

SOUND WISDOM IN THE CHURCH

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

Paul gave final instructions to Timothy to help him in maintaining purity within the local church (3:15). First, Paul dealt with the attitude that slaves should have toward their masters, whether they were believers or unbelievers. Second, he exposed false teachers in light of their doctrine (6:3), their character (6:4), and their negative influence upon slaves and other church members (6:4b-5). Therefore, Timothy was to have no part with them. Third, Paul instructed Timothy to center his teaching around the principle of "godliness with contentment" lest he and his church members be numbered with those who had erred from the faith (6:6-10). Fourth, Paul charged Timothy to maintain proper conduct, attitudes, and goals as he labored in Ephesus (6:11-16). Fifth, Paul informed Timothy of the message he was to deliver to the rich (6:17). The rich were to guard against an attitude of self-sufficiency and use their time and wealth to bring glory to God (6:17-19). Sixth, Paul again reminded Timothy to carefully guard the gospel message, which was committed unto him (6:20), and not let the message of the apostates prevail. His best defense against apostasy was to turn aside from vain talk, such as speculations that originated from the empty wisdom of men (6:20b-21).

I. The Performance of Slaves — 6:1-2**A. Those with Unbelieving Masters — 6:1**

6:1 — A Christian slave was to honor and respect his master. "Honor" has reference to financial benefit as in 5:3, 17. A Christian slave was to be a financial benefit to his master. This was important so that God's name and doctrine are not blasphemed.

B. Those with Believing Masters — 6:2

6:2 — A Christian slave was not to despise his Christian master because he was a brother in Christ. Instead he was to serve him in a greater way because he had a common bond of faith with him. The benefit from his labors went to a fellow believer, a "beloved" brother.

II. The Peril of False Teachers — 6:3-5**A. Their Doctrine — 6:3**

6:3 — "Teach otherwise" - False teachers teach a different doctrine than Christ's doctrine. This is the third time Paul warned Timothy about false teachers in the church (cf 1:3; 4:1-3).

"Consent not to wholesome words" — False teachers willfully refuse the words taught by the Lord Jesus Christ. They oppose the doctrine of godliness (3:16). False teachers oppose the words that develop godliness and spiritual maturity. They are dangerous to the lives of believers in the church. The profane words of false teachers bring spiritual harm to believers and make them weak. The wholesome words of Jesus Christ give spiritual health to believers and make them strong.

B. Their Divisions — 6:4

6:4 — "Proud, knowing nothing" - False teachers are puffed up with pride showing off their useless knowledge, void of truth.

"Doting" — It means "to be sick with" their doctrine. They are perverted and lead people astray. They major in controversial questions that stir up quarrels.

Their teaching produces the unhealthy fruit listed below:

"Envy" — This is jealousy or annoyance at another's success.

"Strife" — This means quarreling.

"Railings" — These are bitter words; blasphemies.

"Evil surmisings" — These are evil suspicions.

C. Their Desires — 6:5

6:5 — "Perverse disputings of men" - Their thoroughly corrupted minds caused wrangling with each other. They are destitute of the truth that they had rejected.

"Gain is godliness" — The article is with "godliness" so it is the subject of this sentence and it should read, "godliness is gain." These perverted teachers taught that "godliness" is the means for financial gain; God blesses godly people with material things. So the more things one gains in this world indicates how godly he or she is.

After Jesus dealt with the rich young ruler, He said, "A rich man shall hardly enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 19:23). The disciples were shocked. They thought that wealth was evidence of God's blessing for godliness and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus told them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:25-26). So Jesus taught His disciples that gain is not a sign of godliness. This is a false teaching that many people believe today. Some very godly people have remained very poor all their lives. This is especially true of believers who live in lands where they are hated and are forced to live in poverty (Heb 11:37-39).

III. The Priority of Godliness — 6:6-10

A. The Priority Considered — 6:6-8

6:6 — "Godliness" - The mystery of godliness was revealed in Christ (3:16). He is God's eternal Son who came from Heaven to live on earth. He was born of Mary, never sinned, died for the sins of all people, rose from the dead, shares His life with believers and has returned to Heaven. He showed the world the essence of godliness. Believers are being conformed to His image (Rom 8:29) and will be like Him when they see Him (1 Jn 3:2). Godliness is being conformed to Christ.

"Contentment" — Christians are content when they are satisfied with God's daily provisions (Phil 4:11). They know this is what it takes to be like Christ. With this mindset, these believers are able to live above the circumstances of life.

"Great gain" — True godliness with contentment is great spiritual gain. Spiritual gain is the top priority of godly Christians.

6:7 — "We brought nothing into this world" - We had nothing when we born. Clothes and food and a place to live were given to us by God through our parents or caregivers. All that we have has come from God (Job 1:21).

"We can carry nothing out" — We may accumulate great wealth during our lives, but we cannot take it out of this world. It all stays here. Jesus said a person is a fool that is rich with this world's goods, but is not rich toward God (Lk 12:20-21). And while he gathers much, it never satisfies him. The pleasures it gives quickly passes and the grief it brings weighs heavy on his mind and soul.

6:8 — We will do well to be content with God's supply for our basic needs (cf. Ps 37:25; Prov 10:3; Mt 6:31-33; Phil 4:19). If He gives us gifts above our basic needs, we must not hold

tightly to them. If riches replace our love for Him, He may take them away so we will draw closer to Him

B. The Priority Contrasted — 6:9-10

6:9 — "Will be rich" - Some believers desire ("will") to be rich. They place this above the desire to be godly. They will commit "little sins" in their haste be rich, but it will hurt their soul (cf. Prov 28:20-22). As a result they fail in their spiritual life.

"Fall into temptation and a snare" — They are trapped by their own lust and enticed to serve money as their god (cf. James 1:14-15; Mt 6:19-24).

"Many foolish and hurtful lusts" — Their desire to be rich will lead them into senseless sins which will hurt them rather than bring them satisfaction i.e., cheating on income tax, dishonesty in business, gambling, making money by selling sinful products.

"Destruction and perdition" — They will be drowned in destruction and perdition. These two words are used for emphasis. Their desire to be rich will overwhelm them and destroy their lives in Hell. Destruction means the complete separation from God and everything good in life: instead of light, darkness; instead of freedom, bondage; instead of peace, fear; instead of joy, grief; instead of comfort, pain. People who have turned from God already have tasted these things, but complete destruction will be much worse in perdition: Hell and finally in the Lake of Fire.

6:10 — "Love of money" - The damage caused by wrong priorities is disastrous. The love of money is a root of every kind of evil. Note: it is not money, but the love of money, that causes the problem.

"Erred from the faith" — Some Christians keep seeking money and, in doing so they lose their love for God and it will pierce their hearts with many sorrows. Those who profess faith in Christ, but do not possess Him, will stray from the Christian faith that they once professed and lose their souls in Hell.

IV. The Practice of God's Man — 6:11-16

This is a helpful exhortation for all Christians.

A. The Method — 6:11

6:11 — "Flee these things" - Timothy was to run from the love of money and the evils that it brings.

"Follow after" — Timothy was to pursue spiritual things with determination.

"Righteousness" — A right life before God and before mankind would show his character.

"Godliness" — Timothy's life should be conformed into the likeness of Christ (cf 3:16).

"Faith" — It may refer to Timothy's faith in God, his confidence in God (2 Cor 5:7). The Greek word also is used for faithfulness. In that case it would show his trustworthiness.

"Love" — Timothy was to love God first with his whole being and then love others as he loved himself (cf. Mk 12:30-31; Jn 13:34; 1 Jn 4:7-12).

"Patience" — His perseverance and endurance in trials would show composure in battles.

"Meekness" — This is a difficult Greek word to translate into English. It is an attitude that does not insist on its own rights and is often translated "gentleness."

B. The Manifestation — 6:12

6:12 — "Fight the good fight of faith" — The word for fight in this verse (*agona*) is a figure of speech for an athletic contest in which Timothy was exhorted to expend great energy and agony in reaching for the prize. The figure of speech for warfare against the apostates in 1:18 is a military battle. Here the fight is called a good fight for the true doctrine of God, which must be kept for the glory of God. It is a contest against the false teachers that want to replace the true doctrine with their false doctrine.

"Lay hold on eternal life" — Timothy already had eternal life, but now he was to grasp all the blessings which that life provided (cf. v. 19).

C. The Motivation — 6:13-16

1. The exhortation — 6:13-14a

6:13 — "I give you charge" - Paul gave several charges to Timothy in this letter, but this was the most solemn. He called two witnesses to hear his charge. Timothy was charged before God Who preserves life. This would encourage Timothy to know that God would preserve him in defending the faith.

Timothy also was charged before Jesus Christ Who left an example for Timothy as a good confession before Pontius Pilate (cf. Jn 18:33-38; 19:8-11).

6:14a — "Commandment" - Timothy was charged to "keep," or carefully obey, the commandment. He was charged to keep the commandment by a godly life so that no stain or blame could be laid against it. The commandment probably referred to all those obligations Paul had given him throughout this letter.

2. The expectation — 6:14b-16

6:14b — "Appearing" - The charge is to be kept until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has reference to Christ's appearing for His church at the Rapture (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thes 4:13-17).

6:15 — "Blessed and only Potentate" - This charge is to be kept until Christ comes in due time to show the power and authority of His Father.

"King of kings, and Lord of lords" — This phrase is said of Christ (Rev 17:14; 19:16), but it also can be said of the Father Who has greater authority than His Son (1 Cor 15:28).

6:16 — "Who only hath immortality" - This description seems to refer to God, the Father. He will never die; He lives forever. It also can be said of Christ's divine nature, but He did die as a man in His human nature.

"Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" — This is another description of the Father. No man, except Christ, is able to approach the brilliant, pure, glorious light of the Father in his earthly body.

"Whom no man hath seen, nor can see" — The only man that has seen the Father is Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:18).

"Be honor and power everlasting" — The highest honor and power belong to the Father (cf. 1:17; Rom 11:36). He has the greatest authority. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons in the Godhead, which never had a beginning. They have the same nature and attributes. However, they do not have the same authority. The Father has the greatest authority, then the Son and finally the Holy Spirit, Who is under the authority of the Father and the Son.

V. The Prescription for the Wealthy — 6:17-19

A. Their Attitude — 6:17

6:17 — "Charge them that are rich" - Timothy was to charge the wealthy members of the church not to be proud and think highly of themselves.

"Nor trust in uncertain riches" — The wealthy members were not to trust in their riches. Riches can make wings and fly away (cf. Prov 23:4-5).

Trust "in the living God" — The wealthy members were to trust in God, Who promises rich blessings both now and forever that are guaranteed to all who depend on Him (Phil 4:19; Mt 6:31-33; Lk 6:38). Those who trust in riches have made money their god and it offers uncertain riches now and cannot give any riches in eternity.

B. Their Actions — 6:18

6:18 — "Rich in good works" - Timothy was to charge wealthy Christian people to turn their attention from producing more money to practicing good works. That is where true wealth is found and preserved. If they listen to this advice, they will be wealthy forever.

"Ready to distribute" — They should be ready to distribute their wealth generously when a need arises to give (cf. 1 Jn 3:17). Of course, money should never be given with an unwilling spirit, because God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7).

C. Their Accumulation — 6:19

6:19 — "Laying up in store for themselves" - By giving, they will be laying up for themselves treasures in heaven — cf. Mt 6:19-20.

"Lay hold on eternal life" — By giving, they will take hold of the blessings that accompany eternal life (cf. 6:12). Those who do this will discover the true life that God wants for them.

VI. The Protection of the Church — 6:20-21**A. Guard — 6:20a**

6:20a — Timothy was to carefully guard or protect the revelation which he had been given. He was to act as a soldier who would guard a treasure.

B. Avoid — 6:20b-21

6:20b — Timothy was to avoid the empty babblings of the false teachers and the knowledge which was man-centered and in opposition to the Gospel. Today this would include the teachings of evolutionists, communists and occultists.

6:21 — Some already had followed false teaching and as a result had been led away from the true faith.