

It's a startling feeling of mixed emotion. You're angry with yourself... and at the same time very thankful that a near-tragedy was avoided. You had been safely driving down a freeway in the right lane... and just as your parents taught you when you were learning how to drive... you responsibly check your rearview mirror... and then your side mirror. ... The left lane looks wide open... so you put on your blinker and begin *easing* over.

But suddenly (and at the very last second) you see the car right next to you. The driver of the other car lays on his horn... and yells something at you... which you are glad you cannot hear. ... Startled and heart pounding through your chest... you swerve back over into your own lane and attempt to catch your breath. Immediately you begin to wonder... "*Where did that car come from?*" ... But an understanding comes almost as quickly. You failed to account for your blind spot.

Last week in our discussion of 1 Timothy 6:1–2... we considered one of the most glaring blind spots for American Christians in history. It was the acceptance of slavery. ... Christians in the South would gather on Sundays... sing and study God's Word... and think nothing - at all - about mistreating men... women... and children (as their slaves.) That's scary.

It's scary to think that well-intentioned... regular worshippers... who loved God's Word and studied it... would have such a "blindness." ... But before we become too critical and hard on **THEM**... there is something very important that we all need to realize – about **OURSELVES**. ... We are not much different. (Just like *them*) Part of our sinful nature instinctively

chooses ONLY to see what we **want** to see - and to ignore what we want to ignore - until it's too late and the damage is done.

(You see) there is something that I did not mention last week – but I will now. ... The example of American slavery beckons us to ask the question in our own lives: “Where do I have blind spots? ... Are there areas where we (as individuals or as churches) are blind to our own sin — even such harmful sin as slavery?”

Today we move-on from the tragic blind spot of the American South of the 1800's. (And) where we go next... is to 1 Timothy 6:3–10... which places a clear focus on one of the glaring sins that many Christians and churches in America today chose to ignore. It is **OUR** tragedy-inducing blind spot... that results in the mistreatment of men... women... and children — all over the globe. ... [ P A U S E ] ...

**Materialism**(!) ... .. has blinded many of us from seeing the things God would have us see. ... In our culture... in our churches... and in our own lives... we have failed to take notice of some pressing needs all around us. ... Our passage today is like a car (that suddenly appears beside us)... and it is intended to jolt us into being where we should. ... (And I pray that it would have this effect in each of our lives.)

(Now)... Our passage today can be divided into two sections... and initially it might look as though Paul is writing about two different subjects. (But he's not.) In 1 Timothy 6:3-5... Paul seems to land both feet on the necks of false teachers who were in Ephesus... with some harsh criticism of them. In these verses... we learn how to spot and identify a false teacher.

Then in verses 6-10... Paul seems to move onto a different subject: "how Christians are to view their wealth and possessions."

But after studying this passage... I have concluded that Paul presents the entire passage... much like a jeweler displays a diamond. Verses 3-5 are a dark background (the black velvet)... against which he contrasts verses 6-10... displaying the beauty of what correct doctrine will produce in a believer's life (and that's the diamond.) ... First we will get a feel for all of the ugliness of false teaching... and then (by contrast) we'll see what good doctrine produces.

OK... so here is the ugly...

### 1 Timothy 6:3-5

What distinguishes a false teacher?

First... **they marginalize Christ.** They push Him off to the side – (Who He is... what He taught... and what He accomplished.) Jesus is minimized... and over-shadowed with man-centered effort and systems... like denying certain human pleasures... or (at the other spectrum) enjoying unrestrained sensualities... or the propagation of contrived mysteries and secret knowledge. ... One of the best ways to identify false teaching is to examine its treatment of Jesus (Who He is... what He did... and what He taught.) Is Jesus central... or is He replaced with human effort and/or understanding?

Second... **they marginalize Scripture.** In Paul's day... believers received Christ's teaching from the apostles... (the Lord's appointed representatives)... both verbally and in writing. Today we have God-

breathed words preserved for us in the sixty-six books of the Bible. Is Scripture the highest authority of faith... life... and practice?

Third... **they exhibit ungodly behavior**... Verses 4-5 describe their very **un**godly behavior... attitudes... and character.

Verse 4 tells us they were conceited. They felt that they had special knowledge of God... better knowledge than the apostle had. However... they did not... and the arrogant air about them betrayed their unregenerate nature. Gentleness (a quality of true spirituality) was totally absent.

These teachers were not simply misguided... they were totally ignorant. (Ignorance and arrogance is such a DEADLY combination! ... If you are ignorant... but not arrogant... you can fix the problem of ignorance.) ... But they were both... (and so) apart from divine intervention... their problem was unfixable.

They took perverse pleasure in controversy and quarreling. “Quarrels about words” comes from a rare compound word meaning, literally, “word-fight.” This so marked their behavior that Paul describes them as “sick with” (having *an unhealthy interest in*) disputes. ... As this dangerous sickness spreads... it produces poisons that destroy relationships and church unity.

Paul goes on to list five church-killing effects of a false teacher’s **un**godly behavior (envy... dissention... slander... evil suspicions... and constant friction in the church.) ...And the end of verse finally mentions what was at the core behind all this word-fighting and prattle. ... **Greed** was their core motivation... (“*imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*”) ... Craving material possessions will produce such horrible ugliness!

A lot of famous pastors today have figured out a way to build giant churches... sell a lot of books... and market themselves... (*“imagining that godliness is a means of gain”*)... which has led them straight into false teaching. (I am not saying that every famous pastor of a large church who sells books is one of these. But I won't hesitate to tell you that our end-time ear-tickling preachers on television and radio – who tell you that God wants you to be physically healthy and rich... are a good example of what Paul is exposing, here.) *“Name-it and claim-it theology”* (the “Health and Wealth Gospel” of Kenneth Copeland and Joel Olsteen) is false teaching. ... Human-effort (push-Jesus-aside) *“Power of Positive Thinking”* is also false teaching! These fit right into Paul's description here in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy.

Any teaching that de-centralizes Jesus... minimizes Scripture... OR does not produce Godly attitudes and behavior... is what Paul condemns in our passage today. ... What a dark picture Paul has painted for us of false teachers! (And) behind it all... is the fact that false teachers try to use God to get what they want. ... Craving material possessions is what drives them.

Now that we have our black velvet background... let's (now) bring out the diamond... and set it in contrast against it. ... Our diamond is the result of right doctrine (correct teaching.) ... Our diamond is contentment... (which is the opposite condition of materialism.) Materialism stays hidden in our blind spot... and then emerges to justify our selfishness... by which we harm others.

### **1 Timothy 6:6-10**

OK... let's take a look at what these verses tell us...

**#1. Wealth does not bring contentment** (v. 6). ... The noun “contentment” (*autarkeias*) is a compound word based upon “self” (*autos*) and “to be sufficient” (*arkeō*). ... It denotes an inward satisfaction that is not affected by outward circumstances. It is rooted in faith of divine sufficiency. It is “*an inner peace in spite of outward circumstances.*”

A Christian’s gain... and what the false teachers sought to gain... are two different things. ...The false teachers were trying to make a buck by using religion... a method that can never produce a “*gain*” because there will always be a craving for more. ... A person who depends on material things for peace and assurance will never be satisfied... because material things have a way of losing their appeal. Contentment doesn’t stay. When we try to obtain it by possessing material things... it will be elusive.

(Now) what we need and what truly satisfies is contentment. But let’s not mistake contentment with complacency. (They look a lot alike.) ... Both contentment and complacency experience **satisfaction**. ... (And) both bring us to enjoy our **status** in life. ... However contentment and complacency are **not** the same.

Two crucial differences separate them: #1. Contentment thanks God for everything... while complacency congratulates self. ... #2. complacency rests on its accomplishments... while contentment doesn’t rest. It passionately pursues excellence.

Paul displayed what contentment looks like when he wrote in Philippians 3...

**Philippians 3:8-11 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth*

*of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

No sitting back and resting on his laurels there! The healthy Christian doesn't waste time on self-satisfaction. Paul showed that he was **content** – and yet he passionately *pursued* excellence.

Contentment is our antidote to materialism. (And) verse 6 makes it clear that... **Wealth does not bring contentment**

(Then in verse 7 we see)... **Wealth is not lasting.** ... When someone's spirit leaves his body at death... it can take *nothing* with it... just as when that person came into the world at birth... he brought nothing with him. Whatever wealth we amass goes to the government... our heirs... and whatever beneficiary we have. ... We always know the answer to the question. "How much did he leave?" The answer in every case is - *Everything!*

(Verse 8 brings out that)... **Our basic needs are easily met.** Food and "covering" (clothing and shelter) are basic needs.

*If I was to quote* Henry David Thoreau... none of you would think that I ascribe to his naturalist philosophies or to his transcendentalist beliefs (would you?) ... OK... Good! ... Because he does have this good observation (which I think says the same thing Paul is declaring): "A man is wealthy in proportion to the number of things he can afford to do without..."

I am reminded of the simple-living Quaker who was watching his new neighbor move in, with all of the furnishings and expensive “toys” that “successful people” collect. The Quaker finally went over to his new neighbor and said, “*Neighbor, if ever thou dost need anything, come to see me, and I will tell thee how to get along without it.*”

A contented attitude gratefully receives the basic necessities of life... and doesn't have to order steak and lobster whenever eating out... it does not have to wear designer clothing and the latest fashion... or desire a 55-foot luxury yacht... or a nine-bedroom (opulent) home on beach-front property. ... This is not to suggest that a believer shouldn't have those things if they are able to afford them. ... - Whaaat?

(LISTEN!) The Bible never condemns the rich for their abundance. God never calls money or wealth - “evil.” (Are you listening?)... Contentment has nothing to do with circumstances and **everything** to do with attitude. ... The fundamental question is not: “*What do you have?*” but “*What do you want?*” ... [ P A U S E ] ...

Verses 9 and 10 lead to the next point. **The desire for wealth leads to destruction.** ... “They that will be rich”... is the accurate translation. (In other words... they will not be denied it.) It describes a person who has to have more and more material things in order to be happy and feel successful. ... But such a pursuit is a trap. It leads to bondage... not freedom. ... Instead of giving satisfaction... the accumulation creates additional desires - and these must be satisfied.

Instead of providing help and health... the pursuit of material things hurts and wounds. The result Paul described very vividly (with verse 9.) It is the



picture of a man drowning! ... He trusted his wealth and “sailed along”... but the storm came and he sank. ... (Health fails. Contentment flees. Marriages come unraveled. Children rebel. Addictions take over. Financial collapse happens. Desperation follows.)

The consequence is unavoidable! ... The love of money eventually causes a person to exchange his or her faith - in God... (Who is limitless and loving)...in order to seek satisfaction and safety - in wealth... (which is limited and loveless.) ... This... inevitably leads the poor soul to “many griefs.”

Materialism is **dangerous**. It leads people into many senseless and harmful desires. The love of money and things will send you down a path that is fraught with danger. Here are some of its deadly fruits: selfishness... cheating... fraud... perjury... robbery... envy... quarreling... hatred... violence... and murder.

Or simply think of some other effects of materialism... which may immediately come to mind: pornography... blackmail... exploitation of the weak... oppression of the poor... immorality... and injustice. ... (LISTEN: Here is what I am saying)... materialism is a breeding ground for thousands of other sins. ... Are you... Christian... foolish enough to think you are immune to such things that spring from this root?

(And speaking of “root”) before we move on... I must say some things about the most **MIS**-quoted verse of the entire Bible (1 Tim. 6:10). You may already know what it is that I have to point out... but please indulge me for a minute.

Paul is talking about the **love** of money (not money *itself*.) ... It takes money to sustain churches and mission work. Everyone —from atheists to committed Christians — has to pay bills.

Another piece of **mis**information... is that 1 Tim 6:10 teaches that the love of money is **the** root of evil. (This was popularized by the KJV). ... The article (“*the*”) is not in the Greek... and so the ESV has it right (which I am reading from.) “The love of money ‘**a** root’.” ... In other words... the love of money is **just one of many roots** that wickedness can spring-up from... to invade our lives.

If we want to rid a garden of weeds... the roots must come out. ... In the exact same way... if we want to rid ourselves of materialism... we must not simply treat the **problems** caused by our greed. ... We must tear out the **root** that produces the problems. ... But the question is “How?”

As usual... Chuck Swindoll offers some profound thoughts here. Let me set up what he wrote at the end of his commentary on this passage... by first giving you three reminders from today’s passage that we must understand... and then I will present Swindoll’s insights about **what God will give us**... when we accept and live by the truths of our passage.

#1. It’s not up to the world... (through its luring advertisements... and the entertainment industry’s display of all the popular trends)... **to tell us what will make us happy**. ... That boat will sink and it’s passengers **will** drown.

#2. We will never find happiness in the acquisition of... MORE, MORE, MORE.

#3. Contentment is **not** something we **find** - it’s something we **decide**.

When we make the choice to be content... Swindoll mentions that we will receive three priceless gifts:

1. Current enjoyment instead of constant striving. At some point in the past, you decided that the acquisition of what you have today would be fulfilling. When you choose contentment, it is! On the other hand, if you're always seeking fulfillment from the future, you will never find it, you'll never be satisfied, you'll never enjoy what you have. Enough will never be enough.
2. Complete freedom to recognize and applaud another's achievement without envy. When I choose to enjoy what I currently have, envy finds no place in my life. As a result, I multiply my joy. I'm happy with my own lot in life and I genuinely delight in the good fortune of those around me. Furthermore, when I choose contentment, I never view the advancement of another as something taken from me. Contentment drains the fuel from my tank of competition, allowing me to rejoice with those who rejoice.
3. The cultivation of a genuinely grateful spirit. When we choose contentment, anything we receive in the future becomes an unexpected gift. This allows us to live in a constant state of surprise, finding delight in the smallest of blessings.

Make the choice to be content. ... Adopt three short statements and then resolve to make them true:

- I'm grateful for what I have.
- I'm satisfied with what I earn.
- I'm generous to those in need.

I began today by comparing the blind spot of American Christianity in the South (back in the 1800's)... with the blind spot of contemporary American Christianity's blind spot of Materialism. ... Was that really a fair comparison?

The blind spot of Slavery hurt a lot of people here on earth. ... But our materialism may be hurting people for all eternity! Our materialism keeps us from giving to God's kingdom work. ... (Those who love their money do not give it away.) ... The resources needed to win the world to Christ will be kept in our second homes and in all our (ever-accumulating) – but not really necessary - nice possessions.

A materialistic world will not be won by materialistic Believers! We will not show the world that Christ is all satisfying - as long as we are in the sinking boat of materialism. ... How will we lead people to abandon the things of this world... if we (in the church) are attached to the same things? ... We will be communicating that Christ plus our stuff equals satisfaction.

... [ P A U S E ] ...

Is a false gospel that declares "Christ PLUS all our stuff equals satisfaction" ... the gospel we want to continue proclaiming to the world...?

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Decide to be content...

Cultivate a genuine grateful spirit...

Be generous to those in need...