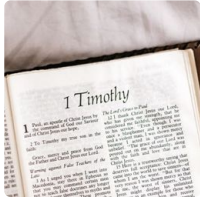


# OpenTheo

## 1 Timothy 5:19 - 6:19



### 1 Timothy - Steve Gregg

This talk delves into 1 Timothy 5:19-6:19, discussing the responsibility of church elders, the role of servants and masters, and the dangers of seeking riches. Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of confronting sin in the church and treating slaves justly, while cautioning against the love of money. He encourages contentment in one's circumstances, and reminds listeners that godliness is the true gain.

## Transcript

...verbal quotation of Jesus when he sent out the twelve on a mission. He told them that they shouldn't carry a purse or bag or extra money with them because the labor is worthy of his wages, which suggests they didn't have to provide for themselves. They should just go about the business of preaching, and God, whom they labored for, would pay their wages.

Just trust God for their support. Now, of course, it goes without saying that God would supply their wages through the gifts of individuals who were benefited by their labors. And so Paul is quoting that here in that way.

If you have benefited from the ministry of the word from the church, and from the elders of the church, then they are worth of wages. Now, wages here should not necessarily be translated as a salary, because it's clear that what we call a salary, which is a monthly amount of money that's paid, or a yearly amount of money that's paid, it was unknown in those days. Wages were what the person was paid at the end of the day for the work they did that day.

It was basically making sure that they had enough money to eat that day and come back the next day and do another day's work and get paid. So, wages, we think of a man's wages today in terms of modern jobs and salaries and so forth like that. It's basically just repayment for work done.

Matthew 10:10 says a worker is worthy of his food. And that was at the sending out of the Twelve, just to be accurate. Luke 10:7, at the sending out of the Seventies, says a worker is worthy of his, that a laborer is worthy of his wages.

Okay, so the exact quote is from Luke 10. That's the sending out of the Seventies. And not quite as exact a quote as in Matthew 10.10. Right.

So, Paul quotes the Old Testament and Jesus as his authority for this. Do you support the leaders, especially those delivering the Word of Doctrine, because, A, it's consistent with Old Testament teaching, B, it's even consistent with what Jesus taught? Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses, and those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all that the rest also may fear. Now, I've got to read the next verse as well.

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Now, here we go. Part of honoring an elder is that you don't quickly suspect him.

You give him the benefit of the doubt. A person who is a public figure is generally more of a target for criticism, whether deservedly or undeservedly. Just the fact that he's in the public eye, more people have opinions about him than they have about a person that they don't know exists, or that's not very visible.

A more visible person can pretty much expect more criticism, perhaps more praise as well, but criticism is part of this package. A pastor friend of mine was talking to an elder who was the brunt of a lot of unfair gossip, and the pastor said, Well, you know, when you take on the Testament, you just got to put on a flak jacket. That's just part of it.

You just accept that with the territory. And that's true. An elder is likely to get accused, and you may well hear accusations against elders.

You may hear someone say, Well, he said this, he did that, he's in sin because of that, or he's arrogant and proud because of this. And if you've heard it from only one source, Paul says, pay no attention to it. Even Jesus himself said, In the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established.

And he was quoting the Old Testament on that. Yes, sir? Do you connect this then with Bruce Marston? Do not rebuke an older man? No, I don't. I would say, first of all, he's talking about older men in general.

Now he's talking specifically about visible leaders, who are the elders who are in the office of elders. And he says, make sure you've got an established testimony against the man. Even in Old Testament times, a person cannot be condemned if there's only one witness against them.

And he says, don't receive an accusation. You have to consider an accusation to be untrue, unless it comes from two or more witnesses. In which case, two or more witnesses is enough to establish a matter.

Now, it makes it a little difficult, because I'm in this position many times, where people come to me, and they'll talk about a minister or someone they know, or maybe someone I don't even know very well. And they'll say, This person did that or that, and I'll think, That taints my view of that person, although I've never even met that pastor. I may have never met that man.

This happened last time I was in Santa Cruz. Some people came to me with complaints about their pastors and elders, and I'd never even met their pastor. In other words, I don't know.

Now, in some of those cases, I got two or three witnesses against them, independent witnesses. And I have reason to believe that the testimony against them is probably true, since there's two or three witnesses saying so. But the first time someone came to me and told me about such and such a pastor, I thought, What am I supposed to do with this? I mean, obviously, I'm not in a position to do anything about it anyway.

But I basically am under obligation, unless I hear it from a second or third source, to assume that that's not true about the person. I had a case where a man who was an evangelist, his wife came to me and told me of all kinds of sins in his life. And he was in the same church I was in, and he was actually an elder in the church as well.

And I told him, This puts me in a hard spot. I was an elder in the church, he was an elder in the church, and his wife told me about, you know, sexual misconduct and stuff like that in his life. And I said, I don't know what to do about this.

You know, I said, What you're telling me are things that probably only you know. And yet the Bible does not permit me to act upon this or to receive it, unless there's a second witness to it. And there may never be one.

And as it turned out, God allowed his sins to be exposed so that there were further witnesses, and he let them discipline. In cases like that, when it's a witness who would generally have a pretty good idea, wouldn't it maybe be a good idea to at least ask the person about it, or should you just... Oh yeah, actually I did ask the guy about it, but he was a liar too. But, see the problem is you might think, well certainly a wife ought to know.

But anyone who's counseled marriages knows that you can't trust the testimony of a wife against her husband or the testimony of a husband against his wife. Not because they're liars, but because when they're in conflict with each other, they see things through different sets of glasses. And they have a different way of interpreting behavior, and they put a different slant on it.

And you know, you hear the husband's story, you hear the wife's story, and you say, You sure you were talking about the same marriage here? You know, even you can't trust a

wife's testimony against her husband, even though you hope... I told her, I don't believe you're a liar. But I can't treat your testimony as anything I can act upon until there's further verification, because he's an elder in the church. It turned out God did bring exposure to it.

But you have to honor elders for their worth's sake, and part of that honor is an honor that you really ought to give to anybody, even not an elder. Namely, that if you only hear one accusation, there's no verification, just give them the benefit of the doubt. I mean, everybody has some enemies.

Everybody has some gossip going around about them, true or otherwise. And unless it's verified, don't believe it or don't follow it. But, the next statement, those who sin, follows up on it, meaning those elders who sin.

If you do receive two or three witnesses accusing another of something, then you pretty much have an established testimony. And therefore, you can conclude the man has sinned, and therefore you should rebuke him before all that others may fear. Now, it's very important to understand that this has to do with elders who sin.

You should not necessarily rebuke every sinner before all. Those who lead, those who teach James, tells us, have a stricter judgment. They're judged by a higher standard.

They have greater responsibility. Jesus indicated that if someone sins against you, you go to them privately and try to work it out. If it doesn't work out there, still try to keep it as private as you can.

Go with two or three witnesses. If it works out there, then keep it totally a private matter. If after several attempts like this don't work, then you make it a public matter.

But, an elder, apparently you don't have to go through all those steps. He's a public figure. He, by taking office, has taken upon himself greater responsibility and greater vulnerability.

And he should not sin. And if he sins, he should be publicly confronted, because his sins often have a public impact, at least church-wide. We have, of course, a case we know in this very town, where an elder for several years was living in adultery secretly.

When it was discovered, it had to be brought to the public attention. It wasn't enough just to go to him privately and say, now stop doing that. He says, okay, I'll stop doing that.

His lies had impacted the whole church. And therefore, the whole church, he needed to be basically exposed to the whole church, so that those who had been influenced by him might know essentially what he had done. Dave Hunt has been accused sometimes of not going through the proper procedures when he wrote *Seduction of Christianity*,

because he quoted a number of Christian leaders, elders, pastors, and so forth, and said they were wrong in what they were saying.

And he named them by name. And he got a lot of criticism. He says, did you, you know, people said, did you go through Matthew 18 with these men? Did you go to Paul Young and Cho? Did you go to Robert Shuler? Did you go to John Webber? Did you go to all these men and talk to them privately about this before you exposed them? He says, no.

He says, it's very hard to get an interview with Paul Young and Cho. He happens to be the pastor of the largest church in the world with half a million people in his congregation. He's the man in demand.

He had made phone calls to John Webber on several occasions, hadn't gotten any calls returned. He says, you know, but he says, Matthew 18 does not apply here. He says, I'm not talking about an individual who's sinned against me.

We're talking about leaders of the church who have gone public with their views. And anyone who goes public with his views is open to public rebuttal. That's the ethics of publishing.

I mean, it's always been the case. Christian writers have always known that. Way back in the days of St. Augustine, even before that, you know, Justin Martyr and Tertullian.

They had published debates with heretics and so forth. I mean, if you go public with your views, you stand to be rebuked publicly. Likewise, if you're a public figure and you sin, you stand to be rebuked publicly for it.

That's only that you're in a different category than the average person in that respect. And so those who are caught sinning should be rebuked before all so that others may also fear so that, you know, that is so that the congregation will realize that sin's a bad thing and other elders themselves will be careful or careful. And he says, don't do this with prejudice.

Show no partiality. There is a tendency to kind of let slide your favorite Christians, your best, you know, especially Timothy would be close friends with most of these others. You know what I mean? You see sin in life? Don't be partial.

Don't say, well, I won't rebuke them publicly because after all, I kind of like the guy. No, do this without partiality. Measure out justice in the situation without letting your personal feelings get in the way.

Now, verse 22, do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins. Keep yourself pure. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Some men's sins are clearly evident preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. Now, he's still talking about the appointment of elders.

When he says do not lay hands on a man hastily, he means don't put a man in the eldership position prematurely. Why? Because verses 24 and 25 make it clear. You can't always know immediately what kind of person you're dealing with here.

A limited exposure may not tell you what this man's character is. Some men's sins are visible, but others only come out later. You may be dealing with a man who's a sinner, but his sins are fairly well hidden, and they'll come out later after you lay hands on him, and then you'll be in trouble.

Because by laying hands on him, you have condoned his activities. You have endorsed him. You have set him loose to be leader of the church.

And if he happens to be unworthy of it, you are responsible, and you share in the guilt. You are partaker of his sins. If you lay hands on a man hastily, and he goes out and lives in sin, then the guilt of that falls on you.

You're the one who made him an elder. You're the one who did the hasty thing. So be careful.

Wait. Let them be tested, he said earlier. And because some people's sins, sure, you can see their sins immediately and say, oh, he shouldn't be an elder.

But other men have as many sins, but just keep them more hidden. And their sins don't come out until later. So what should you do? Wait until you know someone a long time before you consider them for that position.

Likewise, someone's righteous deeds are visible to all. Others are more clandestine and secretive in their good works, but they won't be hidden ultimately. Ultimately, their good works will be shot from a rooftop by God.

But the point here is, you can't always tell what kind of man you're dealing with just by first impressions. So don't hastily appoint him. Now, I need to comment on verse 23.

Verse 23 probably arises as an upshot from the last line of verse 22. When he says, don't share in other people's sins, but keep yourself pure. The idea is, if you appoint an elder who's unworthy and he does wrong things and you become responsible for it, you've compromised your own purity.

You've compromised your own conscience because you have become a partner with a man who's a sinner. Because later on it suggests some partnership and fellowship and agreement and approval. And you bring a taint on your own character and reputation by

doing that.

So keep yourself pure. And having said that, it came to Paul's mind apparently one sense in which Timothy might be trying to keep himself more pure than he needed to. Timothy knew, or at least Paul told him, that an elder should not be given to much wine.

Should not be given to wine at all. He also knew that Paul had said elsewhere, if eating meat or drinking wine stumbles my brother, I won't do it all the days of my life. He said that in the first Corinthians.

So Timothy knew that some people would be stumbled by drinking wine and leaders ought to be particularly careful in this area. And it would appear that Timothy had stopped drinking wine and drank only water. And that this was perhaps even giving way to a certain amount of asceticism because there was an asceticism in the church.

Timothy might have been just sort of out of charity saying, well I won't offend these people who have these ascetic ideas. Drinking wine was normal. Most Christians drank it.

They usually mixed it with water and the reason they did it because the water was undrinkable. And in many third world countries it's still that way. Adding wine to the water was a way of purifying it.

The alcohol would help to kill off microbes and then they could, they didn't know about microbes but they practiced it anyway. They found that they didn't get amebic dysentery when they added wine to their water. And therefore, apparently Timothy, in order to keep himself pure, which he was very eager to do I would say, had perhaps unwisely decided, well I'm going to be so pure I won't even put wine in my water.

I'll just drink water only. But that's not, that was not healthy. And he had oft stomach problems.

And it may not be, you know I used to think that what Paul was saying here is, you've got chronic stomach problems from who knows what source. And you can treat them with wine as a medicine. But I now see it a little differently.

I think what he's saying is your stomach problems come from the fact that you're drinking the water. You know, you've probably got amebic dysentery, you know, chronically. So what you need to do is start adding some wine to your water like everybody else does.

Stop being such an ascetic. Stop trying to be so pure that you don't even touch wine. Because it's just not smart.

The water's not good. Don't drink water only. Nobody else is doing that.

Add wine to it. Drink a little wine. And your stomach needs it.

Because you have often firmness and so forth. And then he gets back into talking about those things. But it's sort of an aside.

At first it kind of moves aside from the main discussion. But it's called for because he's advocating that Timothy keep himself pure. But then he, no doubt Paul realizes Timothy is already one who's predisposed to keep himself pure.

Maybe too pure in some respects. Maybe he's a little too conscientious in this respect. And so he says, now listen.

I don't mean so pure that you don't drink any wine. I mean, I realize you've been avoiding wine. That's going a little too far.

Because the water you're drinking is making you sick. So get back into, you know, add wine to it just like anybody else does. He's not advocating the drinking of straight wine necessarily because people normally didn't drink straight wine in ancient times.

But they mix it with water in order to purify the water. It's a typical table. But OK, Timothy, Chapter six.

And this is our last session that we can afford to give to the first Timothy. I mean, I've made false predictions every session so far as to how much we might finish. But I will guarantee you we're going to finish this session because we don't have another session to give to it.

So we'll finish it whether adequately or not. I think we should finish it adequately. Verses one and two seem very much displaced.

In a sense, they are very Pauline. That is, they are very much like what he says in other epistles. They differ from what he says on the same time you get other epistles in some ways.

And they just don't seem to fit the context all that well, which gives us the impression that since Paul is writing a more personal and informal letter, that he'll throw in something that comes to his mind even if it doesn't happen to be called for by the previous immediate context. Now, it's possible that some would see a connection to context. I haven't.

It's eluded me. It's even as when, in verse 23 of the previous chapter, he branches off to give Timothy some personal advice about his own health practices. It's not altogether disassociated from what he was talking about before, but it's not really directly relevant to what he was talking about before.

I mean, at the end of chapter five, he's talking about ordaining elders. He's talking about being careful not to ordain men prematurely and hastily and so forth. In verse 23, he



departs seemingly entirely from that only for a moment and then gets back to it.

Did you tune yourself on? I thought I did. Is it on now? OK, just. Is it working? It's on as much as it can be.

But again, the reason he went off on that momentary tangent on drinking wine and water is because he had just said a statement that was consistent with his context. Keep yourself pure. It just so happens that having said that, it reminded him of something about Timothy keeping himself pure, which was almost an overbalance on Timothy's side.

And so he throws in that personal comment. But Timothy, now listen, you're not very well drink wine now. Here also, I mean, there may have been something about what he said that caused to come to his mind instruction to servants.

Let me just read it and then I'll make the comments I have, of course. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor so that the name of God and his doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved.

Teach and exhort these things. Now, Paul teaches elsewhere about servants and masters, as we know, both in Ephesians and Colossians he does, and so does Peter in 1 Peter chapter 2. In those other circumstances, though, both Paul and Peter follow up their instructions to masters and servants with instructions to husbands and wives and children and parents. In other words, usually when this subject comes up of servants submitting to their masters, whether it's in Colossians, Ephesians or 1 Peter, it is part of a larger section about submission in general, about people accepting their role, whether it's a role of subordination or authority.

And in all of those places that I mentioned, along with the exhortation to servants comes a corresponding exhortation to masters, and along with the exhortation to wives comes a corresponding exhortation to husbands, and along with the exhortation to children, there is a corresponding exhortation to fathers, as you know from having studied those other portions, the Pauline portions. Now, this is different in that, first of all, there is no reference here to the submission of wives to husbands or children to their parents. So, this is a passage where he just addresses servants, apparently because the servants in Ephesus needed this information.

Secondly, he does not here, as in all the other places, give a corresponding exhortation to the masters. He only speaks to the servants here. He does not speak to the masters, as is his usual custom and Peter's usual custom.

He just talks to the servants. Now, in that respect, it is different from Paul's other

instructions. However, what he says to the servants is the same as what he says to the servants elsewhere, and even that may be distinctively apostolic in the sense that he says something to the servants that we would not be inclined to say in the natural.

We who are Christians nurtured in Western ideas and Western culture in the 20th century are accustomed to the idea of the freedom and independence of all men, and the equality of all men, and the rights of all men to have equal station or equal opportunities. In fact, it is considered one of the greatest sins in our secular culture to deprive somebody of an equal opportunity because of his race, or because of their gender, or because of their age, or whatever. I mean, it seems to be the obsession of our Western culture to make sure that nobody is getting any opportunities that others are not.

And one of the things most intolerable in our culture is the idea that any man would consider another man his slave, that one man would have more rights by virtue of his station in life than another man intrinsically, and that one man would actually belong to and be the property of another man, and be totally obligated to lay down all his rights for the sake of that man who is called his master. That is abhorrent to our culture. And in fact, while there was a time in our own nation where slavery and these concepts were acceptable, where apparently they were abused a great deal, that the conscience of the majority, which was mostly the northern states, rose up so violently against it that it overthrew it once and for all, and although this was only a little over 100 years ago, that slavery was abolished from our culture, and I think it was even more recently that it was abolished from Britain and their culture.

I don't remember the exact time when Wilberforce and those others led the campaign against slavery in Britain, but though it's not much more than a century ago that our own culture took slavery for granted, we have so reversed our thinking on it in the past century that it's abhorrent. It's almost like we can't imagine how anyone could ever have believed that a good person might be the owner of slaves, how any Christian could have in any way justified having slaves. It is so against the grain of our culture, yet apparently Paul and Peter and others did not quite feel the same way about it.

It is true that Paul did not feel like God was prejudiced toward any class of people. He did believe that all people had equal rights in the gospel, that is to be saved and to experience God's favor and blessing and so forth, but he did not teach the obliteration of all social classes. Now, I'm not saying that Paul would have instituted those differences if they hadn't already existed.

I'm not saying that the presence of social classes, including slaves and free men, is a divine institution, which Paul would have established had it been absent, but it apparently was an institution which, while present, was not too offensive, and one in which Christians should be content to live. Now, if Paul only in all his writing spoke to the

slaves on this subject, then we might think that he's just acquiescing to the fact that they don't have any other choice. If he says, be submissive, be good Christian slaves, that's because they have no choice in the matter, and slavery is not going to be abolished by the slaves.

It's got to come from the master's side, and since all the Christians involved in it are on the slaves' side, you might as well just tell them to grin and bear it, which Paul did essentially say to do. Grin and bear it, and serve your masters as you'd serve the Lord. But the problem is, he also addressed Christian masters who owned slaves, and it was never part of his instruction to them that they ought to release their slaves.

Now, that's where Paul shows the difference of opinion from our modern culture. We might say to a person who's in an oppressive situation, well, brother, life is full of hardship, and I pity you, your situation, and the virtue, would you say, embrace it as God's will for you? And even Paul does say something in 1 Corinthians 7, he says, you slaves, if you can get your freedom, go ahead and do it. That is, if you can get the option of your rise, if you're offered your freedom, take it.

He said, you don't have to be compelled to remain a slave if you have some viable option open to you. But he says, if you don't have the option, then don't care a thing about it, don't worry about it, just be a slave. Now, we can understand giving that advice to slaves, but, and we would maybe give that same advice to slaves if we lived in an institution where we were facing a Christian slave who had no other choice.

But when we would talk to a master, if a Christian master would come to us for counsel, or if we were in the position of an apostle to give normative instructions to all people who are Christians, including masters and slaves, we would certainly be inclined by our sensitivities to say, listen, you masters, how dare you have slaves? Don't you know better than that? Let those slaves go. Paul never made any such instructions, he just said, treat your slaves well. Treat your slaves with justice, don't abuse them.

And to tell you the truth, the reason slavery is so offensive to us, even though we've never seen it first hand, is that what we read about slavery is that it was extremely abusive. I mean, black slaves in this country were treated terribly, and it is more of the terrible abuse than the institution of slavery, really, that is offensive to our consciences. We have just perhaps assumed that the only kind of slavery we've ever seen, which is abusive slavery, is the only kind there ever could be.

The fact of the matter is that the Old Testament suggests some slaves might love their position as slaves so much that even when offered their freedom after seven years of service, they'd prefer to stay, which is something that's hard for us to relate to. But it means that not only evil, oppressive men had slaves, but even good men had household servants that were theirs, they owned them. And after seven years, they should let them go if they're Hebrew slaves, but the slave might even like to stay because he's not been

abused.

He's actually in a situation more desirable as a slave than when he met his prospects outside of that place. Many times people were slaves because they were debtors, and they couldn't pay their debts, so they sold themselves into slavery. They had no possessions to sell, so they had to sell themselves.

Now, you offer those people their freedom, they've got no possessions, they've got no way to set themselves up in business, they've got no security, but they've had security if they've got a good master who supplies their medical needs and their food and their clothing and supports their family and so forth. Hey, I've got it good, why should I go out there and try to flail around in the dog-eat-dog economic world and maybe fail? You know, I'm happy where I am. And for some people, slavery was actually a secure place, a more secure place than they'd have outside of it.

And so, Paul had no reason to say slavery as such should be abolished, it doesn't have to be abusive, and in some people's cases it might even be desirable to be a slave. But he did regulate slavery in such a way as to say, listen, masters, do not become abusers of this. Now, he didn't do so here, however.

He does so in Colossians, he does so in Ephesians, Peter does so in 1 Peter chapter 2. Here, he doesn't talk to the masters, he talks to the slaves only, and this is probably because it was the slaves in Ephesus who needed instruction. Perhaps there were no abusive masters in the church, and therefore it was not necessary for him to waste his breath talking to them on this occasion. Now, there's a sense which I said this passage is out of context, it doesn't seem to be called for.

We've been talking about elders, we've been talking about the way the church distributes its money among the poor and the servants of the church and so forth, and we don't have a continuation of that theme here. But there is one thing it has in common, and no doubt the thing that caused Paul to bring it up at this point and brought it to his mind, is that he's been talking about categories of persons who should be honored and given their due, in a sense. Widows should be honored, chapter 5 verse 3 says.

Christian church leaders should be honored, he said in chapter 5 verse 17. And now, there's another category of persons who are deserving of some honor, and that is masters. And their servants owe it to them and should give them what is their due, as it were.

And no doubt that is what called for this discussion, though it does seem more or less out of the context of what's been discussed. The common thread in all of these things, including this passage, is honor. He says, let as many servants as are under the account of their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and his doctrine may

not be blasphemed.

Now this motive, so that the name of God and his doctrine may not be blasphemed, suggests that a Christian's behavior can bring blasphemy on the gospel if it is misbehavior. And a Christian ought to be very careful about all of his conduct, because he wears the name of Jesus on him. He is watched, whether he knows it or not, by the world as a representative of the gospel and what the gospel does in the life of people.

And we know that only too well, because although you may have never suffered criticism from believers for your own hypocrisy or compromise, yet you have heard them talk about others, and you know that the world is watching. And amazingly, the world knows what a Christian should be like, because they're the first to spot when Christians aren't being what a Christian should be, and therefore, for the sake of the reputation of God and his gospel, make sure your conduct is good. In this case, it requires even laying down all your rights, because we're talking about slaves here.

Slaves have no actual rights. One might say, well, you know, I'm entitled to a little happiness, aren't I? Well, perhaps, but not if it endangers the testimony of God and his gospel. The Christian has made a commitment by becoming a Christian not to pursue his own happiness and his own life and liberty and happiness, but that he's made a commitment to live his life for one thing only, and that's to glorify God, and to pursue one's own life, liberty, or pursuit of happiness at the expense of Christian humility and meekness and service and so forth, and laying down your rights is to really put yourself above God.

And while people do this on a regular basis, this is not appropriate for Christians. Christians would be more concerned about how the kingdom of God is shared and how the gospel is viewed and how receptive the world is to the gospel because of my behavior. Those are the issues I should be more concerned about than my own liberty.

And so servants should be careful to honor their masters. Now, here, he's not necessarily referring to Christian masters. And I say that because he singles out Christian masters as a separate category in the next verse.

He's talking about, initially, all masters, even if they're non-Christian masters. And most of the Christians in the early church in the Roman Empire were slaves. And most of them probably did not have Christian masters, since there were not as many Christian masters as there were Christian slaves.

And so a lot of them had, perhaps, abusive masters, non-Christian masters who followed patterns of abuse. And yet the servants were told to behave themselves and honor those masters and esteem them worthy of honor because their position as masters. Now, Peter, in 2 Peter, when he talks to servants, he says, you know, well, let me turn to them quickly.

Because he has quite an expanded version of these instructions, completely agreeable with what Paul said, but some are more expanded. In 1 Peter 2, verse 18, Peter says, servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle ones, such as a Christian master should be expected to be, but also to the harsh ones, which many non-Christian masters would be. For this is commendable, in because of conscience toward God, one endures grief, suffering wrongfully, that is, suffering innocently.

For what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God, for to this end you were called. Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. So, basically he says, you might think that as a Christian, you're commendable because you bear up patiently under beatings, even when you've done something wrong.

He says, no, anybody ought to bear up patiently under beatings when they've done something wrong. They deserve beatings. They deserve discipline when they've done things wrong.

Where you ought to rejoice is where you've done only right things. You've done nothing worthy of punishment, and yet you get punished. You get, you are suffering an injustice.

And he says, if you take that injustice patiently, that's commendable before God. God likes that. God appreciates that.

And he says, not only that, you were called to that, he says in verse 21. This is what Christians are called to. Not all Christians are slaves, and therefore not all Christians will be beaten by unjust masters, but all Christians are called to patiently and graciously bear up under injustice.

As Jesus did. Jesus is given as an example. He also did that.

So, Paul indicates that even Christian, even servants who have no Christian master must honor their masters, but then he says in verse two, and those who have believing masters, you know, which would be a smaller category, let them not despise them because they're brethren. There is always the possibility that because your employer is a Christian, and that you can fellowship with him socially, or at lunch break, or coffee break, you and he enjoy talking about the things of God. I had Christian masters in jobs I held shortly.

I remember working in a factory which manufactured guitar amplifiers, and the foreman was a spiritual Christian, and there was a small factory, only had about 30 something employees, and about 11 or 12 of them were Christians, including the foreman. And the foreman used to come around and pull me off my post to ask me questions about the

Bible and stuff, and it was really a kind of neat working situation. But it's easy to take advantage of that, saying, well, he's, my master is a Christian, therefore he is also under obligation to be gentle and generous and to not be harsh and so forth, and I can kind of take advantage of that in a way I couldn't take advantage of the non-Christian.

Paul says don't even begin to think that way. Rather than thinking you can despise him or look down on him or fail to give him his proper respect or his proper obedience because he's a Christian, rather than taking advantage of his generosity that he's a Christian, seeing his Christianity as more of an incentive to serve diligently, because now the person that you're serving is a brother, and your service is going to benefit a fellow Christian, which should excite you more than the prospect of enriching a non-Christian, you know, by your labor. So he says don't despise your masters just because they're Christians, but rather serve them because those who are benefited by your labor are believers and beloved.

Teach and exhort these things. So your conduct in the workplace is a manifestation of love, especially if you happen to be working for a Christian, and some Christians have that privilege of doing, even in a secular job working for a brother whom they can even fellowship with at the same church or in home meetings, or they're very, they can be intimate with in a spiritual dimension, but they should be very businesslike at work in the sense that they don't neglect their work knowing that, well, this guy, I'm giving him some slack because he's my friend, he's my brother. No, realize that you're supposed to work hard and be diligent no matter who your employer is, all the better if he's a Christian, because then you're benefiting a brother, and that's good, he's beloved.

Verse three. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain, or King James says that gain is godliness, from such withdraw yourself. Now, here's a rather extended description of the false teachers.

They teach otherwise than Paul teaches. Paul has been given a variety of instructions on several practical issues, and he says there are people who teach something else but this, but they're not to be trusted. He says they don't have wholesome words, and basically the problem is they're departing from the teachings of Jesus.

Now, you're probably aware, I have probably made you aware, I don't recall to what degree I have, but one of the disagreements I have with dispensationalists is that strict dispensationalism teaches that the teachings of Jesus are not for the Christian. I don't know if I made that clear to you before, but that... And some dispensationalists do not hold this view. That is, some do not make this mistake.

But strict dispensationalism, original dispensationalism, and consistent dispensationalism says that the Sermon on the Mount and the teachings of Jesus are not applicable to this dispensation. Because they say when Jesus came, he was speaking to Israel as Israel, and that Israel had a destiny in God which they neglected, they forfeited temporarily, and his instructions had to do with them as a nation, as a nation that was about to be offered, or was being offered, the millennial kingdom that they could have had if they hadn't crucified him, and that they rejected him. Therefore, you know, strike all those things from the record as it were, put them on hold, Jesus went back to heaven, when he comes back, he'll institute them by force.

And in the meantime, we live in a parenthetical irrelevant period where God is doing sort of something to sort of bide his time while he's waiting for Israel to come around. Since he's got to wait, he might as well do something productive, so he brings some Gentiles and that's the church age. And so they say, you see, the teachings of Jesus were not directed to the church age, they were directed to Israel, and they pertain to the kingdom age, which they identify as a future millennium.

And strict and consistent dispensationalism teaches that none of the teachings of Jesus really are relevant to the church. That everything Jesus taught was for Israel in the kingdom age, and it will be relevant and applicable during the millennium. Now, like I said, some dispensationalists realize how heretical that is, and they don't go that far with their dispensationalism.

But by not doing so, they simply, they're not consistent in their dispensationalism. Because if you accept the early presuppositions of dispensationalism, then the rejection of Christ's teaching for the church is simply illogical, it's taken into its logical conclusion. But I have met, recently, even in the next town from here, an evangelical pastor who has told me that the teachings of Jesus are not for today.

He's a very strict, what is actually called a hyper-dispensationalist today, and he does not believe that the teachings of Jesus are relevant for today. He was actually teaching a series through the Beatitudes, and he came to the statement in Jesus, the meek shall inherit the earth, and he said, I'm going to have to discontinue my teaching, so I don't believe this. He said, I don't believe the meek are going to inherit the earth.

That's what the Jews are going to inherit the earth. The Christians have a heavenly calling, not an earthly calling, and therefore he didn't think it was relevant to the church, and therefore he just didn't, he was fighting to teach through the sermon, but he couldn't find any way to make it relevant to the church, because his theology couldn't fit it in to relevance. Now, what I want to say to you is that is scary.

When Jesus told the apostles, as they were about to spound the church, go and teach people to observe everything I have commanded you, how could it be plainer that his instructions were for his church? I mean, the very act of planting and promoting the



church and making disciples of the church was to teach people to do what Jesus said, to observe his teachings, and when Paul repeatedly says Christ is the head of the church, in what sense is the authority of his headship exercised but in his spoken words? How do we know what the head wants but by what he said and left us in writing? It's quite clear that to reject the words of Jesus is to dislodge oneself from the head. The head has no way to speak into our lives if we do not accept his teachings as authoritative. Furthermore, Paul makes it very clear here, anyone who teaches otherwise, otherwise than what? Than what Paul teaches.

Yes, but what Paul teaches is also agreeable with what Jesus teaches. He says, even the words, they do not contend to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul makes it clear that if you're teaching anything that's contrary to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are a heretic.

And I hate to say that because the particular pastor I mentioned a moment ago, he's a pretty nice guy. I like him, and he accepts many of the so-called cardinal doctrines of evangelical faith. He believes in the inspiration of the Bible, he believes in the birth of the virgin, he believes in the substitutionary death of Jesus, he believes in the resurrection of Jesus, the secular gifts, the things that we consider cardinal.

But the Bible says, if he doesn't teach and agree with the teachings of Jesus, if he teaches from church any standard other than that, he, well what does it say about him? He's proud, he knows nothing, he's obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, and boy is that the case with this individual. I went over to talk to him, I was planning to have a gentle discussion with him, I just wanted to confront him about a few things I heard him say in a sermon. He gave me an hour's appointment, we were there four hours, because he, not I of course, was so contentious.

I mean, he was fascinated with arguments over words and things like that, I mean, you have to kind of dissect things and find esoteric meanings of things in order to get around the plain meaning of what Jesus said, what the Bible says. And this was so much so, and I hate to say this about the guy, because I don't dislike him, and I don't want to say this is him, but Paul says this is him, and anyone like him who teaches that the words of Jesus Christ are not authoritative for the church. "...from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth." Destitute means absolutely impoverished, having nothing of the truth.

I said this man affirms many of the truths of the gospel, but Paul says he may have the facts down, but he's lacking the truth, entirely lacking the truth. A smattering of true facts is not the truth. The truth is in Jesus.

Jesus is the truth. And if you divorce a Christian from their vital connection to Jesus as the head, then you are cut off from the truth. You may know a few true facts, but you are destitute of the truth.

And it says, "...they suppose that godliness is a means of gain." I don't know that that would be true of this pastor. I don't want to judge his motives as far as whether he's got a chance or whatever. I don't know that to be the case.

But in the case of those in Ephesus, that was true, apparently. There were men there who were using religion as simply another get-rich-quick scheme. Now, this was probably not to be identified with the modern prosperity doctrine, though in my opinion, prosperity teaching in its rankest form is nothing better.

I mean, it basically says godliness is a means of getting rich. But that's probably not what he was talking about here. He was probably talking about people who were just making a lucrative career of being religious teachers, like that today.

And I'm not talking about the prosperity teachers now. I'm talking about circuit teachers. Even temporary biblists and so forth have been known to be total hypocrites.

In fact, by the way, the fact that a person is a circuit preacher or that he's an itinerant or he moves around from place to place, there's certainly no proof that he's not a good man or a good Christian or a good teacher. He can be all those things. But an itinerant ministry lends itself more to hypocrisy and pretension because you never stay in any place long enough for anyone to find out what you're really like.

And I think that whenever an evangelistic ministry plans to come to town and run crusades and is seeking to get the support of the churches or the pulpit of the churches, that those churches ought to say, OK, where's your home church? Where's your stopping grounds? Where's some phone numbers of some pastors I can ask what they know about you? Because these have to be proven too. These people have to be tested before you put them on the pulpit. They ought to be.

And the itinerant preaching circuit has become the breeding ground of a host of charlatans who, because they never stay in one place long enough, no one ever discovers what their personal life is like. And many of them are in it for the money. But Marjo Gortner, whom some of you may know the name.

If you don't, it's just because you're probably not old enough to remember. There was a movie back in the early 70s. Well, I mean, Joe and Virginia are probably old enough to remember.

You might not be in the cultural circles where his name was mentioned. But in the 70s, there was a movie put out by Marjo Gortner. It was an exposé of his own hypocrisy.

He had been ordained into the ministry as a Pentecostal tent revivalist at age four. He had made headlines as the youngest minister to perform a wedding ceremony at age four. And through his teen years, he was a popular Pentecostal preacher, went around tent revivals all over the place.

And he was good at it. I mean, he was very good at it. His mother and father had abused him in the sense that they had forced him to memorize a long passage of scripture.

And if he didn't memorize them, they would speak to close to suffocated with a pillow. They basically had an agenda. Their boy was going to make money in the ministry.

And so they started grooming him early. And actually, when he was quite young, his father was also a circuit preacher. Just left the family, left the tent meeting and the family with the whole offering and never showed up again.

Although he's now a pastor down in San Diego. His father. His father.

Yeah. But Marjo continued his preaching through his teenage years. Then he just departed from it.

And then in his, I guess, probably in his 20s, he decided to make a movie because there had been actual film footage of his ministry and so forth. And he made a movie exposing himself. And he actually, in order, I think, to make a movie, he went back on the circuit again to do some more and took film crews with him and showed how he could preach and stuff.

And the movie is simply called Marjo. And it's really a hard movie for a Christian to watch because when you see him preaching, he says all the right things. He looks just like the best of them.

You know, he looks like the best, one of the best Pentecostal preacher ever. You get excited. You be shouting Amen.

You feel like the anointing is there. And then it shows him backstage smoking his dope with the women on his arms and, you know, giving up the money with his guys, you know. And I mean, that's, you know, he made it very clear.

He made no bones about it after he exposed himself that he was in it for the money. He was in it for the women. He was in it for the, you know, it was the thing he could make money at.

Now he's an actor. And I heard recently that he may be dying of AIDS at the moment. But he went into acting and he was a Hollywood actor, a B or C grade actor.

Really, he was in, I saw him in a movie or two, not very impressive. But it turns out he says that he learned his moves, his stage moves from watching Mick Jagger on stage, you know. He looked like a good Pentecostal preacher.

He looked like so many of them. That's the problem with watching a movie. You watch it and he's saying, I wasn't even a Christian.

I never have been. And yet he did it so well. It makes you wonder every time you see someone, is this another case of the same? Or is this a genuine case? It's hard to know.

The only way to really know is to know a man's life and character, which is not easy to spot if he's on the road all the time. But if he has a home congregation, if he's got people who know him, who can be consulted, it's great to talk to him. But I'm saying that there are people today, as there were in the old days, who consider religion as just another kind of game, another way of making a buck.

They consider godliness a means of getting gained. I mean, it's a financial gain. Yeah.

What is this question? The word godliness. And the translation says that that the religion is a means of gain. What is that translation? I don't know.

It's a Spanish. Oh, popular version. Yeah.

This is religion. But it's just like the United Bible Society or something. Popular version.

ABC. Yeah. Don't they put out the good news for our man? I don't know.

I believe they do. Probably, yeah. And I think that's probably a Spanish version of good news about a man, which means that you don't expect too great a degree of accuracy.

It says translated directly from the original Greek text. Yes. Well, in the same sense that the Phillips translation was.

It means that the translators knew what the Greeks said. And they were guided to some degree by the Greek text. Right.

But they followed a dynamic equivalence procedure. You know, it's more like. So I wouldn't I wouldn't put too much weight on that particular translation.

It's a pretty literal so far. Yeah. I've heard people swear by the good news version of good news version.

People who knew Greek. But I've also heard people who knew Greek swear by the NIV and some of them even use the living Bible. And the question is, what is it you're swearing by? I mean, what is it that you're saying about it? If you're saying that this is a nice, clear rendering of the sense of the original.

And in your opinion, the sense that is given is the sense of the original had. Then you're going to even if you're a Greek scholar, you'll appreciate it if you think that's a good policy and translation. But but if you're looking for literalness and not all Greek scholars think literalness is important, but the person who wants literalness is not going to be using as a principal study guide, the good news version or living Bible or some others.

Eric. Everyone's all opened up the chapter, but you know, I didn't I didn't have to bring any of my papers or so. Letters of commendation.

Yeah. Second Corinthians. Oh, I think it's the opening verses of Second Corinthians three.

Do we now need letters of commendation? And we do. We should not wait for Paul to spend enough time. Paul said you are my letters of commendation.

He's saying I shouldn't need to carry letters of commendation in order to be accepted by you. You're my own Congress. You know me.

You know, I mean, I lived with you for 18 months and and, you know, anything that you have in the way of Christianity came from my influence. So, I mean, you are my letters of commendation. I don't need it.

But he did send a letter of commendation with Phoebe, which is in Romans 16. One, you know, a letter of commendation is basically where a person is a Christian who's on the road or maybe moving from one place to another. And those Christians who know him well from his home church or her home church give them a letter of recommendation so that ahead of time, so that when they arrive in a new location, anyone who questions them can read it.

And nowadays can telephone back. You know, I mean, the first time I went to Germany, I requested from my pastor, Chuck Smith, a letter of commendation and got one. I carried it with me across the country into Germany when I was 19, because I knew that as a long haired kid, a lot of churches probably think, well, who are you? And so I had this letter to show that, you know, at least the church I came from, I was a member in good standing and they respected my ministry.

So that's that's helpful. That's not bad. Actually, I would prefer anyone who wanted to come and teach here.

If I didn't know them personally, I would like to see a letter of commendation from somebody who does know them personally. And I'd probably want to invest in a phone call to the person who wrote the letter and find out more about them. That's one reason we ask for references when students apply.

We want to know something about them, even though they're not teaching. If we're going to have to live with them and have them as an influence in our society here, in our community of students, we want to at least know that they're not going to be a damaging influence. Reference for them to help them.

That's like a letter of commendation, especially if it's your pastor or someone who sends you a reference form. OK, we've got to move along, as you probably know. Now, these false teachers believe that gain is godliness or that godliness is a means to get gain.

Now, Paul has a different opinion about what gain is. They obviously are using godliness to acquire some additional gain, some material gain. But Paul says, hey, godliness is not a means of getting gain.

Godliness is gaining up. You know, there's a saying which is not in the Bible, but it's basically the same thought. Virtue is its own reward.

You know, you may make great sacrifice to be virtuous and no one ever appreciates you or rewards you, but your reward is just that you have a clear conscience. Your reward is that God commends you. Your reward is that, of course, is yet to come.

When you go to be before the Lord, you'll be rewarded. And that's what Jesus said about those who do their alms in secret and so forth, that they have a great reward in heaven. And that's the point.

Godliness is all the reward a godly man wants. He will be godly if no other reward ever comes of it. He doesn't do it for the money.

Godliness with contentment. And that just means that he's content to be godly, even if he doesn't have anything else. He's not really seeking some other form of gain than that.

If he's content just to be godly, if he's content just to live with a pure conscience, he's a man who's really richer than most. Because a man with no money and contentment, but godliness, is really in an enviable state which many rich people who have every luxury are not in. They're not content.

They cannot rest. Their lives are not happy lives. Because though they have many things that other men covet, they have them and they know that that doesn't bring contentment, and they're still not content.

They want more. Whereas the man who's content in whatever state he is in, that's what Paul describes his own mentality, actually, in Philippians chapter 4. He says, I've learned to be content in whatever state I am. Poor, rich, doesn't matter.

Hungry, full, doesn't matter. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, he says. That is, I can endure hardship or I can remain faithful in the midst of prosperity.

It doesn't matter. Whatever state God gives me, it's fine. I am content with it because my conscience is clear toward God and that's the only thing that matters to me.

I can be content knowing that I have nothing but my integrity, nothing but my godliness, nothing but my virtue in this world. Now, Paul acknowledges that there is, of course, you do have some physical needs, and he goes on a little bit, for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. That's what Job essentially said.

Naked came I into the world and naked shall I go out. And having food and clothing, with

these we shall be content, or let us be content is how the King James chapter says it. It's more of an expectation or it could be a statement.

But the point is that we are content with godliness, period. Now, then he contradicts himself when he says, ah, but we also should expect food and clothing. No, because if you contain yourself with godliness, you will have food and clothing, because Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and what will happen.

These other things, food and clothing in the context of Matthew 6, these other things will be added to you. You cannot pursue godliness alone and be without your necessary food and clothing. Unless, of course, it is your time to die.

And I mean, everybody comes to a point where they don't need food and clothing. It's not because God's taken them home. But insofar as your life is not over and God has future plans for you, you cannot lack your necessary food and clothing.

The things are needful to survive if you are pursuing the kingdom of God, because Jesus said so. If you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, the other things will be added. He didn't say seek first the kingdom, then seek the other things in a secondary priority.

Just seek one thing, the kingdom, and the other things will come on its coattails. Your pursuit of the will of God in your life will inevitably bring with it all things necessary for survival. Now, that might not be as much as you have an inclination to desire.

You might desire more than is necessary for survival, and most people do, frankly. Most of us would like to have two chains of clothing. Most of us would like to have a few toys.

Some would like to have a roof over our heads. Obviously, in some climates, that too is part of the needs for living. In Paul's climate, people could live out under the stars.

The weather was not too severe. I think if he was writing to a church in Oregon, he'd say, having food, clothing, and shelter, most of them would be content. But, I mean, obviously, what he's saying is, if we have what it takes to stay alive, if that's all we have, that's enough.

As long as we're godly, we'll be content. Now, does this mean that Paul is advocating a life that is in strict Spartan poverty, and having nothing but food and clothing, and that we ought to be suspicious of persons who have a lot of food, or a lot of clothing, or a lot of other things besides food and clothing? I would say no. I would say that Paul is not teaching that here.

He does not teach that you ought to have only food and clothing. If that's all you have, you should be able to be content even in that condition. Paul himself said otherwise.

Elsewhere, I learned to be hungry and to be full. I learned a basic amount, in other words, to be poor and to be rich. He can be content in any condition, including poverty.

And so should any Christian be able to be. That is because a Christian's contentment is not based on possession of things. A person is content if all of his desires, or I should say if his dominant desires, are fulfilled.

A person whose dominant desires to accumulate things will never be content no matter how many he accumulates, because there will always be more things than he does not possess. If his dominant desire is to accumulate security and wealth, he will not be a content individual. If your dominant desire is to be godly, then you can be in an instant.

You can be this moment. And you will have the fulfillment of that desire which is dominant in your life, and you will therefore experience as a by-product of contentment. It does not mean that you will refuse additional blessings.

If God chooses to give you possessions or whatever, you won't refuse them. But it doesn't matter to you whether he does or not. If you are content, it makes no difference to you whether something is added or not to what you now have.

It's not saying that you insist on having little, but it means that you don't insist on having more than little. And to check your heart and your spirit, you need to ask yourself, not, you know, shall I give up all I have except for food and clothing, but rather, if I were in that situation where that's all I had, would I think God would do me a disservice? Would I be antsy and dissatisfied until I could accumulate a few more things to surround me, to make me feel more secure and more provided for? Or am I happy with God alone, and with my relationship with God? Well, the Christian knows that eternity is all that really matters. What is the point of feathering our nest here? It is true, if you have food and clothing and more things, it may even extend your life here.

But so what? You're going to die someday anyway. Someday, food and clothing will be of no use to you in any case. Whether that's today that you die, or 50 years from today, it'll make little difference in eternity.

A million years from now, or even a hundred years from now, it'll make little difference to you whether you lived on this earth 70 years or 20 years. The difference between 70 and 20 will be so minuscule that you won't even remember, you know, why the difference would have mattered to you, you know? I mean, a person who's got eternity on his mind, a person who's informed by Jesus and by the Bible of true values, which are eternal values, is simply going to live this life with a light grasp. He's not going to cling to anything.

He's not going to be thinking that anything out there that the world has to offer is really necessary for long-term happiness. Short-term happiness sometimes is enhanced by the



possession of things, but sometimes long-term happiness is hindered by short-term satisfaction. A Christian is not making decisions with time in view, but eternity in view.

And therefore he knows, or she knows, that if his relation with God is intact and his conscience is clear with God, and he's got his Godness, he's content, he's got all he really needs or wants. Other things may be added, but whether there are not is of little consequence. It does not affect his happiness or contentment.

And you might say, well, I don't know about this. Well, Paul exhorts us to be in that place. Let us be content with that.

If I'm not content in that way, then I have to ask myself, what's wrong? Where are my values? Am I thinking like a Christian or like a non-Christian? Now, if you're thinking like a non-Christian, it doesn't prove you are a non-Christian. It doesn't mean you're not saved, but it means that you need to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. It means that you need to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

You need to buy into the attitudes and values that the gospel says are true. And if you do, if you fully have, you will be able to be content with, even if you have nothing but food and clothing. Frankly, even if you don't have food or clothing, you can still be content in God, because as I said, you're content to die.

The apostle Paul at times said that he was naked and hungry. In 2 Corinthians where he describes his own conditions, he says he's homeless, having no certain dwelling place, being naked, destitute, afflicted, without food, and so forth. Now, he describes himself at times in that condition, but we don't have any evidence that he was uncontented even then.

The idea is, as long as it's not our time to die, God will supply the things necessary to keep us alive, food and clothing. And we should be content if he's doing so. But we should also be content, though he doesn't say so here.

I mean, it's not within this range of discussion, but we should also be content to die if God wants. And therefore, even lacking food and clothing, we can be content. We can be content just knowing that whatever our state is, it's exactly what God wants us to have.

And our heart is right with God, and we're ready to meet Him. Yes, sir? Do you think there is one of the fruits of this asceticism? I mean, some people that make a warrant for all the deeds they just saw everything as, I mean, kind of evil, you know, because it was just, it took their affections, and that, to them, I don't know, frightened them or something. You mean, you see sort of a relationship, a likeness almost.

Do you recall saying here what the ascetics would say, or? Well, yeah, because I mean, they were afraid of anything that was almost good, you know, marriage. I mean, do you think they were afraid of marriage because they thought, well, I mean... Pleasure is evil

and whatever? Well, not that it's just evil only, but the fact that... I don't know, did it affect God in this? Did it affect their contentment? Well, yeah, I think they probably... Well, I don't know about the fact that it affected... Maybe, maybe so. I personally think that Paul is saying something very different than the ascetics would have said, although it may have something in common, namely that Paul is saying that a Christian may be poor and have nothing, and the ascetics would say the same thing.

In fact, the ascetics would advocate having nothing. Paul is simply saying, if you happen to be in that state, be content there. But he's not saying that you should be in that state or must be in that state.

But the point is that our contentment should not be affected by our bank account. Jesus said, beware of covetousness. I think you're going to cover it in the Life of Christ tomorrow in this very passage in Luke 12.

Beware of covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses. So it should not be thought that abundant life means abundant in things, because Jesus said, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things. A lot of people take Jesus' statement, you know, I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

I mean, abundance of possessions, rich prosperity. No, that's the opposite of what Jesus taught. Jesus did not teach that abundance of things adds to the abundance of life at all.

Anyway, let's move along here. The point is, contentment is advocated. By the way, this is not only Paul's finding, although we don't know whether Paul wrote Hebrews or not, but in Hebrews, whoever wrote it, also stressed the same point in Hebrews 13.5, he said, let your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have.

For he himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. In other words, be content to have God with you. God is with you.

That should be enough. Be content with such things you have. Now, some of the readers may have had a lot of things and some may have had only a few, and some may have had next to nothing, but it didn't matter.

He didn't say how many things you should have. He just said, whatever things you have, be content. The amount of things you have is irrelevant.

Just be content with the things you have and don't be covetous, because covetousness and contentment are opposite things. The person who's content is not covetous. The person who's covetous is not content.

Okay, so let's go along here. Verse 9, verse 76-9, that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare. Doesn't say they can, but they do.

And into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. The word perdition means nothing other than damnation. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Literally, the root of all evil, but probably means all kinds of evil in this context. For which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

We'll stop there for a moment to comment. He said in verse 9, not those who are rich, but those who desire to be rich are in serious spiritual danger. Now, a man who is rich may be in spiritual danger, too, because usually if you're rich, it's because you wanted to be.

But, I mean, there may be a person who's rich just by the blessing of God and doesn't care that he's rich. He doesn't care to be rich. It wouldn't matter to him if he's poor.

He sees his riches as just a state of stewardship that God has given him. And, you know, he'd be as content if he were not rich. Those people are rare, but I know some like that.

This passage cannot be used to say that all Christians should be poor. As a matter of fact, later in verse 17, he addresses those who are rich in the church and tells them that they ought to be rich in good works and so forth. In other words, there's a category of men in the church who were not poor.

And Paul doesn't say that they should be ashamed of themselves for being rich. But he does say anyone who wants to be rich. Now he's got a heart problem, see.

What you desire comes from your heart. Your circumstance may or may not reflect your desires. A poor person may not really want to be poor, and a rich person may not care that he's rich.

It may not reflect what he desires. It may simply be his long life. Men may have been born in a rich family.

He may have employed himself in responsible and honest labor, and it happened to bring him in a good pay. He can't be blamed for that. If money was not his object, if being rich was not his goal, if he was simply doing the will of God and whatever the will of God happened to be something that brought about prosperity, then, as verse 17 suggests, he is one of the rich that has special instructions directed toward him.

And those instructions do not say, take a vow of poverty. Nonetheless, a person who is rich or is not rich needs to examine their own heart and say, do I want to be rich? You see, a person who is very poor might be very guilty in this particular area, because poor people may be content or not content. If not, they may very well be driven to be rich,

and though they may never become rich, they may pierce themselves through with all these sorrows and fall into this very snare that Paul talked about.

Even though they're not rich themselves, they want to be. You see, as soon as you make riches a priority of any kind or a goal, you have lost sight of true values. You are giving, attributing a value to something that has no value in the sight of God.

I don't say no value, I should say. No considerable value. Your money has a value.

As I said earlier, it can be used for godly things. But the thing is, it doesn't have a personal value to your soul, to anything that will last. It may be that your money given away will benefit your soul, and it may benefit someone else's soul that you gave, because you'll support a missionary, they'll go and raise other people.

There are good things to be done with money, and it has a value. The problem is, the value it has is not in keeping it. The value you have is not in the accumulation of it.

The value of money is found in the giving of it, because that's good for your soul to give, and it's good for other people that you support the work of God and give. So, it's kind of an interesting thing. We don't want to say money is a bad deal.

And Paul does not say money is the root of all evil, money is actually a good and important and necessary thing when rightly used, just like the law is good if it's used lawfully. So money is used lawfully, but used unlawfully, or used in a way that is not the proper use, like the law, it can be deadly. Money can be deadly.

And the unlawful use of money, or the improper use of money, is to set your heart on it. It says in Ecclesiastes, he that sets his heart on riches will not be satisfied with riches. And that's true, to set your heart on anything other than God is stupid.

But the reason he mentions money in particular is because Christians often fall in that snare. There's two vices that Jesus used the word beware about. There's other things he said beware about, like beware of men and beware of certain circumstances, but as far as moral qualities that are vices that he warned us to beware of, he said beware of the leper, the scribes, and the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, and beware of covetousness.

Hypocrisy and covetousness. Now, beware means watch out for it. He never said beware of adultery or drunkenness or blasphemy or murder or anything like that.

Why? You don't have to watch too carefully to see that. That's overt sin. That's obvious.

You know as a Christian that adultery is wrong. You know that if you're a murderer that that's wrong. You can't hide those things away in your spirit and not know they're there very easily.

But hypocrisy and covetousness are sneaky things. Oh, Christians who commit adultery

know they're not doing what Christianity calls them to. They know they're in violation.

People who murder or steal know they're in violation of Christianity, but people who are hypocritical and covetous often don't even realize that they're in sin. In fact, hypocritical people sometimes think they're the most righteous people of all, and people who are covetous sometimes it never crosses their mind that their love for money is just cut them off from God. That's why Jesus said, beware, beware, beware.

Love of money is a very sneaky, deadly thing. He says those who want to be rich, they fall into temptation because you cannot desire riches without already having fallen in a sense. You've already bought into a false value system.

You think being rich is more desirable than being poor? Not necessarily. Being in the will of God is the only thing that's desirable. Whether that be to be rich or to be poor.

Anyone who has made being rich a goal has already lost touch with reality, spiritually speaking, and has fallen into temptation, and continues to fall into further temptation and a snare, and becomes trapped in the endless cycle of accumulation, which never brings satisfaction. And no rich person, well I shouldn't say no rich person, but many people that Paul would simply call rich do not consider themselves yet rich, because they compare themselves with people who are richer still. I'm sure that Donald Trump thinks he's rich, and he is.

But there are people who have a tenth of what Donald Trump has, and they are rich too, but they wouldn't think so because they compare themselves with him and say, well, there's a long way to go before I'm really a rich man. Frankly, I think we're all rich, most of us. Some of you don't even have two pennies to rub together maybe at the moment, I don't know.

But you're wearing clothes. You've got a full stomach. If you don't, you're going to eat a meal pretty soon here.

You've got a roof over your head. There's people who don't have so much as that. And we are really well off compared to most.

And if you desire to stay well off, that is if that's one of your goals or priorities, spiritually that's not good. It will prevent you at times from doing what you ought to do. It will prevent you from giving aid to someone who's a little poorer than you.

It'll prevent you from going on the mission field where there's no security and no prosperity that can be foreseen there. If it is your goal to acquire things in the world, you will not be able to pursue godliness. Notice in 1st Leviticus, Paul says, oh man, if God flee from these things, that is the pursuit of money, and pursue righteousness.

You can't pursue both at the same time. Or as Jesus put it, you can't serve God and Mary

at the same time. If you're serving God, it means you're in pursuit of him.

If you're serving Mary, it means you're in pursuit of that. If it is your goal to be rich, you cannot be consistent with a goal of being in the will of God. Being rich is alright if that's in the will of God for you, but you should have very little concern whatsoever for whether you're rich or poor, as Paul indicates here.

Because that desire for money begins to draw men into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. That is, absolute loss of salvation. And he indicates that some have already strayed from the faith, in verse 10, because of this, because of prejudice, because they wanted possessions.

He's not speaking again hypothetically, he's speaking of cases he knows already. He knows of cases where brothers who were in the faith have strayed and are not in the faith, and have been drowned in destruction and perdition because of the love of money. We should not take it lightly when Jesus said it's harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

Although it's not impossible, it must be exceedingly rare. And Christians fool themselves if they think they can have the best of this world or the best of the next as well. Remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man.

All we know about the rich man is he was rich. We don't know anything else about him. Well, he also didn't help the poor outside the gate.

All we know about Lazarus was he was poor. There must have been other things, other factors in their lives that are not mentioned in the story. For instance, Lazarus must have died in faith and the rich man not in faith.

But when they both found themselves in the place of the dead, and Lazarus was relieved in the bosom of Abraham, and the rich man was in flames, and the rich man said, Father, I'm going to send Lazarus down here to dip his finger in water and put it on my tongue. I'm tormented in these flames. Abraham said, hey, let's be reasonable.

You in your lifetime had all the good things, and you want them now too? Come on. This man was poor all his life, and now look, he's comforted. This is not a teaching that being poor is a means of salvation, because there are many poor people in this world who are going to burn in hell, because although they're poor, they're wicked.

And there are some rich people who are going to be in heaven. But certainly the message is you're a little unreasonable if you're demanding that you have pleasure and security and prosperity and luxury in this life and the next one too. So let's be reasonable now.

This life has a totally different set of values than the next. That is, this fallen world has a

different set of values than heaven does, and therefore you can't pursue that which is valued in this world and at the same time be pursuing that which is valued in heaven, because the things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God. And one thing that's very highly esteemed among men is getting rich, and those who seek to get rich, they have an attitude that's an abomination to God, and they pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

But you, verse 11, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness. Remember godliness with contentment is great gain. Pursue godliness then.

Faith, love, patience, gentleness. We don't have time to expand on each of these virtues, but they're familiar to us. We know what they are.

Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life. Now, lay hold on eternal life does not mean that Timothy had not yet, you know, gotten saved and he didn't have eternal life.

But it suggests that even though we're saved, we're still in a continual race, still in a continual warfare, a fight that we have to fight faithfully in order that we might lay hold of the ultimate, which is to die in faith. He has just told of certain who have departed from the faith because of greed. They have fallen to the enemy.

The temptation and the snare of the devil has caught them. You've got to fight that. You've got to fight the devil.

You've got to fight that temptation. You've got to lay hold on eternal life, which in the particular context refers to, you know, ultimate eternal life after this life. We already have eternal life in a sense, but we can lose it.

We can forsake it. We can walk away from it. But you've got to lay hold on eternal life, which I understand to mean dying in faith, having still your having eternal life still in your grip at the time that you pass from this life into the next.

That's what the battle's all about. Now, he says, to which that is to eternal life. You also were called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things. And before Christ Jesus, who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ is appearing, which he will manifest in his own time. He who is the blessed and only potentate, which is just another word for a king, a ruler, the king of kings and lord of lords, who alone has immortality in his own sense, dwelling in an unapproachable light whom no man has seen or can see to whom be honor and everlasting power.

Amen. We've seen it all kind of gets into another doxology here before. Now, the most

perplexing part of this passage is what is meant when it says that Timothy has confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

And then that is compared or maybe even contrasted with Jesus Christ, who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate. It seems to me that Paul is here urging Timothy to live up to his calling and even to what he has confessed to believe before many witnesses. There was a time where he stood before many witnesses and confessed himself a Christian.

He confessed himself to be a servant of God, and he's basically being reminded that don't forget what you said. There were many witnesses. They'll hold you accountable for what you said.

Therefore, don't fall away from it. Fight the fight of it. Lay hold on that which you've professed.

Lay hold of that which you've been called to and don't swerve away from it at all. You have spoken before many witnesses. Probably the many witnesses refers to those elders who laid hands on him and sent him off from Lystra when he first entered the ministry.

It's probable that at the time of his ordination, he had to make some kind of profession of what his vision was or what his commitment was, and then they laid hands on him and ordained him. That may not be the case. Many witnesses might simply refer to the fact that throughout Timothy's career in ministry, there have been many people who've heard him say the right thing.

Many people have heard him confess to being a Christian. In any case, what Paul seems to be saying is you should be willing to make that good confession whether the witnesses are hostile or friendly. If those many witnesses before whom Timothy spoke means the elders of his own church or even the Christians in many different cities where he's ministered, even in Ephesus.

Still, that doesn't take an awful lot of boldness. To make a public stand and confession for Jesus in the midst of people who are favorable to that is one thing. But Jesus witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, a man who was not favorable.

When Jesus' death or his life was at stake, it would appear that Paul said to Timothy, I hope that you will not swerve from that same confession that you made before friendly witnesses when you have to stand before hostile witnesses. Remember Jesus. You and he have both confessed a good confession, but you did it before witnesses who are friendly.

He did it before Pontius Pilate. And I believe that Paul is suggesting you need to just be faithful unto death. If things get rough, don't let that swerve you from your purpose.



Be faithful even in a death-threatening, life-threatening situation. And that would seemingly justify Paul's use of the term God in verse 13 who gives life to all things, and also in verse 16, God who alone has immortality. It seems to be in the context of, you may be in a life-threatening situation someday for the stand you take, but don't let that scare you.

God is one who gives life. God is one who possesses immortality. And by this it means that if anyone's going to have it, they've got to get it from him.

No one is going to have immortality except by way of being found in him who possesses it. And so the reference to life and to immortality seems to suggest a conflict, or a contrast to death. And it's being said, don't worry about death.

Jesus, when he was facing death, still kept his confession uncorrupted, even before Pontius Pilate. You need to maintain that good confession that you've already professed before friendly witnesses, and keep that truth without spot, blameless until our Lord appears, even if death should threaten you. And in his own time, it says in verse 15, he will manifest who is that blessed and holy king of kings and lord of lords, which seems to me God in due course will reveal to the world who the true king of kings is.

At the moment, the world has luxury to challenge whether Jesus is who he claims to be. We know who he is, but the world isn't convinced necessarily, and they have the luxury of disbelief. But they won't then.

God will in his own time manifest who is the king of kings and who is lord of lords. When it says he alone possesses immortality, you might say, don't we also, as Christians, possess immortality? The answer would be yes, but only because we possess him. Immortality is simply a quality of his, and if we are found in him, then we share with him in his immortality, as we also share with him in his death, resurrection, and his other qualities.

It says he dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. It seems strange that Paul would use a term for God that stresses his inaccessibility, since Christianity is that which makes God accessible to man. But there are two sides of the truth, of course.

This God who has been made accessible to us is nonetheless a lofty God, a high God. He's not a palsy-walsy chum of ours. He's an awesome God, and while we have been admitted access to him by the merits of Jesus Christ, he is not a God who is easily approached on any other terms.

In fact, he's not approachable on any other terms. The light in which he dwells cannot tolerate the presence of any darkness. Therefore, anyone who has any darkness in them simply cannot approach him.

He lives in an unapproachable light. This agrees with 1 John 1, verse 7, which says this is the message we have heard of him and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. And if we say we have fellowship with him but walk in darkness, we lie.

And we're not doing the truth, because you can't have fellowship with him who dwells in light, unapproachable, in whom there's no darkness at all, and you cannot be walking in darkness and fellowship with him at the same time. Command those that are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Now, there's two ways of understanding this, although I think one of them is more trustworthy than the other. One is to consider that he means the rich heathens. When he says rich in this present age, it certainly may suggest unbelievers who are rich, because we have been delivered from this present age, it says elsewhere in Scripture, and in Galatians chapter 1 and so forth.

And therefore, it might mean those who are still captives and belonging to this present age who are unsaved. So then he says, this is part of your evangelistic responsibility, that those who are resisting conversion because they love money, those sinners out there with their money who think they're secure because they have earthly security, tell them, don't trust in their earthly security. Don't trust in their uncertain riches.

Trust in the living God. Lay hold on eternal life. Get saved.

Do good works. Give, share, and so forth. That is a possibility.

It could certainly mean that. I could certainly see a case for that. So Paul is basically telling Timothy that in his evangelistic efforts, when it comes to evangelizing rich people, here's your message.

Your riches in which you trust. You shouldn't trust in but in the living God. The other way to see it is that he's talking about Christians in the church who are more well endowed with finances than others.

In saying that they are rich in this present age doesn't mean that they themselves belong to present age, but the things that they are rich with, their possessions, are those things which are the riches of this present world. That is, they're not the riches of Christian's value, but they're the riches of the world. That doesn't mean, though, that they can't be pressed in the service of the kingdom.

And that rich Christians ought to be instructed and warned that there's a danger of trusting in riches, and told not to trust in their riches but in God. In other words, they should live by faith. That doesn't mean they have to not have a job or whatever.

It sometimes can mean that, but it means that they are trusting in God and no part of their trust is in anything material. Because those material things are uncertain. He calls them uncertain riches, and certainly riches are as uncertain as anything is.

The richest person that's the most laid away.