

Great gain in poverty or riches

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[0 : 0 0] We're reading from 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 3 to 19. If anyone teaches a different doctrine that does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he 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 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth.

Imagining that godliness is a means of gain. Now there is a great gain in godliness with contentment. For we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But 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.

For 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 pains.

[1 : 2 3] But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I 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 to keep this commandment unstained and free from approach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.

He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen. As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

[2 : 5 6] Well, good morning, everyone. Sounds like that children's talk touched a nerve there, Simon. So if you want me to take that temptation off you of the millennium failure, I'm very happy to help you.

And I saw Albert Dale Han coming to church for the first time. Great to have little Albert here, Han family.

All right, let's get into God's word. Let's pray. Father, in this topic that is, I don't know, I suppose a taboo, we don't like to talk about money, I pray that you would help us listen to what you have to say.

And I pray most of all that you would show us where great gain can be found. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, there's two polar opposite views on what the Bible says on the topic of money.

I went to a church once that I was visiting, and they were fundraising for a really legitimate cause. And the pastor, I don't know, he went on for maybe 10 minutes.

[4 : 15] It felt like a long time. He was just trying to, he was plucking Bible verses out of context, and he was promising that God would richly reward us if we give towards this thing.

And he kept saying, are you ready to give? Are you ready to give? I just wanted to stand up and say, I was ready 10 minutes ago. I should have.

I know. I was gutless. One view of what the Bible says about money is that we are children of God, right?

God is the king. Would he want us to be impoverished? Wouldn't he want us to abound in prosperity? Isn't that what Scripture promises?

But then money just takes over the focus of the church service. People's prayers are focused on their circumstances. Wealth is taken as conclusive evidence of God's blessing, of God's approval that you're pleasing him.

[5 : 21] And it disregards the warnings we find here in 1 Timothy 6. Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, ruin, flee.

That's one view. Another view of what Scripture teaches is kind of focuses on the passages like the rich young ruler, where Jesus says, sell all that you have and give to the poor, then come follow me.

Church history is filled with monasteries. Many Christians through the ages have tried to escape the materialism of this world. Some today sense that owning a house or anything of value is inherently disobeying the true Christian lifestyle.

There's this nagging sense of guilt that if you're enjoying a holiday, there's just this guilt. Should I be enjoying this?

But this view ignores the fact that Abraham and Job, they were filthy rich.

[6 : 40] Now maybe you might say that's just Old Testament promises, and there's some truth to that argument. But even Jesus and Paul accepted at points in their ministry, they accepted wealthy patrons who supported their ministry.

And here we find in 1 Timothy 6, to the rich, God doesn't say sell all you have, stop being rich. He says God richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Doesn't quite fit that model of getting rid of everything. I think there could even be this inverted pride of trying to give away everything in the name of God.

In the movie Chocolat, I don't know if you've seen it, there's the religious mayor of the town, and Lent is coming up, and he's observing Lent, the religious fast.

But others in the town are indulging in the chocolate. And he's just condemning them for doing that. And at one point he gets so angry that he breaks into the chocolate shop, and he starts smashing all the chocolate until a little bit lands on his lip.

[8 : 09] And he gives in to temptation, and he just starts going for it. And he's rolling around in the chocolate. And he's just weeping because he too has failed.

If we're judging others, it could be a symptom of envy, not godliness. It could be a symptom of envy. It's this inverted pride of going, others are indulging, look what I've sacrificed for you, God.

But if it's a sacrifice, if you're thinking it's a loss, doesn't that suggest you want it, you delight in it, you've lost something?

I think it can be just in love with money as those who indulge. 1 Corinthians 13.3, If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Are you confused? Something's going on in 1 Timothy 6 and across the teaching of the New Testament and Scripture as a whole that it doesn't fit.

[9 : 39] It's not prescribing a lifestyle of riches. It's not prescribing a lifestyle of poverty or bare necessities. And I think it's possible.

There's another danger. We're just confused. We can't see the coherence. So let's just not let the Bible say anything to us really. I can't quite make it fit in my mind.

Except maybe a vague notion that I should share something of the excess. So if a Christian lifestyle isn't prescribed neither poverty nor riches, what gives 1 Timothy 6 coherence?

What is the godly life when it comes to possessions? And what we're going to see here is first a really strong warning to flee. But then, but then we're going to see the true path to great gain.

And you can have this great gain whether in poverty or riches. And so that's where we're headed. But first we need to hear the call to flee.

[10 : 59] When, do you remember in Genesis, Joseph was being seduced by Potiphar's wife in Egypt. What does he do?

She grabs his cloak and he runs for his life. He gets out of there. He doesn't try and reason with her. Now, now, now, let's not do it.

He runs. He senses the danger and he runs. So when scripture says, flee sexual immorality, we get it, right?

To some, to some extent. We see the danger. So when 1 Timothy 6 says, flee, do you struggle like I do to sense the danger?

The desire to be rich is like a hidden trap that catches birds.

[11 : 58] It's hidden and it causes their destruction. Run away. Now, it's not riches in itself, but it's the desire to be rich. This is speaking to people who think they don't have. It would be really, it would be really easy in this series that we're going through to, to agree with much of what's said or what scripture says and just think, oh, that's, that's speaking to them, that's speaking to someone else, that's speaking to those people who have more than me.

If we're thinking that way, we are in great danger. This is speaking to all of us. It's hidden like a trap.

I've never had someone arrange a pastoral meeting with me in order to say, Dave, I'm just addicted to financial gain.

I, I don't know what to do. Now, I've only been a pastor for so many years but I've heard other pastors say their entire ministry, they've never had it.

It's insidious. It's gradual and it's subtle but it kills us. I think an example of this insidiousness is what we call a necessity.

[13 : 41] It just gradually, subtly increases. Like, you think you'll be content if you can buy that house. You'll, you'll buy it on the edge of town, it'll be a fixer-upper, the real estate agent says it's got great potential.

Then I'll be content if I get that. But how long is it? How long? Weeks? Months? Before we need it, we must renovate it.

How long is it before I want to move into a safer neighbourhood? How long is it before we need to be in this school zone? How long is it before it would be really good for ministry to have a house with a pool?

Now, it could be a good thing. I'm not, I'm not condemning anyone with a pool, okay? But, do you hear my point? What we call a necessity, just, it's just gradual over time.

It just creeps up on us. It's like an addiction. We need a bigger and bigger buzz. I found it helpful this week just to reflect, like five years ago, what was I content to live without that now I call a necessity?

[15 : 03] I'm not going to tell you my answers, but I'm asking you to ask yourself that same question. There's, there's an allure and I, I don't think it's just comfort that allures us.

Possessions claim to increase our significance, doesn't it? Our worth as a person. And, like, why else do we need to have the latest phone?

Why do we need to keep up with the Joneses? Why, why do we need a phone that has 22 camera lenses on the back of it instead of 21 so that we get that perfect image to put on social media of how abundant our life is?

Like, why do we feel like we're missing out? It can't just be comfort when it gives, the new technology gives just that little bit more functionality.

It, it can't be just comfort. I think it's got to be significance. When I have more, I am more. When I have less, I am less. Like, don't you feel that, I've, I've never experienced this, but don't you feel that little bit superior wearing the new dress at the wedding?

[16 : 38] If I have new clothes, somehow I am more valuable. If I don't, somehow I'm less.

at a funeral of a wealthy woman, apparently a man asked the minister, how much did she leave?

And he said, everything. It's a good answer, isn't it? Everything. What do you mean? The diabolical lie that our personal worth is less or more valuable based on what we have is in this obvious fact.

We all come out with the same in the end. Nothing. Like, what time frame are you measuring off to say that you're more or less significant?

And we're warned here, it's the root of all kinds of evil.

[17 : 56] Now, it's not saying it's the root of all evil that exists. It's saying it's a root of all kinds of evil. I'm just going to give a few examples and I'm sure you could add to my list.

We treat people as a means to an end, don't we? I remember when Emma said to Sam, people are more important than things.

I was like, oh, that's a good point. We treat people as a means to think of the country in terms of leadership and the legal system. Scripture has a lot to say that bribery blinds the eyes of justice.

there's double standards depending how much you have or if you're poor. How many people have been killed in wars?

Think about in business. This desire to be rich, it makes you break your word. Your yes is no longer yes. I think of when you're selling a house and you've said, yes, I'll accept that offer, but you allow that higher offer.

[19 : 20] James 5 warns about not paying your workers' wages and God hears their cries. How often do we read about tradies not being paid or foreigners not being paid?

People skimping on safety measures to make the profit bigger, putting people's lives at risk. Think in terms of your personal addictions, people's personal addictions, sports betting, ruining families.

Apparently Australia has a pokey machine for every hundred or so people. Why do we need that many poking machines? Any poking machines? Whoops.

What? How much profit are people making off industries like, obviously, drugs and pornography?

Ruining people's addictions that ruin them. Think about family. It ruins families. I heard of a man who had elderly parents, I can't remember if it was mum or dad, but they needed to go in nursing home, they had dementia, they could afford a place that could really care for them, but they chose a place that couldn't care for them properly with their dementia because they wanted a bigger inheritance.

[20 : 58] Dishonouring our mother and father. how many marriages are fighting over money because each spouse believes we need this to be content.

And children and parents not talking to each other anymore. How common is it to hear that sort of thing? And sadly in church, you look in church history, the sale of indulgences, the church saying to people, you can buy your forgiveness before God.

Wow. Or James 2, the warning, something that will destroy us as a church, something like favouritism based off this.

It will destroy us. And I read the other day that a study found like, we can look into the merits of the study, but this study apparently found that the most common reason for leaving church, you think it might be this crisis of doubt, of faith.

No, it was just the main reason that people look back and they stopped going to church for multiple years was because they got a new job or they moved city.

[22 : 19] Like some change in their life, they just stopped going and then they just never came back. It's insidious.

It's, it's, it leads to all these kinds of evils. It's, and do you see the irony that 1 Timothy 6 is warning us about? The desire to be rich leads to ruin.

It ruins our integrity, it ruins relationships and society, it ruins churches, it ruins your soul. you can, you can trade in God and eternal life because of this.

We've got to hate it. We've got to learn to hate it. Not riches in and of itself, but the desire to be rich.

We've got to learn to hate it and flee from it. I'm sure you could add to my list, couldn't you? I could add my own regrets.

[23 : 32] Now, what's the remedy? The command here isn't be content. It's not contentment is great gain.

It's godliness accompanied by contentment is great gain. It's not flee riches and just be content. It's flee the desire to be rich and pursue.

Take hold of true life. Fight for it. It's appealing to us.

You want gain? gain, get great gain. I don't know about you, but telling myself, be content, be content, it doesn't work.

You've got to pursue something even better. Let's take missionaries, for example.

[24 : 35] They've voluntarily given up so many comforts in one of the richest nations in the world. Now, that's amazing, right? It's amazing, but there's something, it shows that something is much more important to them, but there's something more amazing about some missionaries, at least.

The daughter-in-law of Hudson Taylor, Hudson Taylor, pretty well known name, he's the pioneer missionary to China, and his daughter-in-law, Geraldine Taylor, she thought missionaries were exaggerating when Hudson Taylor and David Livingston to India before him said this phrase, I never made a sacrifice.

If you think about the hardships and they made the claim, I never made a sacrifice. Geraldine thought they just got to be exaggerating, right?

But then she went on to speak of her own experience. Talk of sacrifice, this is no sacrifice, there is no such word to the Christian, count it all joy, all joy.

After a riot, when our lives had been saved by a miracle, when we were sitting bruised and bleeding amidst the ruins of our home, in that hour, believe me, heaven itself was open to us, and we tasted then and afterwards a joy so marvellous that I scarcely liked to speak about it.

[26 : 16] As we realised that we had been permitted to suffer something for Christ's sake, no words can tell you the joy which filled our hearts.

We have never known anything like it since, and we would not miss that experience out of our lives for all that you could give us. That's a strange paradox to the authentic Christian life.

They voluntarily lose the world values, but they don't feel superior for sacrificing so much. They count it as personally receiving greater gain.

Now, not just in the future, but now, and they say, I never made a sacrifice. How is that possible? How is that possible?

Verses 11 to 16. The true life pictured here makes something as precious as gold that we list on our contents insurance.

[27 : 31] It's as commonplace as concrete. You may walk on it. It makes wealth just pale into insignificance. Now, this is addressed to Timothy.

He's being charged to be so different to the false teachers, but he's also an example to the whole church. This is for all of us. He's saying, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

Take hold of it. What does that mean? Because he's got eternal life. Take hold of it. Pursue. Eternal life has already begun if you know Jesus Christ.

It's begun. We're in it. The best is yet to come, of course. It has begun. So take hold of it. Pursue it. Fight for it.

Tooth and nail. It won't happen automatically. you've got to seize it. How rich do you believe you are, Christian?

[28 : 39] These verses, look at who it is who possesses you. God who gives life to all things, the source of life.

He is the blessed and only sovereign. Blessed. He's the only one who has deep contentment in himself.

He is the source of all things. And look at this requires much more time to meditate on these words that Paul is using here.

But look at the status of who this one is compared to whoever you think is at the top of society. Look who this is. The only sovereign, king of kings and lord of lords who alone, alone has immortality.

Death and decay can't touch him. He has life in himself. He dwells in unapproachable light.

[29 : 52] life. His life is so full and pure. There's nothing unlovely in him who no one has ever seen or can see.

You can't by your human reasoning find this God. Only if he reveals himself to you can you have him in his immortality and in his blessedness and in his pure life that is light.

heart and this one has called you. He's called you to know him heart to heart.

This one was the one who stood before Pontius Pilate. Picture that moment.

Pontius Pilate. Governance palace, royal clothing, sitting on the judgment seat, representing Caesar. He's representing he's at the top and he's looking at this Jesus and in the screenplay Jesus Christ superstar Pilate says when he sees Jesus who is this broken man cluttering up my hallways.

[31 : 17] So this is Jesus Christ. I'm really quite surprised. You look so small. Not a king at all.

Why did he do that? This one. Well, we're going to look at the passage next week, but to quote 2 Corinthians 8, he did it to make us rich.

2 Corinthians 8 verse 9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

He I know I'm not doing this passage justice, I know I'm not, but do you sense who it is who has called you to himself, and the cost to do so, and he's going to appear one day, this one will appear, that's the right time frame.

How wealthy are you? Are you going to measure that based off retirement? Is that the measure of how much you succeed, how wealthy you are? That is too short sighted.

[32 : 41] His appearing is the correct time frame. Five minutes into eternity and you're just soaking in pure joy. Five minutes in and you look back on your life and go, are you going to think to yourself, man, I wish I hoarded more stuff for myself.

Surely we're not going to be thinking that way. Surely it would be much more likely that when he appears, five minutes in we're going, why didn't I give you more?

Paul can't help himself here. He's just going into doxology. He's just praising. I think that's part of the key. I think that's the key.

Godliness isn't a means to some other end. Godliness is the end because you pursue him and you're taking hold of him.

I'm rich because I have him. He possesses me. He treasures me. despite my treasuring stuff over him.

[34 : 08] Jeremiah Burroughs, he was a Puritan, he wrote the rare jewel of Christian contentment. Godliness teaches us this mystery.

A little in this world will content a Christian for his passage, but all the world and 10,000 times more will not content a Christian for his portion.

Because the blessed one has called you to himself and is calling us man of God, woman of God, know how rich you are. Take hold of it.

Pesure it. Fight for it. You've got to preach it to yourself. Tim Keller gives a really great test of whether you know how rich you are as a Christian.

Here's the test. You don't envy those with more than you. Now with this test, I'm going to encourage a scale here.

[35 : 20] because I clearly fail that test to some degree and that's why we've got to pursue it more and more. But the more we know how rich we are, the less we envy those with more than us.

And the flip side of that is you don't feel superior to those with less. less. If we have food and clothing, if we have got our basic necessities to meet the responsibilities God has given us, we'll be content because we know how rich we are.

In fact, I think we can have compassion on those who are filthy rich in this life only because they are setting their hopes on the uncertainty of riches and they commit suicide when there's a global financial crisis.

You can have compassion on those. who don't have life. And when you have more than our basic necessities to meet the responsibilities God has given, when you have more, you don't feel superior to those with less.

You recognize that you haven't earned this. They are gifts from God to enjoy. you don't see excess as an opportunity to hoard.

[37 : 00] You see money for what it is. It's a resource. That's all it is. You see it for what it is. It's just a resource. And it's a resource to do good.

You get to get great gain by sharing your God's character in meeting the needs of others. being rich in good works because you know you're rich.

You're content and if you have more than what you need, you get to share in God's character. And so you get more and more of God, whether you're struggling to make ends meet or you've got more than what you need.

Great gain in both. Scripture doesn't command a lifestyle. God is not equally distributing among us equal outcomes.

He doesn't command a lifestyle. He's calling us to pursue God and make having him an end in and of itself and to know how rich we really are, to know it in our inner life, not our circumstance, but our inner life.

[38 : 20] God is going to fight for it tooth and nail. God is going to preach it to ourselves, knowing we've been called to true life. If you know how rich you are, money can't add to your significance and when you lose it, it can't take away from your significance.

You can have great gain in poverty or in riches. You can have great gain. I think only the Christian can live like this.

We saw last week, Matthew 6, those who trust in wealth for their security, their safety, they're always worrying about tomorrow. But the Christian, we can look at tomorrow and go, I'm safe.

I know my tomorrow is in my Father's hands. And here in 1 Timothy 6, we're not just told be content, be content. We're told, Christian, you're rich.

You can have great gain in poverty or plenty. You know where great gain is to take hold of it. When people make us think we're missing out or we're telling ourselves we're missing out, we can go, I never made a sacrifice.

[39 : 43] I'm pursuing great gain. And I think at stake here is the clarity and the attraction of our testimony of where true life is found.

That we know great gain. Why would the unbelieving world look at our lives, either as a church or our families, our individual lives, and think, I want what they have, if we're seeking the exact same things.

We're just using Jesus as a ticket to the exact same things. The witness of where true life is found is at stake. And our testimony, our witness can be equally as powerful, whether we're struggling to make ends meet and we're content and we think we're rich because we have God.

What a testimony. Or you've got more than you need and you're not hoarding it like the rest of the world. You know you're rich and you think it's great gain.

You're not proud because you're giving so much away and just boasting, look how much I'm doing. You're not doing anything like that. You think you're sharing in God's character, getting to know him more.

[41 : 07] What a testimony. What a testimony. With little or plenty, may our lives testify to where great gain is found.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, send your spirit to convince our hearts that knowing you more and more really is the path to joy.

Lord, fill us with your spirit afresh to set our eyes on when Christ appears so that we live in light of that day.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.