



**I Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19**

**“Naked In, Naked Out”**

October 27, 2013  
23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Pastor Phil Thrailkill  
Main Street UMC  
211 North Main St.  
Greenwood, SC 29646  
Church Office: 864-229-7551

Church website with sermon manuscripts: [www.msumc1.org](http://www.msumc1.org)

Email: [PThrailkil@aol.com](mailto:PThrailkil@aol.com)

**“Following Christ from City Center”**

II'A,A': I TIMOTHY 6:1-10, 17-19 "NAKED IN, NAKED OUT"

Until Institution Is Changed, Undermine It!

A. 6:1-10 POWER, MONEY AND CONTENTMENT. Social Reality: Not A Justification Of Slavery

About 1/3 Of The Roman Empire Was Slave

1) vv.1-2a Slaves And Masters: Power Redefined. Equality Within Church/ Hierarchy Outside

Eph. 6:5-9, Col. 3:22-4:1, I Pt. 2:18-25, Gal. 3:28, Titus 2:9-10

1 a Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, Non-Christian Master  
so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed. Christian Witness, Credibility

2 b Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; Christian Master  
rather they must serve all the better Excellence In Work  
since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved. Application To Christian Workers  
There Is No Place You Cannot Serve God

2) vv.2b-10 A Teaching Section On Godliness, Contentment, And Money.

Public Counsel To Timothy

a) vv.2b-5 False Teachers Who Imagine Godliness As Gain. True Teaching Means Changed Lives

(+)Teach and urge these duties. 3:14; 4:6, 11 Faithful Church Leaders Speak Clearly

3 1 (-) If any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound (healthy) words of our Lord Jesus Christ False Ones  
and the teaching which accords with godliness, 1:4, 9-10, Jesus Tradition + Application

4 2 he is puffed up with delusion, he knows nothing; Vice List // 1:9-11, Conventional Vilification  
he has a morbid (sick) craving for controversy and for disputes about words, 1:4, 6:20

5 2' which produce envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, List Of Bad Results From Bad Teaching?  
and wrangling among men who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, Reproduce Yourself

6 1' imagining that godliness is a means of gain. Teach To Please, Motivated By Greed: Standard Polemic  
Problem Of Commercialized Religion, American Prosperity Gospel

b) vv.6-7 Contentment: Birth And Death.

6 1 There is great gain in godliness with contentment; Cynic-Stoic Virtue, autarkeia = Self-sufficiency

7 2 "for we brought nothing into the world, Naked In/ Naked Out, Job 1:21  
and we cannot take anything out of the world;" Ecc. 5:15, Wisdom 7:6, Sirach 29:21

All Acquisition Is Temporary, Mt. 6:33

b') v.8 Being Content: The Basics Of Life.

Ancient World Of Famine And Need

8 2' but if we have food and clothing (lit. "covering"), Lk. 12:22-32, Heb. 13:5, Sirach 29:21

9 1' with these we shall be content. See Matthew 6:25-34

a') vv.9-10 False Teachers Who Desire Riches. The Downward Spiral To Consequences:

9 But those who desire to be rich Desire (1)

fall into temptation, Temptation (2)

into a snare, Trap/ Share (3)

into many senseless and hurtful desires New Hurtful Desires (4)

that plunge men into ruin and destruction. (Naval Image: Sunk Ship) Ruin/ Destruction (5)

10 "For the love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evils;" Dio Chrysostom Orations 17:6. Phocylides (6<sup>th</sup> Cent. BC)

it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith Apostasy, Abandon Faith

and pierced their hearts with many pangs. Self-Inflicted Misery Of Some Christians!

[B. 6:11-16 FINAL CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (NEXT WEEK?).]

A') 6:17-19 THE WRONG AND RIGHT USE OF WEALTH.

On Riches: 2:4, 3:2-7; 5:8, 16; 6:2

1) v.17 What Rich Christians Are Not To Do.

17 As for the rich in this world, Word Play On Riches: Money, Uncertainty, Generosity, Ethics

(-) charge them not to be haughty,

nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches Bad Attitude, False Security

but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. Generous, Not A Kill-Joy, Psalm 37:4, 16:11

2) vv.18-19 What Rich Christians Are To Do. Wealthy Have Special Ethical Opportunities

18 (+) They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous,

19 thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, Tried Character, Mt. 6:20, I Cor. 3:14

Eternal Life With God In The Kingdom

# NAKED IN, NAKED OUT

*“For the love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evils.”*

Not a popular memory verse!

## I T I M O T H Y 6 : 1 0

**O**ut in the popular wastelands of American Christianity there breeds a virus, a seductive teaching that corrupts faith in Jesus Christ and often leads to disappointment and despair. Some call it the *health and wealth* gospel or the *prosperity gospel*, and the basic teaching is that if you have enough faith, if you pray the right prayers, if you work the right verbal formulas, if you give to the right TV minister, then God will respond, is even obligated to do so, with an enduring jackpot so you can have it all and be the newest example of the American dream, Christian style. Faith is like dropping quarters in a slot machine; one day it will have a big payoff! Wealth becomes a visible sign you are right with God. You can spot those who are right with God by their riches, their bling, all their stuff, their big celebrity smile of shiny veneers. They are *the truly blessed* the rest of us should emulate while they preach thirty-minute infomercials under the cover of TV Christianity, “If you had my faith and following my new program of mega-faith positive confession available on tape for only \$249.95, you can be as prosperous as I am.”

What’s wrong with this popular teaching that is so open to abuse? As in most errors, there’s just enough truth to convince the naive or the desperate.<sup>1</sup> It is true that God is the source of all good gifts and freely gives them for us to enjoy; trust and

---

<sup>1</sup> For a critique of the *prosperity gospel* and *consumerism*, see Rich Nathan & Insoo Kim, *Both-And: Living The Christ-Centered Life In An Either/Or World* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2013), 188-201, 209-210; also Gordon Fee, *The Disease Of The Health and Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 1985).

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19** ..... 4

obedience is the route to receiving God’s promises; God is often lavish; involuntary poverty and servitude is not the will of God;<sup>2</sup> partnering with God in giving opens us to surprising provision,<sup>3</sup> but to reduce faith in God to one more tool for self-enrichment and consumeristic self-indulgence is to pervert it. To use God to further inflate the self is the opposite of the cross of Christ, and it is a temptation for all Christians, particularly those of us who live in affluent cultures where the bar for what constitutes *the good life* is consistently being raised to higher levels so we are programed to be less and less content with what we have and less generous in giving.<sup>4</sup>

The data is in, and it is not encouraging; the more Christians make, the less they give percentage wise. It’s easy to tithe when you make \$20,000 a year, but when you make \$1000,000 or more between two incomes, now the tithe is *real money* and somehow harder to afford! Here is a list of what money can’t buy:

“Money will buy a bed, but not sleep;  
books but not brains;  
food but not appetite;  
finery but not beauty;  
a house but not a home;  
medicine but not health;  
luxuries but not culture;  
amusements but not happiness;  
religion but not salvation,  
and a passport to everywhere but heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> It is an error to claim, as some critics have, that for the church to work within existing cultural institutions, e.g. slavery, implies approval. Until sinful structures change, and they are agonizingly slow to change even with the best efforts, believers live within them and undermine their power indirectly with love and dignity, truth-telling and witness, egalitarian practices, suffering and prayer, of which I Timothy 6:1-2 is a prime example. Our trajectory is towards freedom with all kinds of resistance along the way towards the kingdom of God.

<sup>3</sup> The classic text on tithing is Malachi 3:1-11.

<sup>4</sup> On contentment, Dr. Richard Swenson, *Contentment: The Secret to a Lasting Calm* (Colorado Spring, CO: NavPress, 2013). This physician/futurist is worth reading!

<sup>5</sup> “Can’t Buy Heaven,” *Leadership*, Vol. 5, No. 2.

---

**A Faithful Witness In Tough Circumstances (vv. 1-2)**

There is no one who cannot serve God, and nowhere that blocks the Spirit of Christ from using a willing servant. I know this because Paul instructed believing slaves in both their worldly duties and spiritual opportunities. He gave them new dignity.

The primary difficulty with the first two verses of chapter 6 is not what it says but how horribly it's been misused, particularly in the American south prior to the Civil War. It is important to understand what this text *is not*. It is not an argument for slavery as the will of God for some class or race of people, which is how it was used by many southern preachers, including, sadly, the Methodists who in 1844 split north and south over the issue. It is rather an argument from within the inherited social structures for a particular Christian response which gives great dignity and opportunity to those who bear the yoke. It's important to remember that slavery in the ancient world was not the same as the system in the South.

Historians estimate about a third of the Roman Empire, between fifty and sixty million, were slaves. Some the spoils of war, some born in bondage. Others sold themselves into slavery to gain the basics of food and shelter. Some became slaves because of crime or rebellion. Slaves could own property, invest and control the proceeds, even own slaves themselves. There was a measure of freedom and self-determination. All were not poor; some became wealthy enough to be criticized by *old-money* Romans. Some were highly educated and used as teachers and managers. Very few reached old age under the yoke. As many as fifty percent were freed by age thirty, and at one time so many were being freed that Augustus Caesar introduced restrictions to slow the process.

Ancient slavery was not a racist institution so much as part of the economic and political reality of the ancient world. It was wrong; it was evil; there was much cruelty, but to make a simple equation between that world and ours is an error. Paul is not arguing for the superiority of one race over another or trying to convince people that their bonds are really for their own good.

Some have criticized Paul for not condemning slavery and calling for its abolition. That happened later on, but the ancient world was not a modern democracy; you didn't get a vote on leaders and policies! It was a dictatorship, and Christianity was a small, new religion from the East and therefore suspect. Early believers were careful not to be portrayed as subversive of a government that

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19** ..... 6

guaranteed the general peace and the safety of the roads and sea lanes on which missionaries traveled. Thy undermined the institution of slavery in other ways.

Within the church all were family because the distinctions of the world were washed away in baptism. Paul said in Galatians that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but you are all one in Christ Jesus, which was a socially radical statement.<sup>6</sup>

The world outside the church was ordered according to sinful divisions that placed one over the other and one against another, but within the church there was a *new world*, a preview of the world to come, in which owners and slaves addressed each other as *brother* and *sister* because of what Christ had done for both. It was a challenge to Christian masters and believing slaves to learn that the oppressive arrangements of the world were only temporary, and that what they were practicing in church was more real and would finally win out. It was an alternative *politics* that was publicly nonthreatening and privately subversive. The church knew what the world did not yet know, that Jesus was Lord and every Sunday a dress rehearsal for his return.

For Paul to have provoked a slave rebellion would only have led to wholesale slaughter and marginalized the church. In the world you learned one identity, in the church another, and the two live in tension until something changes. But if you give people that kind of vision in church on Sundays, they will one day demand it in the outside world on Monday through Friday, thus our American Civil Rights movement. There's more than one way to undermine evil, and direct confrontation is not always the wisest route in the early days. To plant the seed of Christianity in a culture is to guarantee, however, that in the long run the deep oppressive structures of one race over another or one gender over another or one class over another will be challenged.<sup>7</sup> The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

So to slaves with non-Christian masters Paul gives specific advice in verse 1, "Let those who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all

---

<sup>6</sup> 3:28.

<sup>7</sup> For an introduction, see Alvin Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed The World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); also Thomas Woods, *How The Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2005).

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19** ..... 7

honor, *so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed.*” Give honor, Paul commanded, because current social arrangements demand it, but don’t do it out of fear. Do it because your pagan master needs a living example so he might not misunderstand the faith and perhaps be saved. History is full of the examples of supposed *social lessers* evangelizing their supposed *social betters* and upending the social ladder completely. It’s one of the ways God turns the world upside down because you now look up to someone you used to look down on.

Are you married to an unbeliever? Do you work for one? Do you have a hard boss? Then ask a question, Why am I here, and how can God use me *right where I am*? You can choose to live in anger and self-pity, or you can choose to use the situation for a new strategic partnership with Jesus Christ and live in a way that the one who’s giving you a hard time is forced to take notice.

This is not an argument for wives to endure physical abuse or to stay with addicts in some form of codependence. It’s not a call to overlook illegalities or harassment in the workplace. Thank God we have more legal protections and avenues of redress than in Paul’s day. We have voice and vote and rights. But if you are in a hard or narrow place, first ask yourself, Why am I here, and how are my circumstances an opportunity to bring honor to Jesus Christ? Until you’ve asked this question, you cannot make sense of why you are where you are or get your bearings in order to move forward, whether that means staying in or moving beyond your current placement if you have the opportunity.

If I hear Paul, he’s saying even a slave at the bottom of the ladder of dignity and freedom, a slave owned by a pagan, can serve as a witness so that the life of Christ within transforms them into a missionary on a daily assignment with a support system that meets every Sunday to remind they are not who *the man* says they are. They are a child of God and a front-line follower of Jesus Christ. And if it’s a possibility for the lowest and the last and the least in that world, how much more for those of us who have such immense freedoms and opportunities? Why are you where you are, and to whom are you a missionary? John Wesley wrote to the early Methodists, many of whom were poor:

“Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,

---

To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.”<sup>8</sup>

Paul then addresses the flip side in verse 2: believing slaves and believing masters. Some apparently thought because their owners were fellow Christians they could be slack in their duties, “Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; rather they must serve *all the better* since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.”

I wish I could tell you otherwise, but Christians are not always the best employees. Arrive late, leave early. Take sick days when not sick. Too much time on the phone, a lack of attention to excellence. Disrespect. Not following through. I once exhorted a young woman to be on time for work. It had become a joke in her office, and when she was reminded her actions were a reflection on her faith and the reputation of our church, it sobered her immensely. She was teachable.

If you can’t give Jesus your best at work, then please don’t tell anyone you’re a member of this church or that I’m your pastor. Keep it a secret; we just can’t afford the bad publicity. Don’t make it any harder than it already is for us to win folk to this great faith, and if you’ve got problems and need to be whipped back into shape, come see me! I’m already working on me, and I be glad to work on you!

If our faith makes us sloppy or slack, if it reduces our commitment to the core values of integrity and diligence, it’s less than Christian. Followers of Christ ought to go the extra mile, especially for one another. If Paul as a free Roman Citizen could expect this of slaves in difficult conditions, how much more the rest of us? There’s no place and no set of circumstances, however difficult, that cannot be dignified and turned into a place of witness for Jesus Christ. It’s time to *tighten up* a bit, time to *sober up*, time to let Christ make a difference in how I conduct my affairs. Every *out-reach* is always preceded by an *in-reach* of self-examination and repentance. Change *me*, Lord. Let low and sloppy living cease, and let the world wonder what’s going on at the red brick church with the high tower because of the kind of people it produces.

**Confusion Of Ends (v.5b)**

It’s clear then that money is good for some things and not others. This is why Paul

---

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 36, No. 14.

---



capped off his list of the negative characteristics of false teachers in the church with the indictment that they imagine *that godliness is a means of gain*. In other words that *godliness* is not itself the intrinsic reward but only the step towards financial gain. In still other words, that faith is a tool in a scheme rather than a deep change of character in the direction of Christ, him working in me to change my life.

Godliness or, more simply *God-likeness*, is the highest purpose of life, to be even now transformed by divine love and holy fire.<sup>9</sup> It's all you'll carry beyond death, the moment God strips us of all earthly entanglements to see what we've become along the way.

Godliness is the ability to enjoy all things without having to own or control much of anything and to know that whatever God calls me to do God will pick up the tab for. It is not to need much except what God is currently supplying, not to be made haughty by much or discouraged by little. It is to live on the earth with diligence and trust in the provision of God: this is godliness. Sir Roger L'Estrange got it right when he issued the warning that, "He that serves God for money will serve the Devil for better wages."<sup>10</sup>

If what Paul calls *a desire for riches* is your functional god and the center of your desires, Satan will easily pick you off. The joyful pursuit of God is the path to contentment and happiness, not necessarily more money, though that may come. To imagine that godliness is a means of gain is to miss the deeper purposes of God to make us more and more like his Son Jesus.

### **The Lure Of Contentment (vv.6-8)**

I have seen pictures of my own arrival and taken pictures of my two upon theirs. And it is true: we bring nothing into this world; we arrive naked. Loads of potential, but no stuff. And I have many times stood beside a grave, and I tell you that the other half of the proverb is true; no one takes anything with them, as the Spanish say, "There are no pockets in a shroud." The limits of earthly life, birth and death, are given to teach us that wealth, riches, power and fame are not the meaning of the years

---

<sup>9</sup> One of the marks of Wesleyan theology is our trust that our great God *can break the power of cancelled sin and set the prisoner free* on the path of divine love.

<sup>10</sup> "Money in Christian History," *Christian History*, No. 14.

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 ..... 10**

in between. Naked in, naked out. It all goes back in the box. Acquisition and accumulation are temporary. What you own is not nearly so important as who you become which is determined by what you do with the offer of God's love.

Have you ever spoken wisdom and surprised yourself? A man once asked me why I didn't driver a newer car; was it that I couldn't afford it?

"No, I could afford it with some effort, but if I don't have an impressive life, an impressive car is not going to help." I had spoken the truth, and it startled him and me. It made me aware how much of our culture is about style, not substance.

The Hebrew man or woman who first composed the proverb of verse 7 stated the obvious, because that is what the best proverbs do; they look at life as is, "for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world."

It's true. Whether life is long or short, nobly born or humbly born, we arrive utterly vulnerable, and we leave completely stripped. But in this case the Jewish proverb is not offered independently but as a reason for a less obvious and more debatable observation in verse 6: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment," which is Paul's way of highlighting that one of the mature cluster of virtues composing godliness is *contentment*.

When contentment, which someone briefly defined as *wanting what you already have*, is a fruit of godliness, then there is true gain and you are rich indeed. Paul, I think, would have agreed with his contemporary the Cynic philosopher Epictetus who preached that "Contentment comes not so much from great wealth as from few wants." To be at peace with God and peaceful with God's current provision, whether lavish or sparse, is contentment. And from the security of living with the faithfulness of God over time, we find ourselves disengaged from the frantic spirit of acquisition which is the demonic power behind most advertising.

If that car you bought four years ago is still serviceable but beginning not to look quite as sleek as it once did, you have already believed a lie. If that dress you have on the rack is still in good shape but you would not wear it because it's last year's style, you have already believed a lie. Monitor your level of discontent; you will then have a read on where you have bought the modern lie that the newer is always better and that keeping up with styles is necessary. Learn to say a No to what the advertisers demand you buy. If you are making only the minimum payment on credit cards, you have a problem. And if your feel either envious or intimidated by

---

what others own, you have a problem.

The story is told of the Greek philosopher Socrates that once, in the Exchange of Athens, he was asked by the vendors, “What will you buy? What do you lack?” And as it is with philosophers, every exchange is an occasion for teaching. Socrates walked up gravely into the middle of the exchange, spread forth his hands to heaven in a gesture of prayer, and spoke, “Good Gods, who would have thought there were so many things in the world which I did not want.”<sup>11</sup>

The mature Christian has pondered how they arrived and how they will leave. Naked in, naked out. Each day in the shower they are reminded of this reality, and in the pursuit of God they’ve come to a place of peace. Those who are content in God are free to pursue excellence and not success; they pursue faithfulness instead of constantly managing their image; they are free to live on substance and not passing styles. Ambition is not for them so appealing as obedience which leaves the results to God. They live not on the ladder of upward and onward but within the secure circle of God’s love. Saints in the making are always a bit out of step with a culture than demands ever increasing work and acquisition which leaves us both exhausted and having to rent warehouses outside our homes to hold the increasing clutter we no longer use but can’t let go of.

Even minimum provision is enough for those content with God: verse 8, “for if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Such people are a marketing nightmare. Quality, simplicity, durability, beauty: these are the virtues of contentment. The content buy what they need, not what the culture trains them to want. For them less is often more. So pray over you next purchase: Do I truly need this? Is this something God desires me to have and enjoy? It is possible to answer that question with a Yes sometimes. If a needy person was standing beside me at the counter, what would they say about my purchase? True theology and true teachers promote this kind of counter-cultural lifestyle and this kind of regular self-examination. Its widespread practice would make us a radically different people with vast resources of time and money available for the things that matter and will last: friendship, the holy play of worship, missions, feeding the poor, gossiping the gospel and teaching the world how to love God and one another.

**The Other Path (vv.9-10)**

---

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Thomas Traherne in “Centuries,” *Christianity Today*, Vol. 33, No. 2.

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 ..... 12**

The next two verses, 9 and 10, are for us all, but especially for those who dream life would be fine if only they were rich. Paul had seen this craving destroy many believers, so many in fact he could mark the stages downward to ruin and destruction and finally away from the faith altogether.

It begins in the heart with a desire, with a yearning and a longing, not for something good and tangible (e.g. a home, a car, a book, a saw, a piece of art, a wife or husband) but for money, the symbolic stuff that says you that you can have it all if only you have enough of the symbol. The desire to enjoy a good thing is not evil. God leads us into the enjoyment of the good by giving us desires for them. But the desire for riches is not the same as wanting something good in itself. Riches give the power to buy what I want, when I want it, without regard for God or others. Riches give a feeling power and independence which are the very opposite of faith and reliance on God. Few there are who can be both wealthy and dependent on God.

So let's imagine that one Sunday morning Satan visits Greenwood and passes his spiritual scanner over the congregation. Among some he detects lust, among others sloth, among still others perhaps a tinge racism or a dab of unbelief. But it is the greedy who are his special focus this visitation because they are so easy to divert from the straight and narrow. All it takes is money. 200 proof. "Taken straight or mixed with many lovely things, it is the most intoxicating substance known to man." So wrote David Augsburger.

The spiritual scan reveals that on their heart are written these words, "I desire riches more than I desire God." They have no plan for their imagined wealth, no great vision of good to be accomplished, just the dream of being able to do whatever they want whenever they want it with reference to none but themselves. What easy targets they are. Greed isolates and insulates. So he baits them with temptations, even granting them significant successes as they work on Sundays and spend endless hours in stock speculation on the internet.

A voice whispers, "No need to tithe your profits any longer. Think of the miracle of compound interest on that extra ten percent. You can give, but do it later, after you've reached your personal goals. God understands." And so, as Paul says, they fall into temptation and into a snare. Net worth has become their leading indicator. And with new wealth come new opportunities. A vacation home. Trips abroad. First class everything. And now there is the task of *keeping up with the other up-and-comers* so the speed increases, and with increased speed there is inevitable moral recklessness. His wife is not as attractive as the bubble head at the office, and

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 ..... 13**

since he has to have the best of everything, why not her as well? Along the way people have become tradeable commodities.

And then, at a time of Satan's own choosing, he pulls the net and the man is caught. Over-extended in all directions, financially and morally. Another Christian business man or politician or pastor is involved in a scandal involving sex or money with the result that the church is defamed and the Christian message once again labeled with a warning that "it worked for others but not for me." Downward and further downward into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. Paul had seen it happen time and again. Henry Nouwen was right, "Wealth takes away the sharp edges of our moral sensitivities and allows a comfortable confusion about sin and virtue."<sup>12</sup> Mother Teresa, surely the richest poor woman in the last hundred years, offers this commentary on Paul's disaster report:

"Once the longing for money comes, the longing also comes for what money can give: superfluities, nice rooms, luxuries at table, more clothes, fans and so on. Our needs will increase, for one thing brings another, and the result will be endless dissatisfaction. This is how it goes."<sup>13</sup>

Now because Paul has seen Christians repeatedly get on the downward escalator to nowhere, he quotes with approval another ancient proverb found in the Greek writers Dio Chrysostom and Phocylides. It is a radical proverb with an arresting moral warning. "For the love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evils."

It is for the sake of more land and resources that wars are fought. At the root of all sorts of evil is the desire to live independently of God of which money is the most tangible symbol. It is greed congealed together with deception and violence. So if you love money *in itself*, if having more makes you feel more secure and having less less secure, you are flirting with the Evil One. The devil is asking you to dance and luring you into an embrace of death.

Yes, it can also be used for good, but since it is so easily loved not for what it can do but for the power it represents, we should always be suspicious of our own motives in regard to it. And if you are not yet tithing, you should be extra suspicious.

---

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Ben Patterson, *Marriage Partnership*, Vol. 7, No. 3.

<sup>13</sup> In "Jesus, The Word To Be Spoken," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 39, No. 12.

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19** ..... **14**

It may be that if you release ten percent and give offerings as prompted by God you are inoculated against the spiritual disease of avarice.<sup>14</sup> It is hard for the desire for more to find root in a checkbook that honors God off the top and then manages the ninety percent with his guidance.

I wonder if Paul have Judas in mind when he wrote verse 10? “For the love of money is the root of all (kinds of) evils; for it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their heart with many pangs.” Apparently the love of money and its pursuit can cause those who once loved God to choose a different path and then wander down into darkness, like a ship sinking beneath the waves and plunging to the ocean floor, because that is just the nautical image Paul uses in his phrase *that plunge men into ruin and destruction*.

**Those With Special Opportunities (vv.17-19)**

It’s a new idea, at least it was to me, that rich Christians are *special needs Christians*. They have temptations and opportunities others do not, and so Paul addresses them directly.

Asking the rich and prosperous to give above the rest is not optional for pastors. Paul in a public letter commanded Timothy to do it. Verse 17:

“As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty (first task), nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches (second task) but on God who richly furnished us with everything to enjoy (third task).”

The first pastoral task with the wealthy is not to ask for money. It is to deal with sinful attitudes like pride and misplaced hopes. It is to remind them that all genuine enjoyment is from God. There is no need to feel guilty over wealth that was honestly earned in yours or an earlier generation. The questions are, How can this wealth not corrupt my soul? And secondly, What good can I do with God?

An historical analysis confirms that Christian virtues like hard work and honesty and fairness and delayed gratification tend to the accumulation of wealth over

---

<sup>14</sup> For a treatment of avarice and its resistance through simplicity and de-accumulation, see James Bryan Smith, *The Good And Beautiful Life* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2009), Chapter 9, “Learning To Live Without Avarice,” 153-170.

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 ..... 15**

time.<sup>15</sup> Money is no longer spent on alcohol and gambling but on equipment and the education of one's children who then move up the economic ladder. There's a new heart to serve others through your craft or profession, and with excellence in service comes new opportunities. Money comes in, and over time some Christians find themselves prosperous, even rich. They may have depression values and be well practiced at *poor-mouthing*, but their net worth impresses their accountant so that he recommends sophisticated estate plans and insurance programs to protect the legacy.

So the pastoral care of the rich is not first about giving; it is about relationships in which the pastors explores their heart to root out pride and false hope. So many people are after something from the wealthy that it may take a long time to build such frank and trusting relationships. Most pastors are intimidated by the wealthy, and most of the wealthy, and here Christian celebrities also come to mind, want to know someone cares for them more than for their money. It is often easier for the poor to receive good pastoral care than the rich because they've grown so suspicious and insulated, often with good reason.

But there comes a time when you ask them to get involved. No one was ever offended because you asked for too much. Paul was not at all embarrassed about asking the prosperous to fund his mission trips. Verse 18: "They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that is life indeed."

If your gift is music, you are to be rich in music, liberal and generous in that area. If it is administration, be rich there. If, like me, it's teaching and preaching, be liberal and generous there. Whatever your particular gift from God, that is where you are to focus, and in doing so you lay a good foundation for the future and increase your grip on the quality of life that makes life rich, now and later. All Christians are to tithe; it our duty and our role. But to those to whom God grants wealth he also grants the ability to exercise the gift of extraordinary giving, perhaps even up to a reverse tithe, which is to give away ninety percent and live well on the ten.

**CONCLUSION**

It is always a bit dangerous to paraphrase Scripture because it's so easy to make the

---

<sup>15</sup> Some of the early church growth experts (e.g. Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, George Hunter) refer to this as *redemption and lift*. Replacing vice with virtue has immense economic potency, especially across generations.

---

**1 Timothy 6:1-10, 17-19 ..... 16**

text round and smooth and non-offensive. But Joe Stowell, President of Moody Bible College, does a good job a summarizing the verses before us:

“The real point of materialism is not how much we have, but what has us. It’s not what we hold, but how tightly we hold it. Not what we have, but how we got it. The test of materialism is whether our goods have made us proud or grateful, self-sufficient or God-sufficient.”<sup>16</sup>

And if there are any who wish to become rich in good deeds, I will be more than happy to meet with you, your lawyer, your accountant and even your children because I am full of kingdom ideas that need to be funded, here at Main Street and around the world. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

And oh, please make a reservation for the meal on November 10. Let your stewardship of whatever you have begin with faithfulness to your local church. This is where it starts; this is where we are either faithful or unfaithful. By stock in God’s work here at Main Street, and then be an involved stockholder. It’s true riches.

---

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Stowell, “Preaching for Change,” in *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching*, edited by Keith Wilhite and Scott Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 138.

---