



'CHA-CHING!'

Well, we've reached the end of our series on 1 Timothy – a letter written to encourage the church in Ephesus to 'keep it together.' And today we come to a subject that whole churches can get confused about – partly because of their pastors, and partly because of their own hearts:

1 Timothy 6:3-21

Paul ends up where he started (which might make most of 1 Timothy one big tangent!). But now he zeroes in on the motive behind those false teachers in Ephesus (and even some ministries today):

He philargyria in Greek.

The love of money.

That expression is important – because it's not money *per se* that's the problem: it's the love of it. Whenever you're talking about materialism, understand you're talking more than just money; possessions; earthly wealth. That's just the tip of the iceberg, the thing you can *see*. There's something going on much, much deeper. Something in the heart of a person.

About what they *worship*.

What then should our attitude to wealth be? And what should we expect from those who lead us, whose guidance we're supposed to trust and example we're supposed to follow?

1) Watch carefully (vs3-5). “If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing” (i.e. he’s an idiot).

What is Paul’s point? He’s instructing Timothy and the Ephesians to look at what people teach and how they conduct themselves. To quote Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:15-20, you can tell a root by the fruit. In practical terms:

If a pastor makes it sound as if it’s all about them – or even all about *you* – rather than Jesus or the gospel ... avoid.

If a pastor makes it sound as if it’s all about this minute detail or that debatable subject rather than Jesus or the gospel ... avoid.

If a pastor makes it sound as if it’s all about subscribing to this method, available only to this church (and usually for this amount of money) ... avoid.

The reason is that it *comes* from a corrupt place (the desire for money) and *leads* to a corrupt place (envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, constant friction).

I.e. it produces the worst in us, when Jesus wants to see the best (and deserves it, too). So, watch them – and you – carefully.

2) Walk contentedly (vs6-10). Paul says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”

There’s a lot to be said for a contented life, but it does demand a certain mindset. It means we don’t always get what we want when we want it (if at all). It means we can’t have a throwaway lifestyle, a ‘latest this or newest that’ approach to life. It means we mustn’t base our sense of stability and happiness on the things we own.

But those attitudes are destructive anyway, Paul says.

Why, you might ask? Here are some possibilities:

- It doesn’t really satisfy, so we’re always wanting more (and working ourselves into an early grave to get it).
- It eats up the time we could be spending with family and friends (things that in general are good for us).
- It takes our eyes off of God and is a form of idolatry (i.e. it can lead us away from God rather than to Him).

So, Paul says, prioritise the things that matter most – your relationship with God and others – and build your life on those things rather than the things that, at the end of the day, you can’t take with you. Walk contentedly.

3) Work consistently (vs17-19). “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good ...”

There are 2 attitudes that Paul is challenging here:

- The conceitedness of wealth (a 'look at how smart and successful I am' kind of attitude).
- The confidence of wealth (a 'money is the solution to all our problems' kind of attitude).

Now again, Paul isn't knocking wealth *per se* here, he's just encouraging us to view it properly and use it well. He's saying, "Put your trust in God, and do good with what you have: be rich in commendable works, be generous with your money, and be willing to use your wealth for the gospel and the Kingdom of God."

I.e. he's telling us to be as God has been, towards us. To be like Jesus, "who, though rich (beyond imagination!), for our sakes became poor, that we might become rich through His poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Do this, Paul says, and you may not be the next Elon Musk, but you'll be building up treasure for yourself in *olam ha ba*, the world to come (as Jesus Himself put it in Matthew 6:19-20). But that's not all – because he also says this: "So that they may possess the life that is truly life."

It's such an important phrase, isn't it? Because the world will tell us that a wealthy life is reliant on what we get.

Paul says it's reliant on what we *give*.

Focus On The Invisible

So, Paul says, our attitude towards wealth should be to watch carefully, walk contentedly, and work consistently. But in the midst of all that, he challenges Timothy to ignore the phoney wisdom that is going around Ephesus, know what he's about, and go for it! "Take possession of the eternal life to which you were called, when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (a reference to his baptism, perhaps?).

But then he refers to the return of Jesus, which God will bring about in His own time, and quotes one last song, the third in this letter (vs15-16). And it's important because it reminds us of what we're supposed to be worshipping: of where our hearts are supposed to be. And what does it say? That 1) God is the only thing that deserves to rule over us; 2) He is the only thing that of Himself lasts forever; and 3) He cannot be seen.

I.e. our main focus, our first love, our greatest reward, is not what we can see – it's what we *can't*. And that, Paul says, is what we, as God's people, are to live for.

May God's grace enable us to do exactly that.