



Potomac Hills
Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

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1 Timothy 6:6-10

March 12, 2017

“Greedy For God”

This is the 10th sermon in the series on Biblical Interpretation entitled,
The Most Misused & Misunderstood Verses of the Bible!

1 Tim 6 v 6-10 - "Is Money the Root of All Evil?"

-read the passage

-prayer of illumination

Money: is it the root of all evil today?

"Money, so they say, is the root of all evil today." That sounds like scripture, but it's really Pink Floyd, an english rock band. And we can roll our eyes and say "there they go again," abusing and misusing scripture, but they're making a statement that many in our society

would agree with. In the 1970s there was a political scandal called Watergate. And during the investigation into the scandal, news reporters were told to "follow the money" if they wanted to find the source of corruption. Just recently, I heard an expert say that if you wanted to understand 3rd world dysfunction and corruption just "follow the white man's money." So there's this theme that we hear in our culture: if you want to understand human evil, just follow the money. Its the source.

-pink floyd

-watergate - follow the money

-3rd world corruption - follow the white man's money

-understanding human evil - just follow the money

Many in the Christian church would agree. Christians have a love-hate relationship with money - **mostly love** - but we are deeply conflicted over this topic. Even among Jesus' disciples, there was confusion and conflict over the topic of money. Remember the scene in Matthew 26 where the woman puts expensive ointment on Jesus? Many of the disciples were **indignant** when she did this and asked "couldn't that money have been given to the poor?" Modern day, Bible-believing evangelicals can have similar emotions. "Western Christianity is too rich and too into money" some say. Other are concerned that wealth is **leading the church astray**. Leading it away from its mission to spread the gospel and important things like ministering to the poor. Whole movements have sprung up within Christianity, whose central purpose is getting Christians to live radically

simple lives. From monastic lives of poverty that were part of the culture in the middle ages to modern day strains of evangelicalism that do things like making furniture out of milk crates and 2-by-4s, Christians have tried many ways to **protect themselves** from the evil influence of money.

- many Christians would agree
- love-hate relationship
- deeply conflicted
- woman with expensive ointment
- movements to radically simple lives

Meanwhile, some Christians have gone the **other** direction. We all know about the televangelists with their fancy cars and massive buildings, but everyday Christians aren't immune. We affirm a protestant work ethic that doesn't see evil in honest labor, but we struggle to figure out how much is enough. Where does prudent financial planning end and hoarding riches begin? Is this car or house too nice for an authentic Christian to have? We face a real dilemma.

- other direction
- modern televangelists
- every day Christians too

Many of us are confused, very confused. We're a lot like Robbie Hart

in the movie "the wedding singer." Robbie Hart doesn't chase the almighty dollar. He just loves playing rock and roll and loves his beautiful girlfriend, but early on there's a **crisis**. Robbie's beautiful girlfriend leaves him at the wedding altar because he lives in his sister's basement and can only get small-time jobs playing at weddings and bar mitzvahs. And we think his life is getting better when he meets an even better girl. But the crisis only deepens because it looks like he's going to lose her too because she has a guy in her life who makes a lot of money. In one scene, we see Robbie desperately looking for a real job to save his chances with the new beautiful girl and he goes to an interview at a bank. At the interview the first question from the banker is "Do you have any experience?" to which Robbie responds "No, sir, I have no experience, but I'm a big fan of money. I like it, I use it, I have a little. I keep it in a jar on top of my refrigerator. I'd like to put more in that jar. That's where you come in."

And so a lot of us come to God like Robbie Hart goes to the banker. We're desperate. We're not **consumed** with money - no no no. We're cool. We're not **greedy** like our neighbors next door. We just want a little more money in our jar so we can enjoy life just a little, just our *fair share* of the good things in life. What are we to do?

-confused like Robbie Hart

Correcting Misconceptions - the **love** of money is a root of **all kinds of evils**

Misunderstanding the verse about money and evil can make our dilemma worse. This verse seem to support a very **dark** view of

money - but is money really the root of all evil? Part of the problem is the King James translation of the first part of verse 10: "the love of money is the root of **all evil**." [pause] "The love of money is the root of all evil." That sounds bad, very bad. An even bigger problem is that pop culture has "helped us out" in understanding scripture [I'm being ironic] by shortening this phrase: "money [that is **money itself**] is **the** root of **all evil**."

-KJV translation

-pop culture translation

Now correcting pop culture is easy. It's not "money" that's the problem. That's not what this verse is teaching. It's the "love of money" that's the problem. **Money** is a *lifeless* object or a *theoretical* concept. Boiled down, **money is just authority over resources**. I give you money, you give me stuff. If you don't have money, you don't get the stuff.

-correcting pop culture of easy - the love of money is the problem

-money is just authority over resources.

-It's the **love of money** that Paul is talking about in this passage.

There are two other inter-related problems with the King James translation. One is that the Love of Money is not **the root** of the problem- like there's no other root for evil. Just think of pride or lust or idolatry, for example, these are all sources of evil. We can also see,

more authoritatively, in the Greek text that the word "the" is not there and so it's not "the root," but "a root." The love of money is not the one and only root of evil. Money is A root of evil. It's one of a number of sources of evil.

Also, the love of money is not a root of all evil, but rather all kinds of evils. Now sorting through this issue involves going back to the Greek text, but most of the best modern translations are pretty close to the English Standard, the New King James and the New International Version which translate this passage "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils."

So, in summary

It's not money itself that's the problem. It's the love of money.

It's not the one and only root of evil. It's one of many.

It's not the root of all evil. It's a root of all kinds of evil.

Now we want to explain this passage, but we don't want to explain it away. The love of money was a big danger in Paul's day and it's a big problem for us.

We've spent some time untangling what the phrase doesn't mean, and that's an important exercise. But what did Paul really mean when he said that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils."? Well the short answer to this question is Paul was trying to tell Timothy and the churches under his care that

I. Main Idea - true godliness is great gain

but we need to look at the context of this passage to see this more clearly.

The first part of verse 10 - "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" - gets the spotlight, but it's another verse, verse 6, which is the hinge on which Paul pivots this passage to make his main point.

Those of you with ESV bibles can see this, but most other translations show this as well - that verses 6-10 are all part of one paragraph that begins at verse 2b of this chapter. Some translations split these verse into 2 paragraphs, but you'll notice that even these translations that split the paragraph into 2 put that split at verse 6. This paragraph begins in verse 2b of chapter 6 and ends in verse 10, where Paul commands Timothy to "Teach and urge these things."

-verse 10 spotlight, but verse 6 is the hinge

These directions to "teach" and "urge" are used throughout First Timothy. In Chapter 6, Paul is urging Timothy to mobilize those around him to join the fight as well. Next, he focuses on the false teachers of his day. These false teachers are stirring up arguments and controversy and they threaten the gospel ministry. There are many things wrong with these teachers, but in verse 5, Paul hones in on one particularly deadly problem with their teaching - they taught that "godliness was gain." And from the context it's clear that this "gain" was not a vague concept, but was viewed in very tangible terms. They meant that godliness was material or financial gain.

~~Now, Like many great lies, their message was packaged with a healthy serving of truth. Their teaching was confusing to many in the church back then and similar teaching can deceive us today. Of course, most of us know that the health and wealth gospel has major problems, but doesn't Psalm 1 and much of OT wisdom literature teach that righteousness leads to a prosperous life? Doesn't Jesus say in John 10:10 that he came to give us abundant life?—~~

So, Paul gladly picks up the challenge of confronting this teaching in this critical verse 6 and he does this by using their own selling point against them. In verse 6 of this chapter, Paul acknowledges that **there is gain** in godliness, but that is all blown away by that fact that there is **great gain** in **true** godliness - godliness that comes with contentment. Paul is telling them that they have a small-time deal with the false teachers. What they teach amounts to chump change in comparison to the deal of a life-time - true godliness with contentment. With true godliness you get the deal of a lifetime, the deal of all deals.

Paul is also very clear that there is **great great danger** in false godliness - the godliness espoused by the false teachers.

True godliness here **is ... great ...gain**, but false godliness leads to destruction because of 3 maladies that destroy true godliness: discontent, a rush to riches, and a craving for cash.

Let's look at the 1st factor: discontent.

So the first thing we see in these verses is that .

II. True godliness is great gain, but discontent deludes us and denies us true godliness

Let's look at verse 7 where Paul says

"for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world."

Boom! There's a big blow against the false teachers. Why are you making such a big deal out of material gain? You can't take it with you. Your trying to sell you bum goods, because those goods wont last forever. We come into the world empty handed and that's the way we leave.

A pastor officiating a funeral was onced asked "how much did the deceased leave behind?" "Everything" was his answer. He left everything behind because he couldn't take it with him.

-illustration about delusion

Of course we can't take it with us, but people throughout history have tried all sorts of way to delude themselves into thinking they can, somehow. We can talk about the Pharoahs in their pyramids or the ancient norse kings being buried in their boat. In our modern day, we have more trouble fooling ourselves, but we try. I think of the bumper sticker motto that was popular when I was a kid: "he who dies with the most toys wins." I'm sorry, but "he who dies with the most toys" is **still dead.**

In contrast, the Christian has a **clear-eyed view** of the brevity of life. We know our days on earth are limited and, therefore, we don't hold the things of this world tightly. Paul notes this contentment in verse 8

"But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."

Food and clothing. That's it. That's all we need for contentment. We travel light, knowing our life is a pilgrim life. David remarks on this pilgrim life, even as he was dedicating the preparations for building the Temple - a place for God's abiding presence in the midst of his people. In his prayer recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:15, David acknowledges that "... we are strangers before you and sojourners ... Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding." God's presence might abide in the midst of his people, but each of his people would not abide long on this earth.

The sad fact is that by trying to hold on to the things of this world, they ultimately **deny themselves any hope for the contentment that comes with true godliness** and that is so central to maintaining it. Many of us have heard of that Christian saying, which I paraphrase: it only makes sense to give up what you cannot keep, in order to gain what you cannot lose.

False godliness grasps for things we cannot keep and forsakes the things of eternal value. Remember Isaiah's cry in chapter 55 "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?" That would apply to these false teachers in spades. A man obsessed with riches was once asked "how much would it take to make you happy?" His answer: "just a little bit more."

We've seen how false godliness can delude us and deny us true godliness and that gain that comes with it. Next Paul shows us that

III. True godliness is great gain, but the rush to riches ruins true godliness

We see this in verse 9 of this passage

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

In these verses you can almost see the sad story reenacted before our eyes. First, they're tempted. They're lured in by the appeal of riches. Then they fall and they're snared. They can't get away. The love of riches has wrapped its tentacles around them. Soon they're enslaved to desires - some that hurt and some that leave them strangely numb and senseless. Soon they're plunging, plunging into spiritual ruin and destruction, surely, and also, too often, into financial ruin as well.

The bible commenter Ray Stedman looked at one group of people that desired to be rich and actually made it - **lottery winners**. I might have guessed there was a dark side to their stories, but the facts he brought to light stopped me in my tracks. Within a few years, a full 70% of all lottery winners - these are the winners mind you, not the losers - a full 70% of the winners have spent it **all, every last cent of their winnings**. More than that, in the process of their spending, many have destroyed the relationships with others and some have even lost their lives.

We can laugh at lottery winners, even if many of them are brothers and sisters in Christ, but what about us? There can be other ways of desiring to be rich that are just as ruinous. What about those excessively consumed by the quest for financial security? How much is enough? What about our lifestyle choices? If someone looked at our check book, what sort of priorities would they see?

The desire to be rich is a **clear and present danger** to the advancement of the kingdom of God and to our souls. What are we to do? In the middle ages, one popular approach was for the wealthy to give away all they had and retire to a monastery. Consider the rich young man in Matthew 19 who disobeyed Christ and didn't give up all he had. What kind of adventures did he miss out on? One approach is to abandon riches, but is that the only path?

Others, would say use wealth to advance the kingdom and bless those around you. That seems to be the message of Jesus' mysterious parable about the dishonest steward in Luke 16 - he used his temporary authority to secure his future. We can also consider someone like Job.

Job is known to many for his tale of suffering, despite his being righteous in the eyes of God. Job was also a wealthy man, a very wealthy man. In fact, in Job chapter 1, scripture describes him as the greatest of the "people of the east" - a region that perhaps is represented by the modern country of Yemen.

In Job 29, we get a picture of Job's heart and an insight into how he viewed his wealth. In Job 29, he mourns for the days when he experienced God's favor, when things were going well for him and for those he loved. Does he say that he misses the touch of mink? does

he say that he misses the clink of a golden coin as it drops into his vast treasury? Does he say that he misses looking out at his vast business enterprise and revelling in the power that it affords him? No. He doesn't. Let's look at Job 29 to see what he misses. For times sake, we'll read verses 11-17.

11 When the ear heard, it called me blessed,
and when the eye saw, it approved,

12 because I delivered the poor who cried for help,
and the fatherless who had none to help him.

13 The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.

15 I was eyes to the blind
and feet to the lame.

16 I was a father to the needy,
and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.

17 I broke the fangs of the unrighteous
and made him drop his prey from his teeth.

What did Job miss about his wealth? He missed the ability to use

wealth to bless those around him. So sometimes, we might be called to run away from our wealth, but at other times we are called to harness it to advance God's kingdom and bless those around us.

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The rush to riches ruins true godliness and, next, Paul shows us why as we examine the next and final malady afflicting the false teachers:

IV. True godliness is great gain, but the craving for cash crushes true godliness.

This is the big verse, v 10,

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

We spent a lot of time unpacking the first part of this verse, so we'll focus on the second part. Here we see that this love of money - the craving for cash, if you will - can wreak havoc in our lives and crush true godliness in our lives. There are 2 perils here. The first is that the craving of cash causes some to wander away from the faith. That's curious description isn't it - they just *wandered away*.

Is it possible that Christianity could be crushed by oppression and go into decline? That's possible, but more likely Christianity would die out with a whimper as people just wander away from the faith. In the book of Daniel, the believers in captivity face different challenges. At one time they face the fiery furnance or the lion's den, but the first temptation was seduction - eat the king's food and abandon God's law.

If they had done that, they might just have wandered away from the faith and blended into society.

The second peril here in this verse is being pierced with many pangs. The picture here is of a wild beast who is pierced with a spear or spit of wood. When I first read this word "pierced", I thought of how Christ was pierced for us at the crucifixion. But the word crucify is a different word. Nevertheless, the picture here is almost a mockery of a false crucifixion that comes with false godliness. Rather than suffering with Christ for the salvation of those around us, we are suffering for our own foolishness. If we are favored by God, then these pangs are the loving discipline of the heavenly father. But in either case, these pangs should serve to drive us to repentance and faith in Christ.

V. Conclusion - I want it all and I want it now - All of Christ that is

So we've looked at the dangers of false godliness. How do we put the whole picture together? Is it any clearer to us what we should do about money? Although there are applications to draw from these verses on how to handle money, I think there is danger in that approach if we ignore the heart issues that Paul is talking about.

If we stand back and consider what Paul is saying, then we can hear the language of the heart. Paul paints a very vivid image of the emotions swirling around the churches. Paul talks about contentment and desire, passions and loves and desires. Paul talks about powerful emotions that shape our world and he latches on to one of them to

illustrate the way to God. He latches on to Greed.

You're greedy for financial gain are you? Those are piddling trifles. Let me tell you what you should be greedy for - God.

Paul, in a back-handed way, congratulated the false teachers for understanding people's motivations. The promise of gain is a powerful motivator. Paul doesn't avoid people's imperfect motivations for godliness, he tackles it head on because he understands the human heart. The human heart is always searching for motivation, for a cause to join, for a vision to pursue.

What Paul realizes is that they don't need to give up their desires, but rather they need to reorient their desires. They need a change in heart direction. They need to pursue the **great gain of the gospel** and not settle for the cheap alternative peddled by the false teachers.

Matthew 12 -

we can't settle for only a list of don't do this and don't do that -we need the positive presence of a passion for Christ's presence in our lives.

A few years ago, the rock band Queen had a song titled "I want it all and I want it now." We wouldn't agree with what Queen wanted in their heart, but we need to affirm that as Christians we too "want it all and we want it now." But what we want is Jesus and everything it means to know and belong to him. You could say that we're "greedy for godliness," because once you've tasted and seen of the grace of Christ, you never want go back to the cheap thrills of your former life. We hunger to see Christ return and make all things new. We hunger for God to set up a new heavens and a new earth where there are no more tears and no more dying.

Paul in Romans 8 talks a lot about groaning. We groan, creation groans, the Holy Spirit groans, as we await the full fruition of everything that God intends for us. It's hard for us. We don't want to wait, because we want the great gain promised to us by God through Christ.

And when we do that. When our heart is pointed in the right direction. We'll have the true contentment of the Christian pilgrim and the love of money will have no hold on us as the brilliance of Christ's glory illuminates our lives.

Let's pray