

GREAT GAIN - Part 1



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Key verses: 1 Timothy 6:6-16 ESV

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

¹¹But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Introduction

Materialism and **Contentment** are our big themes for today.

Why is money so important to God?

All through scripture we see an intimate correlation between the development of a man's character and how he handles his money. So much of scripture addresses the issue of money, we cannot ignore it. Sometimes we don't notice how central the issue is because we are looking for other themes...

What most challenges our loyalty and obedience to Christ?

None of us can enthrone the true God, unless in the process we dethrone every other god in our lives. This includes mammon or materialism or the love of money. Every believer must break out of bondage to money and possessions in order to live under Christ's exclusive lordship.

How do you know if you are under mammon's influence?

Touch your money; touch your goods; how do you react?

Can you ever make a decision without starting with finance as the determining factor?

Jesus said so clearly: You Cannot Serve God and Money (Matt 6 :24)

²⁴"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be **loyal** to the one and **despise** the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Today we will look at 1 Timothy 6...

Paul presents fantastic perspective in this chapter. Today is a time of realignment where we find liberty and joy and peace in God's goodness and provision for us.

1 Tim 6:6-16 Man vs. Mammon (Materialism & contentment) (next week v.17-19) (Generosity and Eternity)

v.5 Introduces the topic - Error and greed / Contrasts false teaching and true riches.

Confused by materialism. Godliness/religion as a means of gain - a pathway to wealth. (preachers prey on people for personal gain)

v.6 Gives us correct perspective- True godliness with contentment is **great gain** / great treasure / true riches

1. Mammon vs. man (no small opponent)

What is materialism?

Relevant for rich and poor? It's not just an issue for the wealthy.

It has to do with goals / desires / dreams.

Is our focus money or God? **Called to God-focus/God first - Matt 6:33**

Mammon challenges that: our affection/allegiance is drawn away.

Imagine starting to follow Jesus – what changes?

[The language you use; the way you treat others; what you drink; the social activities you enjoy; the places you visit; the music you listen to]

Jesus says: Take up your cross; deny yourself and Follow Me!

Matt 10:38; Mark 8:34; Luke 14:27

Is there any impact on how you handle money; view money; use money?

Why does Jesus make us uncomfortable when He speaks about money? Because His view is so radical; it is so different!

Does your relationship with Jesus impact your relationship with money?

What did Jesus warn us about? The Parable of the Rich Fool **Luke 12:13-21**

¹³Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵And He said to them, "Take heed and **beware** of covetousness [greed / desire for gain], for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (Materialism)

¹⁶Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ²⁰But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

²¹"So is he who **lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**"

2. Themes mentioned in these verses in 1 Tim 6:9,10

⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs/sorrows.

People who long to be rich and

The love of money = (materialism). This is the opposite of faith; We chase them, doubting whether God is able to take care of us.

The root of all kinds of evil

- Look around in SA: Short cuts to cash
- Bribery / corruption / gangsterism / syndicates
- Crime / theft / drug deals / unlicensed firearms
- The Bible equates work / labour with reward

Temptation – if we love money too much, it will tempt us into deceit and insincerity. We will be tempted to corrupt the message of the Gospel.

Trap / snare

Foolish desires – if our loyalty lies with money, soon we will start doing anything to get it, including things that are offensive to God.

Harmful desires – things that bring injury upon you

Many sorrows

Plunging us into ruin (death / doom / destruction)

Plunging us into destruction (loss / eternal ruin)

[What can you think of that causes destruction? Drugs / alcohol / adultery / GBV? What about the desire to be rich?]

The love of money / the desire for wealth / Materialism:

What is its impact on the Christian?

Why is mammon so dangerous?

Why is it seen as direct opposition to God?

It's a good-looking subtle alternative to true surrender to God.

It is not obviously sinful to most, but it is completely carnal.

Those taken in by it can also view the church community as an income source.

What is its impact on the church:

Does the prosperity gospel support a selfish, self-focused, self-centred, materialistic message where self-interest is primary?

Does a message of 'God wants me wealthy' appeal to my materialistic mindset?

If I use this message to get people to church or to God, what type of Christian am I going to produce?

If the key thought is "What can I get out of it?" Like a food parcel; a job opportunity; or win a free car; How do I take that convert and convince them to become a selfless follower of Jesus?

When we connect with our Heavenly Father and He becomes the shepherd that cares for us - we love, follow, serve, obey Him and enjoy His provision for us; but money is not the motivation.

The reality for some people is that surrendering their lives to Jesus has cost them everything.

3. How is your relationship with money?

Money is morally neutral – what we do with it (and what it does with us!) makes it good or evil. Run away from materialism.

Ascetism: views it as evil/something to be avoided; contamination.

Materialism: views it as something good; sought after; honoured.

Poverty is not piety; Jesus lived simply, and used money to the glory of God, while rich and poor were drawn to Him.

Luther: "If silver and gold are things evil in themselves, then those who keep away from them deserve to be praised. But if they are good creatures of God, which we can use both for the needs of our neighbour and for the glory of God, is not a person silly, yes, even unthankful to God, if he refrains from them as if they were evil?"

Yancey: "I feel pulled in opposite directions over the money issue. Sometimes I want to sell all that I own, join a Christian commune, and live out my days in intentional poverty. At other times, I want to rid myself of guilt and enjoy the fruits of prosperity. Mostly I wish I did not have to think about money at all. But I must somehow come to terms with the Bible's very strong statements about money."

What is your view? What is your relationship with money? What is your earliest memory of working with money? What has shaped your relationship with money over time?

What should characterise our relationship with money?

This chapter in 1 Timothy 6 gives us some very clear direction!

- *** Contentment * Integrity * Generosity**
- An **Eternal** perspective: *Our use of money has eternal implications. Money has an impact on eternity – for us and for others – and Jesus knows it!* (More about that next week)

What could be an antidote to materialism? Two things stand out:

- **Contentment** (simplicity as a lifestyle – with purpose)
- **Generosity** / Giving (4 types) (More about that next week)

When we are content, our relationship with God is enhanced. Gratitude and worship overflow. We can make intentional investments – clearly direct our expenditure.

Financial peace comes from margin.

Are you:

- Always pushing for more?
- Always maxed out.
- Never have margin.

Holding back is a key strategy! (Example: S/Side flat)

4. Contentment is key:

It keeps us away from complaining / being disgruntled.

The gain of godliness is not immediate material gain. But... Godliness with **contentment** is great gain.

That contentment comes from **a clean conscience**. It comes from walking in the Spirit and the fulfilment of doing the will of God. It comes from laying up treasure in heaven that cannot be touched and will last for eternity.

What will affect us in the world to come is not how much wealth we have had or not had, but the way we have handled what God has given us.

Michael Eaton writes, '**Contentment** is being happy with what is given us and with the place in life where God has positioned us.'

We make peace with our provision and we make peace with our position. We find our sufficiency in God.

[Are you unhappy with your income? Your position? Has your focus shifted away from God? Is obeying Him your no.1 priority?]

What do you do with **ambition**? Ambition can be beautiful but it can also be destructive. With proper perspective and in its rightful place it can be helpful. The state of the heart is vital. Have you enquired of the Lord? Have you consulted God with your plan?

We can face plenty; we can face need; but in every situation we have Him as our sufficiency.

Phil 4:11-13 NIV

*¹¹I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the **secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³**I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.***

5. Final thoughts and questions:

v.11-16 Flee certain things; follow certain things. Paul is asking Timothy to be a striking contrast to the money-loving people that were influencing the believers in Ephesus.

The false teachers wanted to be rich. People were eager to join them because they too wanted to be rich. **Timothy is not going to be chasing money along with the crowd. He is going to view money differently.**

He is going to get on with what God has called him to do and be satisfied with what God has given him to work with. Money will not be his focus, though he will be a great steward of God' resources. And surely, Timothy will operate with **contentment!**

Will you live counter-culturally?

Will you steward all of your resources as if they belong to God?

Some final questions as we close:

- What does contentment look like in your world?
- What in terms of lifestyle is settled as sufficient in your heart?
- What are you willing to do without?
- What are you willing to sacrifice or forego?
- What will you lay aside?
- Why would you choose that?
- What higher purpose would you serve by limiting your expenditure?
- How can this enhance your awareness of God and worship as a lifestyle?
- What will you place your affection on?
- If you took your affection off riches, what would you place it on?
- What would you desire so deeply that it could be a driving force in your life?