

# Contentment

by Phil Arnold

*“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).*

One of the most desired and yet elusive goals in life is this matter of contentment. Truly, contentment is one of great treasures of life and he who has contentment is truly rich. The word Paul uses here in 1 Timothy 6:6 for contentment is *“autarkeia.”* This was one of the great watchwords of the Stoic philosophers of Greece. By *“autarkeia”* they meant a complete *“self-sufficiency.”* they meant a frame of mind that was completely independent of all outward things and which carried the secret of happiness within itself. He who had *“autarkeia”* (contentment) needed nothing else. The thought being that true contentment never comes from the possession of external things (material wealth) but from an inward attitude in life. A Greek philosopher named Epicurus was asked for the secret to happiness and reportedly replied, “add not to a man’s possessions but take away from his desires.” It is not what a man possesses but what truly possesses him that produces contentment.

God has provided all that man needs to be happy. Yet, God brought us into the world without any possessions. Thus, possessions cannot be the root of happiness. They are transitory. “There are no pockets in a shroud” and “you can’t take it with you.” *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out”* (1 Timothy 6:7). All we can take to God is ourselves and the history of the lives we have lived whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

It is not that Christianity pleads for poverty. There is no special virtue for poverty. There is no special virtue in being poor or in having a constant struggle to make ends meet. In this same sixth chapter in fact, Paul speaks of Christians who are rich and does not condemn them for their wealth. He does warn about trusting in “uncertain riches” and encourages them to be “rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:17-19). It is not sinful to be rich nor righteous to be poor. But we must realize that it is never in the power of things to bring lasting happiness. Paul pleads instead for concentration upon the spiritual things which are permanent. For contentment can only come when we escape the servitude of things. *“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses”* (Luke 12:15). Contentment will be ours when we find that our wealth is in the love and fellowship of God which has been made possible through Jesus Christ. Truly, having God we have all things.

*“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare.... For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Again, money in itself is neither good nor bad; but the love of it – the “desire to be rich” – leads to evil and “many foolish and harmful lusts.” With money a man may selfishly serve his own desires or answer the needs of a fellow human being. With money a man may facilitate the path of wrongdoing or he can make it easier for someone

else to serve God. No, money is not in itself an evil, but it is a great responsibility. It is a powerful tool that may be used for good or evil, and it brings with it special dangers if it is loved. If it is loved: 1) It tends to be a desire which is never satisfied (Ecclesiastes 5:10). 2) It makes for a life founded upon an illusion that security is found in possessions (Luke 12:16-21). 3) It tends to make us selfish and proud (Luke 16:19f). 4) It promises security but tends to produce anxiety (Ecclesiastes 5:12). 5) It may even lead to dishonesty (Proverbs 30:9).

To seek to be independent of financial reliance upon others and prudently provide for the future is a Christian duty (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:10), but to make the love of money the driving force of life cannot ever be anything other than the most perilous of sins and will rob us of the “great gain” – **the contentment that is found only in Christ.**

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## Accountability

*by Kyle Campbell*

*“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord ...”* (2 Samuel 12:13)

Of all the scorned words in America, accountability must be near the top. Accountability has become a by-word in a nation that seeks to blame other people or events for their own misdeeds. Since the Bible never uses the word accountability, we have to turn to other sources for its definition. According to Webster’s, accountability is “the quality or state of being accountable; answerable or bound to give an explanation.” With so many Americans seeing a therapist or mental health professional, the tendency has become to find events in someone’s past and blame the current problem on the past event. In the end, accountability is lost because personal choices can no longer be controlled.

How many have witnessed people blame their sin-filled lives on abuse or a childhood trauma? I do not intend to seem cold-hearted because I know people who have legitimate problems because of past events. However, the problem with this widespread diagnosis is that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. More and more find it easier to shirk responsibility because they do not feel responsible.

Simply put, a loss of accountability translates into a loss of guilt or remorse for sin. When there is no remorse or guilt, sin is unrestrained. Ezekiel 18:20 makes it clear that the responsibility lies squarely on our shoulders. We are accountable for what we do because we ultimately make the decision to act in a certain way. If someone in our past sinned against us by treating us a certain way, they will answer to God for their sins.

In contrast to the “spirit of the age,” accountability is prominent in the Bible. We will be accountable to God for our own individual actions (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Luke 16:2; Romans 14:12; Revelation 20:11-15), our words (Matthew 12:36), our sins (Romans 3:19), and our faithfulness (Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2). We are accountable to Christ because of His authority in the judgment (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16), His judgment of human works (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 4:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and His judgment of local churches (1 Peter 4:17; Revelations 2:1-3:21). We also cannot forget our accountability to the elders of the church (Hebrews 13:17) and our accountability to governmental officials

(Daniel 6:2; Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14). As you can see, mankind is very accountable.

In order for people to turn from their sins, the “spirit of this age” must be vanquished. Responsibility for sins is a reality each of us face regardless of popular psychology. Do not be worn down by subtle semantics or the shifting of blame to escape accountability. The drunkard is an alcoholic because he decided to take the first drink. A smoker is addicted to nicotine because he decided to smoke the first cigarette. An unwed mother must care for her children the best she can because she decided to commit fornication. As painful as the consequences are, the truth still stands that we make those decisions.