is a means of gain”?

To come to that conclusion, one has to have a corrupt mind, and not know the truth,,,, because this is the opposite of the teachings of Jesus....

And yet, in Australia today, and in our very town, some of the fastest growing churches, teach this very thing: that Godliness is a means of gain:

- You donate some money, and God will give you a breakthroughⁱ
- Come to Jesus and He will heal your cancer;
- Become a Christian and you will prosper;
- You’ll become a person of influence;
- You’ll get that :
 - house;
 - promotion;
 - blessing;
 - healing

And probably back in the day, the message might’ve been to the slave, “You’ll get your freedom”.

But, where does that message come from? It comes from the evil one... But why is it so popular? Because it appeals to that part of us that’s still upside-down, where we harbour

cravings of the world, rather than cravings of the Kingdom of God.

So, let's come back to the question: "Are you content?"

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain

We brought nothing into the world; We can't take anything out of the world... As disciples of Jesus, our contentment, is only in things eternal...

What did Jesus teach us?

Matthew 6: (ESV) ¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A builder was recently telling me about a big, flash, expensive house he was building (and he happened to be building it for a Christian)... And the words that came into my mind, "Moth and rust".

A Christian farmer I know, bought yet another property... And the words that came to mind, "Moth and rust".

And hey, I'm not immune,,, Sometimes I plan to build something or buy something I don't really need, and the Lord says to me, "Moth and rust"...

Are we content with the Lord Jesus Christ and the Godliness He leads us to?

But the thing is, we seem to have ways of justifying our worldly cravings, don't we. *I know Robyn and I have had many discussions about the difference between "a want" and "a need" ... BTW, I'm pretty sure you know that it's Robyn who's on the side of Jesus there... And it's Michael who says "I need this". "You don't need it – you just want it..."*

Where do we draw the line between a want and a need?

It's pretty low down. V8 if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

When Jesus taught us to pray, what did he teach us? "Give us today our daily bread". Lord, just give me enough food to survive today...

And yet, some teach, "God wants you to be rich"... And even most who **don't** hold to that teaching, if they were honest, they do still **want** to be rich... Most people are quite like Rockefeller "I just need a bit more".

Why would I want to be rich? People think it's a blessing to be rich... And maybe it is, at a level, but it boils down to our desire and our contentment (or lack thereof).

God's word talks about desire – It's those who **desire** to be rich, who:

- fall into temptation;
- fall into a snare/trap;
- fall into many senseless and harmful desires, that plunge people into ruin and destruction...

You see, if my desire is to be rich:

- it's really easy to fall into dishonesty.
 - It's really easy to claim a tax deduction for something that's not really a business expense.
 - It's really easy to 'forget' to subtract the ½ hour break on my time-sheet.
- And when we desire to be rich (whether I'm rich/not rich), if I desire it, that's where we fall into a snare or a trap...

And it results in spiritual ruination. Ala, the prosperity gospel...

the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.

From what I've observed in the world, those who **love** money (not just those who love the folded green stuff) – those who aren't content, and so they crave more (of whatever), and so

they crave money to get what they crave,, in general, many of them will succeed, but to what end???

Jesus said, **Matthew 19: (ESV) 24 ... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."**

And that very thing was demonstrated by the rich young ruler. A young man who kept the commandments asked Jesus how he could get eternal life, and Jesus said, there's one thing you lack:

Mark 10(ESV) 21 ...go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Jesus didn't say that to everyone – only to him. Why???

Because he loved what he had. It was a source of his contentment. And rather than give up his worldly goods, he walked away from Jesus, sad...

Why would I ever desire to be rich, when God's word is telling me, that this could actually cause me to fall from the faith. Alright, it's that serious. It is through this craving [love of money] that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Where's our contentment? Really – where's your contentment? Does the way we live, and do the priorities of our lives, tell our children that our contentment is in Christ? Or is it telling them our contentment is in something else?

And because we're "**Bush**" Disciples, today I believe I need to talk to parents of **Rural** families, because I believe this is a particular challenge for you... Is our contentment in Christ? or is it in being a landowner???

What are your sons and daughters learning from you? What are they learning about contentment, and about where contentment is found? And I share this, because for many rural families, it spans generations, of scraping together more and more and more, so I can pass properties on to my children... Now, I'm not saying that passing on a farm to the kids is a bad thing – not at all... But it is, if I'm also passing onto them, "That's where the contentment is."

Because the truth of the matter is:

If we've got food for today; and clothes on our back, that's enough, because our contentment is in Christ...

Next week, we're going to be focusing on faith, Godliness and eternal life. (even for those who are rich).

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

Turn us the right way up.

We confess that sometimes we are not content,

and we look for our contentment somewhere other than
You.

When that happens,
we realise there's a remnant of worldliness,
opposed to the Kingdom of God.

Lord, forgive us for our love of money;
it's a very seductive thing;
promising us things that we feel will give us
contentment,,,
but it's like a mirage...
The more we get, we just want a bit more.

Lord, by Your Holy Spirit,
fill us with a contentment in You.
A contentment that is completely independent of what I
have,
or of the circumstances that I'm in...

Lord, what an amazing blessing,
to be completely content,
as we fix our eyes on you.

As You said,

Matthew 6:(ESV) 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

We seek You. You are our heart's desire;

You are our Lord;

You are our Saviour;

You are our Hope;

You are our Joy;

You are our contentment...

Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.kings.org.au/anatomy-of-a-breakthrough-offering/>