

Mid Week • 1 Timothy 6

INTRODUCTION

First Timothy has **two** main **themes**.

First of all, Paul tells Timothy to **beware** of **false** teachers -

Then *second*, he gives a stirring call to **spiritual maturity**.

Since there is so much prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments that the last days would be marked by wide-spread spiritual deception and apostasy, and because of that people's level of spirituality would be *shallow*, 1 Timothy is an important passage for us to study today.

Though Paul wrote this to one man, the pastor of the church at Ephesus, nearly 2000 years ago, what he writes here is completely applicable to all of us today.

We see that in our last night of study - chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

1 Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed.

2 And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

The problem of slavery was a big one in the early church.

The issue was this:

While slavery reduced people to the level of mere *property*, Christianity brought dignity and worth to *all* men and women, regardless of their social status.

Slaves were often thought of as human livestock in the Roman world.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ said that God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, placed *infinite* value on each and every human being and had proven it definitively at the Cross.

God's grace and forgiveness, gained through faith in Christ, meant *freedom* from sin and death.

This freedom, coupled with this new valuation of human life meant that when the Christians assembled for worship, artificial distinctions like social status and ethnic distinctions were swept out of the way.

People sat side by side and worshipped God *together*.

But outsiders saw this blurring of social distinctions as a dangerous trend.

So "against the grain" of ancient society was this leveling among people that many critics of Christianity said it was contrary to the normal order of things and that Christianity was a dangerous sect that was seeking to bring about a radical revolution.

It was based on these charges that Roman officials in many places allowed fierce opposition and persecution of Christians.

Paul is saying here that **equality** in Christ does not mean a denial of the **roles** we are called to play in society.

As we saw in chapter 2, the equality of men and women in Christ had resulted in some of the women *stretching* that equality into areas where it didn't apply, like roles in the home and the church.

In a similar manner, there was a problem with slaves who were shirking their duties to

their masters because they were presuming on their freedom in Christ. Paul tells Timothy to remind slaves that while they are indeed **free** in **Christ**, in **society** they are still under a yoke of slavery – and since God called them as slaves to love and serve Him, then they are to **continue** to love and serve Him as **slaves** – it's just that their service of God is **demonstrated** in their service of their **masters**.

If a Christian slave shirks his or her duties, then their unbelieving master will see the deficiency in their work, and attribute it to their new-found faith in Christ, and this will reflect poorly on the Gospel.

In v. 2, Paul says, and if you give good service to an unsaved master, how much more diligent ought you be to a master who's saved?

Critics of Christianity have often pointed out how the NT fails to condemn slavery.

At points like this, it seems to almost affirm slavery.

But that is an unfair judgment and as usual denies the testimony and record of history. The fact of the matter is, the Apostles knew that when the influence of Christianity had taken sufficient root in society, evils like slavery would be swept out of the way.

But they lived in a world where slavery was a fixed and pervasive institution and to outright condemn it would have been both unwise and unhelpful.

If the Church of that day had taken on an anti-slavery crusade, it never would have survived the second century!

The Apostles and leaders of the early Church understood that God has *not* given us a mandate to reform the institutions of society but that we are called to preach the repentance of individual men and women – and that as we faithful stay centered on *that* task, society will be reformed as individuals are converted.

History has proven them correct!

Slavery was eventually removed as a fixture of modern society.

But only when the influence of the Gospel was widely dispersed and society itself was informed by its truths.

And at the forefront of the abolitionist movement were Christians who realized the time had come to implement the truth that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.

But none of this would have been possible if the Apostle Paul had been a staunch and vocal abolitionist.

It was simply unrealistic to take such a stand at that time.

Better to do what he does here – exhort slaves to diligence in service of their masters.

The salvation of those master was far more likely if they served well rather than poorly.

There is much to learn from what the NT says to slaves.

It reveals a realistic view of things that nonetheless seeks to bring about change.

Where we can take guidance from this today is in the pro-life movement.

Every year, new legislation is brought up on both the state and federal levels that seeks to limit abortion.

And every year, along with pro-abortion groups, some radical *pro-life* groups *oppose* it.

The pro-aborts oppose it because they don't want anyone messing with a woman's right to abortion.

But the reason why some pro-life groups oppose it is because the legislation doesn't go *far enough* in banning abortion.

It may limit it to rape or incest or when the life of the mother is in jeopardy.

Some of these groups want a ban on ALL abortion, for any reason, and so though they have the opportunity to see the end of millions of abortions every year, they won't compromise.

There's a close connection between the issue of slavery and abortion because both of them have to do, fundamentally, with the *value* of human life.

The Apostles worked within the status quo to bring about a change in that status quo.

Wisdom would seem to dictate that we follow their example.

Abortion as the law of the land will not end until the people of this nation wake up to the fact that the unborn child is a full-fledged member of the human race and worthy of all the rights and respect as anyone else.

But it's only as individual men and women are converted to Christ that their thinking about the unborn can be changed.

The best way to see the end of the atrocity of abortion is to share the Lord with our neighbors and friends.

Once enough are saved, society will reform – History proves this, again and again!

In the meantime, pro-life groups ought to take any advance they can in the legal sector to save the lives of the unborn.

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.

V. 2 ended with, "Teach and exhort these things."

As Paul moves to wrap up the letter, he means that Timothy is to teach and exhort all that has gone before in the previous 5 chapters.

Then, in one last shot at the false teachers of Ephesus, he gives this diagnosis of their error.

In v. 3, Paul says that the **first mark** of a false teacher is that they don't line up with what **Jesus** taught.

They teach as doctrine things that lead people astray from the pursuit of genuine godliness.

That is so true!

Look at the result of false teaching and across the board, it leads people into sin and corruption.

The Church has been wracked during its long history by splinter groups that have gone off after some novel doctrine that ends up seeing the members of the sect falling into all kinds of trouble.

Usually the group becomes a hotbed of envy and strife.

For a few years I participated in charismatic churches before attending Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa.

A couple of these churches were part of the speaker's circuit and we regularly had guest speakers.

Several of these I would later realize were false teachers – but at the time, I thought they were legit.

These churches were quite in to the use of the gifts of the Spirit and we regularly heard prophecies and tongues and witnessed so called miracles.

The pastor would call out words of knowledge for people and so on.

What so amazed me is that in the midst of all this apparent depth of experience in the things of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness of the people was appalling.

Coming in and going out was like some kind of a mad dash and people were downright rude to each other.

The envy and strife between members was obvious.

But that's to be expected isn't it?

False teachers succeed because they appeal to the flesh – and once you start appealing to the flesh, the flesh will assert itself and reveal it's ugliness.

Paul charts this in v. 4 when he says . . .

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.

False teachers are proud, and though they think they have an inside track on truth, the fact of the matter is, they know *nothing*!

It is the height of arrogance to reject the words of Christ – yet that is precisely what heretics do!

And once they do, they end up becoming debaters – obsessed with arguing their point.

False teachers love to **camp** on **one** or **two** things to the **exclusion** of everything else.

They **redefine** their entire theology through the **lens** or filter of whatever their pet doctrine is.

I've seen false teachers do this with healing, with miracles, with faith, with the sovereignty of God, and even with the love of God.

Anytime we take one attribute of God and exalt it at the expense of others, we become unbalanced.

And yet, because false teachers affirm one thing that's affirmed in scripture, they think they're right.

False teaching is often a case of being *correct* in what's *affirmed*, but *incorrect* in what's *denied*.

Notice the progress the corruption of false teachers takes:

1) Pride leads to **ignorance**

2) Proud ignorance leads to endless **arguments**

3) Proud ignorant endless arguments lead to **envy**, **strife**, and then nasty insults and paranoia.

4) Once a man or woman gets to this point, unless they **repent**, they will fall to nothing more than speech **void** of any value and a darkness of mental capacity that leaves them empty of **truth**.

NOTE THAT WELL!

In chapter 4 Paul said that the false teachers start out knowing what they're teaching isn't right, but because it provides a convenient mask for their sin, they defy their conscience and teach it anyway.

Over time, their conscience stops bothering them.

Here in v. 5, Paul describes the end of this process of rejecting truth – they lose the ability to know truth at all – they become *destitute of truth*.

I said this a couple weeks ago and I want to restate it tonight because it is one of those things we need to be reminded of again and again: IT IS NEVER WISE TO DEFY OUR CONSCIENCE!

It is never a good move to willingly reject the truth and embrace error because it allows us to avoid a feeling of guilt.

Conscience is a gift we need to cultivate and keep sharp by immersing it in the Word of God, not dulling by giving heed to seductive heresies that appeal to our flesh.

The tail end of v. 5 reveals the *destination* of false teachers who give themselves over completely to their error and end up becoming destitute of truth – they turn religion into a *business* and use it solely as a source of *income*.

They become so corrupt they turn their heresy into a means of financial support.

Of course, we've seen this lived out in Technicolor with some of the modern day false teachers.

The massive crusades some of them hold are nothing but promotional rallies.

The slick TV shows and mailers they send out plead with people to send in money.

Just today I got a report on a false prophecy one of the most well-known false teachers gave 2 years ago.

This man said that 1999 would be a banner year for America and there would be great prosperity – but 2000 would be a year of economic trouble and collapse.

He said the economic hardships would be so great the only way to survive them was to give *everything* to God in 1999, so that He would be obligated to support them in 2000.

He told people to liquidate their assets and call in their pledges right now – that was in 1999.

He then added this solemn warning, “And one final thing, if you break your promise, here this! Some of you make a pledge and along the way you decide to forget about it. The bible says God will destroy the work of your hands if you do that . . . We can't play games with him!”

Some of today's false teachers have turned to slick marketing companies who will do almost anything to come up with new ways to increase their clients income.

Here's one that was sent out a while back . . .

There have always been charlatans who have preyed on the religious superstitions of the gullible.

But the only way anyone could ever be seduced and suckered by false teaching is if they have not been diligent to study and show themselves approved to God as a faithful student of His Word.

The best way to know a counterfeit is to be so well acquainted with the real thing that when a fake is encountered, it's easy to tell the difference.

I spent 13 years in the fast food industry, and handled a lot of money.

One time, as I was preparing a deposit, a bill passed through my fingers that didn't feel right.

A closer look, revealed it as an obvious counterfeit.
One of the ways to recognize a counterfeit teacher is that they make **merchandise** of God's people.

It becomes clear as they minister from year to year that they are getting **rich** off the support of their followers.

Paul tells Timothy to stay away from these guys.

Against the backdrop of this *false godliness*, this kind of *sham religion*, Paul goes on to talk about *genuine godliness*.

Since we covered vs. 6-10 last Sunday, I'll be brief with this tonight.

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

Real godliness, as opposed to the sham piety of the false teachers, is accompanied by **contentment**.

And if we have this kind of contented godliness, then we are indeed rich – **spiritually** rich!

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

The false teachers counted the success of their ministry in the assets gained by milking the people of God.

But because they lived in and for the flesh, they were never content.

Paul reminds Timothy that the criteria we use to measure life is not how many toys we've been able to accumulate.

A person's life does not consist in the **abundance** of their **possessions**.

We entered this world naked, and we end up leaving behind everything we've managed to acquire during our short lives.

There are only two real **necessities** – food and *covering*, which is what the word "clothing" in v. 8 means.

Having food and *shelter*, we ought to be content.

Discontent comes from wanting **more** or **other** than what we have.

A wealthy employer once overheard one of his workers say, "Oh if I only had a hundred dollars, I would be perfectly content."

Knowing that his own money had not given him inner peace, he told her, "Since I would like to see someone who is *perfectly* contented, I'm going to grant your desire."

He gave her the money and left, but before he was out of earshot, he heard her lament to a co-worker, "Why on earth didn't I say 200?"

The boss smiled, for he had made his point that money doesn't make a person "perfectly contented."

The trap so many fall in to is that they think if they could just change their *circumstances*, then they would be content. - It's the old myth of greener grass!

But contentment has nothing to do with our circumstances.

It has to do with what we are trusting in.

Since God has pledged Himself to provide for the necessities of our lives, both our lives here on earth and *eternal* life, we can rest confidently in His provision.

The only other option is to define our lives by our *surroundings*.

If we do that, then we embark on a dangerous journey toward *discontent* because no matter what we manage to acquire, it will never be enough.

Christina Onassis, daughter of famous billionaire, said, “Happiness is not based on money and the greatest proof of that is our family!”

Paul speaks now of those who think that contentment is to be found in the accumulation of things.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

The Apostle paints a terrifying word-picture in vs. 9 & 10 of people who get trapped by the idea that wealth is the means to contentment.

Wealth itself isn't evil – in fact God prospers certain people so that they can be instrumental in funding His work in unique ways

Wealth itself isn't evil, but to longingly desire to be rich can be devastating to a person's soul.

The reason why is because this desire can override all other concerns and see a person do all kinds of things he or she wouldn't normally do.

Cheating, theft, embezzlement – all of these come about because of a desire to be rich.

Where the devil sees greed, he suggests all kinds of ways to attain more money, and as people pursue these they end up drowning in a whirlpool of ruin.

The word “**snare**” in v. 9 means a **fowler's trap** – a snare used to catch small birds by the feet and turn them into tonight's dinner.

The folly of desiring riches is neatly summed up by the story of the middle-aged school teacher who invested her life savings in a business enterprise which had been elaborately explained to her by a swindler.

When her investment disappeared and the wonderful dream of future riches was shattered, she went to the office of the *Better Business Bureau*.

They asked "Why on earth didn't you come to us first? Didn't you know about the Better Business Bureau?"

The lady sadly said, “Oh, yes, I've always known about you. But I didn't come because I was afraid you'd tell me not to invest in it.”

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Paul quotes a well known proverb of the day – “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Again, money itself isn't the problem – it's the *love* of money that's wrong.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it very clear that we have to choose between the love of God and the love of mammon – or worldly wealth. [Matthew 6]

We cannot serve both!

Paul re-affirms that truth here.

He had known people who had believed in Christ, but who had fallen away because of a love of money.

But in every single case, none of these people he had known who had strayed ended well.

The word “**pierced**” in v. 10 means “**impaled**” and pictures someone who's run himself through with his own spear by placing it in the ground and then throwing himself on it.

How it had to just kill Paul to think of people who had made such a good start in the faith,

and with such incredible potential, lose the battle with the world and end up turning away from the Lord because they decide they would rather acquire wealth than heaven. I had a friend, in fact, he was one of my best friend in high school, who started going to church not long after I did.

Prior to his conversion, he was a tough nut, a real agnostic, but when he gave his life to Christ it seemed sincere.

After getting a good start in a solid church, he started going to a church that was a spin off of Robert Schuler's Crystal Cathedral.

The people in this church were all about the trappings of worldly success.

Big cars, bigger houses, pools the country clubs.

These folk didn't bowl – they played golf and tennis.

They even had a valet service at the church!

It wasn't long before my friend dropped out of church altogether and immersed himself in the pursuit of wealth.

He fell away from the Lord and in one very painful conversation admitted that he was back to being an agnostic.

The last time I talked with him was several years ago.

He was living in a plush home in a ritzy neighborhood, but the hollowness in his eyes spoke volumes.

11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Some may be pursuing temporal riches, but *you* Timothy – *you* set off after eternal treasure!

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Paul wrote these words to stir up Timothy's spirit.

It's not hard to discern from 1 & 2 Timothy that Tim tended to be a bit timid.

So Paul uses strong and inspiring words to get him moving.

"Fight the good fight of faith!" he says.

The verb tense is continuous – "**Keep on fighting!**"

The battle is not with other believers but with the enemy in all the ways he raises opposition to the Church and the cause of the Gospel.

This is a *real* fight and Timothy is not to take it lightly.

The outcome is eternal and as Timothy trusts in the Lord as he did when he first came to faith in Christ and was baptized, then his victory is certain.

Here's what's amazing – Timothy heeded Paul's stirring exhortation to fight on – and as a result, the problems of the false teachers was dealt with and the church at Ephesus pressed in to a season of real spiritual maturity.

When Christ wrote his letter to them in Revelation 2, He said that there was only one thing they lacked - and that was in the midst of their doctrinal purity and busyness, they had forgotten about a simple love for Him.

This occurred *after* Timothy's tenure there in Ephesus.

While he was there, he implemented Paul's instructions and brought the church to a solid place.

It's clear – Timothy was no Paul – but he was *persistent* – and as a result, the Lord's work was done.

An anonymous writer wrote: “Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are important.”

- 13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,**
- 14 that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,**
- 15 which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,**
- 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.**

V. 13 is in the form of a **solemn charge**, as a commanding **officer** would entrust to one of his best **soldiers**.

What he's being entrusted with is the command of v. 14, which looks back to v. 12 where Paul told Timothy to Fight the good fight of faith.

He calls God to stand as his witness as he issues this charge to Tim.

He reminds Tim of how Jesus stood before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate and didn't back down in His confession of the truth.

Paul calls Tim to keep the commandment *sincerely*, with *integrity* and to keep at it till Jesus comes.

Look at how Paul heaps up descriptions of Jesus that can only apply to God –

He is the blessed and only Potentate – King of kings and Lord of lords

He alone has immortality. And dwells in approachable light.

And no man has seen him or indeed *can* see him in this glorious light because it would be too much for mortal eyes to see.

Yes, men and women did indeed see appearances of Jesus in the OT, but these were partial veilings of His glory.

No one man or woman has seen God in his refulgent glory – it would be too much!

Paul's earlier comments about money and greed now move him to speak to those who *were* wealthy . . .

- 17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.**
- 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,**
- 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

It's easy for those with wealth to think they are better than others with less.
Because they're able to afford finer things, pride of possession can easily slip in.

Paul cautions against this.

To make sure pride of possession doesn't cripple them, he encourages them to *use* their wealth to good purpose.

God has entrusted them with earthly treasures to what end, so they can selfishly expend it on themselves? Not likely!

He's placed wealth in their charge so that they can be effective at doing good, giving to worthy causes.

By using money as a tool for the advancement of the Kingdom of God, they actually are investing in something *eternal*, and the rewards they lay up in heaven are great.

As we said before in v. 7, you **can't** take it **with** you – but Paul says here you can **send** it on **ahead**!

20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—

21 by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Paul ends with one final comment about the danger of false teaching.

In another military-like charge, he tells his young protégé to set a careful **guard** over his role as **pastor** of the flock of Ephesus.

To that end he must stay **well away** from the emptiness of those who communicate *nonsense*.

There was a very real danger that unless Timothy be diligent to guard himself – he too might be seduced into the endless yet empty foolishness of side issues.

The Titanic was sent warning after warning telling them they were speeding into an ice-field. But the messages were ignored.

In fact, when a nearby ship sent an urgent warning, the Titanic was talking to Cape Race about the time chauffeurs were to meet arriving passengers at the dock, and what menus were to be ready.

Preoccupied with *trivia*, the Titanic responded to the warning: "Shut up. I am talking to Cape Race. You are jamming my signals."

While false teachers are caught up in senseless babblings about nothing – they are leading themselves and those who hear them into ruin.

CONCLUSION

Okay – let me end with this:

There's an ad for a new reality show coming out soon in which 4 unmarried couples are going to be put on a topical island along with 26 very attractive and fit singles who are all trying to seduce them away from their fiancés.

Sick, sick, SICK!

But it serves as a great illustration to end with tonight.

Over and over again, Paul has told Timothy to **STAY AWAY FROM FALSE TEACHERS and TEACHING!**

Look at v. 20

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—

6:5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.

4:7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

In 2 Timothy 3:5 he tells Tim to turn away from those who have nothing but an empty religious form.

All of these words speak of the utter and categorical REJECTION, DENIAL, and ABSTINENCE from all that is false.

Unlike that reality show, if you want to avoid sin, if you want to avoid error and moral failure, the best thing is to stay away from it.

You don't camp out with it on a topical island and sit in a Jacuzzi with it sipping margaritas.

Stay away from sin – stay away from error.

If the internet is too much of a struggle for you, don't use it.

If you have a drinking problem, don't go to the bar.

If you have a problem with drugs, stay away from the parties.

And if you aren't well enough grounded in the Lord yet, then do yourself a favor and stay away from what is called "Christian TV" because quite frankly, a lot of what's on there is just plain bad stuff.

“Feed My Sheep”

DATE \@ "MM/dd/yy" 01/03/01 • FILENAME mw1tim06.doc