

But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. (NIV84)

Theme: A Christian's perspective on Worldly Wealth:

1. He is content with what God has given him.
2. He flees from the love of money.

You are different. Whether you know it or not, whether you try to be or not, you are different. As a Christian you are different than the rest of the world. You think differently. Your speech is different. You act differently. What you believe is different. What is important to you is different. Your view of wealth is different too.

But no one wants to be different. No you want to fit in with the rest of the world. So at times you act like the rest of the world, you think like rest of the world, and perhaps even your view of wealth is like the rest of the world.

So today God shows us what a Christian's perspective on worldly wealth should be. He is content with what God has given him and he flees from the love of money.

We live in a society that has much. Just think of all the blessings you enjoy. Compare what you have today to what past generations had. We have so much more today than 25, 50, 100, 500 years ago. When many of you were growing up there was no cable tv, no internet, no home computers, no cell phones. Many families only had one car, air conditioning was rare, as were dish washers. We could go on and on listing many things that we take for granted today, that not too long ago weren't around. Many of us have these things—with money to spare. God has blessed us so much that we are able to save for the future. The whole idea of retirement is a relatively new one. And it's only possible because we live in a country that has been so richly blessed.

The census bureau recently released some figures about those below the poverty line in our country. More than 80% of Americans who live below the poverty level have a cell phone, a tv with a dvr, refrigerators, stoves, microwaves, and air conditioning. These are those who are living in poverty—the poor. If those in poverty have these many things, just imagine what those who are not in poverty possess. And yet, the world still wants more. They are never satisfied with what they have. Complaining that they don't have enough. They are always scheming to get more. Searching for ways to make a quick buck, hoping to win big in the lottery or at the casino. And when they get it, it's not enough. They never have enough. The more they get the more they want.

And sadly, you may fall into the same type of thinking. Just think of everything you own. Your money in your bank account, your investments. You have multiple cars. A roof over your head. A bed to sleep in. Not to mention all the latest in electronics. You have much. But you may want more. Not only do you want to keep up with the Joneses, you want to surpass them. Your car doesn't have all the latest gadgets. Your phone is over a few months old. Your computer doesn't even run the latest operating system.

You have much, but want more. You're never satisfied. So you are always looking to get more. You may be willing to do anything to get what you want. But at what cost? Your children's future education? The physical well-being of those in desperate need? Your spiritual well-being? The spiritual well-being of others? Like the rest of the world, we may see our wealth as an end in and of itself, rather than the means to an end. We work hard, we strive, and we save simply so we can have more money. Or so that we can buy better things. But what's the point? What goal are you working towards? Paul points out in verse 7, we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. Job says something similar, Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. Whatever amount of money, whatever possessions you gain for yourself, you can't take with you when you die. They are worthless to you then. So why fret or worry about what you have or don't have? Why complain that you don't have enough?

Paul tells Timothy what a Christian's attitude ought to be. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. You certainly have those two things, don't you. I don't know of any of you who can't afford a meal. And you were all able to find something to wear today. God has given us those blessings. And many more. As James said, Every good and perfect gift is from above. Everything we have—our money, our home, car, electronics belongs to God. He gives them graciously to us. He gives them to us to use. And so that we could take care of them.

And so we are content with what we have. But for the Christian there is more to it than simple contentment. In the first verse of our text Paul says, godliness with contentment is great gain. You have been given something else by Christ. Faith in him as your Savior. And through that faith you receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life that he won for you. This is a free gift from God that you cannot purchase and that you cannot earn. Salvation belongs to God. And he graciously gives it to you for free. Godliness, which is this faith and the life that goes along with it, is great gain. You have all you need. So you are content with whatever God chooses to give you. And you thank him for it.

You are different. Unlike the world, which is full of dissatisfaction and greed, you are filled with thankfulness and contentment. And so you flee from the love of money.

Paul says in verse 10, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. We see examples of this every day. How many people have ruined their lives trying to get rich? How many have lost all of their money in a get-rich scheme, or have gone into thousands of dollars in debt just trying to strike it big at the casino? We hear all the time about sinful and foolish courses people try to gain more money. They lie, deceive, or steal—some even commit murder. They alienate their friends, family, or neighbors. The pursuit of money may lead to the breaking of many laws. And it may lead to the breaking up of families.

But that's not the worst thing that happens because of the love of money. Many of those who love money also lose their faith. As Paul continues in verse 10, Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. The lure of worldly wealth is too much for some to handle. They can pick up some shifts, perhaps make some overtime. So they work instead of worship. Their faith isn't nourished on a regular basis. And it starts to wane. Or they get so caught up in what they have that they forget about Christ. Many put their trust in themselves since they have so much and have acquired it by their own effort. And they lose their faith. They pierce themselves—they kill their own faith. And they will suffer in hell forever, where they will go through all kinds of griefs.

The love of money certainly leads to many evils. That is why Paul told Timothy to flee from the love of money. The same stands for us to today. As a Christian, flee from the love of money. You are different after all. You don't see money like the rest of the world. You view your possessions in a different light than everyone else. Money isn't that important to you. It's not something that consumes you. God plays a larger part in your life than your possessions. You are more concerned with doing the will of God than gaining more for yourself.

So not only do you flee from the love of money. But you run toward what is good. As Paul told Timothy, pursue righteousness, godliness,

faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Do what is right. Obey God out of love and thanks to him. Show love to others. Treat them as you want to be treated. Most importantly, pursue faith. Read the Word. Worship him regularly. Study his Word in Bible Class. Get into the means of grace so that your faith may be strengthened.

Paul continues, Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Fight for your faith. The love of money leads to all kinds of evils that put your faith in jeopardy. So fight against what your sinful nature wants. Run away from the temptations of the world. Hold on to the eternal life that has been given to you. And you will live with Christ forever.

Why would you do this? Why would you willingly be different and not care all that much about money? Because of who Jesus is and what he has done. He gave up the glories and riches of heaven to become like us. Then he gave up his life. He willingly let himself be nailed to a cross. So that he could take our sins upon himself and give us his holy life. He became sin for us so that he could suffer through hell in our place. And he gave us his perfect life so that God no longer sees us as the sinners that we truly are. Then he rose from the dead. And promises us that we too will rise from the dead and live with him in heaven forever.

Then Jesus ascended into heaven. Where he reigns from his throne. And he rules over all his creation. That is why he is called the king of kings and Lord of lords. Soon Christ will come again. And he will take with him all who are found faithful. So why flee from what the rest of the world pursues? Because you were chosen to be different. From before the beginning of the world God chose you to eternal life. He elected you to be saved—so you act like it.

So what, then, is the point of worldly wealth? How do you as a Christian look at all the great blessings God has given you? They are not ends in and of themselves. Rather they are means to an end. They are ways we can show love and thanks to God. They are means to show love to others. That's the point Jesus makes in our gospel for today. There he tells a parable about a shrewd manager. His wicked practices are not the point, rather the point that is that this man used what was available to him to make friends for the future.

We do the same thing with our money and possessions. We use them not for ourselves, but for others. We use it to show love to them. So that they may see the love of Christ reflected in us. So that we may have the opportunity to tell them about their Savior. We use our wealth so that we can share our faith with others. We use our money and possessions not for ourselves, but for God. They are means to the end of spreading the gospel. So we give to him generously and cheerfully. For he saved us and we want all people to know and believe in him so that they may join us in heaven forever.

As a Christian you are different. This is especially evident in how you view and use your money. You realize that it is a gift from God, given to you to use for his glory. You understand that those who love money do so at their own peril and at the risk of their faith. So you seek not wealth, but faith and a godly life. Yes, you are different than the rest of the world, because you have been chosen to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.