

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 14 – 1 Timothy 6:6-21

I. Godliness is a Means of Great Gain (vs. 6-7)

In the previous verse, Paul condemns those who would think and act as though there was earthly gain associated with preaching the Gospel. In the past lesson it was discussed that this is not the case and those who seek to gain money or prestige are condemned. However, here it is made clear that there is great gain associated with the Gospel but not in a carnal sense. The gain we enjoy is a hope of Heaven and a resilience in dealing with life's tribulations.

A. *Spiritual Gain (v. 6)*

The "gain" associated with godliness has nothing to do with fame or wealth but is instead the hope that comes with a knowledge that God is faithful and true to His promises (**2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 4:21-22; 2 Cor. 1:18-22**). Therefore we have no need for anxiety (**Matt. 6:25-34**) knowing our treasure is not here but in Heaven (**Matt. 6: 20-21**). The contrast between carnal and spiritual gain is summarized in the Hebrew letter (**Heb 13:5-6** – "*Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," 6 so that we confidently say..."The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?"*).

B. *Contentment (v. 6)*

The Greek word is "autarkeia" which denotes an inner peace, satisfaction and fulfillment without regard to outside things. Contentment is not optional. It is an expectation of God's people but it doesn't come easily. Paul said he had learned to be content regardless of his earthly condition (**Phili. 4:11-13**) and he instructs others to follow his example (**Phili. 4:9**). If Paul had to learn this lesson then we must as well. This hope allows us to endure the difficulties of this life and teach others to do the same by our example. Paul encourages us to understand that there is strength in this contentment. (**2 Cor. 12:10** – "*Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*").

C. *We Brought Nothing and Can Leave with Nothing (v. 7)*

This idea is found elsewhere in the Bible (**Job. 1:21; Ps. 49:17; Eccl. 5:15**). We are characterized as strangers and aliens to the world (**1 Pet. 2:11-12**) and therefore we have no real investment here. Material gain is not to be our primary goal in life (**Luke 12:15** – "*And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions"*). This principle continues to convict those mentioned before who would make merchandise of preaching or living the gospel as were the greedy false teachers of **2 Pet. 2**. Remember Jesus' words when he cast out the money changers from the Temple, calling them robbers and thieves (**Matt 21:13**). They were using the Temple of God for commerce and this was at odds with its purpose.

II. Contentment Versus Greed (vs. 8-10)

The thought is carried to its conclusion here by making clear that we should be content with the necessities of life rather than have lusts for money or what money can buy. The word "raiment" here is a broad reference to a covering, not just clothing. Thus food and shelter are all we really need. This is a stark contrast from what many today consider a "need". In our great abundance, we tend to confuse

what we need with what we want. For a sojourner in a foreign land, food and shelter is enough. Those who have an unbalanced desire for more can develop a greed that can be a “temptation and a snare” (v. 9) that can be difficult to escape (**Prov. 28:20**) because it is deceitful in its nature (**Matt. 13:22; Eph. 4:22; Heb. 3:13**) and can result in ruin and destruction. This “love of money” (v. 10) can displace the love one has for all things that are Godly.

III. Instructions (vs. 11-21)

The instructions that follow are very practical in nature but because they address the attitudes of heart, the weakness and sin of these lusts can be easily hidden by the dishonest, until they are overtaken by them. Simon the Sorcerer (**Acts 8**) did not apparently show his greed until the opportunity to achieve the sinful gain was presented.

A. To Timothy Regarding Himself (vs. 11-16)

Paul warns Timothy personally to flee these things, even though the instruction has application to all Christians. Instead he was to “*pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness*” (v. 11). Timothy was not immune to temptation and his defense was a good offense. Focus on Godly things (**Phili. 4:4-9**) because they displace ungodly things in the heart (**2 Peter 1:4-9**). This empowers one to “*fight the good fight*” and “*lay hold on eternal life*” (v. 12). He is commanded to “*keep the command without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs. 13-14). This denies the human concept that sin can continue because of God’s grace being sufficient to compensate (**Rom. 6:1-2**). Timothy was to be diligent in his efforts.

B. To Timothy Regarding Others (vs. 17-19)

Timothy is told to instruct others on the contrast of earthly riches versus spiritual riches. He is to teach others not to trust the uncertainty of earthly wealth but on God (v. 17). Here we learn that earthly possessions are not evil in themselves and are provided by God for our enjoyment so long as they are used according to His will (**James 1:17**). Christians are to use their abundance for good (v. 18; **2 Cor. 8:11-15**) and not to hoard it and be lazy about the work as was the rich man of **Luke 12:16-21** because this generosity stores up eternal treasure (v. 19).

C. A Sacred Trust (vs. 20-21)

The word “keep” means to preserve. In **1 Tim 3:15**, Paul calls the church the “*pillar and support of the truth*”. The entirety of the Word is to be kept by those who follow it without compromise. This letter is full of admonitions to do this (**1:3, 18-20; 4:1-6, 16; 6:3-5, 12-14, 20-21**) and **2 Tim. 2:2** reaffirms so as to refute “*vain babblings*” or any so-called “*knowledge*” that would be contrary (vs. 20-21). Jesus is the “*Blessed and only Sovereign, King of Kings and Lord of Lords*” (v. 15) and therefore his Word is unchangeable (**James 1:17**) and endures forever (**Matt. 5:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25**). Some have already gone astray so the warning is rooted in actual need to preserve the Truth and adhere to the “*doctrine conforming to Godliness*” (6:3).