1 TIMOTHY 6:3-10
(Reading: Gen.3:1-19; Ps.131; 1 Tim.5:21-6:10)

The Contentment We Have In Christ!

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ…

Imagine that someone has come to live with your family.
He's not related to you, or a close friend of you, yet he knows all about you.
He talks at ease with Dad and Mum, and each of the children.
It's almost as if he is one of the family.

Now, what do you think he sees?
He shares your life with you.
Your good times and bad - he's there.
So what do you think his impression will be when he leaves?

You know, to read through Paul's letter to Timothy it's almost like he's that man.
He seems to know exactly where each one of them is at - and which way they need to go.
Right from the beginning of this letter he looks at this family of God through all its different people.
He starts with saying who they aren't related to at all, and then goes through who they are related to by faith, and how they are a family together.

Paul writes so perceptively because he's led by the Spirit.
He doesn't speak of what he thinks they are, but he expresses the mind of Jesus Christ Himself.
And don't we know how well Jesus could see through people!

So, imagine if that man staying with your family would turn around and ask you just before he leaves, "Are you happy?"
Hey - he's just seen you as a family together!
He's talked to each of you, he's been with you, he eaten with you, he got to know you.
What's the idea?

Friend, it's not something you should be insulted by.
The Holy Spirit - through Paul - has laid out where this church needs to go.
All those different members have been spoken to.
And so now he wants to spell out how each of them can stick up for what they've got altogether.
He's going to clearly spell it out!

Congregation, let's take up the text as a spiritual barometer and test if our hearts are healthy.

And we're going to do that in two parts.

We're going to look at, firstly, THE SADNESS OF SPIRITUAL SICKNESS, and then see, secondly, THE HAPPINESS OF SPIRITUAL WELLNESS.

You see, these verses are about how God's people are fit and well **spiritually**.

This is vitally important because it makes all the difference to how you live your life.

And so this is all about what you eat, as we're increasingly discovering these days!

In verse 23 of chapter 5, Paul has told Timothy to change his physical diet, because he is sick.

And though the text is about our souls, the concern about health is the same.

So let's check out, in the first place, THE SADNESS OF SPIRITUAL SICKNESS.

And right away verse 3 throws us into this!

For there Paul speaks of those teaching false doctrines and not agreeing to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching.

You see, to be healthy is to be in Christ.

His food is what we need.

But it's this good diet which is being left aside.

Some won't be satisfied with the simple gospel.

They're going to replace it with something else - or add something else.

In the time of our text there were false teachers going around the country.

They were perverting the gospel to make money for themselves.

Their influence meant that local believers were doing the same.

However, it's this very thing which will show up their greatest lack - Christ Himself!

Without the Divine Doctor they will be wrongly diagnosed.

And though they might not notice that straight-away, it does have eternal consequences!

Congregation, when we're very sick, and we're not completely satisfied with our doctor, we may get a second opinion.

Your doctor could even have encouraged you to do that.

But the Divine Doctor has already restored their health - spiritually!

He's more than shown that His treatment was the only possible salvation.

They have began the right diet.

So, what kind of person could verse 3 be describing?
Who could say such things?

Obviously one who is blind to his misdeeds.
He doesn't see his sin.
Yes, he's full of himself!

Verse 4 sadly draws out what this wrong food does.
It says about him that "he is conceited and understands nothing."

Man - he really loves himself!
What he's done, who he's met, where he's been, and those things he says - it's just unbelievable!

As a speaker he's hard to match.
He has great oratorical skills.
And what testimonies!

He puts that over against God's Word.
And probably he does that by twisting God's Word.
Like the way they put a healthy spin on certain take-away food!

How foolish he is!
He's eating a diet quite different than the simple gospel fare.
But how did he get to eating such junk?

Well, the first step had been like that temptation of Eve.
The boundaries had been clearly laid by God.
His Word is perfectly clear.

But the devil craftily says to Eve in Genesis 3 verse 1, "Did God really say?"
And then when Eve said that God had said they would die if they are of that fruit, Satan says, "You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will become like God…"

He panders to her ego.
'Come on - don't be so narrow-minded about it!'
'There's lots of grey areas, too, you know!'
'You can have that little treat!'

Satan stirred within her the temptation for something more.
That brought the disruption.
That tore at the unity from within.
Then you aren't strong in the Lord.

It's the same with a marriage.

A man and a woman make a commitment for life.
They publicly promise to be the one flesh together.

So, should there ever be a question about separation?
Sure, there will come serious stresses and terrible strains in that relationship, but they should always keep coming back to their life-long vow.
They have to stick to what keeps them together – prayer, the Word and Christian worship and fellowship.

Don't even think about anything else!
Because then you aren't satisfied with what God gave you in your spouse.

It's the same language used for Eve falling into sin that we find in this text.
You say that you're not happy with the Lord's simple meal.
But as soon as you turn to eat elsewhere you make a god out of yourself.
You say you know better than the Lord.

We only need to read through the Old Testament, and what follows the New Testament, to see how that keeps happening right throughout church history.
And look what happens then!
Though it might be covered up by a great show, yet underneath there's terrible gangrene.
Just as someone may use much make-up to hide wrinkles and blemishes and other marks, so they try to put a nice appearance on things.
But they're actually rotting away!

Paul takes a penetrating look inside that person.
He goes in verse 4, "he has an unhealthy interest in controversies and arguments that result in envy, quarrelling, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind."

Could he be talking about us?
Is that what we've been digesting inside?

It can be quite a shock how much these signs of decay are in someone.
Perhaps you met with someone like that once.
You knew that because within a few minutes and without any encouraging at all they had poured out so much bitterness and unhappiness!
Suddenly you were tragically confronted by what was living in the heart of that person.
What had seemed so different as we looked on the outside isn't them at all!

And how hard they are!
There's no willingness at all to be open to another view.
"Don't confuse me with the facts - my mind's made up!"

Could that be you?

Actually, if it were you you wouldn’t see it anyway.
For this only comes after the process described in verses 4 and 5 has happened.

You see, there are stages in this disease.
We know that with envy always coming before quarrelling.
The thought comes before the action.
And then quarrelling comes before malicious talk because since you don't get on at all with a particular person after having quarrelled, you speak of them in a certain nasty way.

You do!
Just thinking about it for a moment shows it.
We really have to take a grip of ourselves and tell ourselves, “Now, would I say that if he or she was here?”

Perhaps one of our young people feel that when someone who was your special friend suddenly starts spending all their time with someone else.
You’re jealous - that’s envy!
You find you’re not getting on - that’s strife!
Then you change in the way you talk about them - that’s malicious talk!

What could happen next shows how much this disease begins to spread through-out our whole bodies.
You see, you have evil suspicions over everything about that person.
You just cannot see a shred of good in any of them!
And you used to be so close!

It’s this that Paul warns so strongly against.
A nasty virus is making its way through what should be a healthy body.
It could kill you!

But - how?
Congregation, it takes your eyes off Jesus.
The sickness so much takes over your spiritual body that you’ve forgotten what it was like to be healthy.
In fact, you get so used to being sick you can’t imagine what life would be like otherwise.
You even think that the best way to go is to get even sicker!

This is exactly why both verses 5 and 10 make reference to money.
Now we begin to see more of what the Lord Jesus meant in Matthew 6.
For there in verse 24 He warned, “No one can serve two masters.
“Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.
“You cannot serve both God and money.”

You see, you always serve someone or something.
The nature of mankind is inherently religious.
All of us worship either the Creator or the creature.
But what a blow to the Lord when those of His own people have been changed from being united with Him to setting their hearts against Him!

Still, the far greater tragedy is for those ones themselves.
They have become so deluded to think that "godliness is a means to financial gain."
Whether that's those false teachers in the first century, tele-evangelists today, or anyone who thinks that being a Christian is the best lifestyle there is.
Like Ananias in Acts 5, they're only thinking of what's in it for them.

Don't they know that their selfish concern for themselves has set them against God?
They can't worship Him.
In the blunt words of verse 10, "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."

And it's happened!
Verse 10 gives clear examples, "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

How can this be?
They knew the truth.
They knew that you can only be saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

But, you know, their hearts were never healthy.
They haven't actually turned to Him in faith.
They never ever really wanted to love God.
For what they actually want is as verse 9 says, "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."

Congregation, this is THE SADNESS OF SPIRITUAL SICKNESS.
It could spiritually kill you!
The Lord doesn't want that.
For what indeed did the Lord do?
The Saviour gave Himself completely as the ultimate sacrifice.
He came so that our lives would be quite the opposite of the devil's disease.
Right in amongst all the seducing sights and sounds of sin, the Lord says in verse 6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain."
And so we have our second part.

This is THE HAPPINESS OF SPIRITUAL WELLNESS.

Friend, do you believe the Divine Doctor?
Are you using His prescription?

Because you can't say you weren't sick.
You were frightfully ill!
And you could easily let your weak condition drag you into sickness again.

But you don't have to die!
You can actually be so much alive in Him!
It's as simple as His Word: "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

A simple way.
And, yet, though contentment is one of the flowers of heaven it must be cultivated.
It won't grow in us naturally.
It's only because we are new in Christ that we can produce it, and even then it must be constantly and carefully tended.

Paul showed this to the Philippians when he wrote in chapter 4 verse 11, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."
And where was he?
Rotting away in Nero's jail house!
Yet what peace he had in his heart!

Dear Christian, he was being richly blessed exactly because of the great gain from godliness with contentment.
His life in the faith had been a continual building up of this satisfaction which he had not had before.

So here's nothing that pops out of thin air.
It's not a sudden thing.
It takes painful and involved discipline.
This is no strength that can be exercised naturally - it's a skill to be acquired gradually.

Has that been how the prescription worked in your life, believer?
After all, His diagnosis was spot on!
Verse 7 goes straight to the problem.
There Paul says, "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."

What an indictment of those so desperate for money and for all those other material things!

They become so full of themselves for that moment they forget the rest of history telling about man's futility!

Because isn't it exactly when you confess you don't have anything at all that you have what really counts?

The great King David in Psalm 131 couldn't have stated the case clearer.

He prayed, "My heart isn't proud, O LORD, my eyes aren't haughty; I don't concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.

"But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me."

Friend, that's child-like trust.

That's the hand-in-hand dependence on the Saviour from above.

Until we knew Him by faith, the prognosis wasn't good.

It seemed inevitable we would die.

So when we know we will live aren't we content with that alone?

Having found the right formula for living, would you want to add something to destroy its most delicate balance?

Do you ad more drugs to what the doctor's prescribed?

Of course not!

We brought nothing here and we're going to leave with nothing.

Let's make sure the place we're going to will have everything!

That puts a proper perspective on life.

Then with verse 8 we will know, "But if we have food and clothing we will be content with that."

Dear Christian, you'll get exactly what you need when you need it.

So let's not keep putting that big shopping list before Him.

He wants to work through our growing trust in what He gives us now.

You know, that will show all the difference in the world.

For those wracked by sin within mask it on the outside.

They desperately make-over their diseased bodies.

And how much don't we see that in our age with all that botox and plastic surgery?

Yet those with the Lord's healing on the inside have a beauty that shines out.

Their faces are the windows of their souls.

Congregation, this is hard work.

Controversies, arguments, envy, quarrelling, and all the rest of the evil process come so naturally.

They spring up like weeds.

But the precious things must be cultivated.
Those Christ-like qualities which we obtain from the Lord alone must be ploughed and sowed and tended.

If we want flowers there must be the gardener's care.
And if we really want the happiness of spiritual health, there can be only the Divine Doctor's perfect prescription.

Let's make His written way ours today!
Read your Bible.
Do what He says.
See the difference that makes.

Dear believer, think back to that visitor asking, "Are you happy?"
Because now there would be no question.
The health of your heart shines out in the life on your face.
He's got his answer.
Jesus is in you.

And let's pray the Saviour will be in him, too.
Amen.

PRAYER:
Let's pray...
Lord God,
Your Son showed us so perfectly how we are to be.
He fulfilled Your will.
Help us this week to do the same.
Through Your Spirit in our hearts and lives make us diligent pupils in the College of Contentment.
For in You we need nothing we don't already have, and yet we have everything in what is yet coming.
Make us true disciples of the Master.
In His saving Name, we pray, Amen.