

Armagh Baptist Church – 15th August 2010
The Life and Times of Timothy 13
1 Timothy 6:1-10 & 17-19
‘The Love of Money...’

Introduction

You will see from this chapter that there was quite a spectrum of people in the Church at Ephesus in the 1st Century – and of course that’s how it should be! The Church that is made up of born again Christians *should* be a reflection of the whole spectrum of society outside, otherwise we are failing to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men and women, regardless of their background or social standing. If our church only represents a certain section of the population at large then we are not doing our job properly. If we all came from the same social class or the same political persuasion, then we would have a lot of work to do, in order to truly reflect all sections of our community.

Here in 1 Timothy ch.6 we see that in the church at Ephesus there were:-

- Slaves as well as Masters (vs.1-2)
- False teachers as well as True ones (vs.3-5)
- Those who wanted to get rich (vs.6-10)
- Those who were already rich (vs.17-19)

Paul had a word from the Lord to pass on to each of these groups of people. But these groups challenge us as to what our attitude is to the things of this world:

- What is your attitude to the Materialistic Culture that we live in?
- What is your attitude to Money?

The ‘boom and bust’ economy, that Labour promised us had gone forever, is still very much with us. The Credit Crunch, the run on the banks, and all that followed in terms of the collapse of the property market just proves it to us. Now we are faced with the Conservative-Lib Dem Coalition promising us ‘an age of austerity’ and we’re all sitting waiting to see where the cuts are going to come in the Autumn. We have seen that serving the god of money doesn’t work. If we put our trust in riches, we will be let down; we will be left high and dry. So what did Paul have to say to each of these groups of people?

1. **Christian Slaves – ‘The Have Nots’ (vs.1-2)**

The first people we come across in this chapter shouldn’t be in our church today - but they were very much present in the 1st Century Christian Church – Slaves! Many of whom had become Christians in the early days of the church. I think that is very much to the credit of the early Church, that there were so many slaves among their ranks. It means that in their preaching they didn’t pander to the well-to-do upper classes. The Gospel that the early church preached was a gospel that could be understood by the uneducated, lower classes of people just as much as anybody else.

And yet if you visit many Christian churches today, they are made up by and large of the middle classes, or even upper middle classes - the well-to-do, respectable people of society.

By and large it is the poorer people of our society today who have turned their back on the church, and think that there is nothing relevant for them in it at all. I believe that is a big challenge for us today - to preach the Gospel to all men and women, whatever their background or social standing, for Christ died for *all men*, and he desires that *all men* should be saved.

But what did Paul have to say to ‘the have-nots’ in Timothy’s Church in Ephesus?

Well they were slaves, and from history we know all about the injustice of the slave trade, especially among the Blacks from Africa, who were sold into slavery to America, often by British slave-traders.

Although it was Evangelical Christians in the 18th Century, such as William Wilberforce, who were at the forefront of getting slavery abolished, notice that Paul doesn’t mention anything like that here.

He doesn’t tell the slaves who were now Christians to rise up and rebel against their masters, in fact quite the opposite, he tells them to consider their masters worthy of full respect! (v.1)

In fact he goes on to say in v.2 that if your master happened to be a fellow-believer, just like yourself, you were not to take advantage of him, but you were actually to serve him even better, because it was a Christian who was benefitting from your work.

These were ‘the have-nots’ in the Church of Paul’s day, but he doesn’t tell them to find ways of making more money, or to find ways of getting out of their slavery, he simply tells them to work better for their masters. And he gives a reason in v.1: “*so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered.*”

Paul often gets criticised by people of today’s world because he didn’t fight for the rights of the oppressed, because he didn’t have a Liberation Theology, because he didn’t tell the slaves to rise up and rebel, and overthrow their masters and get free.

But Paul didn’t tell the Christian Slaves to do that, because *His* Lord and Master had never told *him* to do that. In fact Paul often regarded himself as a *Slave* of Jesus Christ. And he didn’t mind the term at all. He wanted to please and serve his Master well - with all his heart. And he told these slaves, (in fact

any worker) to do their job, to do their day's work, as if they were serving the Lord, not men! (See Ephesians 6:7-8).

The only command our Heavenly Master has given any of us, is to go and make disciples of all nations, to go and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to lost men and women, whoever they are, whatever level of society they come from - high or low. We will please our Lord and Master by doing just that!

If the Christian Slaves of the first Century had used their new found spiritual freedom, to rise up and rebel against their earthly masters, it would have caused a revolution in 1st Century Roman life, but it would have brought fierce persecution upon the Christian Church, and they would have been branded as mere trouble makers from day one.

Jesus and the Apostles went out of their way to avoid such a reputation. If they suffered persecution it was to be purely because of the Gospel and for no other reason. In fact all of us could adopt the reason given in v.1 as our motto for deciding how we behave in any situation we find ourselves in our everyday lives. We should live and behave in such a way *"that God's name and our teaching will not be slandered."*

So if you have little by way of this world's goods then God's Word tells you to live a consistent everyday Christian life, and to leave the outcome in God's hands. God says, *"They that honour me, I will honour."* (1 Samuel 2:30).

2. The False Teachers – 'Good Livin for the Livin' (vs.3-5)

The second group we come to in this chapter are the false teachers yet again. They had many faults, but one of them was that they were using God's Work, Christian Work, as a means to financial gain. They were only in it for the money; they were only "good-livin' for the livin" as we might say today.

Paul doesn't waste much time on these people here. He has no time for them. He says they are *"conceited and understand nothing."* (v.4) They have an unhealthy interest in all the wrong things (vs.4-5). Most of the time they are causing friction and quarrels instead of advancing God's work.

Paul says such people have been *"robbed of the truth"* (v.5). They only teach falsehood, and they think that godliness is a means to financial gain. Nothing could be a greater contradiction to what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: *'No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.*

You cannot serve both God and Money.' (Matt 6:24)

Then he comes to a third group of people in vs.6-10. We'll call them...

3. Discontented Christians – 'The Wannabes' (vs.6-10)

In v.9 he talks about "people who want to get rich."
So these are the "wannabes" - they wannabe rich!

To this group of people Paul **sounds some very clear warnings** in vs.9-10:

* People who want to get rich fall into temptations and traps.

* They can fall into all sorts of foolish and harmful desires.

* These can plunge them into ruin and destruction rather than wealth and riches!

Then he **states the general rule** in v.10:-

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."

A statement that is often misquoted. But notice:-

(i) It's not **money** that is the root of all evil - it's *the love of it*.

This was not said to those who were already rich (they're down in vs.17-19)

This was said to those who had average wealth, but who always wanted more. They are warned that *the love of money* is a root of all kinds of evil.

So that's a word to all of us - watch your desire to always have more of this world's goods - It can take you over, and trip you up, if you're not careful!

(ii) It doesn't say that money is **the** root of all evil; it is only *one of many*.

e.g. bitterness can be a root of all kinds of evil as well, if you let it get a grip of you, for whatever reason. (See Heb.12:14,15).

(iii) It also says that the love of money is a root of all **kinds** of evil, not just evil. If you let your love for money, or for the things of this world, get a grip of you, there's no telling what it might lead to - it could lead to all sorts of things -all of them bad.

Then after the principle, Paul **gives some examples**. He doesn't mention names, but he does seem to be speaking about people he once knew well. He says that: *"Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* (e.g. Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10) - So we have been warned! Be careful that a love of money, or money worries, or a desire to have more of this world's goods, doesn't lead you *from* the Lord

4. Well-off Christians – 'The Well to dos' (vs.17-19)

The fourth group of people we find in this chapter are down in vs.17-19.

These are not those who *wannabe* rich, these are those who **are** rich (v.17).

We'll call them 'The well-to-do's'. What does Paul have to say to them?

Again in v.17 he sounds some warnings for them:-

- * Not to be arrogant (as rich people often can be!)
- * Not to put their hope in their riches, rather than in God!
- * After all, at the end of the day they would have nothing, if God hadn't given it to them, in the first place! Or given them the health and ability to earn it!

The amazing thing is that Paul didn't feel brow-beaten by these rich people. He issues these warnings to them in the form of commands. He commands them not to be arrogant!

But then in v.18 he goes on to command them some more:-

- * He Commands them to do good.
- * He Commands them to be rich in good deeds.
- * He Commands them to be generous.
- * He Commands them to be willing to share.

What right had Paul to command these rich people to do anything?

Ans. Because these rich people were **Christians** in the Church in Ephesus. The money they had in their pockets, or in their Bank accounts, was the Lord's money. It wasn't really theirs at all - it was the Lord's - to be used for: the Lord's Work, for Gospel Work, for the extension of God's Kingdom.

As James says in his book, James 5:3 - It is an awful thing for wealthy Christians to **"hoard wealth in the last days."**

Don't they realise there is an urgency to get the Gospel out to people world-wide before the Lord returns!?

Don't they realise that Gospel work needs money to enable it to happen!? It would be a terrible thing if God's people were hoarding that money instead of putting it to good use. That's why Paul is not afraid to command them to be rich in good deeds, or to be generous, and to be willing to share.

- * We live in a day when there never have been more opportunities for the gospel world-wide.
- * Yet we live in a day when missionary societies have never been crying out more for money for the Lord's Work.
- * We live in a day when God's people have never had more in their pockets than they do today and yet Gospel work is short of money! This should not be!

Maybe we need to hear those commands today too, just like they needed to hear them in Ephesus in the 1st Century.

We'll never be the poorer for giving to the Lord and to his Work (v.19). We might have less in our pension pots down here if we do, but we will be storing up treasures in heaven instead! And we'll be taking hold of "the Life that is truly life" here and now as well! We'll have found a purpose for

amassing wealth – not just to increase a number in a bank account, but to give it back to the Lord in order to prosper His work around the world!

So don't spend all your money on things that just don't matter, the luxuries of this life. Take hold of the life that is truly life, by living for the Lord, and making sure you play your part in seeing His Kingdom extended around the world.

5. Conclusion: It is still possible to be 'A Contented Christian'

1 Tim 6:6 – *'But godliness with contentment is great gain'*. How come? - (v.7) 'We brought nothing into this world' and it is certain 'we can take absolutely nothing out of it' so why do we run after so much while in it?

I wonder have you ever watched that programme 'Heir Hunters'? It's on first thing in the morning after the Breakfast News on BBC1. It's all about people who have died without making a will, and who have left all their money and property behind them. It is the Heir-Hunters' job to try to piece together a family tree for the deceased to discover if there are any living heirs to pass on their estate to. Otherwise it all just goes to the Government – something like £18 million per year goes to the UK Government in unclaimed estates. It is a powerful reminder that no matter how much we gather up in this life, we take absolutely none of it with us when we go. There is only one answer to the question, *'How much did he or she leave behind?'* The answer is *'Everything!'*

If only we could live our lives again on the basis of v.8. Our forefathers had to 'But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.' If only we could be content with the necessities – realising that anything more is a bonus.

In Phil 4:11 - Paul said that he himself had to *learn* to be content whatever his circumstances. It doesn't come easily. He had to learn it that hard way.

But really it all boils down to what you see as important in life. It all comes down to priorities. **In Phil 1:21**- Paul tells us that he lived totally for Christ; so the things of this world meant very little to him. But the bonus was when he came to die: Because living that way, death was nothing but gain! There was no loss, because he simply went home to be with His Lord, the One he had served so faithfully throughout his life here on earth.

As Jesus put it in **Matt. 6:33-34** -

"But seek first His Kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'

That's true whether you're rich or poor. So learn to be a Contented Christian.