

1 Timothy 6:1-10 – “The Pursuit That Pays”

Summary Statement:

In this passage, Paul warns Timothy about the dangers of greed and the pursuit of wealth, contrasting it with the virtues of godliness and contentment. He emphasizes the importance of using wealth rightly and encourages believers to pursue righteousness, faith, love, and gentleness.

Outline:

1. The Workers – 6:1-2
2. The Wicked – 6:3-5
3. The Wise – 6:6-8
4. The Wealthy – 6:9-10

1. The Workers – 6:1-2

6:1-2 - *Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. ² And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.*

The beginning of chapter 6 wades into some issues that many today use to dismiss the Bible – slavery. They say that the Bible promotes slavery, and that just isn't true. Slavery is something that existed because of the condition of the human heart, and God (and Christianity) looked to regulate it and bring proper management of it until Christianity brought about full freedoms from it.

- Many believed that Paul (and the N.T. in general) never condemned slavery outright because the gospel was meant to bring about freedoms that the law itself could never do.

“Here, as elsewhere in the NT, slavery is accepted as an existing institution, which is neither formally condemned nor formally approved. There is nothing to prompt revolutionary action, or to encourage repudiation of the position ... the institution is left to be undermined and removed by the gradual operation of the great Christian principles of ...

- *the equality of men in the sight of God*
- *a common Christian brotherhood*

- *the spiritual freedom of the Christian man*
- *the Lordship of Christ to which every other lordship is subordinate.”*^{1 2}

This was an interesting dilemma that took place as the church began to grow. It's been estimated that there were upwards of 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. And as Christianity began to spread, many of those coming to Christ were indeed slaves.

- But this left them with the question, *'Should I still have to submit to my master? Aren't I now set free in the Lord?'*

Paul makes it very clear that they are to continue on with even greater service and ***count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.*** The Christian servant, no matter how lowly his position, has a great responsibility in being a witness for God through the work he does.

Now the equivalent to this today would be the relationship between an employee and his employer.

- How many of you have had to work for an employer who you thought was a real idiot or a real joke. Maybe at times you thought, *'Hey! I'm a Christian here, they shouldn't treat me like this!'* And maybe you thought justified in not giving that employer your best.
- But Paul states that we need to honor them. There's something greater at stake here, you're to be a representation of Jesus in that workplace.

It's a very sad thing when the world sees a Christian, or maybe a group of Christians, not giving their best in certain situations. Whether it be at work or when we're at some function.

- For example: this past Wednesday we gathered for our Church in the Park. It was a beautiful night as we sat and worshipped and had a devo. People are out and around the park and they may see us singing and sitting with Bibles and realize, *'Hmm, looks like a church group. How nice.'* But now if we were to leave that place and there's garbage all strewn about and the place is just a real mess, people may walk by and think, *'Look at*

¹ S.D.F. Salmond. (1970). *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Vol. 3). Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2006). *1 Thessalonians–Philemon* (p. 189). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

what that church group did, they just don't care!' And it gives them an opportunity to bad mouth God.

And then Paul addresses those who may be serving Christian masters. It would be easy for the servant in this situation to say, *'Alright, we're both Christians! We're on level ground now – we're brothers! Hey, just for fun, how about today you get me an iced tea.'*

So Paul says, ***and those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved.***

It would have been an interesting situation in this day to have people gather together in church who had these relationships. Imagine the servant sitting together with his master worshipping the Lord, or taking part in an agape meal with this commonality. It may have been hard for the Christian servant to look at his believing master the same way. But there was still to be a respect and reverence for his authority.

- Just because there is an equality in Jesus, it does not negate the authority God has established in certain relationships.

And in our own workplaces, having a Christian boss should not cause us to sluff off, or take longer breaks than we should with the attitude of: *'Oh, it's okay, we're brothers.'* It's because an employer is a brother or sister in the Lord that should cause us all the more to do our best and give that job our all. Because it's a fellow believer who benefits in that. It should have a positive effect, not a negative one.

And this all brings to mind what Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:22–24**, *"Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*

- Do all that you do for the Lord and unto the Lord.
- May people want to hire you based on your work ethic and care you give to tasks. May our conduct be that which leaves a good witness to the world.

2. The Wicked – 6:3-5

6:3-5 - *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*

Paul opened this letter addressing the need for Timothy to stand up against the teaching of False Teachers. Once more now, Paul sees the need to remind Timothy to be alert to those who may come into the church with different teachings and actions that are contrary to the things of God.

Paul listed a few characteristics of these false teachers that would identify them:

A) They stray from truth – ***does not consent to wholesome words...***

Wholesome = ὑγιαίνω *hugiaino* [hoog·ee·ah·ee·no]; meaning healthy (hygiene). It's the same word used in 1 Timothy 1:10 for sound doctrine. Paul says there will be those that come into the church and will promote an entirely different teaching. They will ***not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness.***

Understand this today, the words we have in the Word of God are wholesome. They provide health for us. The Word of God does not just contain truth, it is truth! They are the words of Jesus, and they are sound doctrine which lead us to godliness! Our studying in God's Word does more than just educate us academically, it transforms us as we take in truth.

- Paul will say in his next letter, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [training] in righteousness."* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Now if such a person is not willing to have the Word of God as their guide, which goes against logic since this is the only way to health and blessing, then they only show forth another characteristic that Paul brings up:

B) Pride – ***he is proud, knowing nothing...***

Now what does pride do? It causes a person to only think of themselves. It's all about raising my stock and not really caring about anybody else.

- This word for pride was translated as *puffed up* in 1 Timothy 3:6. That's why we say when someone is prideful, that they've got a big head. It may be big but it's empty of substance. Pride keeps you only thinking of yourself and it distorts the truth of yourself. What we should be doing is what Paul instructed in **Philippians 2:3-4**, "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*"
- You see, pride stops you from thinking you may be in the wrong, that you could actually, potentially mess up. Pride says I'm right and you're wrong.
- For this reason, these false teachers don't want to be corrected. They don't like to hear that they are mishandling the Word of God and have drifted from the truth of God's Word. They see themselves as the holders and keepers of truth.
- Yet Paul says that ***they know nothing***.

And what these guys like to do is argue. They'll argue over little things, differences of words and all. They've left the health of God's word, and now they have an unhealthy craving for controversy.

There are some people today who may know the Word of God inside out, but what do they do with it? Some people like to use it to show their own knowledge. They like to debate people because it feeds their pride, they become puffed up.

- But notice the fruit that comes from this sort of thing: ***envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions***. Just because a person may know something that is right, it doesn't give them the right to use any means to prove that they are right.

This just isn't right!

And you can tell a lot by the fruit that is being left. A person may sound knowledgeable, may seem spiritual, but if he's just bringing division, then something isn't right.

Paul identifies a further character in these false teachers...

C) Greed - ***who suppose that godliness is a means of gain***.

These false teachers believed that they could make a profit off their pseudo-spiritual teachings. They wowed people with their arguments and proficiency in debates. But their real motivation is seen here - money!

- What a sad thing when people try to steal from the Lord. Sadly there are people doing that today. They stand in pulpits preaching the word, they tell innocent audiences to give to their ministry and receive a blessing from God. All the while the only thing that is driving them is money. They don't care about the growth of individuals, or the care they may need. It's all about them personally (pride). And I don't want to be anywhere near them when they stand before God.
- And Paul tells Timothy not to be anywhere near them now. ***From such withdraw yourself.***

So Paul lays out for Timothy the character of these false teachers so as to quickly identify them and deal with them. But he also shows the characteristics of those who are seeking to honor God.

3. The Wise – 6:6-8

6:6-8 - Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

The wicked or foolish want to try and use godliness for personal gain. But those who actually walk in godliness and live a contented life will truly gain in life.

Now what is godliness? It's conforming our will to God's will. It's walking in obedience to Him. In order for us to know God's will we need to be in his Word. That's how we're going to know how to obey and what to obey. This will grow us in God likeness, which is what godliness is all about.

Now living in godliness doesn't always mean you're going to be having it all in this life – despite what the Copelands, Haggens and Osteens say.

Paul shows us how to gain in this life through godliness **and** contentment.

- You can live a godly life, but be lacking contentment. That would rob you of joy. It would be equivalent to living a religious, legalistic life.
- You can live a life of contentment, but be lacking godliness. And that just becomes a lazy, self-fulfilling life that is missing out on the fullness of God.
- You see, these need to be together.

These false teachers were trying to exercise godliness as a means for gain, but it was done for selfish reasons. Paul wants people to know indeed that godliness is profitable, when it is balanced with contentment.

- “The word here used for contentment is *autarkeia* [ow·tar·ki·ah/]. This was one of the great watchwords of the Stoic philosophers. By it they meant a complete self-sufficiency. They meant a frame of mind which was completely independent of all outward things, and which carried the secret of happiness within itself. Contentment never comes from the possession of external things.”³

We have to wrestle against this discontentment because we’re constantly bombarded by things and lifestyles that can leave us desiring more.

- Facebook and Instagram can paint a picture of how awesome everyone else is doing and leave you wondering, *how come I can’t get a piece of that pie?* We can quickly become dissatisfied of our life when we see how others are living.
- But comparison is such a robber of joy. Too often we’re getting the highlight reel version and not seeing what’s really going on behind the scenes. And we need to be careful that we don’t let comparison rob us of joy, peace and contentment in the things we do have.
- I love seeing the post vs. the reality of many of these social media posts [show images].

The book of Ezra reveals for us the danger of comparison (read Ezra 3:10-14). These two groups of people saw the same thing, yet there were two very different responses. One was joy, one was weeping. The difference was in comparison to what once was, rather than being joyful in what they do have.

- Paul says we need to: *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).*
- Paul learned to rejoice no matter what his circumstances were because he learned to be content in whatever state he was in (Philippians 4:11).
- Interestingly, the temple in Ezra’s day may not have been something to get excited about, but God said in **Haggai 2:9**, *“The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,” says the Lord of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the Lord of hosts.”*

³ Barclay, W., ed. (1975). *The letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (p. 128). Westminster John Knox Press.

- Why will the glory be greater? Because Jesus will enter into that temple. God in the flesh – dwelling among us! How cool is that. When we bring Jesus into the picture we don't need to worry about what we don't have because in Him we have all we need!

That's why our lives need to be anchored to Jesus Christ, because this is the only place we find what our hearts are truly longing for. It's in Him alone that we are truly satisfied and content.

For we brought nothing into this world... The reality is that the things we try and place in our lives to bring happiness or contentment, are never really ours anyways. We didn't bring it into the world, and we're certainly not taking it with us. All these things are temporal. Or as Solomon said, it is all vanity. They are empty. The more you get the more you discover that it doesn't bring you what you really desire.

- Yet godliness with contentment is what it's all about. A life that is lived for Jesus and in simple trust that He will give us all that we need. He's already done more for us than we deserve.

What more do we need? Just the basics – ***having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.***

4. The Wealthy – 6:9-10

6:9-10 - 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. ¹⁰ 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.

As much as godliness with contentment is great gain, there's a very real and powerful lust for riches that our society likes to promote. If I just had a little more then I would be comfortable or content. But how much is a little more? Because when you get it, you'll often find yourself with the same response.

There have been a great number of people who have destroyed their lives by the pursuit of riches.

- Now again, let me just clarify, it's not wrong to have money. It's a danger though when money begins to consume you and take you away from the things of the Lord. God has gifted people with money so that they can be

used of Him in funding ministries and such. But it's something that not everyone can handle and balance.

- There are those that try to live godly lives and be content in riches. Yet again, it's putting the trust in the wrong source.

This is why Paul says, ***the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil***... He doesn't say, *money is the root of all kinds of evil*. But rather, *the love of money*... Some have even ***strayed from the faith in their greediness***... This is what Satan loves to do – get that hook in there somewhere to where we get a taste and an unhealthy desire for it.

These are things that Timothy had to watch out for in standing up against the attacks to the church and church body. But he also needed to watch out for himself; to be sure he was living in a manner that reflected the Lord.

You can have everything this world offers and still have nothing – or you can have Christ and truly have everything.

Remember, contentment isn't found in getting more, it's found in trusting the One who is more.

Points to Ponder:

1. Who are you really working for this week – your boss or the Lord?
 - Would your workplace confirm your witness or contradict it?
2. Am I drawn more to truth or to arguments and being right?
 - Am I humble enough to accept I might be wrong sometimes?
3. If nothing in your life changed financially, could you still say, "I have enough"?
 - Is your joy based on what you have – or Who you have?