

# 1 Timothy

---

*1 Timothy 6:2b-20*

---



## **OVERVIEW - 1 TIMOTHY 6:2B-20**

### **A word for the 'wannabe rich' teachers (vv 2-10)**

Timothy's instruction begins with a positive encouragement rather than a reactive response. The 'these things' of v 2 speak to the sound doctrine of the gospel (see 1:10 & 4:16) which reminds him that the apostolic teaching (2 Tim 3:16-17) is no random arrangement of thought up truths, but the body of teaching encapsulated by the Hebrew Scriptures that we know as the Old Testament, and the Apostolic witness that is being passed on to Timothy which are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (v 3), which we now recognise as the New Testament. You cannot teach godliness in any other way.

Ungodliness is expressed in the list of attitudes and actions outlined in vv 4-5, which provides a concluding picture of the people Timothy is to ensure are not appointed to leadership positions in the church (and presumably removed from them if they are), because you cannot distinguish the teacher from the teaching. Ungodliness is then defined by the summary at the conclusion of v 5: believing that godliness is a means of gain. 'Gain' could also be translated as 'profit' and exposes the motive of the false teachers: money. In chapter 3 Paul urges Timothy that would-be-leaders should flee from this urge (1 Tim 3:3 & 8; Titus 1:7), while at the same time he is prepared to say that they should be worthy of double-honour (1 Tim 5:17).

To explain his instruction Paul plays on the 'profit' theme. For in godliness with contentment there is great profit (v 6). His justification is founded in the grace of God. You were born with nothing and you will take nothing with you when you are no longer around. A pastor was once asked at a funeral by a relative of the dead whether he knew how much they'd left? "Everything", he replied. "They always do." Paul desires that the gospel teacher understands the blessings of gospel satisfaction. If your daily needs are being met then recognise the gift that even that is (especially considering that at both ends of life we find ourselves dependent on others for our sustenance). Yet in our humanity we are captured by the lust of lusts of this life, rather than gifts of grace which bring about our ruin (v 9). The love of money should be called for what it is: idolatry, not only harms our hearts but drives us away from God (v 10), the very worst of outcomes.

### **A word for contented teachers (vv 11-18)**

In contrast to the temporary things of this life, most of which are measured in dollars, are fleeting, and instead of satisfying make us crave for more, Paul outlines those things which Timothy will take with him into eternity (v 11). These are the things to take hold of now (v 12) and to which Timothy had already made some level of formal commitment (v 12) in the pattern of Christ (v 13). They are the true gains of the gospel. The charge Timothy is to keep (v 14) is a complement to that which he received in 5:21.

Rather than attempting to narrow the instruction any particular command, for Paul has given him so many throughout the letter, we are better served to see this a responsibility to guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to him (v 20). He is to do so until the return of Christ (v 14) and in the confidence of the God who sovereignly rules over all things and is bringing about our eternal destiny in his perfect timing (vv 15). The glorious explanation of God's character in vv 15-16 is in essence asking us 'Are you content in his eternal purposes and your eternal place in them?' If you are leader among the people of God this is first and foremost what you must model: contentment in the God of the everlasting.

### **A word for the rich (vv 17-21)**

Paul's first letter to Timothy concludes with an expansive instruction for the wealthy in the churches of Ephesus, which we might assume from the earlier chapters were many in number. Those who are the rich in this current age are not to put their hope in that which has so much uncertainty, but in the God who so generously provides them for our blessing. We return to the power of idolatry as Paul resorts to a play on words. If you are going to be rich then be rich in good deeds, generous and willing to share, treasuring that which lays a foundation for the future so that real life may be taken hold of.

The antidote to idolatry is to remember that we have a living God who provides all things for our enjoyment. Paul does not condemn wealth in and of itself. In fact you could argue that those who are rich have the capacity to have a remarkable impact for the Kingdom. We need to remember that none of us are immune from the very common human 'gene' that sees us take the gifts of God and turn them into gods. Rather than serve the living God we serve those things which will not last. The love money is equally termed the love of greed.

By contrast firm foundations are laid by those who make the profit of godliness with contentment. Timothy is to guard the good deposit of the gospel as the financial theme weaves its way through Paul's teaching. For the second time in the chapter taking hold of eternal life by understanding. Paul expands his point by explaining that the good deeds of v 18 will be shaped by the good character of v 12.

A wealthy church is (ironically) defined not by the size of its budget but its capacity for generosity. This however could be an argument for churches ensuring they exceed their budgets as an indicator of their capacity for being rich in good deeds. Blessed is the church that has to regularly make decisions about how to spend its excess. In its wealth a church can still pursue the profit of godliness with contentment.

## **GETTING STARTED**

1. Is it wrong for churches to be wealthy? What are the risks and rewards?

## **INTO THE TEXT**

*Read 1 Timothy 6:2-20*

2. What are the 'these things' of v 2 that Timothy is to teach?
3. Explain the two types of gain sought from the godliness Paul references in vv 4-10. What are the characteristics of each?
4. What are the things that contrast with v 7 that we can actually take with us beyond this world (v 11)?
5. If we are those who have received the gift of eternal life through Christ's work on the cross (1 Tim 1:15) what does it mean to be urged to take hold of eternal life (vv 12 & 19)?
6. What is the command that Timothy receives in v 14? How does it prepare Timothy for the commands he issues to the church in vv 17-18?
7. In what way is the gospel a trust? How is it guarded, and what are the risks if it isn't?
8. What is your attitude to wealth?

## **T A K E A W A Y**

9. In the Anglican setting church budgets are endorsed annually by the Wardens and Parish Council. Is there anything standing in the way of our church meeting its budget?
10. What would be the benefits of not just meeting, but exceeding our budget commitments?
11. What should we pray for in the light of 1 Timothy 6?