

1 Timothy Chapter 6 (vv.1-10)

In the opening verses of the chapter Paul concludes his comments on the various relationships connected with the local assembly, speaking now of (*masters* and) *slaves* in their secular employment (vv.1-2). The final part of the epistle sees Paul return to the themes of the opening chapter and conclude his **charge** to *Timothy* (6.11-16, 20-21). In so doing, he will again **condemn** the *false teachers* for their underlying motive of greed and **call** the *saints* to contentment (6.3-10).

Conduct of Servants [vv.1-2]

v.1: In the early days of the church, many were saved amongst the poor and thus slaves were numerous hence the many passages in the NT that deal with '**servants**' (*doulos*, slave). See Ephesians 6.5-8; Colossians 3.22-25; Titus 2.9-10; 1 Peter 2.18-25. Though slavery was an abhorrent institution, it was part of the social fabric of the Roman empire where as many as 1 in 5 of the population, i.e. millions, were slaves (1 in 3 in Italy). So vast were the numbers that the Romans could not afford any kind of rebellion. William Barclay: "If slaves ran away and were caught, they were either executed or branded on their foreheads with the letter F, standing for *fugitivus*, which means *runaway*". The OT did not forbid slavery but carefully guarded the rights of slaves (see Exodus 21.2-6, 20, 26-27). In all this, Christians recognised they were not called to be politicians or social activists, but to preach the gospel. Societal changes were only possible when salvation transformed a person's life from the inside out. For Paul to campaign for the abolition of slavery would have created insurrection, civil war (slave revolt) and caused the gospel to be blasphemed.

The word *doulos* (slave) describes a person in *submission* (total devotion) to another, with an obligation to obey their orders (Matthew 8.9). These slaves were '**under the yoke**' of slavery, suggesting *oppressive* conditions. The demeaning nature of first-century slavery was not dissimilar to oxen bound together and harnessed for hard labour. They must 'count' their 'masters' (*despotes* – unrestricted authority) worthy of 'all honour'. The word '**count**' is an estimation based on *external* facts not *internal* feeling. Though his master may be a *person* of worthless character, his *position* must be respected by dutiful service, not grudgingly but willingly. In the same sense believers should 'honour the king' even if that ruler is immoral (1 Peter 2.17). Behaving in such a way ensured the '**name**' (character) and '**doctrine**' (teaching) of God was not '**blasphemed**' (to speak reproachfully). No matter a believer's social standing, there is opportunity to honour God and His word with simple, faithful service in one's employment. Alternatively, a lazy, slothful and rebellious servant would bring disgrace to the name of God. Every believer should act in a way which preserves the testimony from disrepute. The same truth is expressed positively in Titus 2.9-10 – NT truth can be *beautified* (commended) by showing willing subjection and obedience. "*The history of the early church reveals that Christian slaves generally commanded a higher price on the slave market than unbelievers. If a master knew that a certain slave on the auction block was a Christian, he would generally be willing to pay more for that slave, since he knew that the slave would serve him faithfully and well. This is high tribute to the Christian faith.*"

v.2: 'And' could be translated 'but' suggesting the theme has now changed to those slaves who had **believing masters**. The dignity and spiritual equality enjoyed in the assembly did not liberate them from obligations in their secular work. They must not '**despise**' (lit. 'think down on') or undervalue the authority of such masters because they were 'brothers' in the Lord, perhaps by abusing their naturally more familiar relationship and acting as equals in the secular sphere. Instead they should '**do them service**', literally, 'slave for them all the more'! Their bond in Christ demands an even *more* dedicated service. Furthermore, those who '**benefitted**' (profit) from their 'good and ready' (JND) service were 'faithful' (i.e. believers) and 'beloved'. Timothy must keep on 'teaching' and 'exhorting' (urging) these things – a statement likely referring to all the preceding directions concerning relationships (from 5.1).

Condemnation of False Teachers [vv.3-5]

v.3: Paul now begins to draw his letter to a close, returning to the subject of the false teachers and re-emphasising his personal charge to Timothy (cp. 1.3-7, 18-20; 6.3-5, 11-14). He describes their false *confession* (v.3), *character* (v.4), *condemnation* (v.4) and *corruption* (v.5). '**If**' does not imply any doubt. vv.3-5 is a single conditional sentence expressing the way things actually are. Two basic faults are presented. First, the false teacher advocates a different doctrine, i.e. what is '**different**' from the sound, healthy instruction of the apostles (cf. 1.3). There are many strains of 'other teaching' available today – especially error in relation to the person and work of Christ. Second, they deliberately rejected (abandoned) apostolic teaching and therefore the truth of the gospel. This is described as '**wholesome** (hygienic) **words**' which develop spiritual health (cf. 1.3). These words are connected to the 'Lord Jesus Christ' (authority) – not words spoken directly *by* Him, but words spoken through NT apostles and prophets which find their source *in* Him. Thus, He is the ultimate origin of the faith (cf. Luke 10.16; 2 Corinthians 13.3). Such teaching produces true '**godliness**', i.e. deep reverence displayed in holy, God-honouring conduct.

v.4: False teachers are '**proud**' – they think themselves wise, but instead are wrapped in a mist, being blinded by self-conceit and **knowing nothing**. "It takes an immense ego to place oneself as judge of the Bible" (MacArthur). In fact, these individuals are in a serious state of spiritual sickness (contrast 'wholesome words', v.3), the word '**doting**' meaning to be *ill or diseased*, metaphorically used of an ailment of the mind. This is expressed in a morbid preoccupation with controversial '**questions**' (idle speculations) and angry disputes (**strifes**) about the meaning of 'words' (cf. 1.4). After all, if the authority of the word of God is dismissed, everything becomes a matter of opinion. *Five* consequences (attitudes) flow from such a mentally diseased condition:

- '**envy**', inner discontent with another teacher's advantage or popularity – and a desire to deprive them of it.
- '**strife**', the outward expression of *envy* in quarrelling, insulting language or arguments (cf. 1 Corinthians 1.11).
- '**railings**', malicious talk or slanderous denunciation. Seeking to injure a person's reputation by evil speaking.
- '**evil surmisings**', literally 'an underthought', i.e. malicious suspicion (conjecture) of any opponent.
- '**perverse disputings**' (**v.5**), friction (irritation) created by unprofitable debates and constant bickering.

Deliberate rejection of the truth (v.3) has produced men with '**corrupt minds**' – the whole realm of their reasoning is defiled for they have been 'deprived' (**destitute**) of the truth. The Greek suggests the truth they once encountered has been stolen away. *Their* abandonment of sound doctrine has allowed the *devil* to defile their minds and defraud them of the same (4.1; John 8.44; 2 Timothy 2.26). The corruption of their minds is evident as they 'suppose that **godliness** is a way of **gain**' (RV). They chose to be religious teachers, imitating godliness, as a lucrative money-making business (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2.5; 2 Peter 2.15). Paul was just the opposite. He did not peddle the word of God for profit, nor coveted any man's silver or gold (2 Corinthians 2.17; Acts 20.33). Note. According to many authorities, 'from such withdraw thyself' is not supported by strong manuscript evidence.

Call to Contentment [vv.6-10]

v.6: But, according to the apostle, there is '**great gain**' (emphatic) or *spiritual riches* to be had when one has *true* godliness (which derives from healthy teaching) coupled with 'contentment'! **Contentment** (*autarkeia*) expressed the thought of *self-sufficiency* to the Stoic philosopher, but in Paul's language means *Christ-sufficiency* (cf. Philippians 4.11-13; 2 Corinthians 3.5). This is a life lived in dependence on God; satisfaction with the circumstances of life, not continually grasping for more, newer, faster, bigger, better! Despite his wealth, *Henry Ford* once remarked, "I was happier doing mechanic's work." **v.7:** A believer will never learn the truth of v.6, unless they appreciate the real nature of material things. '**Nothing**' is emphatically placed at the beginning of the sentence – we came into this world with *absolutely nothing* (materially). So then, we can be sure we will carry nothing material out either! What is accumulated on earth will be left behind. Far better to leave a fragrant Christian testimony than a large bank balance! See Job 1.21; Psalm 49.17. *John Stott: "Possessions are only the travelling luggage of time; they are not the stuff of eternity. It would be sensible therefore to travel light and not to store up for ourselves (that is, to accumulate selfishly) treasures on earth."*

v.8: Let us therefore be content with '**food and raiment**', both of which are in the *plural* suggesting food of sufficient variety and 'coverings' (including clothing and shelter). This is 'enough' or 'adequate' (cf. Proverbs 30.8-9; 2 Corinthians 12.9). *JND: "This is true greatness: say little, serve all, pass on. To serve unnoticed and work unseen. Oh the joy of having nothing, being nothing and seeing nothing but a Christ in glory, being careful for nothing but His interests down here."*

v.9: In a clear reference back to the attitude of the false teacher (v.5), yet providing a general warning to all, Paul cautions those who *long* to be rich. The word '**will**' is *boulomai* – a fixed and deliberate determination – grasping after wealth has become the dominating object of life. Such a desire is likened to *repeatedly* '**falling**' into a pit. The first pit is '**temptation**', an enticement that draws the soul away from dependence on God (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3.5; Psalm 49.6; 52.7). The second pit is 'a **snare**' or *entrapment* of the devil from which a person cannot easily be freed resulting, finally, in the pit of 'many **foolish** and **hurtful** (harmful) **lusts**' (cravings). They are 'foolish' because irrational, not yielding the promised satisfaction and 'harmful', not least spiritually, to the persons involved. These lusts have the potential to '**drown** men' overwhelmingly (like *waves* covering a *sinking ship*, Luke 5.7) plunging them into '**destruction**' and '**perdition**', words which, together, describe the awful physical and spiritual ruin (loss) of eternal judgment. **v.10:** Indeed, the '**love** of money' is the 'root' that brings *every kind* of evil to fruition. Money is not evil in itself, rather a morally *neutral* necessity, however, the attitude which strives to hoard and accumulate money is condemned. A **root** is generally hidden but gives rise to much *foliage* and *fruit* above ground, thus this attitude is the source of '*every kind of evil*' – whether lying, cheating, stealing or murder. These teachers had *continually* 'stretched out in order to grasp' (**coveted**) material riches and in so doing '**erred**' or *led astray* from 'the faith' they once professed (Jude 3). For them, gold replaced God (Luke 16.14) resulting in being '**pierced**' and 'impaled' (implying intense, deep pain) with much distress (sorrow). *JC Ryle: "Money, in truth, is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It takes away some cares, no doubt; but it brings with it quite as many cares as it takes away. There is trouble in the getting of it. There is anxiety in the keeping of it. There are temptations in the use of it. There is guilt in the abuse of it. There is sorrow in the losing of it. There is perplexity in the disposing of it."*