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**You Can't  
Take It  
With You!**

**# 1229-A**

**Series: I Timothy**

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# You Can't Take It With You!

*Father, as we pray, the courts of heaven are silenced, and the ear of our God is turned toward us. Your love is poured out upon us with such abundance that we cannot conceive it, we cannot receive it; we can only marvel at it.*

*Our Father, we come with the knowledge that everything You give us is of grace. The world tries to tell us otherwise, Father, but we pray that we will not listen. It is all a gift, and You are a sovereign God.*

*You know what we need even before we ask, and You give us what we need rather than what we want because You love us so much. Teach us, Father, to praise You for that and to glory in Your sovereign will. We pray for the time we will spend on this, another difficult subject, that You might be the teacher. In spite of us, because of You, change our lives.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Margie had a summer on her hands and a good paying job to keep her occupied. In the fall, she was going off to college and, after that, to medical school. The next eight or ten years of her life appeared to be spoken for. But for this summer, at least, she had a chance to earn some money, get ahead, and prepare for the fall.

The job she had was with a law firm, and because of her expertise as a typist and the summers she had spent in her dad's law office, she was earning quite a healthy sum, a fact her fellow graduates who were toiling for minimum wage never let her forget.

But unknown to her parents, Margie had plans for those paychecks long before they got into her hot little hands. She had gone down to the local furniture store and ordered a new bedroom suite, a 27" television, and a credenza that took a king size truck just to deliver it.

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It wasn't until the *end of the summer*, in fact, that her parents knew where all the money had gone. It was late August when what seemed like a fifty-foot furniture truck pulled into the driveway with a load of new furniture. Mom almost needed an ambulance to carry her to the emergency room. At first, she thought her sometimes less than thoughtful hubby had gone out and bought a houseful of furniture to replace the shabby furnishings they had lived with for all of their 23 years of marriage. Then she thought of his taste in furniture, and the thought *petrified her*.

Imagine her surprise, though, when she realized that what was in the truck was new furnishings for her daughter's bedroom, a room that was to be daughter-less in less than a week. To top it all off, the amount of stuff she had purchased to go in that 12'x14' room would have filled a small furniture store to the brim.

Margie arrived home at about five o'clock, excitement written all over her face. Mom greeted her at the front door, bewilderment written all over hers. "Did it come?" the almost frantic youngster shrieked as she ran into the house. "Did my furniture come?"

"Yes, dear, your furniture came", the somewhat angry mother said, trying desperately not to judge the situation beforehand, and yet not at all sure she could keep from shaking her almost college coed. "Just what do you *plan to do with it?*" "Do with it?" the girl responded, "Why put it in my room, I guess." "And just where will *you be while it's in your room?*" Mother asked next. "Uh, off to school, I guess". "And after that?" The girl stuttered a bit, "Uh, off to medical school, I guess."

"Then why did you buy all this stuff if you couldn't take it with you?" Mom now shrieked, having lost her "cool" after all. "You spent all summer earning more money than some families do, and instead of investing it so somehow you could use it where you're going, you spent it all on things you have to leave behind. Don't you realize, *you can't take it with you?*" With that, Mom marched up the stairs, throwing her hands above her head as if to say, "Where did I go wrong?"

Margie stood in the doorway and began to sort it all out. For the first time in all this summer, she began to get the picture. "I can't take it with me, can I?" the girl sputtered. She already had staked out a furnished room in a dormitory that just exceeded the size of a phone booth by 5%, and there would only be room for her laptop, her suitcase, and the 6,000 bottles of cosmetics

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she took wherever she went.

“I spent all summer working for things I have to leave behind!” she kept saying over and over. And now the summer was gone, and she didn't have a cent left to get her started in school.

Now I know you think this is a silly illustration, because no one in their right mind would do such a thing. After all, have you ever heard of anyone spending *all their time working for things they couldn't take with them*, making absolutely no provisions for where they were going? Well, maybe a few minutes from now, you'll remember such a person. That person may even live in your house. That person may even be you.

The Apostle Paul wasn't too sure that we understood just how fragile and unimportant most of the things were that we were spending our time laboring for. And he wasn't sure we realized for sure that when all is said and done, we can't take it with us. Oh, we know that, but do we live as though we do? Here's what Paul said as he edged towards the conclusion of his first letter to young Timothy.

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 NKJV)

That is our passage for this lesson, and it is one that often invokes varying interpretations, based upon what the reader thinks constitutes “contentment”. To Paul it was clear. To many of us, apparently it is not. And so we dive head first into yet one more icy pond of theological waters in an effort to capture the mind of God where a very difficult passage is concerned.

Paul has been talking about “godliness”, or “God-like-ness”, and he has been referring to certain men (the same men he used as an illustration at the beginning of the letter). These men

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were devoting their lives to arguing doctrine. They had devised variations of certain key theological truths and had made a profession out of wrangling over these supposed “new” thoughts. And in verse 5, Paul gives what amounts to be one of the key attributes of these spiritual gnats who considered themselves giants. He said “they suppose that godliness is a means of gain.” They imagine that God designed this world in such a way that the more godly a man is, the more prosperous he will be. They think that the gospel is a ticket to easy street.

### CONTENTMENT DEFINED

Paul is saying, “Never equate godliness with prosperity.” In fact, *real godliness*, the apostle adds, is characterized by a spirit of contentment. Contentment defined is “satisfaction with your lot in life based on confidence in the sovereignty of God”. It is the absence of a *desire to be rich*. It is the presence of only one dominant force in your life, the desire to do the will of God. And should God’s plan for you include prosperity, so be it. But should His plan be one that involves the absence of things, you should be just as content. For your only real pleasure comes in doing the will of God, not in the things which money can buy.

He further describes that phenomenon known as contentment in Philippians 4:11-12. In verse 10, he has told the Philippians how much their financial support has meant to him, but he adds “not that I speak in regard to need”. In other words, the apostle is sharing the fact that while God has used their gifts, had they not provided them, God still would have met his needs. Perhaps they might not have been met in the same way. Maybe God would have called upon him to change his standard of living or to work more himself. He continues:

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: (Philippians 4:11 NKJV)

Then he defines contentment:

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.  
(Philippians 4:12,13 NKJV)

Contentment, says Paul is satisfaction with your lot in life. Down and out? Praise God. Prosperous? Praise God. Full? Praise

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God. Hungry? Praise God. Got a good job? Praise God. Have to do menial labor? Praise God. Savings account? Praise God. Savings gone? Praise God. This isn't a superficial "Praise the Lord, anyway" attitude, but a deep satisfaction with whatever the current circumstances are.

Paul is saying, "There is a characteristic that accompanies godliness and it is not temporal success. It is the absence of concern over temporal success." Paul is saying, "Sometimes God lets me have an easy life. I have more than I need, and my stomach is full. Other times, the bottom drops out, and things get rough, and on occasions, I don't even have all the food to eat I wish I had. I go hungry. But God is allowing that to see if when the skies turn black my trust vacillates. If it does, *I'm not content*. And if I'm not content, I'm not characterizing godliness."

Now the ramifications of those statements are not only important, they are mind-boggling. The issue is that we are not only to be preoccupied with things; we are not to be affected by things at all.

Let's look at Paul's arguments:

Argument 1- We brought nothing into this world  
(I Timothy 6:7).

We didn't bring it with us. We weren't assigned any standard of living at birth. Oh, our parents may have been upper middle class, or even upper class, but that didn't give us any rights or guarantees. Children, take note. There are no pre-drawn strata of life that God places us in. Paul was used to wealth. But that didn't mean he deserved it or that he would enjoy it forever.

Argument 2- We can't take anything with us when we go  
(I Timothy 6:7).

"You can't take it with you." Like the college student in the opening illustration, if you've spent all your time storing up things you have to leave behind, you're just a fool. Whatever is of this world stays in this world. Whatever is laid up in the spirit realm goes before us and is stored in a vault where moth and rust cannot corrupt and where thieves cannot break through nor steal<sup>1</sup>. It is

to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 6:20

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who are kept by the power of God... (I Peter 1:4,5a)

Psalm 49 says it perfectly:

Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, their dwelling places to all generations;

They call their lands after their own names.

Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain;  
(Psalm 49:10b-12a NKJV)

The Psalmist goes on:

Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.

Though while he lives he blesses himself (for men will praise you when you do well for yourself),

He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish.  
(Psalm 49:16-20 NJKV)

The problem most of us face is relative contentment. We would like to be satisfied with our lot in life, but all around us are people who've bought "bigger lots". They have bigger houses, bigger businesses, better jobs. They have more insurance, nicer furniture, newer cars. They are able to buy their children whatever they want and take vacations whenever they want. Some of them are not godly at all; in fact, many of the most successful are not even Christians. And based on the word of these who are proclaiming that "godliness is gain", we can't fathom that. We try to give our lives to Christ and submit ourselves to His will, and instead of prospering, the sky falls. The harder we try, the more appliances break, the more expenses pile up, the more the bank account shrinks. And we look at those around us who are "making it" and *often they don't appear committed to Christ at all.*

Apparently this is not a new problem. And the Psalmist's answer was the same as Paul's. They can't take it with them. And when we get where we're going, we couldn't use it if we had it. We're going to have a kind of riches then that can't die with the



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stock market, a kind of credit card with no limits. And we'll have a bank account that is made up of what we did in this life in the spirit realm, the very things we sometimes didn't have time to do, because of our pursuits to get the things we had to leave behind. That girl in the opening illustration had a problem that wasn't so uncommon after all!

So we brought nothing with us into this world. Anything we received, we received after the fact as a gift from God, and when we leave, 100% of what we have accumulated will be left behind. Not 50%. Not even 98%. Everything. Paul was so certain. He said, "It is certain we can carry nothing out."<sup>2</sup>

Now just in case you don't totally grasp what he is saying, I have a project for you:

Project 1- We are going to do another high finance test. We're going to take an "E. V." test. E. V. stands for "eternal value". The test is to evaluate what you spend you life doing based on how you spend what you get for doing it. For instance, let's suppose you bought a new Suburban or a Texas pick-up, I think they call them. And let's say you bought it at Happy Harry's Auto Mart. It was on sale and was marked down to \$20,000. It was a steal. It included 2 air conditioners, surround sound stereo plus velour seats, premium high speed tires (I had to get that in), three-tone paint (two-tone is not in any more), and the biggest motor they make. Anyway it cost you 20 big ones. (If you just bought a Suburban relax, we don't know about it and nobody else here does either; however your name will be on the next overhead.) Anyway, you had to finance it and even at that super rate they said it was only good for 26 days (which means 26 days out of every month because you keep coming back with it). But, anyway, at that rate let's say you'll pay \$25,000 to \$30,000 dollars before you're through. Now if you make a good hourly wage it will probably take you only 2,200 hours of working to pay for it. And you may say that's a good investment of your time. I'm not sure that is your choice. Now let's suppose that tomorrow God calls you home and you've just made the last payment. You walk up to the first angel you see in heaven and you say, "Mike, where is the nearest parking lot. I miss my 'burban." Michael, of course, thought you meant another kind of bourbon so after you clear that up, he looks at you with that kind of look that only

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<sup>2</sup> I Timothy 6:7

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angels can give and says, "Pal, that Suburban is 'gone city'. It stayed behind. In fact, I hate to tell you this but, your 17 year-old son already totalled it." Petrified you ask him where you can find that big-screened TV you worked 175 hours to get, and the camcorder you bought yourself for Father's day and toiled for 80 hours of overtime to afford.

"Don't need those things here," Mike answers, "didn't really need them there for that matter", as he chuckles under his breath. "You see, my friend," he concludes, they have no eternal value. The only thing you can bring from earth to heaven is people, changed people, transformed people, people whose lives you've touched. They will be your joy, they will be your crown. You say, "Well I don't have many of those. I didn't have time for people." "I know," Michael says as he walks away, "I know".

So your first assignment is to make a chart like this one and take the things you just had to have and figure how many hours you had to work, away from the family and away from your ministry or whatever, to get them. And then compute in the last column their eternal value. If you can't take it with you they have none. (Those of you with Suburbans will walk home rather than get in one.)

Project 2- Take two pieces of paper and make an inventory. On one piece of paper make a list of everything you own that you can take with you—people you've led to Christ, people you've prayed for until God did a miracle in their life, people on the mission field today because you invested in them what you could have kept for yourself—people.

On the second piece of paper list everything you own of consequence that you can't take with you—your cars, your house, your stereo, your stocks and bonds, your clothes, your boat, your place at the lake. Paste them in the front of your Bible and then every day when you get up and make your plans for how you will invest that day and your time, remember you can't take it with you. That brings us to the next argument.

### Argument 3- Having food and clothing we ought to be... content.

The only two things God promised us ought to be the only two things we come to expect. Enough food to sustain us (and only God knows for how long and to what degree we need to be

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sustained) and enough clothing to cover us (not necessarily the latest fashions and not necessarily designer labels). We *ought to be...content*. We ought to be satisfied with our lot in life. Next problem:

### Argument 4- Those who will to be rich are asking for trouble.

Those whose hearts long for “things” are walking headlong into a nest of bees...they are swimming in an ocean of crocodiles... they are lying down in a bed of scorpions. They are walking into a snare in the form of a temptation, which ultimately drowns men and women in “destruction and perdition”. The word translated “desire” is not the Greek word “thelo” (a desire which comes from the emotions) but the word “boulomai” (a desire which comes after a careful consideration of the facts). So the choice is ours. It must not be an emotional decision based on how we feel, or based on what others have. It must be a conscious choice. And once we recognize the facts, if we willfully choose to give our lives to laying up things we can't take with us, we are knowingly swimming in shark-infested waters.

### Argument 5- The love of money is at the root of many, many kinds of evil.

Paul is giving us the reason that desiring to be rich is so disastrous. It is an *addictive disease*. The things you thought you couldn't live without now you have and you can't live without something else. Once you begin to focus on making money and buying what money can buy, your tastes begin to grow and expand based on the principle of covetousness, until from that seemingly harmless germ, there issues forth a venom that poisons your life.

### Argument 6- Because of the love of money, some have strayed from the faith.

They have taken their eyes off of Christ and focused on the pursuit of things they cannot keep. There are grave spiritual consequences to a covetous spirit. Like cancer, it eats away at the core of a man's life—his priorities. And the end result is a series of sorrows.

### Argument 7- The issue is learning to be as satisfied with nothing as you are with everything.

That's the conclusion of it all (Philippians 4). Nothing equals no thing. It is the utter, complete absence of the comforts you

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think you *have to have*, and the total inability to get the money to buy it. It is, as Paul calls it: “learning to be abased”. To be abased means “to be put low; to be humiliated”. The word “abound” was a word that meant to “overflow”. So Paul has said that he was as comfortable when he was bordering on bankruptcy with all of the humiliation that accompanied it as he was when his cup “runneth over”. Because all he had to do was adjust his living conditions to the assets available. And there was no need to fuss about either extreme. Whatever “state” he was in he was content and with what was the will of God for him at that time, and it was thus the perfect backdrop for a sovereign God to use to highlight the qualities of His nature he wanted to work into Paul’s life at that time, and through Paul’s life into those who were looking on.

There were two keys. One was that he was living for a spiritual kingdom. Therefore, the only time he had to worry was when he ran out of spiritual funds, and that would never happen, because as he said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” This physical world with its physical limitations was of no eternal consequence. If he was out of food, it gave his God a new opportunity to feed him as he did Elijah. If he was overflowing with possessions, it gave him a fresh chance to bless others by giving it away. So he simply assumed that God’s particular ministry for him at that time was a mirror that would reflect God’s sovereignty *through whatever circumstances God allowed*.

The second key was that what somebody else did or didn’t have was of no consequence to Paul. Everybody around him might be rich, and he might be poor, but that didn’t make God any less powerful, or him any less cared for.

He recognized that the sovereignty of God is extremely personal and variable. We have a problem with both. His words were, “I have learned whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content.” He was not referring to the Body of Christ as a whole, or even to his immediate peers. God’s plan for him was infinitely different than His plan for those around him, just as God’s plan for you is different from His plan for your brothers and sisters, your parents, your children, or your friends. And if you judge your circumstances against the grid of theirs, you will be puffed up with pride, or depressed and discouraged. God never intended that. Remember II Corinthians 10:12? It says this:

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with

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those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

(II Corinthians 10:12 NKJV)

The only plan you have a right to consider *is the plan God has for you*. Nobody else has exactly the same plan. Nobody else has exactly the same pattern. Nobody else has exactly the same needs. Nobody else has exactly the same ministry. God may withhold from you something He freely gives all your friends. He may in the same way give to you something in the spirit realm they may not have. There is no measuring stick of comparison. And the fact that He has drawn in the parameters around you may well be a sign of His special plan for you. You may or may not have read that beautiful pamphlet, "Others May; You Cannot". There is not time to read it all, but here are a few excerpts for your encouragement:

*"If God has called you to be really like Jesus in all your spirit, He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put on you such demands of obedience, that He will not allow you to follow other Christians, and in many ways He will seem to let other good people do things which He will not let you do."*

The author gives some illustrations of what he means, and how powerful they are:

*Others can brag on themselves, and their work, on their success...but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.*

*Others will be allowed to succeed in making money, but it is likely God will keep you poor because He wants you to have something far better than gold, and that is a helpless dependence on Him, that He may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury.*

*God will let others be great, but will keep you small. He will let others do a work for Him, and get credit for it, but He will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He will let others get the credit for the work you have done, and this will make your reward ten times greater when He comes.*

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*...Now when you are so possessed with the living God that you are, in your secret heart, pleased and delighted over this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of Heaven."*

That is issue number one. Paul understood the precious, special uniqueness of God's plan for each of us, and he understood that the more God withholds from you, *the more special His plan for you may be.*

He also understood that God's circumstantial will varies daily. You can't take today's standard of life and count on it. People around Texas are finding that out. He said, "I know how to be full; I know how to be hungry." Peaks and valleys. Ups and downs. Highs and lows. This would be a characteristic of our circumstances. That's why Jesus said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Today's path is enough to trod. Tomorrow's plan is known only to God.

So when you wake up tomorrow morning, fall to your knees and worship God *in advance* for His provisions for that one day. And tell Him, "Dear Lord, I want to be content. If your plan includes financial blessings and circumstantial blessings, I praise you; and I pray for the grace to place them in their proper perspective, humbly using them to benefit the Kingdom. But, Lord, if you choose this day *to take it all away*, may I have the grace, like Paul, *to be just as content.* Oh, Lord, I brought nothing into this world, and it is certain I can take nothing out. *Lord I can't take it with me, can I?* So just give me what I need, not what I want, and then so give me your perspective, that I might be content."

I warn you that is not an easy prayer to pray. For the heavens may darken, and God may remove some of the things you *thought you had to have*, and replace them with things eternal. And when He does, *unless you have a good memory, and remember what you prayed*, you may, like the children of Israel, be prone to cry out in anguish for some quail and argue with God that this manna is not enough.

If you do, your loving God may whisper in your ear; "My dear child, you brought nothing into this world, and you can carry nothing with you when you go." Remember: Whatever it is you are so clamoring to obtain; *you can't take it with you.* When you enter

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heaven, *all* of it stays behind. Only the treasures of the Spirit you have sent ahead will be there.

The girl in the opening illustration wasn't so unusual after all, was she? She devoted all of her time accumulating "things" she couldn't take where she was going, at the expense of storing up currency she could use. She knew better. But that insatiable desire to get "things" we cannot keep at the expense of things we cannot lose got the best of her. And all too late she learned the lesson. The lesson was: She couldn't take it with her. And *neither can we*.

Let's pray.

*Our gracious God, what a difficult subject. How easy it is to be squeezed into the mold of this world, to get caught up in the parade of man searching and questing for things that we cannot keep. We give hours, days, weeks of our lives to working for the things that will perish.*

*We build houses and name them after ourselves, and think in our spirits they'll be there, when in reality we can't take them with us. The only thing we can take are the treasures of the Spirit that You have brought through us to people's lives.*

*We beg You, Father, clear up the haze in our lives that we might see clearly what we are living for, and give the rest of our lives just for that, because we can't take it with us.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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