

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

The Deceitfulness of Money

From beginning to end, the Bible emphasizes God's ownership of all things. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). God is the creator and owner of the universe. He has created us and owns us. Not only has he created us, he has also redeemed us from our sins. Because of whom God is and what God has done and continues to do, he deserves to be honored and glorified. Even though he is almighty God, he seeks a loving relationship with each one of us.

That relationship is greatly jeopardized by a common attitude toward money: greed. Wanting more money and possessions and holding on to them tightly can become such an obsession that life exists only for the purpose of acquiring more and more. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus described the various kinds of people who respond to the Gospel. Jesus stated that some *"seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants"* (Matthew 13:7). He explained, *"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful"* (Matthew 13:22).



Money and possessions can deceive us into believing that nothing is more important than to

own things and to enjoy the things money can buy. Of all the things that Satan can use to separate us from our relationship with Jesus, money may be his most effective tool.

The fact that Jesus referred to money and possessions in more than 2,100 Bible verses indicates that he is very concerned about our attitudes toward and our relationships with money. Jesus spoke often about money and possessions because he knew the influence and power money can have over our lives. He was very interested in helping people understand that money can never provide us with real satisfaction in life. Richard Halverson wrote, "Jesus Christ said more about money than any other single thing because money is of first importance when it comes to a person's real nature. Money is an exact index to our true character. Throughout Scripture we find an intimate correlation between the development of a person's character and how he or she handles money."

"Give me five minutes with a person's checkbook, and I will tell you where his heart is."

Billy Graham

The Joy of Contentment

In contrast to materialism, contentment is a state of mind that does not desire more than what one has. A contented person is satisfied with what he has. The goal of a Christian is to be content regardless of his financial condition. Discontentment is a spiritual problem. It affects rich and poor and everyone in between. Discontentment can eat away at our souls and rob us of the joy the Lord wants us to have in Christ. A contented person sees the world from

a different perspective than a materialistic person views it.

In the “have it now and enjoy life” society in which we live, contentment is no longer a goal. In this culture, the goal in life is self-gratification. Our society strives after material things that provide temporary happiness. Comfort is more of a goal than is contentment. Unfortunately, when all we care about is ourselves, we are never satisfied, because we keep telling ourselves we need and deserve more. We convince ourselves we should have more cars, bigger houses, better clothes, a classier neighborhood, a higher salary.

The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’ ” (Hebrews 13:5). If we love money and the things of this world, we will never be content. Money and possessions can’t buy contentment. Only in Christ can we find lasting contentment. The Apostle Paul’s contentment came from knowing and trusting in Jesus. “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13).

Paul had learned the secret of contentment. Paul was in prison when he wrote those words in Philippians, and he had been at the point of death several times. If anyone could have said he was in need or want, it was Paul. In fact, Paul’s message on contentment should make many of us uncomfortable.

How could our circumstances be as bleak as his? We know that Paul suffered from a physical problem, was stoned, beaten, and went without food. Yet he gave God thanks for everything. He was content whether he had abundance or nothing. Because Paul was content regardless of his circumstances, he is a magnificent example of contentment. Through Paul, we see that, when we depend on Christ for everything, we can accept any situation here on earth, knowing that God won’t abandon us.



What was Paul’s secret? How did he find contentment in all those circumstances? His contentment came from Christ Jesus himself. He found contentment in the fact that he was forgiven all of his sins and sinful behavior. He was assured that Christ was with him constantly. He knew that God was always there to see him through and that God would never give him more than he could handle. He knew that Christ Jesus died on the cross for him to give him life every day on earth and eternal life in heaven. He knew that Christ would rescue him from every trouble and sustain him in every trial along the way. He experienced Christ’s promise, “*My grace is sufficient for you!*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!