

Letters From My Father
Week 18
1 Timothy 6:6-10
“The Fruit Inspectors - Part 2”

Introduction

Calling the crowd along with His disciples. He said to them, “If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel will save it. For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? What can anyone give in exchange for his life? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”
Mark 8:34-38

The famous author and poet, Mark Twain, was once asked if he had a problem with parts of *The Bible* that he could not understand. His reply was telling. He said, “*It ain’t the parts of The Bible that I can’t understand that bother me, it’s the parts that I do understand.*”

For you see, there are those who believe that if people could just understand the message of the gospel, then they would automatically want to repent and be saved. This isn’t the case at all, however, for the message of the gospel is simple. It calls us to forsake everything in order to follow after Christ. This is not a difficult concept to understand, but it is most definitely a difficult task to live out. For our flesh wants to have its own way. Our flesh doesn’t naturally gravitate toward the surrender of its own will in order to be subject to the will of another. So, the reason that people do not follow after Christ is not due to a lack of understanding. It is rather due to a lack of desire. **People do not submit to Christ, because they do not wish to do so.** It is that simple.

Christianity is a radical faith. It calls us to surrender everything; our will, our desires, all that we have, and all that we are to Christ. This is the very essence of lordship. To confess Jesus as LORD (**Romans 10:9**) is to freely offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices (**Romans 12:1**). It is to relinquish all self-control in order to be controlled by His Spirit. And even after we have been converted, this is, and will be, an ongoing struggle, as long as we live in this fallen world. The flesh is selfish by nature, and The Spirit of God longs to bring it into perfect submission.

I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against The Spirit, and The Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don’t do what you want. But if you are led by The Spirit, you are not under The law. Galatians 5:16-18

As we continue our study in **1 Timothy**, we see the contrast between those who are of The Spirit and those who are of the flesh. We may even be surprised to learn that there are many so-called “religious leaders” who feign Christianity, but do so in order to gratify their own fleshy desires. In short, they present to be godly in order to gain wealth, power, and prestige for themselves. But by careful inspection, we can tell whether or not someone is being led by The Spirit of God, or by their own fleshy desire. For the works of the flesh and the working of The Spirit are diametrically opposed to one another. And this makes the false teacher easy to recognize, if you know what to look for.

As Paul concludes his letter to Timothy, his young son in the faith, he makes it clear that the man of God puts his trust in Christ, and Christ alone, as his sole source of life. He isn’t concerned with the things of this world, but rather, his goal is to store up treasures in heaven. And as such, he is content with whatever he is given upon this earth. Greed and godliness are incompatible with one another. We will either be content with Christ or discontented by chasing the things of this world, which do not satisfy. In short, we can lose our life for Christ, or we can lose our soul in the pursuit of worldly pleasure. For the child of God, there can be no compromise between the two.

Lose Your Life (vs. 6-7)

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. **1 Timothy 6:6-8**

Paul's use of the word "but" (*de* in the Greek) links this verse to the one before it. He had just finished saying that the false teachers who had crept into the church of Ephesus had foolishly convinced themselves that godliness (*eusebeia*) was a means to financial gain. In short, they had looked upon the cross of Christ as a way to gain worldly wealth for themselves. It is the worst possible kind of man, who sees the gospel as an opportunity to get rich. Sadly, we have many of this same type of "preachers" today, who view the church as a "pyramid scheme", so that they may fleece the flock with impunity. These charlatans are in for a rude awakening when they stand to give an account before The Son of God.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'LORD, LORD,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'LORD, LORD, didn't we prophesy in Your Name, drive out demons in Your Name, and do many miracles in Your Name?' Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!'" **Matthew 7:21-23**

While it is quite possible for a false teacher to fool other people, he will not be able to fool God. For only God can truly see the intentions of a person's heart. And it is based upon this reality that all will eventually be judged. Your motives matter. And for those who are motivated by anything other than a genuine love for Christ, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth upon the day of judgement. This is why it is so vital for each of us to examine our hearts and gain a true assessment of our motivations.

After pointing out the motives of the false teachers (greed), Paul then juxtaposes their misconceived notions of financial gain with the spiritual gain that is the characteristic of those who genuinely love The LORD. He states that there most certainly is great gain from godliness (there's that word *eusebeia* once more meaning "right worship"). But it is not the kind of "gain" that the false teacher presumes. Rather, it is a spiritual gain. Those who worship Christ in Truth and in Spirit are the recipients of contentment. It is something *The Bible* calls "**the peace that passes all understanding**" (**Philippians 4:7**). And it enables the true Believer to be content in whatever circumstances he finds himself.

...for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him Who strengthens me. **Philippians 4:11-13**

So therefore, the gain of godliness (genuine worship) is to be content in all circumstance, knowing that Christ is in control, and He will never leave, nor forsake us. You cannot place a price tag on such a peace as this! Whatever storms may come upon the seas of your life, there is great peace in knowing that Christ is in the boat *with* you. Therefore, we learn to trust Him, come what may. This is the great gain of godliness with contentment. When you have Jesus, you come to realize that He is all that you need. And He has promised us that if we seek Him first, that all other needs that we have will be provided.

"Therefore I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Consider the birds of the sky: They don't sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They

don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. If that's how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won't he do much more for you — you of little faith? So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Matthew 6:25-33

So, if God has promised that He will provide our needs while we are here upon this earth, then why should we worry about storing up treasures down here? We don't really need anything more than what God gives us, now do we? So we must learn to be content with His provision. Rather than be consumed with the acquisition of wealth in this life, let us be committed with storing up treasure in heaven. For nothing that we manage to hoard up down here will be going with us up there (**vs. 7**). You will never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul! If you are willing to "lose your life" for the sake of Christ, then you will find a better life than you have ever known. You will find purpose and everlasting peace, when you surrender your all to Jesus.

Lose Your Soul (vs. 8-10)

But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. **1 Timothy 6:9-10**

Trying to find genuine happiness apart from Christ is a futile endeavor. But sadly, many in this world foolishly believe that the key to success and joy is found in the acquiring of material, rather than spiritual, wealth. But just a bit of genuine research into the matter will reveal that the richest people on this earth are more often than not the most miserable. The old axiom is true: *money cannot buy happiness*. And yet, how many people are still convinced that it will? They greedily chase after riches with all the strength they can muster and still wonder why they are left unsatisfied.

The best way to tell a genuine Believer from a false one is whether or not they have their priorities straight. The Believer will be satisfied with Christ, while the non-believer is *never* truly satisfied. Paul calls the pursuit of riches a trap, rather than gain. For those who live for the sole purpose of attaining wealth, always end up being empty and miserable as a result. It is as one person put it, *"like drinking salt water. The more that you drink it, the thirstier you become."* This is why those who pursue wealth can never acquire enough to satisfy.

There is nothing wrong with being rich, in and of itself. Paul did not say that *money* was the root of all evil, he said **"the love of money was a root of all evil."** There is a difference. Many godly men are wealthy. Abraham, for one, was a very, wealthy man by all this world's specifications. But he was willing to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldeans, a very modern city by ancient world standards, to go and live in a tent so that he could follow God. Do you see the difference? He didn't let his wealth dictate his heart. He was far more interested in following God, than he was in his own personal status or even comfort. And God blessed him richly as a result. Again, the man who is willing to lose his life for the sake of Christ, will find it. And being in the will of God is far more fulfilling than having all the money in the world!

Paul warned Timothy that to fall for the temptation to pursue wealth was to choose a path that leads to one's own demise. The words that he used to describe the end result translated **"plunge people into ruin and destruction"** in the CSB, actually means *to be dragged down to the bottom and drowned*. The pursuit of riches is a trap much like being caught in quicksand. And as a result, the greedy person will be swallowed whole and devoured in its depths. This is the culmination of *all* sin. If you fall for the

temptations of this world, then you will be destroyed in the end. You cannot serve both God and money (**Matthew 6:24-26**). If you try, then you may well end up losing your very soul in the process.

A person's priorities will be demonstrated by their pursuits. I cannot tell you how many people that I have known who have fallen away from the faith in order to chase after material things. And I also can testify to the fact that these very same ones end up being the most miserable people that I know. Have you ever noticed that a person who appears to be "sold out" for Christ also seems to be genuinely happy? These people are an absolute joy to be around, for they ever encourage us to strive for the better things. The eternal things. I do not know very many wealthy Christians by this world's standards, but I know a great deal who are content. And after all, isn't this a better thing for which to aspire?

After pointing out the difference between godly contentment and the lustful and empty pursuit of wealth, Paul instructed Timothy to "**flee from such things**" (**1 Timothy 6:11**). There are times when God's Word tells us to take a stand, and then there are other times, when it tells us to run. We would be wise to know the difference. And when it comes to the temptation of worldly wealth, we are instructed to run away. For our flesh desires to feed itself more than anything. But you cannot satisfy the flesh and follow after The Spirit. So when it comes to the temptation of worldly wealth... ***Run!***

This doesn't mean that we are not supposed to work hard and make a living. It simply means that we are to desire Christ above all else and to be satisfied with what He gives us. It is far better to live according to the means that God has provided than to become discontent and forsake His calling in order to gain material wealth or status. Never lose sight of what truly satisfies. Do not be willing to lose your soul in order to gain the whole world. You will be sorry in the end if you do. Godliness (*eusebeia* or "*right worship*") requires us to trust in Christ for all things and find our true fulfillment and satisfaction in Him.

So examine your heart today. What is your reason for living? Are you finding your all in Christ, or are you blindly chasing after the treasures of this world? No one can answer these questions for you. You must seek out the answers for yourself. For no matter how well you may be able to convince others that your motives are pure, God knows your heart. Will you be one of those to whom He says on that final day, "***Well done good and faithful servant?***" Or will he say, "***Depart from Me, for I never knew you?***"

Many Believers have what they commonly refer to as their "life verse". I personally have acquired quite a few over the years. But one that keeps me grounded, when I am tempted to allow my own greed to dictate my actions can be found in Proverbs. And if you are one of those who are prone to underline verses of Scripture in your *Bible*, then I highly recommend this one:

Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need. Otherwise, I might have too much and deny You, saying "Who is The LORD?" Or I might have nothing and steal, profaning the Name of my God. ***Proverbs 30:8b-9***

Now, I don't know about you, but those words make perfect sense to me! I would rather have Jesus and a little, as to *not* have Him and possess all the riches of this world. I desire to know how to be content with just what He has given me. I want to focus on what I have and be thankful, rather than feeling shortchanged and become covetous of my neighbors. And I know that this attitude is attainable. ***For I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me!***

TRUTH!!!