

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is full of warnings the dangers of loving wealth. Perhaps none is more pointed than the one given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:21 'for where your treasure is there your heart will be also.' What believers do with their money and their wealth in general is one of the truest measures of their spiritual maturity. How should believers view money? Let me say as a way of introduction that having money or wealth is not wrong (1 Samuel 2:7) being wealthy is not sinful.

Some of the great men of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Job and Solomon were extremely wealthy. The second thing we should realise is that money is a gift from God (Deut. 8:10-18 especially vs. 17-18). All that believers have comes from the good hand of our God. Third thing to say is that believers must be willing to part with their wealth especially when it gets in the way of serving Christ (Matthew 19:27). Fourthly people with wealth must not be shown favouritism (James 2:1-10).

Fifthly those who are wealthy must not be proud nor seek security from it (1 Timothy 6:17 & Proverbs 11:28). Lastly wealth must be used for eternal purposes it must be used to help in the pursuit of souls (Luke 16:9). Now having very briefly surveyed the biblical principles for the use of our wealth let us turn to our passage and discover what the passage says about this subject, but before we do so, I am assuming that we are all wealthy. Even the poorest one among us is wealthy compared to at least two thirds of the world. Now notice:

1. THE PRINCIPLE STATED (v 10)

Now this principle is stated in this chapter because as we saw last time, there were false teachers whose motivation within the church was one of money. It is not that money is wrong as I outlined in the introduction but it is the love of money or the pursuit of wealth that is so wrong. When money is the motivating factor then we will discover ourselves being prepared to do all kinds of evil.

Now I must point out in passing that the love of money is not the only root of evil but it is a root and many of our crimes are committed because of someone's pursuit of wealth. In the case at Ephesus the false teachers had devised a whole system of beliefs, which had money at its heart for they taught that godliness, as they understood it led to financial gain (v 5). It is because of this belief that Paul puts this section about money in his letter.

2. THE DANGER OF LOVING MONEY (vs. 6-8)

Paul gives us three dangers that we all must be aware off:

a) Loving Money Leads To Ignoring True Gain (v 6). The word translated 'but' could be translated in other ways as well. It could mean 'indeed' and if that is how it should be translated then this little phrase is in response to the erroneousness belief of the false teachers of v 5. Paul would then be saying indeed godliness does provide great gain but not the gain that you are thinking about. If the word should be translated 'but' or even 'now' then what Paul is saying would be something like; but over against your false understanding of godliness, true godliness does result in great gain. But it must be accompanied by contentment.

Godliness is really likeness to God so when likeness to God is accompanied with contentment then such godliness leads to great gain. Contentment means to be satisfied to seek no more than what one has. The word was used in Stoic philosophy to mean immune from earthly or external distractions. The Stoics had a little saying 'we cannot control the circumstances but we can control

our reaction to them.’ As Christians we know that ultimately contentment comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6; 9:8; and Philipians 4:11-13 & 19).

Contentment is based on the sufficiently provided by God for his children. If we love money then we are saying that God cannot provide all that we need or He does not understand what we need and therefore we are robbing ourselves of that contentment that comes from trusting in God. Having a complete and total trust in God as the provider is indeed true gain. Believers who trust completely in God are truly wealthy for the richest person is the person who doesn’t need anything and that is exactly the position of the Christian.

A godly person is not motivated by the love of money but by love for God. Such a person seeks the true riches of spiritual contentment that comes from complete trust in an all-sufficient God. No amount of money will make up for lack of contentment, and you cannot love money and be content, to love money you lose, to be godly with contentment you gain.

b) Loving Money Leads To Focusing On The Temporary (v 7) – Paul has to remind the church that there are no pockets in a shroud. We all know the truth of this verse even if the Bible hadn’t of said it, we would all know it is true. We brought nothing into the world and we will take nothing out of it. Paul had to say this because the love of money is so powerful that we so easily forget that basic principle we become so easily entangled in this world, we can so easily live as if this world is all there is, we can become focused on the temporal and lose sight of the eternal.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that there are many Christians who need to be reminded of this basic principle of life. There are Christians who work more and more hours in order to earn more and more salary or else they are not content with their grade at work and so continue to seek promotion which of course demands more and more hours which of course ultimately affects their walk with God, their family life and their life in the church.

Jesus told his disciples not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth but treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20), yet far too many Christians, it seems chose to ignore this principle. That is why many churches are struggling today financially, and many missionary societies are unable to expand their work and in some cases missionaries have had to come home because of lack of finance. If every Christian truly lived by this principle then I believe God’s work would not be struggling financially.

We know the truth of this principle in our heads but our hearts are often too much in love with wealth so that we are unable to live according to this basic principle of life. It does affect how we live the type of house we live in the car we drive, how much savings we have. A good question to ask ourselves is why do I have the things I have? Why do I want to buy that thing I am thinking about? Why do I have that amount of money in my savings account?

You might be able to answer those sorts of questions honestly and with pure motives but it is worth asking those questions. Beware! for our hearts are so good at deceiving us and convincing us of what we think we need rather than what we do need. What do we really need in this world? What are the basic necessities of life? We are told in v 8 that if we have food and clothing (the word for clothing can also include shelter) we should be content with that.

Life when boiled down to its basics is really very simple, but the love of money can make life much more complicated. Material things demands time and energies and money that would be better spent on eternal issues. Of course Paul is not condemning wealth or having possessions here and that is very important to stress, if God graciously provides them for us we should be content with that but what Paul is condemning is a self indulgent **desire** for money which rises out of a heart that is not content.

The goal of every Christian is to love and glorify God, if in the process of perusing our goal, God chooses to bless us with material things then we will deal with them in a way that comes into line with our goal of glorifying God. Unfortunately the temptation is to make wealth our goal and pursue it and in so doing we will not love and glorify God as we should.

3. THE EFFECTS OF LOVING MONEY (vs. 9-10)

Loving money instead of loving God has a number of effects:

A) Great Temptations That May Lead Us Into Being Trapped - People who want to get rich, people who love money are people who face all types of temptations. They are tempted to think that their money belongs to them and therefore they can do whatever they want with it and use it in whatever way they think best to make even more money. They forget that it's the Lord who owns everything and they are only stewards. Money lovers are tempted to think that God owes them, and therefore all that they have is deserved, in turn they become ungrateful and selfish.

A good antidote to such temptations is to realise that God owes us nothing and anything we receive from him comes from his gracious hand and therefore we ought to be thankful and use our wealth carefully for his glory. Another temptation money lovers face is to fail to distinguish between wants and needs so that in their minds their wants become their needs, Such people are tempted to spend more than they earn and therefore are prepared to get themselves into debt in order that they might accumulate even more wealth.

A final temptation is to be stingy, such people will fail to give sacrificially to the Lord or to others and therefore God's work suffers as a consequence. There are many other temptations that face a money lover but all these temptations lead such a person into being trapped. They are trapped by their desire for more and more wealth. These desires reflect themselves in many of the sins mentioned above and they are completely trapped, for their whole lives are being controlled by their desires and lust for more and more wealth

The trap is laid by the devil and it is one that every Christian here has to seek to avoid. I cannot read hearts only you know if you are being tempted in this area or maybe there is someone who is caught in the pursuit of wealth trap or is in danger of being so.

B) Ruin Of Spiritual Life (vs. 9-10) – The wholehearted pursuit of material wealth ultimately ruins one's spiritual life. Such people are tempted and trapped but they also fall into many foolish and harmful desires, such people do not think right they do not have a proper perspective on life for they are controlled by wealth therefore many of their decisions can be irrational, senseless illogical and foolish. It is in this sense that their desires are harmful such thinking will only harm a Christian's life not help it.

You see this further by the next sentence of verse 9 these foolish and harmful desires lead them to plunge into ruin and destruction. It is interesting in passing that the word translated 'plunge' means to 'sink' or 'submerge' or 'drag to the bottom,' the pursuit of wealth will always drag a man down. The word destruction is often used of the eternal ruin of the soul. If you put all the words together in this verse you have a picture of a man who in pursuit of wealth ruins himself, both body and soul. The love of money is indeed a root of all kinds of evil it ultimately ruins people. There is no greater example in Scripture of this than Judas who betrayed our Lord for 30 pieces of silver.

This is something that might happen to you if you love money for this is something that has already happened to many people and so in order to illustrate his point; Paul in verse 10 points out that; those who were eager for money have wandered from the faith and caused themselves many grief's. Paul does not name names, but he clearly has some individuals on his mind and probably the church knew that is what has happened to some of their Elders.

They turned their backs on the Lord in their pursuit of money. They have wandered from the faith the word 'faith' here means the body of truth believed by the church. They have changed their doctrines in order to suit their aims, and we have already had one example of their false doctrines in v 5, where they proclaimed that godliness is a means to financial gain. The incentive for godliness is no longer love for God but love for money. Such people have replaced God with money.

As a result they suffer many grief's they go against their conscience and it's like sticking a knife into them, it hurts. They will have unfulfilled desires that hurt them, a deep dissatisfaction and a disillusionment that grieves them. Can you not see what Paul is saying, to love money more than God does not lead to happiness and contentment as we are led to believe; but it leads ultimately to heartache and grief and a desertion of the true faith?

Therefore as I conclude you have to apply this to yourself, as I have to do so to myself. We all need to look at our own motivations and desires. In a book I read this week in preparation for this sermon someone suggested that we write everything down that we possess. Then write beside it the value of each item. Add it up and you will probably be surprised at your true wealth. Then the book suggested that we take each one of these items and decide if each one is a need or a want.

After doing that the book suggests that the true nature of our hearts will be revealed to us. I will leave you to think about doing that; but the truth is this passage is not about what we have or do not have but its about our desires and motivation for having the wealth we have. You can be wealthy and be content, and you can be poor and fall into the trap of desiring wealth. We all I am sure ought to ask God to examine our hearts on this issue.

Amen