

1 Timothy 6:6

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Date: 30 August 2015

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[0 : 00] Now, I'm 1 Timothy, we're finishing off today, and you'll remember that one of the theme, the big theme of the letter is really how do you keep a church on track? How do you keep a church on track so that it will show off the saving of the world?

And we've certainly seen what that looks like in the home and what that looks like in church. And one of the sub-themes of the letter is godliness. You find it nine times in the letter of 1 Timothy. And I want to take, I suppose, as a text this morning, I've got verse 6 of 1 Timothy chapter 6. But godliness, being like God, godliness with contentment is great gain.

Let me start with a quote from Madonna. Some boys kiss me, some boys hug me, I think they're okay. If they don't give me proper credit, I just walk away.

They can beg and they can plead, but they can't see the light. That's right, that's right. Because the boy with the cold heart is always Mr. Right. Some boys try, some boys lie, but I don't let them play.

[1 : 02] No way, no way. Only boys that save their pennies make my rainy day. Because they are living in a material world, and I am a material girl.

You know that we are living in a material world, and I am a material girl. I can see you all singing along. That could very well have been the theme tune of the Ephesian elders.

Verse 5, look what it says there. In verses 3 to 5, it says that their teaching, these Ephesian elders leaders, their teaching does not agree with sound words. Their teaching is not sound, it's not healthy.

There's something unhealthy in what these false teachers are teaching the church in Ephesus. Their teaching does not agree with the sound teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not healthy. And what are they teaching? Well, what they're teaching does not promote godliness. Instead, look at the end of verse 5. They imagine that godliness is a means of gain.

[1 : 59] They're promoting a new gospel. They'd be on the God Channel and TVN, because they believe that the gospel actually leads you to monetary prosperity.

There's nothing new under the sun, is there? I think that's reassuring. They imagine that godliness is a way to get rich financial gain. A way to material gain.

And what that is telling us is we are living, aren't we, in a material world. And these Ephesian elders, they are living in a material world. And the Bible's got something to say about that.

It says, well look at verse 6, it says godliness with contentment. Not godliness as a way to make financial gain, but godliness with contentment is in itself great gain.

I think it's a very, very important text that's done this year. As we think about this church plan, as we think about a building project in which we will have to raise finances, godliness with contentment is great gain.

[3 : 03] Three things about it. First of all, see the madness of materialism. See the madness of materialism. Materialism has got its limitations. It's not all it's cracked up to be.

Look at verse 7. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of the world.

There's the apocryphal stories of the man who died, and he chose that great Welsh hymn for his funeral.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah. You can't do better than that, can you? At a funeral, really. And do you remember how the last verse goes? And that hymn, When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside, death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Cagan's side.

But there was a spelling mistake in the order of service, and it said it lands my safe on Cagan's side. That's wishful thinking, isn't it? It won't happen, because Paul says, do you see that?

Look at it. Verse 7, we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of the world. Do you remember the Egyptians, the pharaohs, you studied them in school, children? The pharaohs and the Egyptians, they built those massive pyramids, and they crammed them full of treasures,

stick with them into the next life, but it can't be done.

[4 : 19] Materialism has its limitations. How much did she leave? Preston is often asked at a funeral. And the answer, of course, is everything. You leave it all behind, don't you?

You can take none of what you have with you. The Russian author Tolstoy tells the story about a Russian peasant who was never satisfied. He always wanted more. And he gave him a wonderful chance to get more land.

For a thousand rubles, he could have all the land that he could walk around in a day. It's one of Tolstoy's short stories. But the Russian peasant had to make it back by sundown or lose all the money.

He rose early, that man, and he sat down, and he walked on and on and on, his greed driving him on just as far as it could. He saw new territory. And finally he realised time was going on, and he had to get back.

And he started to walk, and he realised he had to walk faster, and he jogged. And he had to get back to where he'd started out in order to claim the land. And as the sun got lower and lower in the sky, he quickened his pace.

[5 : 28] Sweat began to pour down upon him. And as the sun neared the horizon, he began to run, his heart pounding rapidly, him gasping for breath.

And he plunged over the finish line and collapsed just seconds before the sun disappeared below the horizon. And as he lay there, a stream of blood poured out of his mouth.

And he lay dead. And his servant took up a space and dug a grave. He made it just long enough and just wide enough, and he buried him.

Do you know what the title of the short story is? How much land does a man need? And the answer is just six foot from his head to his heels. That's all he needs. We brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of the world.

And Paul, of course, is quoting from the Old Testament, isn't he? Solomon, who was one of the richest people who ever lived. He's even Job. He's a very wealthy man. The Bible isn't against wealth at all.

[6 : 32] There are a lot of wealthy people in the Bible. But he's quoting from Job and he says, 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. Materialism has got its limitations. And it's got its dangers, isn't it? So look in verses 9 and 10.

It says those who desire to be rich. He's speaking to those who want to be rich. At the end of the chapter, you'll remember that he speaks to those who are actually rich. But here he speaks to those who desire to be rich.

I don't know what category you're in. But he's speaking to those who want to be rich. And he warns them of the trap of those who want to be rich. Verse 9. Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a slag, a trap, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money. Notice that it's not money, is it? It's one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible. The Bible doesn't say that money is the root of all evil at all.

[7 : 37] But it says the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It's a trap, in other words. It's like a noose to catch a bird. And you are lured into the trap.

And before you know it, the noose is wrapped around your neck and it drags you down and pulls you up. The Apostle Paul talks about the cloak of covetousness. It's a brilliant phrase.

What do you use a cloak for? You use a cloak to disguise yourself, doesn't it? The cloak of covetousness. And John Bunyan brilliantly picks this up in his book The Holy War.

And he speaks of Diabolus sending traitors to lurk in the town of Mansoul. And among the traitors that he sends into Mansoul is a young fella called Covetousness who took the name of Mr. Prudent Thrifty.

I love Bunyan. It's just so obvious languages. It's so readable. He took the cloak of covetousness and he took on the name Mr. Prudent Thrifty. And he lodged in the house of Mr. Conscience.

[8 : 43] Isn't that what happens? Covetousness. That wanting what we don't have is like a chameleon. It disguises itself and it hides away in the human heart.

And it puts on a cloak and it comes out in different ways and we don't see it. And it changes its colour according to its surroundings. And if we see it we see it in someone else, don't we? You understand? For yourself. There's a Jesuit priest who once said that in all the years that he'd taken confession over a lifetime of hearing confessions in the Roman Catholic Confession Box not once had anyone ever confessed of being greedy.

Isn't that interesting? Because it's a trap. It's a temptation. Wanting to be rich. It is one of those traps. It's like a hole in the ground that is covered by twigs and leaves.

And before you know it you've fallen into this hole in the ground and there are spikes at the bottom of that hole and you impale yourself on them. And you plunge yourself into ruin and destruction.

[9 : 52] The love of money is the root of all evil. And by loving it, Paul says some have wandered away from the faith and they've pierced themselves. They've impaled themselves with many pains.

It's a downward spiral. So the Bible gives you examples. It talks about Achan and what greed did to him. Destroyed his whole family. You think about Adonai as a fire in the New Testament whose greed made them lie in the Holy Spirit and brought down severe judgment upon themselves.

You think of Judas who for 30 pieces of silver a small amount betrayed his Lord and his life.

Demons who just loved the world and went away from the gospel.

Paul says there's real danger there for you and I. And it's still a very present thing to you, isn't it?

How soon do luxuries become necessities?

Think back of your own lifetime. Think of the things that you used to hanker after and you thought if only I had one of those things and now you think I've got to have it.

[11 : 03] Think about mobile phones. Do you remember when your first mobile phone was? Do you remember it? It was probably a brick, wasn't it? Kind of big square. Do you remember when it was? You can all remember your first mobile phone, can you?

And it was a luxury. But how quickly the luxuries become necessities. What others in different parts of the world this morning can only dream about and now why are there dreams?

Now we think we can't live without. Nelson Rockefeller, he was one of the richest men in the world in his day. He was asked by a reporter how much money do you need to live comfortably?

And he said, you know the answer, don't you? He said, just a little bit more than I get. So let's think about this. If there's somebody here, you've got a fantastic income.

You've kind of jacked up your expenditure. So your debt load is absolutely massive. It's as big as anybody with a much smaller income. And so you live on the edge.

[12 : 03] And you live on the edge month by month. And you're only a whisper away from blowing blowing the lot. Or it's something you've just not got control at all.

And you're right on the borderline. But what is this? It is a trap, isn't it? It is a noose. It's greed.

It's covetousness. So when somebody gets a good job, what do we do? That's crazy. We congratulate them. We thank God for this new opportunity. And there's a part of that which is really right.

But there's another part where we don't stop to think that he or she might be entering very dangerous territory. It might mean that actually their job keeps them completely away from serving the church.

It may mean that they spend far too much time away from the family. It might ruin their marriage, potentially. And we don't stop it. Finish this sentence.

[13 : 05] If only I had If only I had an iPhone an iPad an iMac Do you know what that is?

Do you know what that's called? It's called idolatry. It's a rubbish joke. You PC users, you're just as bad. If only, if only I had.

How do you escape this trap? How do you escape this trap from madness and materialism? Well notice what Paul goes on to say in the second place in verses 11 to 16. He goes on in the second paragraph to talk about the great gate of godliness.

The great gate of godliness. He gives some advice in verses 11. But as for you O man of God It's an Old Testament title. But as for you O man of God flee these things pursue righteousness godliness faith love steadfastness gentleness.

How would you escape the trap of just keeping up with the Joneses and being like everybody else in London? How do you break free from the madness? Will you have to consciously run away from something and run to something?

[14 : 15] Thomas Chalmers we've talked about this before he calls it the power the expulsive power of a new affection it's a sermon it's a terrific sermon you can read it online what does that mean?

Well remember the teenage boy the teenage boy who never visited the bathroom unless he absolutely had to he spent hours kind of on his game boy or whatever it is they play now I don't even know what they're called Nintendo is it or something I don't know or on his skateboard he was always on it but suddenly there's a change he would never visit the bathroom but now he spends hours in the bathroom and you think what is wrong with him his skateboard is in the back garden he doesn't play on his game boy anymore what's happened?

He's discovered girls isn't he? It's the expulsive power of a new affection he's fallen in love with a girl and suddenly he's concerned about his appearance so he spends ages trying to get rid of his spots in the mirror what happened?

he has run away from the things that he was once occupied with and now he's pursuing his new love and if you become a Christian that's exactly what's happened to you so Philippians chapter 3 the apostle Paul says whatever was my prophet I now consider lost that's behind me for the sake of Christ to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I've lost all things I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ but if you go to Philippians 3 there's what 30 years between verses 7 and 8 he's not just telling you what happened when he became a Christian when he fell in love with Jesus but he's telling you what happens now he says that language is even stronger Paul is painting a picture isn't he in verse 11 of 1 Timothy 6 of what we should be pursuing he says flee flee these things flee all that and pursue godliness righteousness faith love steadfastness righteousness you see it's not that we say right

I'm going to stop being greedy and I'm going to stop being comitous and with grooming resolve I'm not going to be a greedy person it doesn't work like that does it instead what happens is we need to pursue an alternative set of values and that's what he's giving you in these verses he's giving you another alternative lifestyle godliness righteousness faith love steadfastness gentleness so let me just speak to those children that are going back to school this week and it is hard to live as a Christian in school we know that and so you need to ask yourself what is going to help me pursue righteousness godliness faith love steadfastness and gentleness ask that about your friends in school ask that about the people that you want to hang around with now I know we need to be the friends of sinners we know that don't we but if our friends are going to lead us away from godliness what is the apostle for what does the word of god say can you see it he says flee he says run through your life i'm constantly amazed at how strong i think i am but i think i'm able to cope with with all sorts of things when in reality i'm not i think i can cope with her teaching when i really can't and so actually we need to re-explain that don't we there are certain things as Christians we've got to flee from tom writes about a little commentary on 1 timothy 3 it's actually not very good but he gives a great illustration here and he says imagine you walk around the corner and you meet your most feared animal i don't know what your most feared animal is imagine that you walk around the corner and there is a giant spider or a great snake or a rhino or roaring lion let's say you go around the corner what do you do you run with your life you flee but let's say you go around the corner and you see the person that you love most in the world and you haven't seen them for years and they're walking on the other street and they haven't seen you and they walk down and what do you do you shout and you run and you pursue that's the picture that is the picture and that is how we should behave for the

[19 : 03] Lord Jesus that's how we should behave for these virtues of can you see them righteousness godliness faith love steadfastness gentleness it's very interesting in verse 12 the next word is fight is that perceive gentleness fight isn't that the rest of the position no because you've got to fight for gentleness those qualities in verse 11 they don't come about by accident isn't that true they don't occur in someone's life just by accident you don't kind of go to a conference and you suddenly come back wow I'm now righteous godly I've got full of faith love steadfastness and gentleness no you've got to fight for them you've got to go after them energetically you choose again day by day by day to live simply in an uncluttered sort of way and people who begin to do this discover that they begin to live in this present age the life of the age to come it breaks in and they find themselves looking forward to the king of kings being revealed and they celebrate his royal appearance so break free from materialism smash the idols of wealth you've got to pursue christ to pursue the person who loves you best in the world who you love the most let your heart go out to

him let the lord jesus become your consuming passion feed that passion so there used to be a hymn that when the minister walked into the pulpit they would play the hymn turn your eyes upon jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth would go strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace and this little kind of spindly old man would get up but the hymn is a brilliant hymn is that turn your eyes upon jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will go strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace that brings me to the third point in one two and that is the crown of contentment so in verses 17 to 10 he speaks to those who want to be rich and in verses 17 to 19 he speaks to those who are rich you see what he says in verse 17 as for this as for the rich in this age charge them it's a very serious word it's command them have a thought for poor old timothy he's often called his name timid timothy i don't think that's really fair but he does seem a kind of gentle kind of bloke imagine how much are you feeling imagine you've got a very very wealthy man in your congregation imagine you've got one of those footballers earning 200 grand a week where you've got

Simon the guy of the X Factor Simon Cowell is it Cowell or you've got Rupert Murdoch someone like that you'd be a little bit intimidated wouldn't you when you went round for the visit as the minister and Paul is saying to Timothy I want you to command I want you to charge I want you to command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant not to put their hope in uncertain riches but to put their hope in God who gives us everything generously for us to enjoy command them Timothy so I don't really know who the rich people are in this congregation I don't see the giving figures but actually I do because it's all of us isn't it and I know most of us don't think we're rich in fact probably none of us think that we're rich but in fact we are all filthy rich we are amongst the richest people on this planet you read of the south of Sudan we are all rich it's a word for all of us this morning it isn't a word particularly from Bill Gates it is a word from God to us because we are rich it isn't a word for some great rich philanthropist it isn't a word for Richard Branson no it's a word for you and a word for me we are fabulously wealthy by global standards and this is what God has to say to us he says this he says do not be arrogant command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant because with riches comes pride doesn't it pride of achievement I'm a self made man I'm a self made woman it gives us a sense of superiority money talks money gives you wealth and power and influence and control very often and with money can come a sense of superiority and whether you like it or not you look down your nose at those who are not just as well off as you are and Paul says command those who are rich not to be haughty not to be arrogant not to look to wealth for their sense of significance people do that don't they how much was he worth how much is he worth how much is a human being worth Jesus says a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions Jesus says you don't measure a human being by how much he's left behind money money is good it is good but money is not God that's the point that's the point at the end of 1 176 don't get your sense of who you are because you've got money behind you don't get arrogant don't look to money for significance you're someone in your job you've made it no no that's idolatry you see money is good but it is not God don't look to money for significance don't look to money for security I spoke about giving to our building project and they said they would have last week but the Chinese stock market crash had lost them goodness knows how much it only takes a Chinese stock market crash for the world to reel a little bit do you see those headlines are we heading for another downtown or you crash your car and it's written off or there's an unexpected bill moth and rust corrupt thieves breaking and steel or there's a global financial crisis do you see it command those who are rich charge them not to put their hope in uncertain riches things have wings money is good but it is not God don't feel you're safe because you've got money in the bank you are only safe if you have Jesus Christ in your heart as your Lord and your Saviour money is good but it is not God and don't think that money will satisfy us that's easy to think that we've seen that from the passages we've looked at it's like drinking seawater the more you drink of seawater the first year you get I just happened to see I was on YouTube there was an interview with Kerry Packer the Australian billionaire he died a few years ago and his friend was being interviewed and he was releasing a conversation that they had in the early hours of a morning in a restaurant in Sydney and Kerry Packer says to his friend Philip Adams tell me what is a black hole and Philip Adams spent the next 20 minutes trying to explain what a black hole is and Kerry Packer turned to him and said do you know what I think I've got a black hole in my heart I've got a black hole in my heart

[27 : 03] I've got an aching void the world can never fill that's right isn't it it's a billionaire Thomas Watson one of the old puritans describes comparing the delights and the pleasures that you can have in this life from material things which there are we don't despise those things God gives us all things for us to enjoy there's pleasure in music isn't there on holidays pleasure in having a nice home and a nice car to drive around God gives us these things to enjoy but they cannot satisfy us and so Thomas Watson says this there's as much difference between spiritual joys and earthly joys as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is merely painted on a wall the material things can look so satisfying can't they but they can never satisfy your soul it's a difference isn't it between I was going to say a photo of a Big Mac and eating a

Big Mac there's the exact opposite on that isn't there you think of food photography isn't it and you look at some of these dishes they produce and they are amazing and then if you ever get the privilege of tasting them the photograph fails into insignificance isn't that right so are you content have you found satisfaction and meaning and purpose to life it's not out there it's not out there in the things that we chase after but it's here in your heart now none but Christ can satisfy none other name for me there's life and love and lasting joy Lord Jesus found in thee last year there was an unpublished letter of C.S.

Lewis that was discovered in a second hand book and he's writing in 1945 to Mrs. Alice whoever she is and he compares Christian contentment and joy with the pleasures of life in this world this is what he says he says real joy jumps under one's ribs and tickles down one's back and makes one forget meals and keeps one delightfully sleepless at night and then he adds this post script to the letter don't you know the disappointment when you expected joy from a piece of music and you only got pleasure it's like finding Leah when you thought you'd married Rachel brilliant thought that you you you expected you expected joy but all you found was pleasure it's the difference between what is soulish and what is spiritual isn't it people can come to church and you can have some sort of experience and people think that that is spiritual

I felt something in the singing but it's just soulish it's like going to a concert and listening to Beethoven there's nothing wrong with that Beethoven is great is he but it's a soulish experience it's not a spiritual experience it will not satisfy it's transient does it you go to the football you experience enormous joy it's a good experience it's not spiritual it will not satisfy because none of Christ can satisfy none other mean for me there's life and love and lasting joy Lord Jesus found in me the third part of Shakespeare's King Henry VI the king is found wandering about in the countryside and he's unknown he's unrecognised and he meets two gamekeepers and he tells them I'm your king and they don't believe him and they say to him if you are a king where is your crown the king gives them a great answer he says my crown is in my heart not in my head not decked with diamonds and Indian stones not to be seen my crown is called contentment a crown it is that seldom kings enjoy and so brothers and sisters we start out on a new academic year we can know contentment in Jesus

Christ and let us encourage one another and let us admonish one another and let us rebuke one another towards that end because godliness with contentment is great gain let's sing a Thank you.