

## 1 Timothy 6:3-10

### The Heresy of Materialism

Here is a passage from Paul's letter to Timothy which many modern celebrity preachers would find very difficult to preach. It seems that some heretics were using the gospel to get rich; Paul says that food and clothing should be enough for a Christian (**1 Tim 6:8**), who should seek no more than his or her basic needs (**Mt 6:25**).

Most people in antiquity had little beyond basic necessities—food, clothing and shelter. Because their acquisition of these necessities often depended—especially in rural areas—on seasonal rains or (in Egypt) the flooding of the Nile, they had plenty of cause for stress even about food and clothing.).

This greed was one reason that Paul had to prohibit materialistic persons from church office explicitly. When we examine the instructions the Apostle gives we notice that he dwells on the character needed for leaders **rather than** on a list of their responsibilities or a model for their leadership pattern.

His key concern is the moral integrity of the church leaders.

Paul is well aware that non-Christians will judge the whole church and the validity of the gospel of Jesus Christ **on the basis of how Christians act**. The leaders of the church will be held up for severe examination - and we must dedicate ourselves to consistently blameless behaviour.

Harmony within the church depends on fair, objective and even-handed leadership. When leaders are driven by a desire for recognition or financial gain, the church is sure to experience

dissension from those who feel they are unfairly treated by the leaders (**Titus 1:8-9**).

Four general principles with regard to Church leadership can be deduced from the New Testament teaching as a whole:

(a) All authority is derived from Christ and exercised in His Name;

(b) Jesus' humility provides the pattern for Christian service

**(Mt. 20:26-28);**

(c) Government is collegiate rather than hierarchical

**(Mt. 18:19; 23:8; Acts 15:28);**

(d) Teaching, pasturing and leading are closely associated functions

**(1 Thess 5:12);**

The character of a church leader should display the following qualities:

Above reproach	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:6</b>
If married, commitment to a healthy marriage	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:6</b>
Temperate – careful with regard to addictions	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:7</b>
Self control – committed to living a disciplined life	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:7</b>
Hospitable – generous and open hearted	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:7</b>
Able to teach – competent Bible teacher and discipler	<b>1 Tim 3:2 / Titus 1:9</b>
Able to manage conflict	<b>1 Tim 3:3 / Titus 1:7</b>
Free from the love of money	<b>1 Tim 3:3 / Titus 1:7</b>
Able to manage his/her own family	<b>1 Tim 3: / Titus 1:6</b>
Not a new convert – an experienced and mature Christian	<b>1 Tim 3:6</b>
Respected – able to command the respect through person qualities	<b>1 Tim 3:7</b>
Hold and teach sound doctrine	<b>Titus 1:9</b>
Committed to healing and pastoral care	<b>James 5:14-15.</b>

**6:5**

Sometimes Jewish people recognized wealth as a sign of God's blessing, and many teachers taught that those who served God would become more prosperous. The Deuteronomistic principle was plain: if you keep Torah, you will be blessed with long life, prosperity, and possession of the land; if you abandon Torah, you will lose possessions and children, and die (**Deut. 30:1-20**). This teaching was, however, meant as a general principle, as in Proverbs: one who works harder earns more. The Talmud teaches that reward that is lasting is reserved for the afterlife. Reward in this life may even be a form of judgement. It is not clear whether Paul's opponents *preached* that godliness was a means of gain or simply *used* religion as a means of gain.

**6:6**

**Philippians 4:11**. What is the difference between contentment, complacency and dissatisfaction? Example: The ladder.

**6:7**

Here Paul cites a moral commonplace, phrased similarly by Cicero; it is also attested in the Old Testament (**Job 1:21**),

**6:8**

Ancient literature usually recognized "food and clothing" as the basic needs, which even Cynics and the poorest of peasants required (Cynics and most peasants had only one cloak each).

**6:9**

Middle-class South Africans understand "rich" much differently from the way Paul's first readers would have; in the widespread poverty of

the ancient Mediterranean, most people would have viewed our lifestyle as “rich.” Paul addresses those seeking to accumulate wealth (cf. **Prov 28:19-20**) rather than those who had already become wealthy through inheritance or industry (**6:17**).

### **6:10**

Paul cites here a widely used ancient proverb about loving money being the source of various evils. The idea was even more common than the saying, but the saying itself circulated among philosophers and those who respected them.

### **6:11-16**      **Fleeing the Evil Lifestyle**

In contrast to the greedy preachers (**6:3-10**), Timothy is to seek righteousness.

### **6:11**

Moralists often exhorted readers to “flee” from vices. The Old Testament used this term “man of God” for people commissioned by God to function as his spokespersons. (**Deut 33:1**) *This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites before his death.*

### **6:12**

Greco-Roman moralists often described moral struggles in terms of warfare, as did Jewish texts influenced by them (e.g., 4 Maccabees, where it refers to martyrdom). The image in the Greek here is not that of a war, however, but of another image the moralists equally exploited in a figurative manner: the wrestling match or athletic contest.

**6:13**

The idea of Timothy's confession is linked to the faithful confession of Jesus at His darkest hour.

**6:14**

“Without stain or reproach” (NASB) may allude to the requirements for pure sacrifices to God as unblemished (e.g., **Lev 1:3, 10; 3:1,6; 4:3, 23, 32**) or to “undamaged” merchandise and so forth; it was a natural image for virtual perfection. On “without reproach” see comment on **3:2**. “Appearing” would be a natural Jewish description in Greek for the revelation of God at the end time.

**6:15**

Jewish literature repeatedly described God as king. Rulers who claimed to be supreme kings, such as the Babylonian or the Parthian king, called themselves “king of kings and lord of lords.” Greek writers like Dio Chrysostom occasionally applied the title to Zeus; Judaism quite often applied it to God, and Christians applied it to Jesus (cf. **Rev 19:16**).

**6:16**

“The Immortal” was a common title for God in Hellenistic Judaism (borrowed from the Greek term for their own gods, which Jews and Christians recognized as an inappropriate epithet for them; thus Paul adds “**who alone**”). Jewish texts often mentioned the glory of light around God's throne; kings' great authority made them unapproachable for common people. The Old Testament declared that no one could see God's full glory and live (**Ex 33:20**)

## 6:17-18

**The very wealthy** usually derived their income from landowning; they rented out the land to tenant farmers or residents, or derived profits from crops grown on the land. This may also refer to a socially inferior but nonetheless wealthy class of merchants like ship owners. Wealth could be gained by a variety of means, not all of them immoral. The issue was not whether one had wealth but whether one used it for oneself or for others. This was the usual view in Judaism, which stressed charity in the form of the tithe. Paul does not reject the world, as the Cynics or (in the most extreme sense) later Gnostics did; with Judaism, he affirms that creation itself is good (4:4-5). But he also recognizes that material wealth is transitory.

Still more important, **people matter more than possessions**, and in a world of unending human need, possessions were ultimately worthless compared with more important things one could do with one's resources.

## 6:17.

Paul had dealt with those who did not possess wealth, but who deeply desired it (vv. 3-10). Now he addresses those who had it, and instructed them as to what their attitude should be toward it. They are **not to be arrogant** as if their wealth is deserved (1 Cor. 4:7-8; 1 Sam. 2:7). Nor must they **put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain** and transient. This is perhaps the greatest temptation to wealthy Christians, into which category most modern Western believers fit. Christians should **put their hope in God**, who is the

Source of material things. Again material possessions are among those things God has given **for our enjoyment**.

**6:18-19.**

Yet Christians must not merely consume material possessions selfishly. Possessions are to be shared with those who have less. Thus Timothy was to charge the well-off **to do good, to be rich**, not ultimately in money, but **in good deeds**. The wealthy should make every effort **to be generous and willing to share** what they have. If they do this **they will lay up treasure for themselves** in heaven. This undoubtedly refers to the sayings of Jesus (**Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:33-34; 18:22**) wherein the transient is exchanged for the eternal. Such eternal treasure becomes **a firm foundation for the future**, recalling in a mixed metaphor perhaps another of the Lord's teachings (**Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49**).

Wealthy Christians should invest their riches for eternity. *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose"* (Jim Elliot). Paradoxically it is in this giving away of the possessions which the world considers the key to the good life that a Christian **may take hold of (1 Tim. 6:12) the life that is truly life**. The alluring but vain and plastic substitutes for life, supplied by an unhealthy attachment to material things, pale into worthlessness when compared with that life which is found in Jesus Christ (cf. **Matt. 16:24-26**),  
**6:19**

Jewish texts sometimes spoke of storing up treasures in heaven;

(**Matthew 6:20-21.**)

**6:20-21**

### **Final Exhortation**

“Entrusted” is the language of keeping a deposit; those with whom money was deposited were under sacred obligation to keep it secure or increase it, and this principle applied also to teaching (to which the image was extended by other ancient writers as well). Some scholars have seen the “false knowledge” here as a reference to Gnosticism (which could indicate a date for the Pastoral Epistles later than Paul), but this interpretation is unnecessary; many philosophers made claims to “knowledge,” which other philosophers considered false.

**6:20-21.**

One final time Paul exhorted **Timothy** to **guard** (cf. *phylaxon*, “keep,” in **5:21**) the “deposit” or “trust” Paul had passed on to him (*parathekēn*, used elsewhere only in **2 Tim. 1:12, 14**), a reference to the body of Christian truth which in some way was under attack in Ephesus. Paul was concerned that Timothy give himself wholly to the truth and reject even the subtle inroads of error. Thus Timothy must **turn away from godless chatter** (lit., “profane empty utterances”; cf. **2 Tim. 2:16**), and from **opposing ideas** (*antitheseis*, “counter-assertions”) **of what is falsely called knowledge**. Such knowledge was the supposed key to the mystery religions which were already born and which would mature into a full-fledged Gnosticism during the next century. Their influence was already being felt in

Ephesus, so much so that Paul could say that some had become so caught up in professing their esoteric *gnōsis* that they **wandered from the faith** (lit., “concerning the faith missed the aim”; cf. **1 Tim. 1:6; 2 Tim. 2:18**).

Paul closed his letter with the simple benediction, **Grace be with you**. “You” is in the plural, however, no doubt indicating Paul’s awareness that this letter would be read widely in the churches