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“The Good Fruit With Our Finances ”

1 Timothy 6:1-10

We'll be looking at 1 Timothy chapter 6 this morning, so if you turn there we'll be doing verses 1 through 10, and I'll read it for you. “Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against. (2) And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles. (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; 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, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. (6) But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. (7) For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. (8) And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. (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. (10) For 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 a pang.”

So, these are some of the dangers, the concerns, that we need to be aware of as we seek to live the Christian life. The first area is in regards to our occupation. We want to be fruitful. We want to live as God has designed us and to be productive, and in verses 1 and 2, we are dealing with our means of support, of living. It says slaves and masters, of course, because that was the economic means of the day. For many, in fact, in some cities, the rate appears to be upwards of one-half of the working population being slaves.

Slavery wasn't like it was a couple of hundred years ago in America, of oppressiveness. It was actually something that some people chose to do to better oneself in life, to gain a higher economic status, or to gain an education. So, when you hear slaves and masters, don't think of the American version of it. It was a different economic system than we have now. One important difference though was that you couldn't just stop from being a slave like you could just quite your job right now. You had to purchase yourself from slavery.

Today, as these words are given to us about slaves and masters, we have an even greater obligation because if we don't like our occupation, we can change. We can move to something different, where these slaves didn't quite have the maneuverability that we do today. So, even more, these words speak to us and that is to honor our own masters, our own employers; we should honor our employers. Notice it says “regard their own masters as worthy of all honor.”

Do you suppose that people two thousand years ago were any more honorable than people are today? Doubtfully, and I realize that some employers are less honorable than other employers but irregardless of how honorable your employer might be, you still have the responsibility to honor them whether you like it or not.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So, you don't have to consider them highly worthy of honor to choose to honor them. In fact, this is not only true for employers, this is true for all people. 1 Peter 2:17 says to honor all men.

Are all men equally honorable? Certainly not, but you can choose to act in an honorable fashion to all men. But you specifically have responsibility here, with regard to those who are your employers, to honor them. And there is a reason for this. In honoring your employers, you honor God. Not only do you honor God by doing what God calls you to do, but the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against if you do this. When employers feel dishonored by grumbling and discontented employees, that makes for an unpleasant situation in the work place. And potentially, especially as you ought to be identifying yourself as a believer in Christ and following Him, if you're not honoring your employer, that can bring disrepute upon the God whom you claim to follow. So, this is important. This is important enough to even get into the Bible for us directly.

There is another group of employers that are given special attention here and that's in verse 2. "And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles." We should honor fellow believers who are employers, particularly.

Perhaps in your life you've had believers as employers. I can say that if I were to grade all of the employers I've had in my lifetime, I would say there is not a great correlation between whether they profess to be Christians or not. Unfortunately, some of the more difficult employers I've had in my life were Christians. In fact, the one employer that fired me in my life for questionable reasons, but that was my biased perspective, was a Christian. But nevertheless, I should honor that employer and even more so because there is a greater sense of responsibility that we have to one another.

It is apparent here that we have a connectedness with each other. Whether we like it or not, we are bound together in the family of God and we are in the same boat, and as one benefits, we all benefit. So, when your employer who is a Christian is benefiting, and you might even feel benefiting a little too much on the backs of the work force, you can still honor them. You can serve them all the more because those who partake of the benefit, from the labors of others, are believers and are beloved of the Lord. So, I would wish that all employers would act justly and fairly and responsibly and be the wonderful employers that we would love to work for, but such may not be the case. And if that's not the case, that still doesn't change your obligation, your responsibility. You should still honor them.

As we look at this passage, it seems that there is something missing here. There is nothing about how much you are earning, how to better yourself in the work place, how to advance and those sorts of things. Which leads me to conclude that our esteem for our boss is simply more important than our earnings from our boss. While we could be tempted to try to maneuver ourselves to gain more earnings from our boss, and I'm not saying that more earnings wouldn't be a nice thing, what maybe more important is that you do what the Word of God calls you to do. And that is in the midst of whatever earnings you may get, you are to esteem your boss, to honor your boss, for that is what God has you to do and that would honor Him.

Now, we will look at the next section, fruitfulness in our orthodoxy. We want to be fruitful in our occupation, in the earnings that we get, and we also want to be fruitful in our orthodoxy. And the

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

challenge here is that not everyone is teaching orthodoxy or correct doctrine. Verse 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.” These people are creating problems when they disagree, when they have different doctrine. So, if we are going to be fruitful in our orthodoxy we must recognize that there are different doctrines.

It reminds me of the early days of the automobile. You know in the early days of the automobile, doctrine and the automobile both had the potential for danger. That people sometimes drove carelessly, there was a great fear. Some people were so concerned about the automobile in certain localities they outlawed it. The state of Vermont was a little different. You could drive in the state of Vermont. You just had to have someone walking in front of you carrying a red flag. In Memphis, if you were a woman, you had to have a man in front of you with a red flag, just to know that there's a danger here.

Now, you may think well, that's ridiculous, but if you grew up in my household, you might recognize there is some danger. My mother wasn't a particularly skilled driver. She tried to drive as little as she possibly could only when my dad wasn't around and she had to. I remember one day we picked my dad up at the airport. That's the only trip I remember him taking without us after I grew up past preschool. And my mother was turning on this large boulevard, bigger than any boulevard we have around here. There were medians and traffic lights. She turned into the oncoming lane and I said, “Mom, you're going the wrong direction.” That has struck an indelible impression in my mind. I remember another time when I was younger, I was probably six years old, when we were lost, so we stopped at a gas station to find our way home. And I remember the guy telling my mom, when she gave him the directions and the address to our house, that it's right around the corner. But I made it through life.

This danger of automobiles, we see it today. People get into automobile accidents, but we decided that we need to get around and so we all run the risk of the danger that exists. With doctrine it's the same way. We have people teaching things, some good, some bad, and if we are going to be fruitful, we must recognize bad teaching. It would be wonderful if, when we see bad teaching, we notice it is different and then hold up our red flag and say that's dangerous doctrine, and it's clear to all. Wouldn't that be nice? But it's not so easy, sometimes we don't notice it. Bad teaching is teaching that's simply different. It's different, and how do you know it's different?

Well, the challenge here is that you have to actually know what the truth is in order to distinguish what's not inline with it, what's different. And this comes simply from a life of reading and studying and learning. There are no short cuts to this. No one can just hold up a red flag and you say, “Ah, it's different, thank you!” You have to be developing this for yourself.

Zig, who plays the guitar on our music team, is in my growth group and he shares his stories with me. He says once in a while I get a little creative and I can count on Miriam, who's at the piano playing, that when she hears something that gets a little too creative, she pops her head up like a prairie dog and says, “What is that?” and that keeps the music group together and playing something all of you can appreciate.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Bad teaching is different, and the more you learn what good teaching is, the more you will be able to pop your head up like a prairie dog and say that's different. It's not just different, but it disagrees with Christ. Not everything that's not in the Bible is wrong, but when it disagrees with Christ, then we can say categorically it is wrong. So, being different should just perk your ears up, but then you have to look at what the Scripture says and see if it agrees with Christ.

If I could raise my red flag for anything, it would be for this next one. Bad teaching does not develop godliness. This is this last phrase, “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.” I think in this day and age, this is where we are particularly susceptible to doctrine that does not conform to godliness. There are ways that people go about teaching that might sound good, but it does not conform to godliness, which is the purpose for the Scripture being given to us. It's not just to educate us and inform us, it's to mold us into God's image.

One way that doctrine doesn't conform us to godliness is when it may be true but it's only an intellectual academic exercise. So, it only goes as far as our head and doesn't move into our heart and it doesn't bring change. So, if all this amounts to as being an information transfer, it is aborting the process that the Scripture has to conform us to godliness.

Another way that bad teaching doesn't develop godliness is when the ways of the world, the ideas of the world, are being taught in the midst of biblical teaching. There are various ways that people think of how to solve man's problems, and I will give the world some credit here that they can recognize some people have problems. But where the deficit is, is how do you solve those problems? To get a clear view of what the real problems are and how to achieve solutions, we need to look to the One who has created us and given us the owners manual on how to bring the real solutions to the problems of man, and if we are not careful we can listen to a lot of peoples opinions on how to solve mans problems that doesn't develop godliness.

And the last one is pragmatism. How to get this to work well. How to have a happy family. How to work better at your job. How to do X, Y or Z better. We all would like to be better and more effective and efficient in living life. But sometimes what seems to be not very useful or pragmatic is actually quite biblical and is what God would have us to do as being important in being most effective at becoming godly, and even though it seems that it is a bumpy road. The mind of man might not appear to see God's teaching as very pragmatic or effective in what man wants to accomplish, but in faith we are able to trust in what God says and what He means, and it's the way to achieve His end, which is godliness. Bad teaching does not develop godliness. We not only need to recognize bad teaching, we need to recognize bad teachers.

Fruitfulness requires recognizing bad teachers. There are some things written about these people who are advocating a different doctrine. Verse 4, “He is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions.”

One telltale sign, one red flag, in determining bad teaching is to observe bad teachers and how they are conducting themselves. If they are conceited, if they are prideful, this is a telltale sign. People who are prideful think they know but they don't know, they don't understand. They don't understand

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

because they think they know and as teachers they are very happy to communicate all of what they think they know and then they are not listening and learning. And all of us must continue to learn since none of us know fully all of what God has revealed to us.

Bad teachers are prideful. Bad teachers are pugnacious, it means they are combative they fight. They are not only conceited but they have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words and then from that it gets even worse they become envious and jealous and strife and they create friction.

Do you know what friction does? Friction slows you down, you don't go as fast if you have friction. I can remember eras in our church where people were having strife and we weren't going very fast our ministries were bogging down because of friction. That is a bad thing, it is such a bad thing Titus 3:9 says this “Shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a divisive man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is sinning, being self-condemned.” People that are full of strife and abuse people verbally, evil suspicions, constant friction, depraved mind, deprived of truth, these are people that we do not need ministering in the church and so much so that they are to be rejected, they are to be warned.

There's an end phrase in verse 5 that says, in some of your Bibles, avoid such men as these, withdrawal from them, different translations, some of you have this, some of you don't an since I want to deal with the whole of what you have in front of you that is one of these phrases that are not found in the best and oldest manuscripts and so that's why the more modern translations don't have it. But it's a true concept; it is mirrored for you in Titus 3 and that is avoid men like these.

That is a telltale sign, red flag there, they are pugnacious, they also seek profit and you thought that this was just a phenomenon from the 21st century or reaching way back into the 20th century but no, these men supposed that godliness was a means of great gain. Even 2,000 years ago there were people who were supposing godliness is a means of gain, financial gain.

Now we have perfected it in this day and age, haven't we? We have entire television channels that foster this. It's gotten to be so good they don't just suppose that godliness is a means of gain and live the financially plush life that their supposed godliness brought them, they actually teach that you too should do this and that this is somehow godly, to live this way. Well, that's another telltale sign. People that are supposing that godliness is a means of gain, that Christianity is a root to financial success, are not reading the Scripture because the person we are following, Jesus Christ, did not enjoy financial success. He died rather poor, and the apostles did likewise. And it's incredible that people will turn this on their head and believe and teach that we should be prospering and financially well off by following Christ.

If you have a lot of money or a little money, it really is irrelevant to how God can work through your life. What is most relevant is the next verse. “Godliness is actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This last section I call “Fruitfulness in our Objectives” or what we are after in our life. And finances, money is something to be content with. We want to be fruitfulness in the things we are pursuing, productive and in terms of money contentment is the message that the Scripture gives to us. It doesn't just give it to us here it gives it to us in other places.

John the Baptist in Luke 3:14 instructed people to be content with their wages. Hebrews 13:5-6 says, “be content with such things as you have for He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Since the Lord will not forsake us He will not leave us we can be content with whatever we have because what He has given us in terms of the relationship with Him is beyond what this world can offer and what finances can bring.

The Phillips translation, I'm sure you don't have that sitting in front of you but it's a very loose translation and I like the way he translates “when accompanied by contentment,” that phrase. He says, “the peace of heart of those who live as God would have them to.” Those who are content, able to live at peace have a great gain on this earth. Being at peace at heart knowing that they are following God's will.

That is priceless it is invaluable and it not only holds hope for the present it holds hope for the future as well. There is the reward present and the reward future. Our purpose in life is godliness. Scripture is given so we can become godly, the Holy Spirit has been given to us so that we can become godly. That is our objective and if we are fruitful in life we are pursuing this objective and not the stuff of this world.

One thing we can say about our possessions is our possessions are guaranteed and here is the guarantee, in verse 7, “we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.” This is not news this is one of the great things about funerals that we once again realize and come face to face with we are taking nothing with us. Unfortunately we forget that and we live as if we are taking it all with us and when we do that we are foolish.

Everyone, Christians and non-Christians recognizes the truth of verse 7 they can't take it with them. Some try, they stick things in their caskets and things like that, it's not going with them. Reminds me of that now famous phrase that Jim Elliot uttered, “he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” And what we ought to do is to invest ourselves in the things that we can take with us, the things that last and that is ministering the Word of God in the lives of people. That endures into the future, the rest of this is not something to get worked up about. So much not something that we should get worked up about we have verse 8 given to us, “and if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”

You think, “well at what point do I have to start worrying about these things and being stressed out?” If we have food and covering we can be content with these things. And I can say that you don't even need to be worried about food and covering because the Word of God instructs you. Jesus instructed you do not be anxious for these things in Matthew 6, God arrays the lilies of the field He can take care of you. Matthew 6:33, seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you.”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

We can trust Him. What we shouldn't be doing is longing, pursuing riches. Our problem, our obstacle, our challenge is in greed. Our problem is greed. To overcome greed, we need contentment. A grateful heart leads to satisfaction, great contentment with the things of this earth. If we can see the things that we have and be thankful for the Lord's blessing for them, that is wonderful and we will be satisfied and content and on the road to godliness.

However, a greedy heart leads to a snare. Our destiny is we can't take it with us and the danger is we think that we can and so we want to get rich. "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."

(10) For 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 a pang

These foolish and harmful desires, we know they are harmful, you know why they are foolish because you know better. Not only you know better, everyone knows better. We have testimonial upon testimonial of people who have become rich and have found that it only produces destruction. It doesn't satisfy as Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "he who longs for income will not be satisfied with it." It just doesn't satisfy it will not bring contentment. So this pursuit of riches is empty.

And it doesn't even matter where you are. If you have ever been to a third world country you will know the truth of this. Even people that are very impoverished and have so very little are just like us. Wanting the same thing, which is more and more and more, whether they have a little they want more whether they have a lot, they want more and the only solution to this, the only remedy from this, is contentment. To see that God has entrusted us the things that we have and to be content with what we have and to know that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires. These foolish and harmful desires lead to destruction. They lead to ruin.

Remember the parable of the sower, Matthew 13? Remember there is the seed on the road, the seed that is sown in the rocks, seed in the thorns and then the seed that's in good soil? They all heard the word of God but they didn't all respond fruitfully, and the seed in the thorn really touches this. Matthew 13:22 says And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

And I suspect that there are people at Valley Bible that fall into this category. They're hearing the word, they're even maybe responding to a degree, but the word is going to become unfruitful because the worries of this world and the deceitfulness of riches will succumb them and they will plunge into ruin and destruction.

The reason the love of money, verse 10 is the root of all evil, (you might wonder, "gee, the love of money the root of all evil? That's a big statement there."), here is the reason why the love of money is the root of all evil. It's not because of what money is. It doesn't say money is the root of all evil, it says the love of money is the root of all evil. So money is just a means to an end. It accomplishes something.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So what is it that people long for money and want money and love money are looking to accomplish? They are basically looking to accomplish one of two things. Either they want to keep it to protect themselves, because they believe that if they have enough money they will be secure and the worries of this world will not concern them because their security is coming from their finances. Unfortunately, our finances are threatened. So much so that James 5:1-3 says, “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted;”

Our things will pass away and it doesn't really matter how much stuff you have it will pass away. It may pass away quickly or it may pass away slowly but it will pass away. And then the worries of this world cannot be stopped by having enough money.

The other thing that people will look for money to accomplish is not for security, but for pleasure. All of what money can gain for them, and this is the deceitfulness of riches. The worries of this world cannot be protected by money and the deceitfulness of riches cannot be protected by money, will not be accomplished, because its fleeting, it passes away. It is foolish, it's an image and it's deceitful. Don't be deceived; money will not bring your heart's desires. Only the Lord can accomplish what you really truly need.

The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil because all of this surrounds our self. Self in the middle of money. If we want to feed our self we will plunge our self into ruin and destruction. And some longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many a pain.

This is the truth. You know Paul. He was a very ambitious man with great skills quite apparent, had respect, had leadership ability par excellence. He also worked as a tent maker and I suspect Paul would have been one heck of a tent maker. In fact, I think he not only made tents well, I think he could have produced a 1st century factory of tent-makers to organize the line of tents that would be very good and efficient and be able to accomplish a quite a business of tent-making, if he choose to. But he had other interests in mind. So he made tents when he needed to in order to make enough money to survive and continue to serve. And when he wasn't in that situation where finances weren't an issue for him he didn't make tents. He didn't choose to organize the labors in order to make more tents to produce more money for the kingdom of God or for what ever reasons. He sought to give his life as a service to God, a hundred percent, and all the abilities and giftedness that God gave to him he pursued in serving. He was not distracted thinking that he could serve God and money because, as Matthew 6:24 puts it, you cannot serve God and money. You cannot hold to one and hold to the other. You will either, love the one and hate the other.

A greedy heart leads us to stray and if you are not careful you will stray by the temptation of loving money because no matter how hard you try, and believe me some people are trying very hard, you cannot serve God and money, it isn't possible. You must choose. Let's pray that we make a good choice.

Let's bow together. Lord Jesus, we thank You that you have given us not only Yourself, but that You will never leave us nor forsake us and that we can respond to You in faith. Not being distracted by the things of the world, the worries of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and all the things that it is supposedly bring to life but that we can have trust in You.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

We pray that this trust will be impressed upon the heart of each one here that we cannot be distracted but we can in faith follow you from a whole heart, that we can serve You and You alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.