

January 29, 2012  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: 1 Timothy  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from 1 Timothy 6:2b-10

1. What are the “sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ?”
2. What kind of problems does an arrogant false teacher cause?
3. Is money the root to all evil?
4. Do all people who have wealth pierce themselves with many pangs?

### **GREAT GAIN** **1 Timothy 6:2b-10**

With these verses, we begin to study the fourth division of Paul’s first letter to Pastor Timothy. The themes of the four divisions look something like:

- 1: Warnings about false teachers (1:3-20)
- 2: Instruction regarding conduct in the church (2:1-3:16)
- 3: Practical advice for proper conduct in the church (4:1-6:2).
- 4: Final instruction regarding false teaching (6:3-21).

We can see that Paul has sandwiched practical advice on how we should behave in the household of God (i.e. the church) between warnings about false teachers who neither behave in the church nor desire for others to behave.

We typically think of false teachers as men or women who come to the church with a teaching that perverts the truth about God

or Jesus Christ, or twist a particular aspect of Jesus’ person and ministry. Or we see false teaching as a general attack against the authority of the Bible. However, in this text we learn that false teachers can be motivated by financial gain, and, therefore, will teach a view about materialism that is contrary to the truth of God’s Word.

No one has to tell us that people in general struggle with the issue of money, possessions, wealth, or however we want to describe the problem. Money and a certain amount of possessions is necessary for us to not only survive in life, but to do ministry in life. I am reading a book that is titled, “Radical.” In this book, the pastor of a 4,000 member mega-church bemoans how transfixed professing Christians are on chasing wealth and flaunting possessions. I haven’t read the part yet that explains what the pastor plans to do with his church’s multi-million dollar complex. I’m sure there is an answer.

But that is just the point. An easy view of wealth is to avoid it at all costs, take a vow of poverty, and live in austerity. Actually, that kind of life could be far less stressful than us trying to serve God and represent Him well in the setting (both social and financial) where He has placed us. It really is not God’s will for everyone to be poor. Paul himself expressed thanksgiving on various occasions for people who gave from their wealth to meet his material needs. There were people in his life who shared from their resources to help him know what it meant to abound. God places His people at particular levels or in certain situations in life to be an instrument in His hands for His glory. His will for all Christians is not the same as His will for the young man who wanted to keep his possessions and have heaven too. Jesus told that young man to sell everything he had and give to the poor because Jesus knew the young man craved wealth, not God.

The lesson here in our text is about contentment with God. When we are content with God, it does not matter whether He allows us to be poor or wealthy. People who are content with God have learned that their financial condition does not determine their level of godliness. If it does, then we do not understand godliness. This is a difficult lesson for Americans to grasp. Our standard of living is so high that we cannot imagine that living under the declared level of poverty, which for a family of four is \$22,250 per year, could possibly be God’s will. Everyone knows that it is impossible to maintain two vehicles, pay for cable TV, the internet, cell phones, go

out to eat once a week, and take a nice vacation once a year on that level of income. But who determined that all of those “excesses” comprise the necessities of life?

The question we must answer is, “Am I content with God, content to live in His will, wherever it is, and on whatever level it is?” False teachers don’t think so. False teachers preach that you need to make more and more money all the time. Why? Maybe so you can share with them? We need to understand what constitutes real gain and learn to be satisfied with that.

### **Imagined Gain (vv.2b-5).**

Again Paul warned Timothy to be aware that some people teach a different doctrine (vv.2b-3). In contrast to those teachers, Paul expected Pastor Timothy to teach these things (v.2b). Which things did Paul command Timothy to “urge and teach”? If this command is attached to the preceding section of the letter, Timothy was supposed to teach the very practical matters about behaving in God’s household. That would include things like caring for widows, respecting elders, providing for elders, rebuking elders, and employer/employee relationships (5:1-6:2). On the other hand, if this command is attached to what follows, Paul expected Timothy to teach about specific dangers regarding false teachers and how Christians ought to be different.

These things would be the kind of “doctrine that agrees with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Even the practical truths demonstrated in the foregoing text make up the kind of teaching that accords with godliness. This was not instruction for Timothy alone. Because it is Scripture, all pastors, like Timothy, are to keep on teaching these things. We are to keep on *urging* (παρακαλεω) people to embrace this teaching. The verb means to call the people alongside, to exhort them to embrace the teaching of sound words. The exhorting part is often the application part of the sermon. Raw exegesis, the unfolding and explaining of the text, is important, but truth not put into practice is worthless.

One of the problems Timothy faced was teachers in the church who did not teach or urge “these things.” They taught a different doctrine, and a different doctrine is not in accord with the Bible (v.3).

In chapter one, Paul charged Timothy to confront the false teachers and put a stop to their leading people astray. Here Paul identified the false teachers more specifically. He pointed out that they are teachers who “do not agree with the sound words . . .” The word translated *agree* implies that these teachers have been exposed to the truth, but they have chosen to keep it at arm’s length; not to be drawn near it. The *sound* words they reject are literally *healthful* words. They are the sound [healthful] words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Words of our Lord Jesus Christ can be words that He Himself taught. That teaching is found mostly in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). Or the words of our Lord Jesus Christ can also be the words the apostles taught about Him. That would be all of the other New Testament books, some of which would be written after this letter from Paul. Probably Paul referred to both kinds of teaching and, therefore, the essential meaning of *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ* is “the Word of God, the Bible.” In a nutshell, the Bible says this about our Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus is God in the flesh, fully God, fully man, lived perfectly, shed His blood as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin, died, was buried, rose from the grave, ascended to heaven, and is coming again. That is a very basic creed that expresses the Good News, the gospel. Whatever does not measure with those clear and simple Bible truths is not the gospel and are not the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul codified the truth of the gospel of Christ earlier in this letter when he wrote, “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). Embracing this teaching (as opposed to holding it at arm’s length) is the only road to godliness.

But just as certainly, the words that Jesus Himself taught are also sound words and critical for right doctrine. A great example of such sound words is found in Matthew 6:19-24, part of the Sermon Jesus preached on the Mount (wherever that was). In this section of the sermon Jesus warned, “Don’t lay up treasure on earth” (vv.19-21). He taught, “Don’t let the money of this world darken your perception” (vv.22-23). He warned, “Don’t try to serve two Masters, God and money (v.24).” He said, “Don’t be anxious about the temporary physical things of life” (vv.25-32). Along with the

“don’ts” Jesus also taught the audience, “Do seek first the kingdom of God and let Him add what He will” (v.33), and again, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow” (v.34).

By the time we come to this end of this text today, we will see a good example of how the false teachers reject “healthful” words like these. It is often these practical truths of life that constitute truly godly living, truths that God clearly addresses, about which we hear little teaching. The healthful words of the Bible when lived out in life reveal godliness. A person can demonstrate religion without ever reading the Bible, much less practicing it. But the person who reads the Bible, meditates on its truth, and puts that truth into practice will demonstrate God.

That does not describe the false teachers! Standing in contrast to the person who is godly, the person who lives out the sound words of Jesus, the false teachers were arrogant, greedy, and divisive (vv.4-5). Paul warned that people like this are driven by their natural cravings (v.4). The person who rejects the healthful words of Jesus and about Jesus is arrogantly ignorant. His arrogance is obvious in the fact that he is impressed with himself. Maybe various circumstances in the past have given him an inflated view of himself. I draw that conclusion based on the perfect tense, passive voice verb used here. Something in the past impacted this person with continuing results that made him smug and self-satisfied.

This arrogant guy has concluded that life is about him. Maybe he is the kind of guy who loves to look in the mirror and marvel. Or he loves to review his accomplishments with satisfaction. He loves to remind others how quickly he achieves his goals. It is almost hard to believe that this fellow is in the church telling other people how to order their lives like his life.

Also, the person who rejects the healthful words of Jesus and about Jesus is ignorant. People like that are so full of human wisdom based on their own experience that they do not even understand Bible truth. Earlier in the letter Paul said they were “desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions” (1 Timothy 1:7). Because this fellow rejects the clear revelation about Christ, he cannot begin to grasp scriptural truth.

This kind of teacher also has a sick craving for controversy. He loves to debate and argue. This is all an expression of pride as he defends his chosen position. He wrangles about words, the meaning of words, the application or non-application of words.

The result of this kind of evil attitude and action is not good for the Body of Christ. Basically the result of the false teachers’ influence is that they promote discord and sin (v.4b-5). Unhealthy controversies produce all manner of sin and friction (v.4b-5a). Accordingly, God revealed the following general description of the resulting product from controversial cravings and wranglings about words (v.4b): First, they cause envy to infect the people. Envy is the evil desire to deprive the person who has what you want. Another evil is dissension which is major differences of opinion to the point of hostility and arguments. Then there is slander, the defamation of another, speaking down about someone, abusive speech about a brother. Finally, evil suspicion results. This is wrong conjectures, suspecting the other person of doing evil when such is not the case.

People like this cause constant friction (v.5a). God warned that we will find a continual irritation when we are around them. That is because they are *depraved in mind*. The phrase means that their minds are *in a state of degeneration, incapable of working properly*. They cannot perceive truth in their minds, and so they are deprived of the truth.

People who buy into this false teaching end up with a perverted view of gain (v.5b). They concluded that “being religious” was a great means for gain. This makes us wonder if the false teachers in Ephesus were trying to “market” Christianity, like some modern false teachers do. Did they sell T-shirts and bracelets and books and movies and the latest translations of the Bible just to make money? Did they hold seminars and take tours to Jerusalem in order to make money? All of those things can be a good means to convey the wonderful truth of the gospel. Any of those things can be used as a means for financial gain.

Teachers who have a wrong view of God and godliness will peddle the gospel for personal gain. They did it in the first century just like they do it now. That is why Paul was so careful to maintain integrity in the gospel ministry. He assured his brethren, “For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity,

as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:17). Paul did not want to give the slightest hint that he would be like the false teachers who taught a perverted doctrine about what really constitutes gain in life.

### **Great Gain (vv.6-10).**

In contrast to the foolishness the false teacher promoted, Paul asserted that genuine gain is found in godliness with contentment (vv.6-8). Do you really want to be content? Try learning that godliness with contentment is the goal for life (v.6). This statement in verse six, “godliness with contentment is great gain,” is very important. Godliness is not the means to gain . . . it is the gain . . . spiritual gain. Godliness is knowing God through Christ, being conformed to the image of Christ, so that the life we live is a reflection of Christ. Contentment is having sufficiency, with no other aid or support needed.

That brings up a very important question. How can we be content with no outward means of support? This is the person who has learned to truly trust in God—ALONE! This person is fully satisfied with God, God’s will, God’s leading in his or her life. This contentment has learned in so many practical ways that God will provide. This kind of contentment is marked by the absence of greed, envy, jealousy, lust, and anxiety. Therefore, we must conclude that real contentment and prosperity are not connected in any way, shape, or form. D. Edmund Hiebert concluded, “A state of contentment makes one independent of outward circumstances, satisfied with one’s inner resources, enabling one to maintain a spiritual equilibrium in the midst of favorable as well as unfavorable circumstances.” (Hiebert, p.112)

Contentment is partially discovered in a honest view of materialism (vv.7-8). Paul reminded Timothy that we brought nothing in to the world, and we will take nothing out. Adam came into the world from dust and went out of the world as dust. We came into the world empty, and we leave empty regardless of how much we accrue in the process of life. How can you find lasting satisfaction in something you can’t take out of the world with you? Job understood this important truth and expressed it when God allowed Satan to take

all he had accrued: “And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD’” (Job 1:21).

Godly contentment concludes, *but if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.* The word for *clothing* in this statement actually speaks of a covering. That means that not only clothing is considered here, but also shelter, a house, a place to stay warm and dry. Is it not true then that all of us really do have enough? Those are pretty basic staples. With these, the godly person *will be* content. This is not a command requiring that we learn to be content, but a statement of expected result—we will be content.

Since that is true, godly people are not normal. Normal is expressed in the discontent described in a poem one writer received from a teen. She wrote,

It was Spring but it was Summer I wanted:  
The warm days and the great outdoors  
It was Summer, but it was Fall I wanted:  
The colorful leaves and the cool dry air.  
It was Fall, but it was Winter I wanted:  
The beautiful snow and the joy of the holiday season.  
It was Winter, but it was Spring that I wanted:  
The warmth and the blossoming of nature.

I was a child, and it was adulthood I wanted:  
The freedom and the respect.  
I was 20, but it was 30 I wanted:  
To be mature and sophisticated.  
I was middle-aged, but it was 20 I wanted:  
The youth and the free spirit.  
I was retired, but it was middle-age I wanted:  
The presence of mind without limitations.  
My life was over,  
and I never got what I wanted.  
(Chuck Swindol)

Phillip Ryken came to the conclusion in this study that “Discontent is life’s burglar. It robs every other experience of its

God-given joy. Someone who is discontent is always operating at a loss.” (Ryken, p.256). That is why a desire for wealth leads to sin (vv.9-10). Paul warned that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation (v.9). A snare, a trap is never a positive thing. The snare of wealth is senseless desires; the kind of thing that eventually causes us to ask, “Why did I think I needed that?” (i.e. 8 track tape player, avocado green appliances, VHS video camera, , etc.). That senseless kind of thinking leads to harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. It is like a person buying Enron stock to make a killing or being a day trader in penny stocks. It is like the man who decides he needs a new wife, a trophy wife, who fits better with his enhanced financial position. False teachers tempt Christians to go there.

Below the surface in these people is a bad root. A love for money is a bad root (v.10). Roots are generally hidden, but they are the source of whatever they are attached to. This root of evils is like the root of bitterness that God warns us about when He said, “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). The love for money root defiles people like that.

But notice that money is not the root to all evil. Rather Paul said that a **love** for money is **a** root to all **kinds of evils**. This is a wisdom saying much like we find in Proverbs, not law. Wisdom principles establish truths that are generally so. So it is in this case. Not just people who love money commit evils. Poor people who love money but have none are known to commit evils. And rich people who God made wealthy for His own purposes and glory can be quite “evil-free.”

A love for money is the bad root. This perverted love causes people to wander from the faith which results in being pierced with painful experiences in life. Saved people do not wander from the faith in that they lose their salvation. Rather they wander away from fellowship with God which always results in painful chastening to bring them back. Unsaved people wander away from the faith they “associate with” and which they should have embraced but did not. They often face the consequences of a life that chased money instead of God.

The secret to great gain is learning how to be satisfied with Christ alone! What is Christ to you? Do you really lean on Him for daily bread? Is He your strength, your sustenance? Do you pray to Him and ask for His help when life is okay as well as when it is falling apart? Our goal must be to conclude with Paul, “I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need [which is] I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:12-13).