

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: December 31, 2017

Sermon Title: Godliness, Gain, and Contentment

Sermon Series: First Timothy

Text: 1 Tim. 6:3-10

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: December 31, 2017
Title: Godliness, Gain, and Contentment
Text: 1 Timothy 6:3-10
Theme: Godliness becomes gain when coupled with contentment.

Introduction:

“Just over one hundred years ago, the renowned pastor and statesman Charles H. Spurgeon spoke these words to the then-largest congregation in all Christendom: **‘I believe that it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say, ‘Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can?’ You may do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. But what I said was that to live with the object of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian.**¹ Over the years, however, the message being preached in some of the largest churches in the world has changed. Due, in part, to the rise of several ungodly philosophies and movements,² a new gospel is being taught today. This gospel has been ascribed many names, such as the ‘name it and claim it’ gospel, the ‘blab it and grab it’ gospel, the ‘health and wealth’ gospel, the ‘word of faith’ movement, the ‘gospel of success,’ the ‘prosperity gospel,’ and ‘positive confession theology.’ No matter what name is used, though, the teaching is the same. Simply put, this egocentric gospel teaches that God wants believers to be materially wealthy.”³

“It may be repackaged for a new audience, but this modern version of the prosperity gospel is just as dangerous. Over the years, scores of Christians have caught on to the fact that the glittering promises of ‘health, wealth, and prosperity’ from the mouths of charlatans are unbiblical and idolatrous. It’s become so well-known that even the unbelieving world has called it heresy. Today’s wolves have realized, with their bellies grumbling, that they need a new approach in order to deceive the flock—something more subtle, seemingly more innocuous. Teaching that we should use God to get material riches and physical healing is far too obvious now. But what if we use God to get *something else*? Like, let’s say... a better, happier life, fewer problems, and feel-good spirituality? That’ll work!

And so they feed their poisonous teachings to an unsuspecting, disarmed flock... accomplishing their goal of stealing God’s glory to benefit themselves. How has the old ‘prosperity gospel’ been revised and updated? Let’s take a look.

BEFORE: Come to Jesus to get health and wealth.

NOW: Come to Jesus to get your life problems resolved and your selfish desires fulfilled.

If the prosperity preacher declares that Jesus will heal your cancer or make you rich, he’s bound to run into a big problem—*reality*. How long before his followers realize that what he’s promising is a bunch of baloney? When they realize they’re still living paycheck-to-paycheck and paying for hospital bills, at least some folks are going to wake up from the disillusion.

That’s why false teachers will say that it depends on the strength of your faith. That way, they can fall back on the refrain, ‘You’re not healed or rich yet because you need a stronger belief that it’ll happen. Your doubts are getting in the way.’ But what if there was an even easier way to avoid this problem? What if, rather than promising things that are as tangible as healing and riches, they instead focused on a less-visible prosperity? ‘Jesus will take away your disease’ becomes ‘Jesus will fix your marriage.’

'God will multiply your bank account' becomes 'God will make your kids behave like angels.' **Beware if the teaching you're hearing makes becoming a Christian (or becoming a 'better' Christian) all about assurances that your earthly issues will be resolved, your insecurities will vanish, your relationships will improve, you'll be happier in life.** No matter which version is taught, the focus of this false gospel is always on the selfish trinity of 'me, myself, and I,' and never on glorifying the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We should never come to Jesus—whether as an unbeliever or a Christian—as a means to get something for ourselves. **Jesus is never a 'means' to anything. He's the end, the goal, the prize.** Godliness for the sake of gain is one of the oldest false teachings in existence—even the early church had to deal with it (1 Tim. 6:5). It just reshapes and reforms for each generation."⁴

In God's good providence, He is allowing us to consider this text at the beginning of a new year. Many of us will set some type of goal for 2018. I always think such things can be helpful such as eating better, exercising more, being frugal with finances, and more generous with surplus. The list can be quite extensive. This text puts a lot of this in the context of godliness, gain, and contentment.

Verse 3 continues setting forth the tension between strange teaching and sound words. The difference is between a teaching that destroys the soul and a teaching that feeds the soul.

The strange teaching [**heterodidaskaleo**] occurs twice in the New Testament and both are in 1 Timothy [1:3; 6:3]. Sound teaching [**hugiaino**] means, "To have sound health." It occurs in 12 verses in the New Testament. Three times in Luke [5:31; 7:10; 15:27] and 3 John 2. Otherwise its occurrences are all in the pastorals.

- "For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary **to sound doctrine**" (1 Tim. 1:10).
- "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not **to wholesome words**, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3).
- "**Hold fast the form of sound words**, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).
- "For the time will come when **they will not endure sound doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3).
- "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, **that he may be able by sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).
- "This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, **that they may be sound in the faith**" (Titus 1:13).
- "But speak thou **the things which become sound doctrine**" (Titus 2:1).
- "That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, **sound in faith**, in charity, in patience" (Titus 2:2).

There is a tendency to minimize teaching/truth and maximize experience and emotion. Our culture as a whole is built on this premise. We are always looking for new experiences. We are

not looking for “new” truth. Because everyone and everything is right, learning becomes obsolete. Why is truth necessary? This text speaks of the devastation resulting from unhealthy doctrine. What is this strange teaching?

“It is so easy to slip into a life focused on wealth and material goods. We work to gain money so we can live, always focused on the material. Once we earn enough to survive, then we look for an apartment and clothes. Then a house of our own, a car, better furniture. Then, as our earning potential increases, a vacation home. John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), perhaps the richest person in history, was asked, ‘How much money is enough?’ He answered, ‘Just a little bit more.’ Greed was a problem in the church at Ephesus. The false teachers taught that ‘godliness is a means to financial gain’ (6:5), which distorted the whole Gospel. In our day a Prosperity Gospel has made great headway around the world.”⁵

The false teaching says gain is godliness. The truth says godliness is gain.

THE BIG PICTURE:

“The doctrine ... according to godliness] Two characteristic words of these Epistles combined in a phrase which might be taken as their keynote – ‘Holy Truth – True Holiness.’ See previous notes on the words and especially the note on the central doctrinal passage 1 Timothy 3:16.”⁶

“Thoughts about the right use of wealth are suggested by the slave problem, a mischievous attitude towards which is associated with false doctrine. If a man possesses himself, he has enough.”⁷

Outline:

I. The description of unhealthy teaching (vv. 3-5)

This strange teaching taught that godliness brings financial gain or that financial gain is a result of one’s personal godliness. If I were to speak of the prosperity gospel, we would perhaps balk. We would perhaps see the immediate problem with such theology. But if I told you that your obedience brings God’s blessing into your life, you would perhaps nod in approval. Friend, the structure for both these ideas rests on the same footing. Both are strange teachings that do not agree with sound words.

The first part is made up of three verses. If we start with verse 5, we will see the natural conclusion in verse 3.

A. The twisting of truth (v. 5b)

- ^{5b} “who suppose that godliness is a means of gain” (1 Tim. 6:5b).

Here, Paul states the problem. The actual order is that gain is godliness. Who are the most spiritual or sought after? Those who appear to have their act together or appear to have accumulated a lot of stuff.

Gain through godliness produces unrest in one's soul and will ultimately destroy the individual.

"The whole object of life with them is to make money; the rule by which they judge of everything is by its tendency to produce gain; and their whole religion may be summed up in this, that they live for gain. Wealth is the real object of pursuit; but it is often with them cloaked under the pretense of piety. They have no more religion than they suppose will contribute to this object; they judge of the nature and value of every maxim by its tendency to make men prosperous in their worldly business; they have as much as they suppose will promote their [financial] interest, and they sacrifice every principle of religion which they suppose would conflict with their earthly advancement."⁸

Because they put the acquiring of wealth primary, relationships suffer.

B. The fracturing of relationships (vv. 4b, 5)

- ^{4b} "but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth" (1 Tim. 6:4b, 5).

When it comes to strange teaching, we all seem to be able to point it out in others but often fail to see it in ourselves. I would argue that any teaching that robs us of rest and is anything other than easy and light is not sound, but strange. Those who lay on others burdens to bear are teaching a false gospel. Such people are always rubbing others the wrong way. Their attitude/theology causes friction/strife within the body.

I cannot stress this enough. All teaching must be Christo-centric or it becomes a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words.

C. The prattling of fools (vv. 3, 4a; cf. 1:7)

- ³ "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴ he is conceited and understands nothing" (1 Tim. 6:3, 4a).

Paul identifies such people as conceited and without understanding. They act as if they know something, but in reality, they know nothing.

Those who become experts in areas of the biblical text that are not the main thing always concern me. Their expertise draws people to themselves. They are able to write books and holds seminars and conferences, but they have not kept the main thing, the main thing. That "thing" they have fixated on has become for them the gospel.

Paul then uses financial terms to expand on this idea. Verses 6-10 actually illustrate Paul's point concerning this strange teaching. First, he will state the positive (vv. 6-8). Then, he follows with the negative (vv. 9, 10). The negative calls out the dangers of lusting after wealth.

II. The defining of healthy teaching (vv. 6-8)

- ⁶“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

A. The principle (v. 6)

Godliness is gain. It becomes gain when we see this as enough.

Paul flips their argument. They say, “Gain is godliness.” Paul says, “Godliness is gain.”

Paul adds the idea of contentment.

Autarkeia occurs twice in the New Testament [2 Cor. 9:8; and here in 1 Tim. 6:6]. **Autarkes** occurs once in Philippians 4:11. The simple verb **arkeo** occurs in eight verses.

- “But the wise answered, saying, Not so; **lest there be not enough for us** and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Matt. 25:9).
- “4 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and **be content with your wages**” (Luke 3:14).
- “Philip answered him, **Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them**, that every one of them may take a little” (John 6:7).
- “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and **it sufficeth us**” (John 14:8).
- “And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee**: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).
- “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8).
- “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and **be content with such things as ye have**: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).
- “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and **not content therewith**, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 10).

Those who believe/ teach gain equals godliness are never at rest. They never know when enough is enough. In contrast to this, those who find godliness gain can live contented lives.

B. The proverb (v. 7)

Everyone knows we brought nothing into the world and we equally know we will take nothing out of it.

C. The parameters (v. 8)

How do we gauge when enough is enough? How much do you need in order to be content? This text sets the parameters for our resources; food and shelter. Friends, this is tough. Most of us have far more than food and shelter. A million different things clutter our lives. I liken this to the soils in Mark 4.

- ¹⁸“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹**but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful**” (Mark 4:18, 19).

This is a hard sell while we live in the land of plenty. But if you couple the benefits resulting from the gospel with contentment, you will gain.

“It requires but little of this world's goods to satisfy a man who feels himself to be a citizen of another country, and knows that this is not his rest.”⁹

What shall it profit a man if he gains the entire world, but loses his own soul or what shall he give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36, 37)

“The word **akepasmata**, which we translate raiment, signifies covering in general; and here means house or lodging, as well as clothing.”¹⁰ This will always be a tension within the believer. At some point, you must address when enough is enough. God desires for us to leverage our assets/resources for the sake of the gospel. This is something each of us must settle in our hearts. Only God can answer this question for you.

This is the answer to life. Learning to rest in the vertical is true godliness. Knowing God provides food and shelter is truly adequate. Is the joy and happiness we seek answerable in Christ alone, or do we find it somewhere else. Can we find Garden joy anywhere else or in anyone else? Are we content to let God build His garden? On the other hand, are we determined to build one in our own image?

Unless and until we find our true contentment in Him, we will always be seeking joy in empty cisterns.

Paul speaks of gain in verses 6-8. Now he turns our attention toward loss in verses 9 and 10.

III. The danger of lusting after more (vv. 9, 10)

- ⁹“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

Those who desire more than “food and shelter” are pursuing riches.

“A 2003 Gallup poll found that although only 2% of Americans describe themselves as rich, 31% said they thought it was very or somewhat likely they would be rich one day. That number jumped to 51% for 18 to 29-year-olds—and plunged to a sobering 8% for Americans 65 and older. According to Gallup, the public's median definition of ‘rich’ was an income of \$120,000—or assets of \$1 million. A majority of MSN Money readers, felt that they would need at least \$5 million to consider themselves rich.”¹¹

The problem is not wealth; the problem is believing the shadow can give you something that the substance cannot. Paul notes this idea in 6:17-19.

- ¹⁷ “**Instruct those who are rich in this present world** not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed” (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

When you and I set our affections on wealth as godliness, we lose. Money is not evil, the loving of it is. The love of money makes individuals do strange things.

“This could be taken to mean ‘a root,’ but the phrase ‘of all evils’ clearly makes it definite. This seems to be not entirely true to life (some evils are unrelated to love of money), but it should be read as a case of hyperbole (exaggeration to make a point more strongly).”¹²

A. The direction one chooses (“But those who want to get rich” cf. Col. 3:1ff)

“Verse 9. But they that will be rich] **oi de boulomenoï ploutein**. The words are emphatic, and refer to persons who are determined to get riches; who make this their object and aim in life; who live to get money; who get all they can, save all they can, and keep all they get; and yet are apprehensive of no danger, because they seek to be rich by honest means; for it is likely that the apostle does not refer to those who wish to get riches by robbery, plunder, extortion, &c. By the term rich it is very likely that the apostle refers to what he had said above: Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. He that has more than these is rich in the sense in which the apostle uses the term.”¹³

This text and its counterpart in Colossians 3:1 speak of setting one’s affections on things above and not on things below. Here, we see the outcome of lusting after more.

- ¹“Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. ⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them” (Col. 3:1-7).
- ⁴“so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh,

but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:4-9).

B. The danger to be avoided ("Fall into temptation and a snare")

This text does not say you can lust after more and avoid the snare. The two are parts of the same. Lusting after more is the snare.

- "Not a novice, **lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil**" (1 Tim. 3:6).
- "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; **lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil**" (1 Tim. 3:7).
- "**But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare**, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).

"The idea here is, that they who have this desire become so entangled, that they cannot easily escape. They become involved in the meshes of worldliness and sin; their movements are so fettered by cares, and inordinate desires, and by artificial needs, that they are no longer freemen. They become so involved in these things that they cannot well break away from them if they would."¹⁴

The entanglement is so severe that unless one keeps pushing forward they will be consumed by their folly. They cannot rest.

C. The destruction of one's soul

- ⁹"But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

The language is so graphic ["ruin and destruction"]. "The two words taken together imply utter ruin and destruction of body and soul."¹⁵ The intent and outcome should be one of shock and fear. Those who would set their affection on the accumulation of wealth as the answer for contentment and joy are sowing the seeds of their own destructive harvest.

"The apostle considers these persons like mariners in a storm; by the concurrence of winds, waves, and tide, they are violently driven among the rocks, the vessel is dashed to pieces, and in a moment they are all ingulfed in the great deep! Such is the lot and unavoidable catastrophe of them that will be rich, even though they should strive to accomplish their desires by means the most rigidly honest."¹⁶

“And pierced themselves through with many sorrows.] The word **periepeiran** signifies to be transfixed in every part; and is an allusion to one of those snares, **pagida**, mentioned 1Ti 6:9, where a hole is dug in the earth, and filled full of sharp stakes, and, being slightly covered over with turf, is not perceived; and whatever steps on it falls in, and is pierced through and through with these sharp stakes, the **odunaiv pollaiv**, the many torments, mentioned by the apostle.”¹⁷

The outcome of this pursuit is an abandonment of the gospel. How do we protect ourselves from this danger? What might be our action steps if we find ourselves already ensnared?

“William Randolph Hearst was a very wealthy newspaper publisher who had an incredible collection of art. The Hearst mansion in northern California is a testament to his insatiable desire for artistic treasures. On one occasion he learned of some artwork he was determined to obtain. He sent his agent abroad to search for the treasure. After months of investigating, the agent reported that the treasure had been found. To further sweeten the find, Hearst learned that the relic wouldn't cost him a dime. He already owned it. The rediscovered piece was in Hearst's warehouse with many other treasures that had likewise never been uncrated. The desire for acquiring more can sometimes blind us from what we already possess.”¹⁸

Only the gospel can break the stronghold this world has on us. Living generous lives enables us to break the power of the horizontal.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Recognize the sufficiency of Jesus. He has to be enough in this life and in the life to come.
2. Where are you in all of this? Only you can answer this question.
3. Let us ask God to make us a contented people.

¹ Tom Carted, ed., *2,200 Quotations from the Writings of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 216.

² While it is impossible to trace the prosperity gospel back to an exact starting point, there are at least three movements from which it draws its ideas. One is the experience-centered Christianity which was birthed in the mind of nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and has come to fruition in the form of the twentieth-century Charismatic movement. A second philosophy that gave rise to the prosperity gospel was the “positive thinking” school of Norman Vincent Peale. Indeed, scholar Harvey Cox wrote concerning the prosperity gospel that “it owed much to the ‘positive thinking’ of the late Norman Vincent Peale.” Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 272. The third modern movement that has influenced the prosperity gospel is simply the “American dream,” or materialism.

³ <https://bible.org/article/bankruptcy-prosperity-gospel-exercise-biblical-and-theological-ethics>

⁴ <https://wiseinhiseyes.com/2017/03/05/not-your-moms-prosperity-gospel/>

⁵ http://www.jesuswalk.com/timothy/6_greed.htm

⁶ Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges on 1 Tim. 6:3.

⁷ Expositor's Greek Testament on 1 Tim. 6:3-21.

⁸ Albert Barnes' NT Commentary on 1 Timothy 6:5.

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:6.

¹⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:8.

¹¹ <http://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/definition-of-rich>

¹² <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/1+Timothy+6>

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- ¹³ Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:9.
¹⁴ Barnes' Notes on the Bible on 1 Tim. 6:9.
¹⁵ Pulpit Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:9.
¹⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:9.
¹⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary on 1 Tim. 6:10.
¹⁸ <http://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/unaware-of-his-possessions>