

1-2 Timothy – 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Review

Last time, we looked at Paul's instructions regarding wages and honor for those who serve, particularly those in preaching and teaching positions. We discussed the need to guard against our admiration for the work of faithful servants growing into hero worship (idolatry) of the servants themselves. Then we looked at Paul's direction on how the church should discipline its leaders who are found to persist in sin on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Paul then warned Timothy to discharge his church leadership duties without partiality or prejudice. We then discussed the need to thoroughly evaluate candidates for ministry positions in the church without calling anyone in haste. We know that such due diligence requires time and patience since the sins of some people are well hidden. But we also remembered Jesus' encouragement that we can recognize wolves in sheep's clothing by their fruits. We looked at Paul's admonition for Timothy to keep himself pure, noting that the temptation to compromise our principles in order to fit in is nearly irresistible – particularly in the light of modern society's leaning toward moral relativism even among Christians. Finally, Paul completed his detailed pastoral instructions by encouraging bondservants to honor their masters (and vice versa) particularly when either or both are Christ followers.

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Let's continue our study of 1 Timothy now by looking at Paul's final, general instruction and encouragement for his protégé.

3If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound [ὑγιαίνω *hygiainō*] words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Timothy 6:3-5 (ESV)

I find the Greek word ὑγιαίνω *hygiainō* translated in verse 3 as “sound” intriguing. It comes from the same root where we derive the English word hygiene. The word is translated variously in other verses as “whole,” “healthy,” “sound,” “safe,” and “wholesome.” In fact, the KJV and NKJV translate it as “wholesome” here in 1 Timothy 6:3. I am reminded of Palm 119 which is entirely devoted to praise for God's Word – particularly, His Word's power to cleanse.

***9How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word. Psalm 119:9 (ESV)***

In the modern Church, the concept of the inerrancy, completeness, and power of God's Word is fading away. Many of those who stand in pulpits of a Sunday morning throughout the modern world preaching something they call “the gospel” have publicly and repeatedly declared that they do not believe in the authority of the Bible – particularly the creation “myth,” the fall of man, the great flood, the parting of the Red Sea, and many of the other accounts of supernatural miracles we find in God's Word. Among these, perhaps the most famous is Andy Stanley – son of the late, beloved pastor and radio evangelist Charles Stanley. But of course, Andy Stanley is only one particularly famous and vocal ostensibly “christian” preacher who denies the inerrancy and authority of God's Word. Even the official position of the Catholic church since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s teaches a

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concept called “limited inerrancy” (strikingly similar in my mind to the idea of someone being “partially pregnant,” or a “Partial Zero Emission Vehicle”).

But all of this begs some important questions. If the Bible isn’t really the complete, reliable, Truth of God, then what parts are and what parts aren’t His Truth? If the story of the fall of man isn’t reliable, then how could Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross possibly save mankind out of death unto eternal life? And if Christ’s sacrifice was helpless to save, then is Jesus really God the Son come to Earth in the flesh of a man? If not, is the whole story of Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and promise to return also a “myth?”

But if the Bible isn’t completely and reliably God’s own Word, then who should decide how to divide God’s Truth from the so-called “myth?” For Andy Stanley and his ilk, the answer is most decidedly they themselves! Furthermore, since these people now consider themselves the chosen arbiters of truth, they become free to preach whatever “gospel” they choose to fill the minds of their ignorant victims who are wholly unequipped to discern God’s truth from their lie. Since there is no immovable foundation of God’s Truth upon which to build an apologetic, the “gospel” they then preach is entirely subjective in its source and its nature. The resulting “morality” derived from this “gospel” becomes a mushy, “I’m okay, you’re okay” moral relativism that presents a clear, mortal danger to the hearers’ eternal souls.

Although such false teaching has grown so strikingly over the last few centuries, it is nothing new at all. Therefore, Paul warned repeatedly about it in his writings. Paul also points out here at the end of 1 Timothy 6:5 that even in his day, unscrupulous “gospel” teachers had already discovered this means of “fleecing the flock” that has been honed over the course of the last two millennia into a fine instrument for separating fools from their money.

Just for the record, I personally believe in the completeness, and total inerrancy of God’s Word the Bible (all arguments regarding erroneous translation, incongruity among ancient manuscripts, seeming conflicts between scripture passages, etc. notwithstanding). Without this firm foundation of belief, all the other articles of our Christian faith must necessarily also be called into question – even the very resurrection of Christ which forms the core of our Gospel hope. Thus, Christians are left with no reliable anchor for our faith and fall prey to the unscrupulous false teachers Paul warned about so stridently. In that way the “...*envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction*...” Paul wrote of in 1 Timothy 6:5 rise up to destroy the Church, and lead God’s people away from proclaiming the true (ὕγιαίνω *hygiainō*) Gospel throughout the lost and dying world. That of course, is exactly what our great enemy desires and strives toward.

ASIDE – In Andy Stanley, we surely find the exception to the adage – “The acorn doesn’t fall far from the tree.” I hate to speak ill of the dead, but if Andy is Charles’ “gospel” legacy, then perhaps Charles should have been named Eli instead. Read 1 Samuel 2-4 if you’re curious what I mean by that quip.

“But godliness with contentment [αὐτάρκεια *autarkeia*] is great gain, 1 Timothy 6:6
(ESV)

Everyone in the entire world is seeking and striving for “contentment.” The Greek word Paul uses here – **αὐτάρκεια *autarkeia*** – means *a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed*. Some of us are blessed from the very start with the sure realization that such happiness is something

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to be savored along our way rather than a prize to be coveted and finally obtained and held at the end of our journey.

But Paul tells us here in 1 Timothy 6:6 that quite the opposite is the case. Real happiness and joy are found along the way in our relationship with the One true and living God along with His promise of redemption out of death in our sins obtained solely by belief in His Gospel. Paul tells us here that contentment with the worldly circumstances in which we find ourselves comes from this godly relationship. Thus, the hymn writer Horatio Spafford wrote, “**Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well with my soul’.**” Furthermore, out of our relationship with God and the contentment that He bestows upon us through that relationship, we obtain nothing less than eternal life in the glorious presence of our Lord Jesus. **That** indeed is great gain!

This isn’t to say that we won’t ever experience struggle and sorrow along the way. Jesus Himself warned us that in this world we will have tribulation (John 16:33). Even as Horatio Spafford set down the encouraging words of his most famous hymn, he was aboard a ship traveling to collect the bodies of his three daughters who had drowned when their own ship had sunk after a collision at sea nearby some few days before. Paul taught that our contentment in Christ is independent from the life circumstances in which we find ourselves.

11b...I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 1 Timothy 5:19b-20 (ESV)

7for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 1 Timothy 6:7 (ESV)

Here in 1 Timothy 6:7, Paul is of course paraphrasing Job who modeled godliness in the midst of sorrow and strife. Recall Job’s reaction upon hearing of the deaths of his children.

21b...“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.” Job 1:21b (ESV)

8But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 (ESV)

In this encouragement for us to be content with the fulfillment of our basic daily needs, Paul reminds us of what Jesus Himself taught.

31Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. 34“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for

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tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:31-34 (ESV)

Recall that when His disciples asked how we should pray, Jesus encouraged us not to pray for physical resources beyond our daily needs, nor for help with future challenges, but merely to give us “***our daily bread,***” (Matthew 6:11) with which we shall 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. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (ESV)

Many people fall into the trap of believing that the prize of contentment can be found in the acquisition of worldly possessions. But Paul warns us here that this lust for possessions is a trap leading to ruin, destruction, and sorrow. Of course, God’s Word is filled with many teachings against avarice. Ironically, some of these came from Solomon – one of the richest men of the ancient world.

¹⁰He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. Ecclesiastes 5:10 (ESV)

^{1b}a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. Ecclesiastes 6:1a (ESV)

The news outlets run stories from time to time about people who suddenly received financial windfalls like receiving a large unexpected inheritance or winning the lottery, but the money only brought them sorrow and trouble. This shouldn’t surprise us. After all, Solomon wrote about it 2500 years ago saying “***...there is nothing new under the sun.***” (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

But the real tragedy of great worldly riches is that they tempt people to be drawn away from their faith as Paul warns Timothy here in 1 Timothy 6:10, or never come to call upon the Name of Jesus for eternal salvation at all. Jesus taught about this danger in His Parable of the Rich Fool.

^{15b}“...Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”” ²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:15-21 (ESV)

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God willing, next time we'll finish up our study of 1 Timothy.