

INTRO: There is an emphasis placed on our children today that they must become educated in order to become wealthy in order to achieve success in order to become happy in order to become good citizens in order to portray a successful life in order to find joy in order to make life worth living. Success is measured in wealth rather than in character, it is measured in possessions rather than moral excellence, it is measured in power rather than compassion. Our modern society, our modern nation has the idea that when we are born, we are "entitled" to certain things because of our race, color, creed, ancestry, political persuasion or status. Yet how many of these wealthy and seemingly successful individuals are really content? Benjamin Franklin once stated "**CONTENTMENT MAKES POOR MEN RICH; DISCONTENT MAKES RICH MEN POOR.**" We have been brainwashed into thinking if we just "have", if we can just "possess", if we can just "own", if we can just be independently wealthy, all our problems will disappear, all our sorrows will go away, and we will have a little paradise on this earth. So we work, we struggle, we sacrifice in order to obtain that "dream" of wealth that will solve all of life's problems, so we think. But it would seem that almost no matter what the amount, we are not content – the individual with a million needs two, the one with two needs four, etc., and life becomes a life sacrificed at the altar of riches and everything else is placed in perspective to that ultimate goal of gain. The Bible speaks much about the riches of this world as compared to the riches of heaven and when you stop and think about it, few "rich" people are worth much in the kingdom of God for they spend all their time in obtaining and then trying to protect what they have obtained in this world's goods. The Lord desires children who are more concerned about His goals than their goals, more concerned about serving Him rather than serving themselves, more desirous of becoming good citizens of heaven rather than wealthy citizens of this world. Corrie ten Boom once wrote that she had learned to hold everything loosely in her hand. She said she discovered, in her years of walking with Him, that when she grasped things tightly, it would hurt when the Lord would have to pry her fingers loose. Disciples hold all "things" loosely.

- A.** Illustrated in our text, we see the evil of covetousness of all kinds, including riches. In fact, in verse 10 we read "**for the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.**" Notice it did not say money was evil, rather the "**love**" of money was the problem for when this becomes the driving force in the life of an individual, it will eventually push them on to evil of all sorts. Every sort of wickedness and vice, in one way or another appears to grow from the love of money. Is this not the case that we see all around us, especially in this age of the prosperity doctrine in the church and the drive for material possessions in this world?
- a. If one gives up their Christianity for their turn in this world, they will be greatly disappointed not only in this life but especially in the life to come; but the one who makes sure of his calling will find life now and life ever after. No matter how much one obtains of this world's goods, they die with nothing more than they had when they came in – everything is left behind.
 - b. Verse six talks about godliness, which signifies Christianity and contentment which signifies a competency, a sufficiency; that measure or portion of secular things which is necessary for the support of life, that is food, clothes and a home. So if a man has the contentment of Christ in his soul, and has food and clothes enough to survive and a place to lay his head, he has what God calls great gain, an abundant portion. Basically he has what Jesus Christ had on this earth. Some read this verse "**godliness with a competency**".. that is, if a man has just a little but enough and desires no more, his godliness with that will be his great gain. For the Psalmist wrote in 37:16, "**For a little which a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.**" He that is content with their godliness are happy people in this life and the one to come. Paul was such an individual and one whom we should pattern "**Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity, in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.**" You see, Paul was not driven by circumstances for circumstances were of little effect to an individual that had learned to be content in their godliness.
 - c. And reading a little further, in verse 9, we see that when we achieve more than this, we are in danger of falling into "**...temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge into ruin and destruction.**" I am not saying we should not try and be our best in this world, rather I am saying when you set your goals in this life, do not set riches as your goal, rather glorifying God should be your goal. Many a good person has fallen by the wayside cause they got their eyes off of God and onto gold. Some say, but look what money can buy, look what I can do with it and I'll even give some of it to others, certainly God would not be displeased with such an action. Money, as previously stated, is not evil, but when it controls our lives it becomes

a problem. And if we gained everything we ever wanted, if we visited all the places we wanted to visit, if we obtained everything we wanted to obtain and if the Lord allows us to live 70-80 years on this earth – how important would that be in preparing for spending an eternity, that is, forever, in a world after this one? And if through our foolishness or misguided direction in life we end up spending an eternity in hell, would we be able to look back and say with any kind of truth “it was worth it”? I think not.

- B.** Let us speak a little about wealth. I believe the Bible teaches us to prepare for the future to make sure we can provide for ours and to help others as need be. I do not believe in foolishly giving everything you have to others with the thought that you are doing God a favor of some sort, unless God urges you to give everything. But I believe He expects us to be wise and treat our possessions and even our financial blessings with wisdom. Some cannot handle money for when they get a little, they think they have to buy everything they see – so to them, money is a detriment, not a help. But my dad told me when I was a boy and experience has taught me the same thing, when God allows you to have a little extra, when it seems you have a little “cushion” in the bank, be careful and be wise for generally, there is a need coming up for that. Either in your own life or a need for someone else that God wants you to provide for or assist in some way.
- a. There are very few that can handle money properly, just look at those that you know who make a substantial amount of money and see what they do with it, see the kind of attitude they develop, see their nervousness about someone trying to take it from them or worry about losing it in some way, see if they are really content or if they are trying to buy contentment with their possessions. And is it not amazing we can see those faults in those that are rich and we think if we have that kind of money, we would be different. Would we? Sometimes I believe God knows it is best for us to have little than to have much.
 - b. Jane Canfield wrote, **“THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE ARE RARELY THE RICHEST, OR THE MOST BEAUTIFUL, OR EVEN THE MOST TALENTED.”** Frank Clark said **“WE WOULD BE HAPPIER WITH WHAT WE HAVE IF WE WERE NOT SO UNHAPPY ABOUT WHAT WE DO NOT HAVE.”** And Seneca, who was contemporary with St. Paul philosophized, **“TO BE HAPPY, ADD NOT TO YOUR POSSESSION BUT SUBTRACT FROM YOUR DESIRES.”**

C. One that seeks wealth often has to give up a lot, choosing to live in the “fast lane” takes sacrifices. Patrick Morley wrote in *“The Man in the Mirror”*, 1989, **MEN AT THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY ARE WORN OUT, FATIGUED, AND OVERCOMMITTED. THE MAN WITH A FULL RESUME ALWAYS PAYS A PRICE TO GET IT. SOMETHING HAS TO SUFFER WHEN WE ARE AN ELDER, A BUSINESSMAN, A CIVIC LEADER, AND A SPORTSMAN. WHEN WE RUN IN THE FAST LANE, PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME REMAINS FOR GOD AND OUR FAMILY. WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO GET OUT OF THE FAST LANE? PRAYERFULLY ASK GOD TO HELP YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES. IF YOU WERE SPEEDING DOWN THE INSIDE LANE OF A BUSY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY AT 80 MILES AN HOUR AND DECIDED TO GET OFF THE ROAD, YOU WOULDN'T SWERVE SHARPLY WITHOUT WARNING. YOU WOULD TURN ON YOUR BLINKER AND START TO WORK YOUR WAY OVER. EVEN THEN YOU WOULD HAVE TO WAIT FOR AN EXIT RAMP. GOD IS NOT SO MUCH INTERESTED IN YOUR POSITION AS HE IS IN YOUR ATTITUDE, IN WHERE YOU ARE AS IN WHERE YOU ARE GOING. WHEN WE MAKE THE DECISION TO GET OUT OF THE FAST LANE, GOD WILL HELP US, WILL BLESS THE DIRECTION IN WHICH WE ARE MOVING. HE WILL EMPOWER US TO MAKE THE ADJUSTMENT, TO FIND AN EXIT.**

a. What is it worth to gain things in this world? What are you willing to give up? God? Church? Family? Friends? If we are not careful and if money becomes our goal, we would lose all of this and then, would it really be worth it? Those of you that are younger will have to make this decision in your life. If you are just starting in the work force, what is your goal in life? In making your goals, have you included God in the picture? Many a person makes bad choices for they forget to include God in their plans. We go here or go there cause the “money is good”, but how will that effect their walk with God, how will that effect their service for God? I want to live here or live there cause it is beautiful, I like the area, I like all the pleasures that are there, but how will that effect your godliness? I have known of individuals that were active in the Church, active in God's work, then decided to move to somewhere else without ever considering where they would go to Church, what they would do in the service of the Lord, etc., and they ended up being miserable, and in some cases, even losing out with God because they made the choice for themselves without including God.

b. It is easy to put things ahead of God, it is easy to put “money” ahead of God. We have that thought in our mind that we will be different, we will handle our money correctly, God will be glorified when we get wealthy and think of all the good work we can do when we get enough money. I have also seen this, if they do not do for God what they can when they have nothing, they will not do anything for God when they have much. So, is great wealth really such a great thing? If we lose our godliness with contentment in the process, we have lost everything and we would have been better with nothing than with much. Millions don't count for much any more. A dollar is worth about one hundredth as much as it was when I was a young boy. Money becomes worthless. According to Jesus Christ, money is worthless cause it will not buy you anything in heaven, if fact, it might not even get you in, so is it really worth it? You say I just don't have much, learn to be content. You say you have a little in the bank, learn to be content. And do not lose God over something as worthless as wealth, for certainly Jesus Christ was accurate when He spoke the following: **“For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”**