

# 1 Timothy – The Household of God

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6 ESV)*

## **Godliness Over Gain**

**1 Timothy 6:3-10**

**May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022**

**Dr. Matthew Stanton**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning Redeemer City. It is my privilege to open God’s word with you. Pastor Levi has asked if I could continue you in your series through 1 Timothy. I believe there’s a lot we could learn from this letter, as I know you have been, and so this morning I want to zoom in on one key aspect which runs throughout the epistle and is at the heart of our text: **the pursuit of godliness.**

I would define Godliness as *living a fruitful and obedient Christian life.*

Whether you are a brand-new Christian or you’ve been walking with Christ for decades, the pursuit of godliness is your main task at hand. The Gospel isn’t simply about getting saved, it’s about being transformed. It’s justification AND sanctification working hand in hand. At every stage of your journey of faith, you are called to pursue godliness – to look more like Christ.

There has been so much chaos all around us over the past two years that has pulled us this way and that way. It’s SHAKEN the faith of some and has certainly DISCOURAGED the faith in others. It’s time to get back to the basics of doing what we are called to do.

And I would argue, more than just SURVIVE, it’s time now for us to THRIVE. And I don’t mean thrive in the physical or material sense, in fact the text we are looking at this morning speaks directly against that; rather, I’m saying that to thrive means *living the life you were made to live in Christ, hallelujah!* In fact, the reason why Christians ARE supposed to put **Godliness Over Earthly Gain**, per our sermon title, is because for the Christian,

---

## Godliness IS Gain.

It's what this whole thing called life is about!

So, as we continue in this series, we come now to 1 Timothy chapter 6. Please turn there with me.

*Last week you looked at the importance of leadership and playing the long game.* And so, before I jump into reading the text, I want to provide a transitional bridge by which we can make sense of where Paul is going here. **How do chapters 5 and 6 relate?** In fact, chapter 6:1-2 really should be the end of chapter 5. It's the same thought. Paul was instructing Timothy on how different groups in the church: women, widows, children, elders, are to relate to one another as a church family. So, look at the transition he makes into chapter 6 with verses 1-2 (we need to see this before we can jump into verses 3-10):

“Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.” (1 Timothy 6:1-2 ESV)

So, chapter 5 ends with church relations, and chapter 6 picks up in the exact same vein! But instead of talking about elders, he changes trajectory to address a different faction in the church: SLAVES and SERVANTS. This group, marginalised in culture, has found equal status within the church. These people therefore must work, even as slaves, to the benefit of their master and their God. Paul says, “their labour brings honour, so that the name of God may not be reviled.” Even their work for a Christian brother must be done so that there might be a benefit from their good service. So that all makes sense so far? Ok, here's the transition.

In this next section, verse 3-10, Paul introduces another faction that can be found in the church: false teachers. But the reason it seems so disconnected is because Paul's tone changes. Meaning, it's like in chapter 5 he was talking to the church about their identity, and now he's speaking directly to Timothy with a final warning saying, “but there is this group wants to influence your congregation, be on guard”.

---

All the family matters stuff we talked about won't matter much if these guys get a hold of the flock. So, keep going in the way I've laid before you and now don't be swayed by these false teachers. Instead, **PURSE GODLINESS** – that's what I want us to zoom in on this morning. Do that and your family- this church- won't be divided. Live out your identity together in unity.

Ok, so let's now continue as we read from verses 3-10 in order to seek out some instruction for guarding the faith and growing in godliness.

“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and 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. But godliness with contentment is great gain, 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 pangs.” (1 Timothy 6:3-10 ESV)

In 1 Timothy, the apostle Paul is writing to his young protégé, Timothy, to encourage and instruct him in his new role as a church leader. You've walked through these instructions over the past 5 chapters and here, in chapter 6, we are met with some miscellaneous notes and adages. In them, Paul dives into the idea of true godliness and in it, gives two major warnings: against false teachers and false contentment. Paul, having told Timothy to “teach and urge these things” (v2), now explains the reason why: **there were people there teaching differently**. That's why Paul spends time here elaborating on the nature and identity of false teachers and those with a craving for earthly gain. In essence, he explains that their teaching DOES NOT lead to godliness, but the teachings of Christ DO.

The question before us this morning is an important one:

---

## How Do We Grow In Godliness?

Especially when the world is pulling us down into a survivalist mindset- how do we grow and thrive in our pursuit of godliness?

Look with me a little closer at how this text begins. Paul writes in verses 3-4:

“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and 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.” (1 Timothy 6:3-4a ESV)

This “different doctrine” that Paul is talking about is toxic to the church. For the church, ANY teaching which does not accord with the teaching of Christ will inevitably lead to her destruction.<sup>1</sup> So, it’s either A or B: teachings that accord with Christ, and everything else. It’s the first choice we need to make. Growing in godliness starts by choosing A so that we can:

### 1. Stay on Course vs 3-5

That’s our first point for how to grow in godliness, and the point Paul is making as he warns Timothy about false teachers. Staying on course means not getting pulled away or distracted. We can be distracted in a number of ways. For some, the last two years have served as such a distraction. Here Paul describes the type of false teacher who would seek their own gain. Look at these descriptors with me starting in verse 4:

“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.” (1 Timothy 6:4-5 ESV)

Wow! What a list to describe false teachers. These guys are full of empty wind and hot air. They are full of envy **which leads** to anger and strong disagreements over the simplest of things. They

---

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *1&2 Timothy & Titus*, (Crossway Books: 1998), p. 99 Calvin notes that their teaching will not build up the church.

---

make SMALL issues BIG and BIG issues seemingly UNIMPORTANT. And they corrupt people's minds.

**Listen: Gospel instruction aims at unity and love while false teaching aims at division and discontentment.**

You know which one of these characteristics stuck out to me as we were reading the text? When Paul said they are “depraved in mind and deprived of the truth”. That’s the essence of it. They have a warped sense of right and wrong because they are without the truth of the Gospel. Their eyeglasses, by which they see the world, are dirty and therefore have obscured their vision.

I know for myself sometimes when my glasses get really smudged and dirty, everything gets blurry and I think to myself, “it might just be better if I take these things off,” because they’ve lost their usefulness in letting me see things clearly. (Maybe that’s why I keep missing the laundry basket with my dirty socks.)

These false teachers have deviated from the teachings of Christ and look at where it’s gotten them: they are causing dissension, friction, disunity. They are speaking slanderously, suspiciously, and CRAVING controversy. They are causing a MESS and Paul warns Timothy, that he needs to be on guard for such people. **Like a shepherd standing guard over his flock,** Paul warns, “look out Timothy, there are wolves in sheep’s clothes! And some may have already infiltrated your herd.”

Now, Paul is instructing Timothy to be wary of the false teachers at Ephesus because there were people there getting pulled off course, and I would argue that that’s not such a leap for us to understand today.

False teachers are still trying to pull people away from the faith and the pursuit of godliness. They are still trying to DISTRACT from the truth of the Gospel. If you want to avoid letting false teachers get a hold of you or your church, then you need to pursue Christ.

---

That's your focus, Christian. Christ is your NORTH STAR keeping you on course. And all the other stars in the night sky, beautiful as they may be, are like the false teachers trying to divert your trajectory – trying to sell you a different source of true godliness. That's why Paul ends this epistle with these final words: "Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you, avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith." Those were his final words to Timothy – don't cling to this world, cling to the cross of Christ.

When I was doing my studies over in Ireland, I discovered the writings of a 17<sup>th</sup> CE Particular Baptist named Benjamin Keach. Keach wrote an allegory and I think it best illustrates this idea. You've probably heard of the allegory by John Bunyan called *Pilgrims Progress*, well Keach's allegory is much the same; it's called *The Travels of True Godliness*. It's the story of a man named True Godliness and it's about his journey of faith home. There's one part in the story where True Godliness is talking to another character named Riches.

As Godliness is talking with Riches, Riches asks him,

"Do you think I shall give entertainment to you, and lose all my great honour and credit amongst men?" But Godliness rightly replies, "Is not that honour that comes from God better than all the vain honour poor mortals can give you? ... Some rich and noble men have, for my sake, denied themselves all the glory of this world, and accounted the reproaches of Christ greater riches than earthly honours and the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season."<sup>2</sup>

Wow! True Godliness has forsaken all the things of this world for the things of Christ- that's true godliness. No motives, no goals, no desires beyond this- **to know Christ and make him known**. Christ sought the Father's will, not his own kingdom whilst on earth. But he didn't; he forsook everything by taking on the form of a man.

**He became a son of man so that we might become sons of God.**

If the Heavenly Father is your father, then strive to look like him! Your greatest gain in life will be living in conformity to the image of Christ- who is the Son.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 73-74.

---

So, stay the course. And secondly, we need to resolve to:

## 2. Be Content vs 6-8

This is a hard one for us sometimes. We live in a culture of perpetual discontentment. But look with me at verses 6-8.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, 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.” (1 Timothy 6:6-8 ESV)

Here Paul gives Timothy a formula for life and ministry:

**Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain.**

Not power plus wealth, not popularity plus influence -all those things pass away; but godliness paired with contentment results in great gain. In the Greek, it's reads: “godliness *in company with* contentment *is now* great gain.” I like that imagery. I would explain it this way:

**godliness is a reflection of God's character, and contentment is a reflection of ours.**

Paul explains it similarly in the following verse, verse 7. He says, “we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of it.” That's perspective!

Here, Paul draws on a widely cited principle in antiquity from Job 1:21:

“And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’” (Job 1:21 ESV)

Again, it's that idea of temporal versus eternal. Even if someone were to gain great riches in this life, their gain is short-lived because “There are no U-Hauls behind hearses”. “There are no hitches on hearses.” You can't take it with you so don't buy into it now.

---

**Think about this:** Your birth and death are meant to provide vantage points by which you can APPRAISE the material things of life and determine what is truly necessary.<sup>3</sup> This isn't a new idea for Paul. Just a couple of chapters earlier, in 1 Timothy 4, Paul wrote:

“Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, **godliness is of value in every way**, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” (1 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV)

Now this doesn't mean we don't need to go to the gym anymore; that's not our take-away this morning. But there is a clear contrast here between the physical and the eternal. Godliness has eternal value, so pursue it. Like sanctification, it is a daily process. We have to work/train at being content, so:

Live with contentment. Desire it/make it your main goal.

You aren't going to covet your neighbours' things if you are content with yours. You're not going to seek after the things of this world if you are content in Christ. Being content in Christ wasn't just a struggle for the church in Ephesus.

Paul actually breaks this down even more for the church in Philippi:

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in **whatever situation I am to be content**. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11-13 ESV)

I mentioned that being content can be a hard task and a high calling, and that's clear from this text: even when Paul was brought low, he was content. When we lose a job or a family member, or know someone who's struggling, it brings us to the valley. And there being content is difficult. When we place our contentment on situations, it will waver. So, place your contentment not on your gain, but in your God. He will provide you with daily contentment.

---

<sup>3</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1992), p. 253



---

So now, PRACTICALLY, pursuing contentment requires daily prayer. In fact, prayer is to Godliness what the heart is to the body. Just as a heart pumps blood throughout the body to sustain life, prayer embodies our pursuit of godliness. Prayer sets our pursuit of Godliness on fire. When we are caught in the valley, prayer is our first response not our last resort. Prayer is our first response because it brings us in alignment with the Father's will which LEADS to being content "in whatever situation I am in".

So, we stay the course, pursue contentment, and finally, we realise that growing in godliness means we have to:

### 3. Focus On Eternal Things vs 9-10

If you want to talk about things that can hinder our pursuit of godliness, well here's one! Paul gives us a great example which we need to have an honest discussion about- money.

The Apostle Paul warns in the text:

"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 pangs." (1 Timothy 6:9-10 ESV)

What a sobering thought: that money can destroy someone's faith. That's the power it can have. I almost want to say, "Look if that's you, then you can have all my money; take it. I'd rather have you as a brother or sister in Christ than any amount in my bank account!"

But it doesn't work that way. You can't buy your salvation with money, and you certainly can't buy someone else's. **But praise be to God that he can!** And he did; not by money but by the blood of the Lamb. Through his Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross, salvation has been purchased once for all.

You know it's almost alarming how much Jesus talked about money in the Scriptures. Did you know that he discussed the topic of money more than he spoke of faith and prayer *combined*?

---

There are over 2300 references to money and material things in the bible. Our text this morning says that the love of money is the *root of all kinds of evil*. And we need to address that. We at least need to stop and ask why. I would put before you this morning that money is *Satan's currency of choice*. It's his currency because it has an innate sense of value.

And when we struggle to know our own value, or even what our values are and how they define us, we immediately turn to something tangible and easily identifiable. **The problem is: as soon as we identify our value in something like money, it begins to own us.** The text calls it a snare. It takes ownership of us because we've given it our value. What is your relationship to money? We undoubtedly have some savers and some spenders in the room. They're often married to each other! So, I bet money affects your marriage. Even if you have very little of it: are you both content, or are you left wanting? Constantly noticing your lack isn't being content either. You may notice a nice car in the parking lot, and that's ok; complaining to your spouse isn't.

Here's the principle:

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21 ESV)

**How we use “our money” tells the truth about who we are and whose we are.** It's like when we talked about contentment revealing our heart. True godliness must never be commercialized – and I pray that never comes to this church or your pastor- true godliness is a matter of the heart and not the pocket.<sup>4</sup>

But let's take a step back because there's something more going on here than just an “attack on money”. Actually, what Paul is getting at is that it's the CRAVING of things, such as money, leads to evil, apostasy, ruin, and destruction. Money is simply the means to an end. And the hard truth about that is: **we can turn anything into an idol, isn't that true?** Money is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to things we need to BE ON GUARD against in our desire for them.

**Identify, address, deal with your idols this morning.**

---

<sup>4</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 124.

---

**Don't be idle about your idols.** *It's not about the size of your bank account, it's about how often you check it.* That's what is consuming; that's what will affect your life. It will 100% effect your worship- particularly your giving. The root issue is the LOVE for money.

How do we combat that desire in a culture which glorifies it? Brothers and sisters, be set apart.

I mentioned earlier this book *The Travels of True Godliness*. Well, there's another scene I want to mention here. There's one part in the story where True Godliness is talking to another character named Covetousness. True Godliness says this of Covetousness:

“He [Covetousness] hath also grievously corrupted many who profess kindness to me, by encumbering their minds so with the affairs of this life, that they cannot find the way to the church. When they should be hearing God's word, he forces them to abide in their shops; nor will he suffer many of them to take a little time to pray in their families, nor in their closets.”<sup>5</sup>

You see Covetousness succeeded in robbing many people not just of their possessions, but of their identity. **It wasn't just what they had; it changed who they were.** That's what this text is warning us about. Covetousness is a bottomless pit. *Covetousness is the opposite of Contentment.* Covetousness is a pit that the world finds refuge in.

You know that as Christians we aren't supposed find our refuge where the world does, right? In fact, as Christians we aren't supposed to look like the world at all. Romans 12: “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.” Be conformed to the image of Christ. That verse summarizes our text this morning.

When the church looks like the culture then it's failed at its job to change it: to be salt and light. We have been set apart to pursue godliness. The world isn't doing that. They are pursuing themselves; power, riches, desires, feelings...

**When we stop pursuing Christ, we begin to reflect the culture.**

---

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Keach, *The Travels of True Godliness*, (Boston: MA, 1829), pp. 71-72.

---

And don't take my word for it, I love this J. C. Ryle quote:

“There is a common, worldly kind of Christianity in this day, which many have, and think they have enough – a cheap Christianity which offends nobody, and requires no sacrifice – which costs nothing, and is worth nothing.”<sup>6</sup>

He says, “in this day”, but he wrote that in the 1800s. But man is it every still true today!

If we aren't set apart, if we aren't holy because he is holy, we'll become like the ones we are called to save with the Gospel. Let's not give the world a cheap and ultimately useless Christianity along the way- a religion void of conviction. Let's show them godliness and give them Christ.

So, how do we grow in Godliness? Stay on course, be content, focus on eternal things.

I said off the top, it's time for the church to get past just surviving and it's time for us to thrive- as Paul taught us today – by gaining in Christ. Refocus your vision this morning to see that Godliness IS Gain for the Christian. And with that proper understanding of gain, we can now realise that we aren't made to simply survive, we are called to so much more- to thrive as children of God as we pursue godliness. To thrive in our church family.

Let's pray and ask him for the help to do just that! ACTS

**Benediction:**

Before I read the benediction for us, I just want to say that I pray you have been filled spiritually this morning, can you say, “Amen” to that? If so, that's great, go and pursue godliness each day this week until you gather again.

---

<sup>6</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, (Baker, 1979), p. 204.

---

But some of you here aren't quite ready for that step yet. Because you are still just surviving day by day. The idea of thriving isn't even on your radar because each morning when you try to get out of bed you're met with fear, anxiety, worry, depression- you're just TRYING TO SURVIVE.

Well, I hope this morning you learned **that that's not the way God intended for you to live**. He wants you to be a child of God free from all those things. So, come up after the service because I want to talk and pray with you. I don't want you going another day living in that survivalist mode when there is such FREEDOM in Christ. Read: Jude 24-25:

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen”

Amen, go in peace!