

## FIRST TIMOTHY CHAPTER SIX

### False Teaching and True Riches

#### 1 Timothy 6:1-10

Robert Herbert Thompson owns 180 newspapers, 290 other companies, and is worth an estimated \$300 million. Someone asked him, “*How much would you give for the New York Times?*” Like a flash he answered, “*I think I’d mortgage my soul.*” Listen to the sad echo from the rocky caverns of his lonely soul: “*I’m not close to anybody except for business. ... I just don’t have a lot of personal friends.*”<sup>1</sup>

1 Timothy 6:1-2 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *All who are under the yoke as **slaves** are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.*

<sup>2</sup> *Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.*

As we begin First Timothy Chapter Six, we see that Paul is introduced to another problem, and that is the relationship between slaves and masters. When Paul used the word, “*slave*” (*doulos*), he was speaking of his relationship with Jesus. This word speaks of a bondservant or bond-slave who has no will of his own, but lives for the will of his master, and is available to accomplish that will 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The idea of slavery in this passage should not be compared with the dehumanizing slavery Black people experienced in America prior to the Civil War. It would more accurately be compared to a relationship between a coach and his players. If any member of the team does not please the coach in carrying out the coach’s will (the game plan), they would soon find themselves with a permanent season ticket on the bench. So the player’s primary goal is to please the coach and in so doing the coach will provide the player with the things he wants. In my time I have had some very good relationships with my coaches. I knew whom I served and they in turn took good care of me. We became partners in achieving a common goal.

Now it was Paul’s intent that the Christians in Ephesus know that freedom in Christ did

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<sup>1</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

not mean they were free from their obligations to people in authority. Although we are given freedom through Christ, we must still be aware of our responsibility to obey rules that apply to our lives which are established by those in authority. Christian slaves were to respect their masters. Let us look more closely now at verse one:

1 Timothy 6:1 NAS:

*All who are under the yoke as **slaves** are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.*

"Slaves" (servants) is 'Doulos.' Slavery in the Roman Empire was taken for granted. It was a common thing for Christians to have slaves.<sup>2</sup> Regarding slavery as an issue, Paul had already made it clear to Timothy that being a slave trafficker was in the same category of sin as murder, immorality and lying:

1 Timothy 1:8-11 NIV:

<sup>8</sup> *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.*

<sup>9</sup> *We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,*

<sup>10</sup> *for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.*

These slaves to whom Paul is referring were Christians, and they found themselves in positions of **slaves working for unsaved masters**. These masters considered their slaves in much the same way that they thought of their cattle. A Christian master, however, could not regard his slaves as under a yoke, and the Christian slave of a Christian master would always show deep respect for his master, honoring him. Paul instructs slaves how to behave in the workplace. In our culture today these words apply also to employees. If you have a job and a boss, these words in verse one are for you too. The bottom line here is for these Christian slaves to treat their pagan masters with the respect and honor due a master. They are not called upon to honor what they are, but to honor the position they occupy so that no disgrace or dishonor is brought upon the name of God. Since slavery was a common and accepted institution at that time, it would hurt the cause of Christianity for Christian slaves to rebel against their masters. The "*the name of God*" includes all of what God is. Disobedience and disrespect on the part of these Christian slaves would bring disgrace upon the name of God.<sup>3</sup>

The word "*honor*" ('*time*') in verse one is the same word used back in chapter five when Paul spoke of **widows and elders**. The word honor used in verse one means one whose worth brings respect or fame. It speaks of dignity.

Now we doubt Paul would have written these first two verses in chapter six if slaves had not begun to show disrespect for their masters. And that disrespect appears to have been

<sup>2</sup> Philemon.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies – Volume 2: Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 90-91

the result of their salvation. So Paul wanted those who were slaves to know that their salvation was never intended to make them any less faithful and effective as a slave. They were not to be any less faithful to their coach because of their salvation.<sup>4</sup> And Paul was not only directing these comments to those Christians of the first century because they also apply to Christians today as much as they did then.

Christians should be better employees, better students, better politicians, better soldiers, and better human beings because of living by higher standards. The Holy Spirit will now lead us and guide us whether we are at church or at work. Having been saved, we should exemplify the same character and conduct as Christ, and we should reflect His righteousness wherever we might be, whether at church or a ballgame or even a political rally. So seeing that Christians were not rising to expectations, Paul needed to make it known that they were to recognize what they were doing and make the necessary adjustments. Paul therefore told them that as slaves who were under the yoke they should treat their masters with honor and respect.

“When Paul used the word “yoke” (*zugos*), he had reference to a coupling. The yoke spoke of that which coupled two things together. Here it has reference to the slave and the master coupled together. Paul was speaking of servitude and a law or obligation. The slave had an obligation to serve his master. His service to his master brings honor to his master.”<sup>5</sup>

And in so doing, the slave (employee) also honors God by displaying the heart of a servant. The reason Paul was so concerned about Christian slaves being obedient to their masters was so that their Christian testimony would not be damaged because of disobedience to their masters. Such disobedience would cause people to question the credibility of the Gospel and the purpose of Christ’s Church. When Christians obey those they work for, they are honoring the name of Christ by living the message which He sent believers to proclaim to all the world. You too can give a powerful testimony for God by the way you behave in the work place and by following the instructions of your boss.

We see in verse two that in some situations there were Christian slaves who had Christian masters. They were both saved; they were brothers in Christ. This was probably difficult because in church they worshiped together as equals, but then in the workplace the one had to be subservient to the other. The slaves were to respect their masters even though they had equal status before Jesus. “God offers an excellent benefit package. He offers excellent health coverage, job security and a retirement plan that is out of this world.”<sup>6</sup>

Kenneth Wuest provides a good paraphrase for these verses to help our understanding:

Verses 1 and 2. *Let as many as are under the yoke as slaves, consider their own absolute*

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<sup>4</sup> George T. Brooks, – *Expositions from the Book of First Timothy*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Employees Respecting Their Employers."

<sup>5</sup> op cit., Brooks

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*masters worthy of the greatest respect, in order that the name of God and the teaching be not evil spoken of. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brothers, but render them a slave's service, all the more because they are believing ones and beloved ones who busy themselves in kindly service.<sup>7</sup>*

1 Timothy 6:3-10 NAS:

<sup>3</sup> *If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,*  
<sup>4</sup> *he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,*  
<sup>5</sup> *and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*  
<sup>6</sup> *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*  
<sup>7</sup> *For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.*  
<sup>8</sup> *If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*  
<sup>9</sup> *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*  
<sup>10</sup> *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Now let us take a closer look at the next section of this passage.

1 Timothy 6:3-5 NAS:

<sup>3</sup> ***If anyone advocates a different doctrine** and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,*  
<sup>4</sup> ***he is conceited and understands nothing;** but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,*  
<sup>5</sup> *and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*

“Paul had just told Timothy to teach the principles of honor, submission, obedience, and love as found in the slave-master relationship.”<sup>8</sup> Paul undoubtedly knew that false teachers would challenge Timothy’s ministry claiming that he did not know what he was talking about. So Paul gave Timothy a crash course in how false teaching could be detected.

<sup>7</sup> Op cit., Wuest; pp. 90-91.

<sup>8</sup> Knute Larson, *Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 241-246.

**False teaching is anything that anyone teaches that in any way contradicts the teaching of God or Jesus Christ.**

*“The sound instruction to which Paul referred is the same ‘glorious gospel’ he spoke of in 1 Timothy 1:11.”<sup>9</sup> It includes the teaching of the prophets, the words of Christ, and the teachings of the apostles, especially that which Paul himself received from Christ. “It is sound, trustworthy, and true because of its source in God and its effective work in bringing about progressive godliness in the believer.”<sup>10</sup>*

Then in verse 4 Paul goes right for the jugular as he clearly exposes what the heart of a false teacher looks like, and the consequences that come upon those who follow such false teaching.

Paul begins by advising Timothy that false teachers *“are conceited and understand nothing.”* It is almost impossible to figure out what is going on in the minds of people who claim to have a better understanding of God than God Himself. We must conclude that they are either insane or they believe they can gain power and riches by misleading the common folks. Usually it is a large dose of both.

False teachers claim to have special knowledge and they trump up any number of lies to explain where that special knowledge comes from. Further they claimed that such knowledge entitled them to special leadership roles as well as a comfortable lifestyle. It was all nothing but smoke and mirrors and Paul made that clear when he said they understand nothing. They are simply a pack of liars trying to take advantage of the ignorance of the common people. They did not know the truth much less teach it.

These false teachers remind me a lot of the politicians we have in the U.S. today because they too enjoyed creating controversy and quarrels. These false teachers could get people confused by directing their attention to issues such as how many angels can fit on the head of a pin, or how could a loving God allow people to suffer. It is the same standard boiler plate foolishness that for some reason gets tempers flaring and egos refusing to admit that they could be wrong. They waste time discussing issues that will never be resolved and consequently the people will not receive salvation. In the end, the truth of the Word of God is ignored and some other doctrine of salvation may be accepted. This type of teaching breeds sin and one sin leads to another and then another.

We cannot imagine getting much of an argument if we were to say that before we do anything we always think about it first, whether it is good or bad. We have a confirmation of that truth in the following verse:

Romans 12:2 NAS:

*<sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Our thoughts always come before our actions and that is why Paul tells us in this verse that our lives can be changed for the better with a renewed mind that produces the right kind of thinking. Thinking about those things that we know are wrong, but tempt us because we think we will find enjoyment in them, will inevitably produce suffering and unhappiness.

**“Men of corrupt mind. . . have been robbed of the truth.** Once again Paul used contrasts. In 1 Timothy 6:3 he wrote that sound teaching produces godly behavior since it comes from Christ, the source of truth. Here he connected corrupt thinking with the absence of truth, which produces false godliness.

“True Christian faith produces humility, gentleness, unity, and giving. It is based on servanthood. But the false teachers, divorcing themselves from the truth, exhibited unhealthy reasoning. False doctrines produce pride, contention, disharmony, and selfishness, which in turn produces greed. Such men **think that godliness is a means to financial gain.**”<sup>11</sup>

You might want to memorize these few questions to ask about the teaching you are hearing.

- Is it consistent with Scripture, true to the faith?
- Does it unite the church? Does it encourage unity and love?
- Does it promote godliness, strengthening the inner person above the outer person?<sup>12</sup>

1 Timothy 6:5-10 NAS:

<sup>5</sup> *and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*

<sup>6</sup> **But** *godliness actually is a means of **great gain** when accompanied by contentment.*

<sup>7</sup> *For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.*

<sup>8</sup> *If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*

<sup>9</sup> *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

<sup>10</sup> *For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

We see as this chapter unfolds that many false teachers envisioned their religious

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



teaching leading to their own wealth and power. They were very much like many televangelists today who teach things that people find exciting and thus are willing to give these false teachers their financial support. The appeals are usually phrased something like, “give to this TV program and God will make you rich.” Religion was seen as a source of power and wealth.

The implication that Paul gives when he speaks of “*godliness*” in verses 5 and 6 is that there is a difference between them (even though the same Greek word is used). In verse 5, it might be more helpful to think of it as “religion,” whereas verse 6 is actually talking about piety and love of God. Some think that going into religious work will make them rich, but that ultimately comes to destruction. True godliness is based on a relationship with God and is very rewarding, albeit not necessarily financially.

“**But**” is very critical in verse 6. Paul says it is not money and power that bring happiness, but rather contentment that comes from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and righteous behavior that is the great gain. It is righteous behavior in our everyday lives that makes evident a person’s faith. Such behavior is the result of knowing what is right and doing it, and knowing what is wrong and not doing it. Do you do what you know to be right? Or do you occasionally, or even often, do what you know is wrong? Doing what God tells us is right brings new life! Doing what is right should be the total commitment of Christ followers. And remember that our souls were not created to find contentment, “*the great gain,*” in material possessions or money. Those things are the carrot that Satan dangles before our nose to distract us from seeing what is of real value. Real contentment is found in a close intimate relationship with God.

Paul then continues in verse 7 by telling us why money and possessions do not bring happiness and contentment. “*We brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it.*” We want you to think about that very carefully. In this life you can become President of the United States, a billionaire, handsome or beautiful, a music star, or a movie star, and those things alone will mean absolutely nothing when you die. Your wealth or fame will no longer stroke your pride. You will stand naked before the Lord and you will be humbled and totally dependent on His judgment regarding whether you will go to Heaven or Hell. And if you want to make God laugh, try to convince Him of how important you are.

There is an old saying that reads, “*Contentment is knowing that if I am not satisfied with what I have, I will not be satisfied with what I want, either.*”<sup>13</sup> Having food, clothing, a roof over our heads, and an intimate relationship with God should be enough for us all. God’s power through the Holy Spirit has given us everything we need for life.

#### 2 Peter 1:1-3 NAS:

<sup>1</sup> *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:*

<sup>2</sup> *Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of*

<sup>13</sup> Ryken, Philip Graham. *1 Timothy*. Phillipsburg NJ: P & R Publishing, © 2007, p. 259.

*Jesus our Lord;*

<sup>3</sup> *seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

We might point out that money and possessions themselves are not to be considered evil as Paul points out next in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 NAS:

<sup>9</sup> *But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

<sup>10</sup> *For **the love of money** is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

It is “*the love of money*” that can pull people into the quicksand beginning a slow descent into misery and eventual damnation. Satan lures us to the quicksand the way a hunter may draw an animal into a trap, by placing irresistible temptations along the path until the animal finds himself captured.

Money opens a whole new world of possibilities for us. Imagine a young couple when first married who have little money. They shopped only for the necessities. Their time was spent in the simple things, going for walks, reading, going to a movie, church activities, and perhaps an occasional trip to Dairy Queen. Later, as their income level rose, they began buying some luxuries, bought a house with an accompanying mortgage, more insurance, a couple of new cars, and a membership at the country club. They suddenly saw a lot more things they could buy, a lot more objects that drew their attention, time, and resources.<sup>14</sup>

Some of those things they could have done without, but once the “*status bug*” gets hold of us it becomes very much the same as a chemical addiction. Sound biblical judgment is the key to maintaining balance. If you were to check your Bibles you would find that the subject of money is the second most frequently dealt with topic behind salvation. Christians should carefully prepare annual budgets broken down into months. Do not deviate from those budgets except in extreme emergencies. Do you need a second car? Perhaps there is a practical and much less expensive alternative. Such things can be kept in balance but you must stick to the plan when making daily decisions. Is golf next Saturday in the budget? If it is not, do not go.

Once we give in to temptation to use the credit card when we do not have enough money, then it becomes easier to make that same decision over and over again.

James 1:12-18 NLT:

<sup>12</sup> *God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit, Larson.



<sup>13</sup> *And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else.*

<sup>14</sup> *Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.*

<sup>15</sup> *These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.*

<sup>16</sup> *So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters.*

<sup>17</sup> *Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*

<sup>18</sup> *He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.*

Many people have ruined their lives for a half-hour of sensual pleasure. The most satisfaction possible is found within the kingdom of God. True peace and joy are found in God. Can you be content with Him and trust in Him completely?

John 10:10 NAS:

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

Jesus was not referring here to a \$5 million house, a Mercedes in the driveway, and a condo in Malibu. He was referring to the benefits that come from a relationship with God, to the joy that comes from daily seeing God at work in our lives and from the satisfaction of daily feasting on His Word.

Money is not the only cause of misfortune and evil, but it is a powerful one. Love of money is the root, the life support for a variety of wrongs and destructive behaviors. From a love of money grow thistles which choke out abundant living:

- The businessman determines to secure advancements and higher salaries, neglects his family, and loses their love and affection.
- The dreamer thinks he can gamble and make a fortune, hoping never to work again. He keeps trying, wasting his resources in hopes of a big win, losing friends and dignity instead.
- The housewife habitually buys new furniture and redecorates her home, neglecting to tithe or give to others because her comforts have made her insensitive to those in need.
- The pimp sells drugs or sex for the sake of money, fancy cars, expensive clothes.
- The guy down the street steals from others, his desire for things ruining his sense of personal worth.
- The mercenary kills for the sake of cash.
- A woman complains, gossips about a neighbor, snaps at her children and husband, making herself and those around her miserable because she is envious, bitter over

what she does not have, always wanting more..<sup>15</sup>

“The drive for money can destroy relationships, resulting in immoral decisions and compromise. It can also bring spiritual ruin. Paul noted that some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith.

“Today our entire culture is built upon the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. It determines the success or failure of presidents. It is the foundation of free enterprise, the principle behind our system of credit cards and debt, banking, and loans. It is what drives the advertising, music, entertainment, and sports industries. Materialism and personal wealth are hammered into our thinking every day all day long.

“It is easy to put Christian ministry, personal godliness, acts of justice and charity, and sacrificial giving on the peripheries of life—to see no connection between these Christian "ideals" and life as we experience it.

“Even so, we are forced to decide which offers truth and which offers illusions, which brings contentment and peace, and which leads to frustration and emptiness. It seems simple on the surface, but in our daily decisions the choices become hard. Resistance to wealth's temptations becomes difficult. Though we would never deny our faith, it is easier (though just as deadly) to wander from it.

“Just as the rich young ruler who questioned Jesus was brought to a point of decision, so are we. It becomes a choice as to whether we will trust in God or the stuff around us. God allows us to make the choice. The young ruler decided to keep his riches. He walked away a wealthy man . . . but sad (Mark 10:17-24). There is always a price to be paid.

“Paul was not against the drive to accomplish or the ambition to make a difference in the world or on the job. The Bible states clearly that we are to work hard, to be model employees or employers. But money should not be the driving force. It should be God's glory that pushes us—love of people, the mission of the church, our devotion to Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

Let us close with these two contrasting thoughts from God's Word: “. . . *some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

*sorrows*” (1 Timothy 6:10, NLT) versus “*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need*” (Matthew 6:33).

Which path do you choose?