

1 Timothy 6:1-10

"Godly Gain"

It's estimated that some 60 million slaves served the Roman Empire! It was simply an inescapable reality, not motivated racially, motivated economically. Through warfare or poverty you would become a slave of Rome.

Now the bible doesn't condone slavery, but neither does it turn a blind eye to the conditions of the day, & as the gospel began to permeate the known world & slaves were being saved, or their masters were being saved, it raised questions. What is the appropriate response if I (being a slave) come to know Christ but my master is still a non-believer? Or what if I (being a slave owner) come to know Christ, or what if we both come to know Christ, what should be the nature of our relationship now? Suppose we go to the same church, or in the church the slave is an elder & his master is expected to submit to his authority in the church, but back at home my master is still over me in the day to day affairs of life. How does this work out?

So it's not uncommon to find these kinds of issues addressed throughout the epistles, the apostles were consistently giving instructions along these lines. What you discover is that the apostles were careful to never make the gospel a *political* thing; it is a *personal* thing. They didn't want the gospel associated w/social upheaval... Dealing w/a culture on a political level is just treating the symptoms, if you want to see cultural transformation you've got to take things to a deeper level, you've got to address the condition of the human heart. It's the *transformation* of the heart that leads to the *reformation* of society.

So what the bible emphasizes, isn't so much individual *rights*, but rather individual *responsibilities*. Paul's chief concern wasn't *what we deserve*, it was *the glory of God* & the bottom line as it pertains to these 1st couple of Vs is that our work effects our witness. To Paul (and to us) social redemption is secondary, it's personal redemption that's primary. That's why he said in 1 Cor 7 that we're to live as we're called. He said, "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave."¹ "Look, if it works out that you can be made free that's awesome, however don't let that consume you, serve the Lord right where you're at."

¹ The New King James Version. 1 Cor 7:20-22 (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We (in our culture) don't have slaves today, so we make the transition to employer/employee relations & we're to let our work be a witness right where we're at.

Vs 1

Now when he starts talking about being "under the yoke", the reference is to being under the heavy hand of the unbeliever. If you're in a work environment whereby your boss is an unbeliever & he's hard on you, you feel like he's unfair toward you, how do you respond toward him? Now obviously not every unbelieving employer is unfair or unjust, either way our attitude is to remain the same. The bible says that we're to honor them; translation, work hard for them, do your very best for them. Why? Because the way they're treating you is right, no, but so that God might be glorified.

Remember that's the chief aim, not individual rights, but individual responsibilities & our responsibility is to seek to glorify God & magnify Christ in all that we do. So if we're responding w/a bad attitude, an intentional .5 work ethic just to spite him than what we're doing is giving him a reason to see Christ & Christianity as a joke. We're to do our very best & put in a full day's work for a full day's pay. We're not to fudge our time cards, or take extended/unapproved breaks, we don't want to shame the name of Christ.

We don't want to give the unbeliever an occasion to "blaspheme". Remember that's what Nathan busted David for, after his "episode" w/Bathsheba. Write it down, look it up later, Nathan said, "...by this deed you have give great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme..." People will mock the Lord & what He's all about based upon what we do, how we work, the witness we model while we're around them.

So... spiritual freedom in Christ, doesn't alter our social position. We are still responsible to work hard for those who employ us lest we bring reproach upon the name of God. To the Colossians Paul said it like this, *"Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*² So we're to honor/respect & submit to our employers, but beyond that we're to realize that regardless of the work, our service is to the Lord & in that we want to do the very best we can.

Vs 2

We're not to expect special favors from our boss just because he's a Christian & we're a Christian... Or that maybe he's cool w/me taking it easy because we're brothers...

² The New King James Version. Col 3:22-24 (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul says, “No way, don’t be thinking that now you can slough off, or that he’s doing you a disservice by expecting you to work hard. If anything you should be all the more eager to work hard because now you’re blessing a brother. You’re being a blessing to a man who loves the Lord.”

Yes, you’re equal in Christ but that doesn’t diminish God’s ordained order of authority & submission, if you’re working for a believer you’re both blessed. You can trust he’s going to do his very best to fairly compensate you for your work responsibility & he can trust that you’re doing your very best to bless his business.

Paul tells Timothy, “Teach & exhort these things.” Listen, personal integrity *must* accompany doctrinal integrity. It doesn’t matter if we *know* God’s word if we don’t *do* God’s Word. **If we’re a doer of the word it will evidence itself in how we live & how we work. Ultimately it’s about bringing glory to God, not giving people a reason to reproach (or criticize) the name of Christ.**

Vs 3-5

Noted Greek Scholar Kenneth Wuest translates Vs 3-5 like this: “If, as is the case, anyone is teaching things of a different nature and opposed to the things just mentioned, and does not give his assent to wholesome words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the teaching which is according to a godly piety, he is in a beclouded and stupid state of mind, which condition is caused by pride, not doing any concentrated or reflective thinking in even one instance, but exercising a morbid curiosity about inquiries and quarrels about words, from which come envy, strife, speech injurious to another’s good name, malicious suspicions, protracted and wearing discussions of men corrupted in mind, who have disinherited themselves of the truth, thinking that godly piety is a way of gain”

So as Paul begins to draw his letter to a close he re-emphasizes the theme he began w/& that is the way some people *are* handling as opposed to the way we *should* handle the word of God. We’re to guard ourselves against those who would misuse God’s Word. He says, “If anyone teaches otherwise,” it might be publicly from a pulpit or privately in personal conversation, but should anyone teach otherwise, not consenting to the wholesome (that is healthy, sound, righteous, free from error) words of Christ... **The idea is that the word of God nourishes, edifies & gives health to our inner man.**

The heresies & philosophies of man are like poison, they corrupt, corrode & contaminate your walk with Christ, but God’s Word gives life... The psalmist said, **“This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life.”** Psalm 119:50

Anyone who doesn't teach, doesn't exhort, doesn't consent to the doctrine (plain teaching) that accords with & promotes godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, he's obsessed w/disputes & arguments, promoting his own opinion as opposed to the word of God... Paul says, "Get away from that man as fast as you can."

The prophet Isaiah's 1st test of any teacher was this, *"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."*³ If they're not promoting the solid plain teaching of the Word of God, it's a problem. The person who thinks that what *they* have to say is of more value than what *God* has to say is delusional to say the least...

Paul says they're "proud", prideful... So the 1st mark is a refusal to adhere to the plain teaching of the word of God, the 2nd mark is in their attitude, it's not an attitude of humility, but of pride; however the pride is counterintuitive because the truth is, he doesn't know anything! But somehow they're able to convince others that they're some sort of spiritual giant/scholar of scripture.

Someone who has a proper working knowledge of the word of God isn't going to have a big head; they'll have a burning & humble heart... This word "proud" speaks of being beclouded, they've got their head in the clouds, it means to render foolish or stupid being blinded by pride.

These guys are great debaters, obsessed w/disputes & arguments over words; the problem is that this desire to constantly debate only displays their own unwillingness to humbly receive the truth, they don't have a teachable spirit.

Now let's be clear that Paul isn't speaking about the person who has a question or a genuine desire to learn, this is the kind of person who's always debating & discussing things to display how smart they are, they're not teachable, they're critical.

The fruit of which is envy, strife (contention), reviling/slander (character assassination) evil suspicions & useless wranglings of men (the idea there is a constant friction taking place) who's minds have been corrupted being destitute (or absolutely impoverished) of truth.

Notice, "Who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." Mark #3, Their interest isn't God's glory, it's personal gain. Mark #1 They won't consent to the plain teaching of God's Word, #2 Their attitude is one of pride, not humility, #3 Personal gain, not God's glory, that's their primary pursuit.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982) **Isaiah 8:20**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're to have nothing to do w/that kind of man, the kind who seeks to market the gospel, or peddle the things of God for personal gain. Why do you follow J.C.? Who is Jesus to you? *Is He a product that hedges you from difficulties, brings blessing & bounty into your life, the fix it of your failures? If that's the case what are you gonna do when you encounter some tragedy or difficulty that Jesus doesn't seem to "fix" for you?*

Listen, will following Christ be a blessing/benefit for your family, or bring you joy & peace? Yes, but understand that Jesus *never* promised us the "problem free, fix it all life", we don't follow Him for financial gain, or personal happiness. *We follow Him because He redeemed us from all our sin, He became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, we were bought w/a price, the price of His shed blood & we owe Him everything. Whether my life is plush or riddled w/problems is beside the point.* The point is that I owe Him everything & I will render Him the *whole* of my life regardless of what may befall me *in* this life. This world is not our home, therefore we refuse to allow the circumstances of this world dictate our faithfulness to follow J.C.

Remember the emphasis of our lives isn't to be what we lose or what we gain, how easy it is or how difficult it may be... It's not about me, it's about Him, & what glorifies Him is more important that any personal gain that may or may not befall me.

You see this idea of godliness as gain isn't limited to the pastors, it applies to the people as well. Listen to what God told Ezekiel; *"So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."*⁴

Vs 6-8

Listen, set your minds on things above & not on things of the earth. This seems like a great place to segue into **Matt 6** (19-34).

Here's the idea, honor God & trust that God will honor you... Now God will not owe you, He owes us nothing. If you tithe, or give to get you'll never get. God will not owe us, but He will honor us, big difference.

Our priority is not to be found in the things of this earth. Doesn't mean you're in sin if you possess material things, however if those material things possess you it's a huge problem.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982) **Ezekiel 33:31-32**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We're to be, well the word is, "Content". "Godliness w/contentment is great gain." Finances aren't the gain that godliness brings, godliness itself *is* the gain. This word "contentment" is a great word. *It's a word that speaks of an inner self sufficiency independent of external things or circumstances & dependent only upon the Lord. In other words it doesn't take material gain to satisfy me. If there's one thing you learn in life it's that material gain never satisfies you, it only increases your appetite for more.*

Here's the idea; true contentment is only realized in the sufficiency of Christ (who is in you). If your sufficiency is of Christ than it doesn't matter whether you're abased or you abound. That's what Paul was talking about when he said, *"...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*⁵ *The truth is it's probably more difficult to abound in Christ than to be abased, when you're abased you cling to Jesus, when you abound you're tempted to drift, you don't as readily sense your need, you're tempted toward things that most of us simply can't afford...* We're to keep our hearts rooted in eternal things, we're to set our minds on things above, not on things of the earth, our sufficiency is of Christ, & Christ alone. Godliness w/contentment is great gain...

If true contentment only be found in Christ than it stands to reason that we should be continually cultivating our relationship w/Christ; if *The Lord* be your Shepherd, you shall not want. Our focus will be ultimately on the eternal, not the temporary.

Vs 7-8

If true contentment lies in the wealth or material possessions of this world than we're all going to be in for a rude awakening when we die because we can't take any of it w/us... You can take w/you what you brought w/you, which is nothing...

Of course this takes us back to Matt Ch 6 doesn't it. This is why we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, because we're not taking it w/us, therefore we'd do well to send it ahead of us, to invest in the things of the kingdom of God, meaning we should be in someway giving the work of God.

Write it down look it up later Luke 16:1-14. There you'll find a parable that Jesus taught about a man who took advantage of his present position to secure a better future.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982) [Phil 4:11-13](#). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He knew he'd be called to account for what he'd done & he took it seriously & being where he was at he used his present position to secure a better future. **The point being we can use our material resources right now for eternal good. You can't take it w/you, but you can invest it presently in a manner that will benefit you eternally.**

If you get to eat, & you have clothes on your back, bless the Lord...

Vs 9-10

Now don't misunderstand what Paul is saying here. He's not saying that the person who thinks, "Man, it would be nice to make some more money & knock this debt out, or go on vacation" for awhile & then goes on about his life; is this guy. **This word "desire" speaks of an all consuming passion, it's a deliberate resolve, the chief pursuit of their life is all & only about making money.**

This lust for material gain will fall prey to temptations & snares that will plunge a person into an ocean of despair & destruction. You might think of Lot lifting up his eyes & setting them on the riches of Sodom, think of Haman (there in the book of Esther) & all that he lost having set his heart on riches & honor... **Your pursuit is for pleasure but only find pain & sorrow, it's one reason why so many celebrities drown themselves in drugs & alcohol & so often commit suicide. Everything they thought they needed to provide pleasure & contentment only brought pain, discontentment & disillusionment.**

Rodney mentioned Demas (last week) who forsook Paul having loved this present world, Judas betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver only to commit suicide & pierce himself though w/sorrow & drown in destruction.

Now that doesn't mean that poor equals godly & rich equals ungodly, there were several incredibly rich people in the bible who were incredibly godly & used greatly of God. It's what we set our heart on, that's the problem.

It's not money that's the problem, money can be used for great good. It's the *love* of money that snares us. There is no sin a man will not commit born out of greed & the desire for riches, murder, rape, drug trafficking, human trafficking, all for the sake of money.

A lust for material gain can lure people away from the faith & drown them in destruction.

Hear me, true contentment will never be found in the things of this world. If it could than we'd be awfully disappointed when we died because we can't take them w/us. True satisfaction, true sufficiency, true contentment... great & godly gain, is Christ in you.

Prayer Points:

Father You have given us much to consider today. May we learn what it means to find true satisfaction in Your sufficiency, that we not set our minds on things of the earth, but on things above, where Christ is. Give us an mind toward the eternal, help us to have the mind and heart that's less about gaining & more about giving. We thank You for Your Word & ask that You would strengthen us in that the way we lead our lives not bring shame to your Name, but rather glorify & magnify Your name.

If you're here today & you've come to realize that no matter what you do, or how hard you try, contentment is an ever fleeting fantasy just beyond your grasp, if you just had a little more; if you just had this bill paid off, or owned that thing, life would be better... You're waking up to the fact that the things in this life don't truly satisfy, listen, true contentment is only found in Christ. Not a plush life, not an easy always happy experience, but sufficiency that's not dependent upon the things of this world... **Jesus shed His blood for you, died upon the cross for you, He took away all your sin & all that's left is for you to look to Him, to trust in Him & be made brand new. Believe on the Lord J.C. today & be saved.**