

1 Timothy Chapter 6: The True Riches of Godliness

Honest Service Under Subjection (1 Timothy 6:1-2)

Paul opens chapter six by addressing those under the yoke of servitude. In the first-century Roman world, slavery was a widespread social reality. Paul's instruction to these believers is direct:

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." (1 Timothy 6:1)

Applied to our modern context, this highlights the profound responsibility Christians bear in the workplace. Believers are called to a standard of absolute integrity and diligence. If secular coworkers stretch a fifteen-minute break into a half-hour, the Christian worker should remain disciplined and above reproach. When a believer cuts corners or exhibits a poor work ethic, it invites critics to mock their faith and defame the name of Jesus.

This echoes the rebuke the prophet Nathan leveled against King David after his sin with Bathsheba: *"You have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme"* (2 Samuel 12:14). Because the world expects more from those who claim Christ, slovenliness and compromise carry a heavy spiritual cost.

Paul then transitions to the unique dynamic of serving a Christian leader:

"And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." (1 Timothy 6:2)

A Christian worker might easily presume upon a Christian employer, expecting special favors or lower performance standards under the guise of brotherhood. Paul corrects this immediately. Brotherhood in Christ is never an excuse for entitlement; rather, it should inspire even higher quality service, rendered out of love for a fellow member of the family of God.

The Error of Commercialized Faith (1 Timothy 6:3-5)

Paul severely warns Timothy about those who distort Christian teaching for personal advantage:

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing..." (1 Timothy 6:3-4)

Throughout this epistle, Paul returns repeatedly to the theme of "godliness"—the cultivation of a character that reflects the heart and actions of God. True doctrine always produces godliness. Conversely, false teachers are characterized by pride, academic pedantry, and a toxic fixation on trivial disputes that breed envy, friction, and suspicion.

Paul exposes their underlying motive in verse 5: "supposing that gain is godliness."

This is the ancient root of the modern prosperity gospel—the deceptive heresy that faith is primarily a tool for financial advancement, material wealth, or social status. It treats God as a means to an

end, telling people that if they just muster enough faith, they are entitled to luxury and ease. Paul's response to this ideology is uncompromising: "from such withdraw thyself."

Contentment vs. The Trap of Wealth (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

In contrast to the pursuit of material gain, Paul redefines true prosperity:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6:6-7)

Real wealth is not found in an abundance of possessions, but in a heart that is satisfied with God. Consider the tragedy of the ultra-wealthy who spend eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, obsessively chasing their next corporate acquisition. Despite millions in the bank, they live in deep poverty of soul, driven by a chronic deficit of peace.

True security begins with the recognition of our baseline mortality: we enter the world completely naked, and we leave it exactly the same way (Job 1:21).

Therefore, Paul establishes a radical standard for lifestyle simplicity:

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Timothy 6:8-9)

A life consumed by the drive for affluence opens the door to unique temptations. Where limited resources naturally restrict certain vices, excessive wealth often provides the means to indulge them, leading to spiritual shipwreck.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:10)

Scripture does not state that *money* is inherently evil; money is morally neutral. Rather, it is the *love of money*—greed—that anchors human corruption. If you trace the systemic miseries of the world, from international warfare to local crime and exploitation, you will inevitably find the fingerprints of financial greed.

The tragic irony of the pursuit of wealth is that it promises happiness but delivers misery. The most financially affluent individuals are frequently the most profoundly isolated, constantly wondering if people love them for who they are or merely for their bankrolls.

The Call to the Man of God (1 Timothy 6:11-16)

Paul provides Timothy with an alternative pursuit, shifting focus away from temporal accumulation:

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

A healthy life requires a proper orientation. If your life revolves entirely around material gain, internal discord is inevitable. However, when your life is centered on God, your perspective shifts entirely.

To give this instruction maximum weight, Paul issues a solemn charge:

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Timothy 6:13-14)

Just as Jesus boldly declared His kingdom before Pilate, Timothy is called to uncompromised fidelity. This requires keeping Christ at the absolute center of his life. As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Human life operates on two intersecting axes:

- The Vertical Axis: Your personal relationship with God.
- The Horizontal Axis: Your relationships with people and possessions.

If the vertical axis is out of alignment, the horizontal axis will inherently wobble. People spend fortunes on therapy trying to stabilize their horizontal relationships, yet they continue to struggle because their primary connection to God is broken. When the vertical axis is set right, the horizontal relationships naturally settle into place. You will view possessions as temporary resources entrusted to you for stewardship, and you will view your fellow man through the lens of love and generosity.

When Christ returns, Paul reminds us:

"...he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto..." (1 Timothy 6:15-16)

Material wealth is a counterfeit god. While the poor often live under the illusion that money will solve every problem, and the rich quickly discover its limitations, Christ's return will decisively establish who the only true God is.

Instructions to the Rich: Eternal Investment (1 Timothy 6:17-21)

Finally, Paul addresses those who already possess worldly wealth, commanding Timothy to instruct them directly:

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy..." (1 Timothy 6:17)

God is not opposed to our enjoyment of life. In fact, the finest experiences—marveling at a sunset, walking through a quiet forest, or experiencing deep fellowship—cannot be bought with money. They are gifts given freely by God to be enjoyed fully within the boundaries of His wisdom.

For those with financial abundance, the instructions are clear:

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come..." (1 Timothy 6:18-19)

This commands us to leverage temporary resources for eternal purposes. In Luke 16, Jesus shares the parable of the unjust steward who, facing imminent dismissal, used his remaining time in office

to secure future friendships. Jesus used this secular example to teach a spiritual truth: we must use our brief, passing time on earth to invest in eternity.

Currency holds no value in heaven; gold is merely the pavement of the New Jerusalem. Our only opportunity to invest in eternal treasures is right now. To be rich on earth but bankrupt in heaven is a profound tragedy. True wisdom chooses eternal wealth over passing comfort.

Paul concludes his letter with an urgent plea:

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

Timothy is exhorted to protect the pure deposit of the Gospel, avoiding empty philosophies and speculative systems that distract from a simple, lived faith. By keeping Christ at the center, cultivating godliness with contentment, and investing our lives in things of eternal value, we experience the fullness of life as God intended.