

THE TEN PLEASURES

EXODUS 20:17

# THE PLEASURE OF CONTENTMENT



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

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# INTRODUCTION

Almost everything that we buy today comes with warnings on it, whether it is something electronic or mechanical or even a child's toy. But there's one thing in this world, probably about the most dangerous thing in the world, that does not carry any warnings. **The dollar.**

Money can be a good friend. It gives comforts and opportunities to us and our families. It supports churches and charities as they minister to the spiritually and financially poor. Money can be such a good friend, it's no wonder we desire its company in our lives. But as Paul teaches in 1 Timothy 6:8-10, the *love* of money is our worst enemy. **How do we make money our friend not our foe?**

# BACKGROUND

Here's a synthesis of Shorter Catechism 80-81, and Larger Catechism 147-148 as they summarize and simplify the Bible's teaching about this commandment:

The tenth commandment requires:

- Full contentment with our own condition
- A right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor and all that is his
- So that our desires and actions concerning him/her tend to and further their good

The tenth commandment forbids

- All discontentment with our own estate
- Envy or grieving at the good of our neighbor
- And all excessive desires for anything that is his

Why so short compared to the catechisms' answers on all the other commandments. Because the tenth commandment addresses what's at the root of all other sins. This is why the Heidelberg Catechism says that this commandment requires "that not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any of God's commandments should ever arise in our heart. Rather, with all our heart we should always hate all sin and delight in all righteousness." As Kevin DeYoung writes, "The command not to covet is actually the practical summation and heart-level culmination of the other nine commandments."

This commandment is not just about the love of money but about all excessive and disproportionate desires for any kind of gain: a better house, car, wife, family, body, face, popularity, grades, etc. But for the purposes of this sermon we are going to focus on the love of money because it's the most common expression of covetousness. All that we say, though, can be applied to all other excessive and disproportionate desires. We can desire the right things at the wrong *times*, for the wrong *reasons*, and to the wrong *degree*.



Why is the love of money so dangerous?



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# 1. MONEY-LOVE IS THE ROOT OF MULTIPLE EVILS

**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils** (10).

It does not say that *money* is the root of multiple evils; it is the love of money that's the root of multiple evils. Just having money is not evil. Even having lots of money is not evil. Later in this chapter Paul guides the rich in how they are to manage and view their money and he doesn't tell them to give it all away (1 Tim. 6:17-19). You can be extremely wealthy and not sin regarding money. You can be very poor and sin much more regarding money than a rich person. A poor person may have far greater love of money than a rich person.

It is not just being rich that Paul says is evil, and neither is it even the desire to have money that is evil. If that was so, then who could live in this world? Who could function? Because there is a natural desire, a God-given desire to earn money, to fund provisions for ourselves, our families, and the Church of Christ. So again, it is not just the desire for money that is evil. You can desire money without sinning. It is a certain kind of desire, a certain kind of longing, and a certain kind of love for money that Paul says is the root of all kinds of evil.

It is a loving of money above everything else. It is a loving of money that puts money number one in our priorities. It is a loving of money that will make us pursue it at all costs. It is a kind of loving of money that will make us try to get it by fair means or foul, by good means or bad. It is a love of money that dominates and overwhelms. It is that kind of love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil. If Paul had his way, money would come with government health warnings.

**"I am a great temptress."** "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation" (9). Some temptations come so obviously; but financial ones come so stealthily, so beautifully dressed, so innocently, so excusably. If only we could see behind them: I am a temptress, I am a seductress.

**"I trap."** "Those who desire to be rich fall into...a snare" (9). If we knew that we were about to walk through a forest in which hunters had set traps and snares everywhere, how carefully, how slowly, how gently, how gingerly we would go. Paul warns that the love of money puts traps everywhere; traps that can grab us, damage us, and injure us. Yet how thoughtlessly and carelessly we walk!

**"I fool."** He says it leads "into many senseless and harmful desires" (9). "Foolish" here means irrational and illogical. He is saying, "If only people could see how irrational and illogical this love for money is. It looks reasonable, it looks logical, it looks normal. But, no! It's irrational; it's illogical if only you could see what it is doing to you."

**"I injure."** Paul does not only speak of foolish lusts but also "harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction" (9). He says, "You think that this money is raising you up, promoting you, and making you big and high. No! If only you can see it's drowning you, it's taking you down, it's suffocating you, it's sucking the oxygen out of your life and you are slowly dying."

**"I can make you an unbeliever."** Paul mourns that "through this craving some have wandered away from the faith" (10). Paul doesn't say, "They decided to leave the faith." No, they "wandered." They began slowly moving away from the faith. It wasn't anything dramatic or obvious. It was slow, almost casual, but inch by inch, turn by turn, they left the faith. When the love of money takes over, it takes our faith away. The dollar has turned more people into unbelievers than any false religion.



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**"I impale."** Due to the love of money some have "pierced themselves with many pangs" (10). It's a picture of someone crucifying themselves. Every ill-gotten dollar, though it was thought to bring comfort, pleasure, and happiness, is actually turned into a sharp and painful knife. Talk about self-harm!

Remember, we are using the excessive love of money as an example of any excessive desires. It could be the desire for popularity, marriage, sex, popularity, position, etc.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Listen to the dollar.** Imagine if the dollar said all these things before we wanted it, before we got it, and as we thought about how we're going to use it. It would cry out, "I tempt, I trap, I fool, I injure, I drown, I create unbelievers, and I impale." That would make a difference in our desire for it, what we do when we are given it by God, and how we use it (Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:6, Rom. 1:28-31; James 4:2-3; Ps. 73:2-3).

**Look at "Where are they now?" pictures.** Look up the pictures of those who were rich and famous 10 or 20 years ago. If that's what the love of money does to our bodies, what does it do to our souls? If we could see our hearts, we would see multiple spears, arrows, and knives sticking out of them. The love of money gives us some things, but takes away everything worth having.

IF WE SOW MONEY-LOVE,  
WE'RE SOWING SELF-HATE.



These are dangerous weeds. Any weedkiller?



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## 2. GOD-LOVE IS THE WEEDKILLER OF ALL EVIL

**But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content (6-8).**

Paul not only issues warnings about the weed of money-love, but also provides us with two weedkillers, one that is more passive (contentment) and the other more active (godliness). When you put them together you get a blessed formula: godliness + contentment = great wealth

### The passive weedkiller: contentment (6-8)

There is nothing wrong with praying for an outward sufficiency (Prov. 30:8). But, Paul is especially advocating an inner sufficiency, an inner contentment, regardless of our finances. Paul is combating materialistic preachers who taught "gain is godliness" (5).

Paul says, "NO! You've got this upside down and back to front. Godliness equals gain." Contentment can be fertilized with thankfulness for what God has given you and for what he's given to others. But the best fertilizer for contentment is meditation on our departure from this world. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." I think it was John Piper who said, "There are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses." We come in to this world empty and we leave this world empty. Label everything and everyone "Nothing in, Nothing out." When John D Rockefeller died, his aide was asked how much he left behind. "He left it all behind." How much will you leave behind? "Everything!"

### An active weedkiller: godliness (11-12)

Passive contentment kills the leaves and the stems of covetousness, but it's vigorous godliness that reaches the roots. "But as for you, O man of God, **flee** these things. **Pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. **Fight** the good fight of the faith. **Take hold** of the eternal life." What active and aggressive imperatives. We flee by pursuing, fighting, and grabbing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness. These aren't just practices, they are a person. They are a description not just of moral virtue but of Jesus Christ (Ps. 63:5; John 6:35).

Only another love can get to the deepest roots of the love of money, and that's love for Christ. Christ-love uproots money-love. That's why Jude tells believers living in the midst of apostasy, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). Love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit for a triple treatment of money love.

Each of the commandments reveal and reflect God's character. The tenth one reveals God as the one who is perfectly satisfied and content in himself and calls us to find our satisfaction and contentment in him.

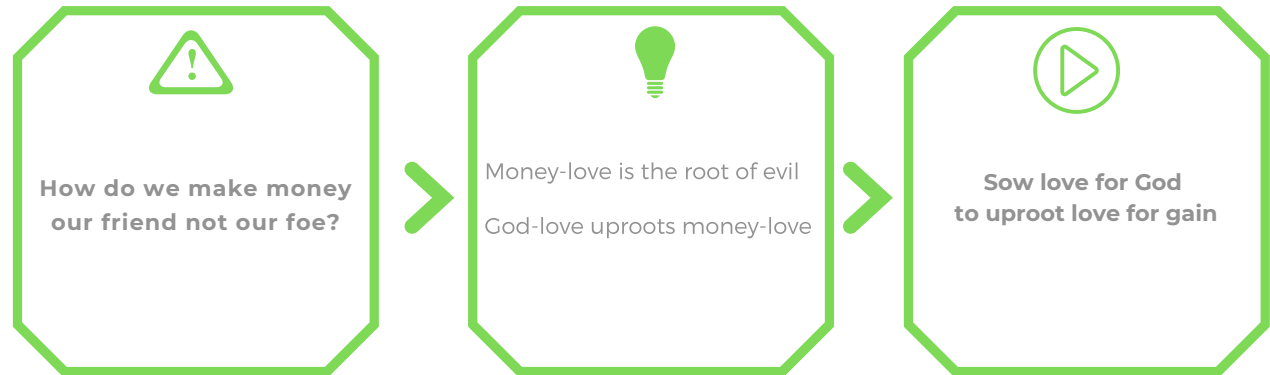
### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Contentment is the key to godliness.** The tenth is the last commandment but is at the root of all the others. Contentment is therefore they key to pleasure. Being content with God, with God's worship, with God's leaders, with God's timetable, with God's love, with God's friendship, with God's provision, with God's Truth. The more contentment we practice, the more obedience we practice, the more pleasure we'll experience. Christ is all.

MORE CHRIST = MORE CONTENTMENT  
MORE CONTENTMENT = MORE CHRIST



## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

My hopes for this series on the ten pleasures were:

- New view of the **law**: We've seen its minute detail and its ethical beauty
- New view of **sin**: We've seen sins we never saw before and we've seen sin we've ignored.
- New view of **obedience**: We've seen obedience as a way to joy and happiness.
- New view of **God**: God wants us to be as happy as he is and has provided the law to help that.
- New view of **Jesus**: How awesome his sinless life, how awful his punishment for our sins.
- New view of **salvation**: We've seen how precious justification by faith (not works) is.
- New view of **apologetics**: The Christian life is the happiest life.
- New view of **heaven**. Heaven is a place of perfect obedience, therefore of perfect pleasure.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has money been your friend and your enemy?
2. What else can we covet apart from money?
3. Who do you know that's been ruined by money love?
4. How content are you on a scale of 0-100? How can you move nearer 100?
5. What has helped you towards greater contentment?
6. How would you disciple someone who was covetous instead of content?
7. What have you learned from this series of sermons on the Ten Pleasures.