

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 1 TIMOTHY 6 (PART 1)

1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2 - MASTERS & SLAVES

THE ROMAN WORLD OF 1 TIMOTHY INCLUDED SLAVERY AND SERVITUDE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS. SOME SLAVERY WAS A FORM OF EMPLOYMENT, SOME A WAY OF PAYING OFF DEBT, SOME AS A RESULT OF MILITARY CONQUEST, SOME WAS VOLUNTARY, SOME FORCEABLE. SLAVERY WAS EMBEDDED IN AND HELD UP THE SOCIETAL FRAMEWORK OF THE TIME. IN THIS LETTER PAUL ACKNOWLEDGES THE EVIL AND BROKENNESS OF THE SYSTEM (CALLING IT A "YOKE", V. 1) AND ALSO DENOUNCING SLAVE OWNERS/TRADERS AS UNGODLY (1:10). HAVING ANOTHER HUMAN AS ONE'S SLAVE IS WRONG - EVERY PERSON HAS BEEN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS PART OF WHAT IS BROKEN IN THIS AGE AND SOME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT'S WRITINGS WILL BE WHAT INSPIRES THE WORLDWIDE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT THAT (SADLY) CONTINUES TODAY (GAL. 3:26-29; EPH 6:9; COL. 4:1). HERE THOUGH PAUL WILL ADDRESS BRIEFLY HOW A CHRISTIAN SLAVE SHOULD ENDURE AS THEY WAIT FOR THEIR TRUE MASTER'S RETURN AND THEIR ETERNAL EMANCIPATION.

SLAVES SHOULD HONOR THEIR MASTERS AND WORK FOR THE LORD AND NOT FOR PEOPLE. ESPECIALLY ONCE IT IS KNOWN THAT THE SLAVE IS A CHRISTIAN, HOW THEY WORK AND SERVE WILL BE A REFLECTION OF THEIR FAITH IN GOD. AND IN CASES WHERE A CHRISTIAN SLAVE IS SERVING A CHRISTIAN MASTER, THEY SHOULD HONOR AND SERVE THEM FAITHFULLY AS WELL AND NOT ASSUME THEY CAN CUT CORNERS OR BE NEGLIGENT BECAUSE THEY'RE WORKING FOR A CHRISTIAN.

THERE'S AN ELEMENT OF THIS THAT IS UNIQUE TO THE SLAVE/MASTER RELATIONSHIP OF THE ANCIENT WORLD BUT WE CAN ALSO GLEAN FROM THIS TEACHING FOR MODERN DAY EMPLOYEE/EMPLOYER RELATIONS.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE THE BEST EMPLOYEES. CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE HOW FORTUNATE A COMPANY WOULD BE TO HAVE SOMEONE COMMITTED TO HONESTY, INTEGRITY, LOVE, FORGIVENESS, AND HUMILITY? WE'RE NOT NARROW-MINDED, LAZY, ARROGANT OR LOOKING TO CUT CORNERS! AND WE'RE ALSO NOT JUST SERVING THE COMPANY OR SUPERVISOR - WE'RE SERVING CHRIST! SO WHETHER IT'S PAINTING A HOUSE, SERVING A TABLE, TEACHING A CLASS, WORKING A REGISTER OR COLLECTING THE TRASH - WE'RE DOING IT AS IF IT WERE JESUS' HOME, MEAL, STUDENTS, GROCERIES AND CAN ON THE STREET.

IN ADDITION - IN CASES WHERE WE WORK FOR AND WITH OTHER CHRITIANS, WE SHOULD NEVER ASSUME THAT MEANS WE'RE ABLE TO GIVE LESS THAN OUR BEST IN THAT CONTEXT EITHER. OUR FAMILY SHOULDN'T GET THE LEFTOVERS OF OUR HARD WORK AND CHARACTER, THEY SHOULD GET THE BEST! SADLY, THIS HAS NOT ALWAYS PROVEN TRUE FOR MANY - BUT WE CAN DO BETTER AND RIGHT TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

PAUL IS ALSO HIGHLIGHTING THAT THERE IS NO SPHERE OF LIFE THAT OUR CONFESSION OF JESUS AS LORD DOES NOT AFFECT AND INFLUENCE.

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-5 - FALSE TEACHERS

THE WORDS OF JESUS SERVE AS THE DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION FOR THE CHURCH. HERE PAUL ALSO EMPHASIZES THAT THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE MUST CONFORM TO "GODLINESS", MEANING THAT THE RESULT OF THE TEACHING MUST LEAD TO A GODLY LIFE. FOLLOW JESUS AND BECOME LIKE JESUS. FOLLOW SOMEONE OR SOMETHING ELSE AND YOU WON'T LOOK LIKE JESUS.

THIS IS THE SECOND TIME PAUL HAS MADE SUCH AN ASSERTION. HE IS CALLING TIMOTHY TO LOOK AT THE FRUIT OF SOMEONE'S LIFE. HE'S ECHOING JESUS' TEACHING ON HOW TO IDENTIFY "FALSE PROPHETS"

MATTHEW 7:15-20 - "BEWARE OF THE FALSE PROPHETS, WHO COME TO YOU IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, BUT INWARDLY ARE RAVENOUS WOLVES. 16 "YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS. GRAPES ARE NOT GATHERED FROM THORN BUSHES NOR FIGS FROM THISTLES, ARE THEY? 17 "SO EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT, BUT THE BAD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT. 18 "A GOOD TREE CANNOT PRODUCE BAD FRUIT, NOR CAN A BAD TREE PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT. 19 "EVERY TREE THAT DOES NOT BEAR GOOD FRUIT IS CUT DOWN AND THROWN INTO THE FIRE. 20 "SO THEN, YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS.

THOSE WHO DEPART FROM THE TEACHINGS AND LIFESTYLE OF JESUS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY PAUL IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- CONCEITED - ARROGANT, PRIDEFUL. "PUFFED UP"
- UNDERSTANDING NOTHING - FOOLISH. IRONIC BECAUSE THEY THINK THEY KNOW (CONCEITED)
- HAVING A MORBID INTEREST IN CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS AND DISPUTES ABOUT WORDS - SICK/UNHEALTHY CRAVING AND DESIRE TO DISPUTE AND ARGUE.
- WHICH STIR UP ENVY, STRIFE, ABUSIVE LANGUAGE, EVIL SUSPICIONS - JEALOUSY, FIGHTING, EVIL SPEAKING AND EVIL THINKING ARE PRESENT IN SUCH ENVIRONMENTS.
- CONSTANT FRICTION WITH OTHER PEOPLE WHO ARE DEPRAVED - CONTINUAL FIGHTING, MUTUAL IRRITATION, LACK OF PEACE
- WHO SUPPOSE GODLINESS IS A WAY TO GAIN (MONEY) - IN IT FOR THE MONEY, IN IT FOR THEMSELVES

EUGENE PETERSON SUMMARIZES THIS SECTION LIKE THIS: "IF YOU HAVE LEADERS THERE WHO TEACH OTHERWISE, WHO REFUSE THE SOLID WORDS OF OUR MASTER JESUS AND THIS GODLY INSTRUCTION, TAG THEM FOR WHAT THEY ARE: IGNORANT WINDBAGS WHO INFECT THE AIR WITH GERMS OF ENVY, CONTROVERSY, BAD-MOUTHING, SUSPICIOUS RUMORS. EVENTUALLY THERE'S AN EPIDEMIC OF BACKSTABBING, AND TRUTH IS BUT A DISTANT MEMORY. THEY THINK RELIGION IS A WAY TO MAKE A FAST BUCK." (EUGENE PETERSON, "THE MESSAGE" 1 TIMOTHY 6:3-5)

IN CONTRAST, PAUL REMINDS US THAT GODLINESS IS A MEANS OF GREAT GAIN, WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY CONTENTMENT - MEANING, NOT A WAY TO GET RICH THROUGH MATERIAL THINGS, BUT ETERNAL THINGS, NAMELY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND LIFE IN THE AGE TO COME (V. 7).

1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10 - CONTENTMENT AND MONEY

Q - WHAT DOES PAUL TELL US WE OUGHT TO BE CONTENT WITH? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CONTENT?

Q - ARE YOU CONTENT? DO YOU FIND YOURSELF UNSATISFIED OR FEELING DISCONTENT?

"**THE LOVE OF MONEY IS A ROOT OF ALL SORTS OF EVIL (V. 10)**". PAUL SAYS THAT THE LOVE OF MONEY CAN CAUSE PEOPLE TO WANDER AWAY FROM THE FAITH AND RESULT IN THEM GETTING HURT (PIERCED WITH MANY GRIEFS). THAT'S PRETTY SERIOUS. THE LANGUAGE OF A ROOT TELLS US THAT THIS IS NOT SOMETHING NECESSARILY OVERT OR OBVIOUS. ROOTS ARE BELOW THE SURFACE OF A PLANT BUT AFFECT THE LIFE AND FRUITFULNESS OF THE PLANT SIGNIFICANTLY. WHAT WE MUST GUARD AGAINST IS PROBABLY NOT OBVIOUS AND SEEN.

Q - HOW DOES THE LOVE OF MONEY MANIFEST ITSELF IN SOMEONE'S LIFE?

HERE ARE A FEW THOUGHTS: WORKING A LOT. NOT RESTING/SABBATHING. NOT HAVING GOOD BOUNDARIES WITH WORK. DESIRING NEW AND UPDATED THINGS WHEN YOU CURRENTLY HAVE SOMETHING THAT WORKS WELL. FEELING JEALOUS OF WHAT OTHER PEOPLE HAVE. FLAUNTING YOUR POSSESSIONS. NOT BEING GENEROUS. NOT CARING FOR THE POOR. NOT SUPPORTING THE LOCAL CHURCH. BEING STINGY. BEING IN

DEBT. BEING WORRIED ABOUT YOUR POSSESSIONS, CAREER OR FINANCES. COMPLAINING. ALWAYS LOOKING FOR THE NEXT HOME UPDATE OR PROJECT. NOT BEING THANKFUL.

THIS SECTION ISN'T REALLY ADDRESSING INCOME LEVELS - YOU CAN BE A CHRIST FOLLOWER AND BE WEALTHY (PAUL WILL SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS WEALTHY CHRISTIANS IN THE NEXT SECTION). BUT BEING WEALTHY CAN BE RISKY BECAUSE THERE IS A SUBTLE DECEPTION TO RICHES WHICH POLLUTE THE SOUL. REMEMBER JESUS' TEACHING AND THE WARNINGS HE GIVES:

MARK 4:18-19 - "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 (LUKE 8:14 INCLUDES "PLEASURES OF THIS LIFE"), AND THE DESIRES FOR OTHER THINGS ENTER IN AND CHOKES THE WORD, AND IT BECOMES UNFRUITFUL.

MATTHEW 19:23-24 - AND JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "TRULY I SAY TO YOU, IT IS HARD FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. 24 "AGAIN I SAY TO YOU, IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL TO GO THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE, THAN FOR A RICH MAN TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

SO BEFORE WE HANDWAVE THIS AND SAY "*I'M NOT RICH*" OR "JESUS DOESN'T SAY THAT IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE* TO ENTER THE KINGDOM, JUST DIFFICULT", LET'S HEAR THE WARNING AND SIT IN IT FOR A MOMENT. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT STATEMENT. IT'S THE SURGEON GENERAL SAYING: "SMOKING CIGARETTES CAUSES CANCER". IT'S THE POLICE OFFICER SAYING: "DRIVING WHILE BUZZED/INTOXICATED CAUSES ACCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS CAUSE DEATH." IT'S THE ACADEMIC DEAN SAYING IF YOU DON'T GET YOUR GRADES UP YOU'RE GOING TO FAIL JUNIOR YEAR. IT'S YOUR BOSS SAYING "IF YOU KEEP SHOWING UP LATE YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE YOUR JOB." AND YET IT'S GREATER THAN ALL OF THOSE WARNINGS BECAUSE IT'S THE MESSIAH SAYING: "THIS IS A RISK YOU MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY BECAUSE IT COULD COST YOU ENTRANCE IN MY KINGDOM."

GREED IS NOT OFTEN MENTIONED AMONGST THE SINS WE STRUGGLE WITH, NOT BECAUSE IT ISN'T A SIN WE STRUGGLE WITH BUT BECAUSE IT'S NOT LOOKED AT AS A SIN AND WE DON'T STRUGGLE WITH IT. SOMEONE WORKING ALL THE TIME IS COMMENDED AS A GREAT EMPLOYEE. UPGRADING TO THE NEWEST AND NEXT THING IS EXCITING AND GETS OTHER'S ATTENTION. I'M NOT SUGGESTING THESE THINGS IN AND OF THEMSELVES ARE SINS - BUT THEY CAN BE THE LAB IN WHICH UNGODLY DESIRES AND PRACTICES GET CREATED.

THE LANGUAGE USED BY JESUS AND PAUL ARE WORTH NOTHING. JESUS SAYS THAT RICHES ARE "DECEITFUL" AND LIKE THORNS "WHICH ENTER IN AND CHOKES THE WORD." PAUL SAYS THAT WANTING TO GET RICH IS A TEMPTATION AND A SNARE (AKA TRAP). THE POINT IS, THIS PARTICULAR TYPE OF SIN AND THREAT IS SUBTLE. YOU DON'T JUST WALK INTO A TRAP - EXCEPT YOU DO! - BECAUSE YOU CAN'T SEE IT AND SO YOU WALK INTO IT WITHOUT KNOWING IT'S THERE! SOMETHING THAT IS DECEITFUL IS TRICKY AND THORNS GROW QUICKLY AND ARE INVASIVE IF THE GARDENER IS NOT ON THE ALERT AND CULTIVATING THE SOIL CONSISTENTLY. SO IF WE HAVE ANY TENDENCY TO ASSUME WE DON'T STRUGGLE IN THIS AREA - BE CAREFUL. GREED, RICHES, WEALTH AND WORLDLY DESIRES ARE NOT OBVIOUS, THEY ARE INSIDIOUS.

AS WITH MOST THINGS, JESUS IS ADDRESSING THE HEART. IT'S OUR EMOTIONS OR AFFECTIONS REGARDING MONEY AND WEALTH AND POSSESSIONS. YOU CAN BE ON FOOD STAMPS AND BE GREEDY. YOU CAN BE SLEEPING ON THE STREETS AND HAVE A CRAVEN LOVE OF MONEY. YOU CAN BE LOWER, MIDDLE, AND UPPER CLASS AND NOT BE CONTENT. JESUS ISN'T JUST CALLING US TO CHECK OUR BANK STATEMENT, HE'S CALLING US TO CHECK OUR HEART.