

1 Timothy 6:3-21 - True Treasure: Christ Above All

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Date: 16 November 2025

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[0 : 00] We are going to crack straight on with our study this morning because I've been told to teach short.! That's not going to happen. And so there.

And obviously we've got a lot to do after service as well with the planning meeting as well. So would you turn with me to 1 Timothy chapter 6? We're going to finish 1 Timothy today.

All right. And then just FYI, next week we're going to finish. No, next week we're going to begin to finish the Gospel of Mark. So Mark, the next two weeks then we'll be finished the Gospel of Mark before we launch into our Christmas season.

For me, it still seems a little bit too early to be talking about Christmas. But I know that some of you will disagree. I just hope that you haven't got your decorations up yet. I'm getting some very sour looks.

So let's just, we probably should just move on. All right. So last week we came as far as verse 2 of chapter 6. And so now verse 3 to the end of the chapter reads like this.

[1 : 19] Paul says,

Let's pray. Father, we come to your presence today, not as people who have it all together, but as people who are utterly dependent, just as we've sung already, upon you, upon your mercy and grateful for your unending grace.

Father, we thank you, Lord, that we don't have to pretend or perform. Lord, thank you, Lord, that you have done all of that for us. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you have gone before us, that you give us every good thing.

Lord, that we don't have to try and measure up. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you have done all the winning on our behalf. Lord, thank you that we have your word.

And Lord, as we open it, Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would free us from false treasures, Lord, and fragile hopes that we cling to. Lord, may your work, may your word do its work this morning, Lord, and transform our minds.

[4 : 44] Lord, we pray that you would saturate this room, Lord, with the beauty and authority of Jesus, who is our true treasure, our only righteousness, and our perfect peace.

Holy Spirit, come and do what only you can do. Open our eyes that we may see Jesus clearly.

Open our hearts to love him dearly and open our hands to follow him faithfully. Lord, we pray, save us from distraction, self-reliance, and being only hearers of the word.

Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would have your will in your way here this morning. In Jesus' name, amen. I don't know about you, but I am feeling like I am officially getting old.

I know, thanks for that. And the reason I feel that is because I've started to lose things constantly. And clearly, it's not my fault.

My keys just disappear. Sometimes right before my eyes. My keys disappear. My glasses disappear. They vanish. And that's just a horrid thing because you need your glasses to find things.

[6 : 00] And my phone grows legs and just walks away. I'll spend 10 minutes more than that tearing the house apart looking for something only to discover that it's right there in front of me.

Take this week. I rose early one morning this week. I'm not wanting to wake Laurie up. I didn't turn the light on. I just used my phone, you know, as the flashlight on my phone.

And I spent a good five minutes trying to find my phone. And so maybe you can relate.

We lose stuff. And I hope I haven't started to lose my mind yet. But sometimes at the end of a particularly stressful day, I do begin to wonder.

But here's the absolute crazy thing. We live in a world where even the things that no one should be able to lose are getting stolen.

[7 : 05] So I don't know whether you followed the news over this last few months, but two unbelievable stories. Firstly, did you see the story about the 18-carat gold toilet that someone stole? Now, I have no idea why you would want to steal or even create in the first place an 18-carat gold toilet. But someone stole it from Blenheim Palace and they unbolted it.

They ripped it out and carried it away by night and then evidently melted it down. They were inside the palace for less than three minutes.

And it happened back in 2019. But the culprits have only just been convicted. You shouldn't be able to steal an 18-carat gold toilet. Last month, arguably, the most secure art gallery on the planet, the Louvre in Paris, had precious crown jewels stolen.

Did you see that news? And it happened in broad daylight, didn't it? They climbed up a ladder, jumped through a window, did some cutting of stuff.

[8 : 20] Like, I'm not really a thief, I wouldn't know. But I imagine it's cutting stuff and breaking stuff. And then ran away. They stole jewels worth 76 million pounds.

Stolen from under layers of alarms, cameras, guards, and gates. And think about it.

No one should ever be able to steal that stuff. If you've ever been to the Louvre, most of it is underground. But if thieves can steal a million pound golden toilet, and thieves can steal from the Louvre, what exactly on earth is secure?

Our world is one giant testimony, isn't it, that every treasure on earth is stealable or losable. Money, possessions, status, image, influence, comfort.

It all gets lost. We can all lose them, leak them, or have them ripped away. And yet the very things our hearts so often cling for, as if they are eternal, actually aren't eternal, are they?

[9 : 35] And Paul knows this. He knows how quickly the human heart turns godliness into a means of gain. He knows how easily people inside the church begin chasing the same insecure treasures as the world.

And so he writes to this young pastor in Ephesus called Timothy, and to us to say that there is only one treasure no thief can take from you, and that is Jesus himself.

And this whole series that we've been looking at through this book of 1 Timothy, we've called it Dangerous Church, has been a little bit of an awakening to the church, to this calling to be dangerous in the kingdom of darkness, to be dangerous to it, to be dangerous to idolatry, to be dangerous to empty religion.

But in this section, Paul says that the church also faces a danger of its own, that we all face a danger. Not persecution necessarily, not politics, not culture wars, but misplacing the treasure God has given us.

And at the heart of the passage is one question that keeps being repeated over and over again. What is it that you treasure? Because your treasure sets your direction, doesn't it?

[11 : 02] It defines your identity. It shapes your eternity. And so Paul is challenging us to be dangerous by recovering the only treasure that can't be stolen or lost, and that is Jesus.

Now, I don't know whether you noticed as we went through this passage, there are several real subtle, meaningful word plays that he's going to make through this passage.

We don't have a huge amount of time to go through them, but they're deliberately placed to help us contrast the difference between false treasure and true treasure.

Treasure that you can lose, and treasure that you can't lose. Treasure that can be stolen, and treasure that can never be stolen. And so in verses 3 to 5, Paul is writing about the danger of distorted teaching.

He says, If anyone teaches a different doctrine, verse 3, and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

[12 : 09] And so, look, the root of false teaching is not necessarily doctrine. The root of false teaching isn't necessarily the teaching itself or the content of what is being taught.

The root of false teaching is pride and self-interest. When Paul describes them, he's not referring to them as being misinformed. He's not referring to them as innocent bystanders who accidentally took a kind of a theological wrong turn.

He says, He has an unhealthy craving, verse 4, for controversy and for quarrels about words which produces envy and dissension and slander and evil suspicions and constant friction among people.

And the people are depraved in mind and depraved of the truth. Imagining that godliness is a means of gain. So, what Paul is saying is that these leaders aren't confused, they're corrupt. False teachers treat doctrine as a means to personal gain. And the term that Paul uses for sound there in verse 3 means healthy, life-giving and wholesome. So, in other words, the problem isn't that they haven't heard the truth, it's that they have rejected it because something sick is happening in their hearts.

[13 : 33] It's not ignorance, it's arrogance. He says that they want to be seen as spiritual, insightful, you know, enlightened.

They have an unhealthy craving, he says. Underneath the surface is this heart addicted to attention and validation.

And as a result, Paul says that their teaching doesn't lead people to greater maturity or understanding, it produces, he says, envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction.

That's a diagnostic. The fruit exposes the root. Teachers are shaping the way people are thinking and acting.

He says, teachers who are shaped by the gospel create places where people flourish, but teachers who are driven by self-importance create environments where people fracture.

[14 : 39] And the most devastating indictment there is in verse 6, they see Christianity as a way to get paid. Imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

So they're not worshipping God because of God, that's what he's saying. They're using God to get something other than God. The false teachers didn't want Christ, they wanted cash.

They didn't want truth, they wanted profit. They didn't want a saviour, they wanted a system that they could exploit. And so from Paul's perspective, false teaching isn't just about intellectual error, it's about moral rebellion.

False doctrine isn't just a belief problem, it's a worship problem. Their theology is warped because their hearts are warped, their hearts are twisted. They've placed something above Jesus.

And look, here's the warning for us, like whenever our hearts drift from Christ, like whenever our desires become more about gain than godliness, whenever we start treating Jesus as a means to our own ends, we're stepping onto that same path.

[15 : 56] False teaching doesn't start in the mind, it starts in the heart. The gospel doesn't just correct our beliefs, it heals our desires. Because then he goes on, he says in verse 6, he says, but godliness, but godliness, with contentment is great gain.

So, the idea of false gain versus true gain. So we have false teachers versus true teachers, false treasure versus true treasure, and false gain versus true gain.

He's saying that false teachers treat godliness as a means of gain. Verse 5, and true believers experience godliness as the gain.

True godliness gains, excuse me, false godliness gains the world, but true godliness gains Christ. And so Paul is setting up that distinction for us.

And he's setting up that distinction for us to really think about what is my treasure? treasure. Then he says in verse 7, 4, and now he's going to remind us of the danger of misplaced treasure.

[17 : 07] He's going to contrast two kinds of love. What do we really love? And the idea is, what kind of treasure do we really love?

Here's the first in verse 7, or let's just tag on verse 6. But godliness, with contentment, is great gain. 4, we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we'll be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

And so Paul is talking about the love of money. He's talking about the love of money that leads to wandering and ruin. And it has a way, Paul argues, of controlling the heart.

He says in verse 10, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

[18 : 18] So Paul doesn't say that money is the root of evil. He says that the love of money is the root of evil.

It's the affection of it. It's the attachment to it. It's the gravitational pull towards it. The love of money has a way of slipping past our defenses and quietly taking control of our hearts.

Well, you may say, well, in what way? How might I recognize that in my own life? Well, I think there's probably five ways that we can diagnose whether we love money more than we love Christ. There's probably more than five, but these are just five that I came up with. After the fifth, I'm like, I think we're done. The first, the love of money offers the illusion of control and then becomes the controller.

Who are we being controlled by? Money promises safety and security, doesn't it? It's that promise. If I just have enough, I'll be safe and I'll be secure.

[19 : 45] I won't depend on anyone else. But the truth is that we don't end up controlling money. Money ends up controlling us. It tells us what we can and cannot do.

It tells us what risks we can take. It tells us where our comfort comes from. It tells us whether we are winning or losing at life.

money becomes the scoreboard for the soul. And so that should challenge our thinking.

Do we judge ourselves and do we judge others on our wealth who is controlling us? The second way the love of money takes control of the heart and maybe a good diagnostic question is that it attaches itself to our identity.

So money is not just about buying stuff. Money promises stuff.

[20 : 50] It doesn't just allow us to buy things. With it comes a promise. It promises dignity. It promises security.

It promises significance. It promises independence. It promises comfort and autonomy and safety. There's a promise attached to it.

And once money becomes a source of identity it becomes a master. Suddenly our mood rises and falls with our bank account.

Have you ever noticed that? I'm a lot more pleasant to be around at the beginning of the month than I am at the end of the month. We feel confident when resources are up and anxious when they're down.

Our hearts become tied to something that is actually really quite fragile, temporary, and unpredictable. And then we become more accepted by others because we are safe and secure.

[21 : 59] It becomes part of our identity. The bigger our net worth, the more respected we think we feel, more admired, more accepted by others. We start to believe people will take us more seriously if we look more financially stable.

And slowly and subtly money becomes not just something we use for something we are. Our identity gets hitched to our income. Our confidence gets tied to our accounts.

Our emotional stability starts to mirror the market. We don't just love money, we let it define us. But the tragedy is that this kind of identity, again, is always fragile.

It's always threatened, and it leaves us always anxious. Because when money gives you your value, losing money feels like losing yourself.

The third way the love of money kind of takes control of our hearts is that it reshapes our desires.

And this is a powerful one. Because Paul says there in verse nine that the love of money leads people into, to fall into temptation, into snares, into many senseless and harmful.

[23 : 19] Notice this word, desires. And there is a progression there. Love moves from to temptation, moves to desires, and ends in destruction.

And this destruction is what happens when climbing the success ladder feels more urgent than walking with Christ. so that money becomes essential.

And Jesus, the one who offers eternal significance, and unshakable security, and lasting approval, listens very carefully, moves into the optional column.

The gospel calls us to reverse that order, to treasure Christ above all, everything else. not the top of a list of other things, but in a list of one.

So that career, wealth, and ambition then become tools for his glory rather than substitutes for his sufficiency. The fourth way the love of money takes control of the heart is that it creates a never-ending ache for more.

[24 : 31] you speak to, well, you read about. You may move in circles that I don't, so let's just give you the benefit of doubt.

You may speak to multi-millionaires, more likely probably just read about them, right? And often they'll say, you know, they'll be asked the question, when's enough?

When will be enough? And the answer normally comes back is they never normally answer that question straight out, but occasionally they have been honest and said it won't be. There won't be enough.

Bezos famously said that, you know, the guy who owns Amazon, he said, I'm just going to keep going. Money is one of the few idols that fools you into thinking your problem is that you simply don't have enough of it, no matter how much you have.

And like many other idols that are exposed for what they are, money is cunning because it promises that the solution to anxiety and fear and insecurity or dissatisfaction is simply more.

[25 : 47] And we believe it over and over again, chasing an ever-moving finishing line. But the truth is money can never satisfy, right?

Right? When Christ becomes our treasure, we no longer chase more money in hopes of finding wholeness. Instead, we discover that everything we truly need has already been given to us in him. And that's why Paul says that godliness with contentment is a great gain. And then lastly, one of the most practical measures for discovering whether money has hold of our hearts is that money and the love of money makes generosity feel impossible.

Generosity is the litmus test of who controls your heart. And this is why many churches you go into today will pass the bucket or pass the plate, bucket, plate, thing.

And I know that a lot of that has to do with tradition, but actually the learning point and the practicalities is really important, isn't it?

[27 : 05] The plate comes in, whatever change you have in your pocket, you're like, this does not rule me. Going through that action, that motion is helpful.

It's another one of those actions that we do to take control back of our hearts. So generosity is the litmus test of who controls the heart.

If money controls you, then generosity feels like actually you're losing. Paul isn't so much warning Timothy about greedy false teachers.

He's warning him about a universal vulnerability in the human soul, the love of money. The love of money is subtle. It's socially acceptable, isn't it?

It's culturally applauded. It can quietly seize the center of your heart without you even noticing.

[28 : 10] But here is where Paul helps because having talked about that first kind of love, the love of money, love of God. He now contrasts that with a different kind of love altogether.

Verse 11, look at it. He says, but as for you, so the idea is that as a man or woman of God, that's not how we love.

It's not what we love, it's not how we love. He says, but as for you, a man of God, flee these things and pursue. And notice, look, he uses these parallel imperatives, right?

So flee from this, pursue that. Don't just flee, don't just pursue, flee and pursue. And so this love is expressed in fleeing and pursuing.

What is it that we are to pursue? Well, he says, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness.

[29 : 25] We would do better as the people of God if those things controlled our hearts rather than the others. So what Paul is doing is almost ripping the plaster off here and he's saying, look, let's compare these two competing loves.

And can we just be honest? These are competing in our lives, aren't they? Like there's a struggle there. This isn't some kind of theoretical thing that no one has ever struggled with.

So Paul just, he says, let's compare these competing loves. And he's asking us again, what do you love most? What is it that you treasure more than anything else? And so this is the charge then finally to pursue the true treasure.

And he warns us that this isn't easy. Right? To flee and to pursue is not easy. And we know that because then in verse 12 he starts using language of warfare.

Oh, great. So it's a battle. So it's not easy. He says, fight the good fight of the faith. So what does that mean?

[30 : 43] It means that this is not going to happen passively. Pursuing doesn't happen passively. I mean, they're opposites, aren't they? The battle isn't to earn salvation, but listen, the battle is to hold fast to it.

It's a fight. But it's a good fight. He says, take hold. Don't expect it just to land in your lap. Like one Saturday afternoon, it just kind of goes, boom, there it is, there's your treasure, now you don't have

to do anything.

He says, take hold. It's the same language he uses to the church of Philippi where he says, press on, right? It's the same idea. Press on to make my own because Christ Jesus has made me own. I'm carrying on. I'm pursuing. He says, take hold of the eternal life. This is verse 12. To which you were called.

Take hold of it. And about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. You've got to be deliberately pursuing Christ in every area of life.

[31 : 53] Even if it costs us comfort, even if it costs us convenience, even if it costs us reputation. temptation. It's not passive.

It's not wishful hoping that faith will somehow carry us through. It's a disciplined, intentional struggle to hold fast to the truth of the gospel, to resist sin and to live in obedience to God's word.

And then he says in verse 13, I charge you. This is 2 Timothy. Right? Not 2 Timothy as in the book, but it's a charge to Timothy. Made that clear.

It's a charge in the presence of God who gives life to all things. And that's what we're searching for. That's what humanity is searching for.

Life. And in money, in the love of money, is the illusion of life. But it's not real life. He says who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.

[33 : 15] He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, who no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. And so look, unlike money and status and success, what Paul is saying is that Jesus Christ cannot be stolen, lost or diminished.

He doesn't lose his value with the next budget. To him alone belongs honor and eternal dominion. God is the Lord of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is your treasure. He is your treasure.

No thief can touch what is truly yours. If he is your treasure. Why? Because Paul says he is the sovereign, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. See, look, the gospel solution to the love of money is replacement.

[34 : 31] It's to replace that love, the object of that love, with Christ. So it's making Christ our treasure.

It's making Christ our security. It's making Christ our identity. And when that happens, money is just dethroned. Why? Because Paul says that he is sovereign, King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

There's no one greater than him. And when we make him great in our lives, everything else becomes subservient to him. And so money then is dethroned.

It becomes a tool, not a master. It becomes a resource, not a refuge. It becomes something to use, not something to worship. Christ frees the heart from money's control by giving the heart something better to love.

And then he kind of closes in the next three, four verses by saying, as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God.

[35 : 47] So he's saying the same thing. Now he's just addressing those people who've got some money, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good and to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

wealth. And so the wealthy are not condemned because they are wealthy, but instead they are instructed to guard their hearts against arrogance and the false hope that wealth promises, the false hope of life.

God's God's deposit entrusted to you. And interestingly, he uses the same kind of money language, it's a deposit.

God's deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babbling and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by it professing it, some have swerved from the faith.

And I love the last, the final word in the whole book is grace be with you. And so as Paul ends this letter, what is super interesting to us is that Paul doesn't give Timothy a strategy.

[37 : 21] He doesn't give him a program. He doesn't give him a business plan for the Ephesian church. He gives him Christ. And the church is dangerous, the church is beautifully, redemptively dangerous when Christ is our treasure, when his gospel is our guardrail and his glory is our aim.

Shall we pray together? Father, we want to make you our all in all. Lord, we want to make you our highest of high.

Our treasure beyond all other treasures. love you. Lord, we! Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would teach us to flee and pursue.

Lord, to have hearts that are intentionally chasing you down. Lord, that we would learn to love you above all other loves.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, for that promise of life. And Lord, we confess this morning, Lord, that we have often allowed the love of money to control us and control our hearts, to give us desires that are not godly, to give us habits that are not godly, Lord, to give us directions that are not godly.

[38 : 43] Lord, and we pray this morning, would you reorientate our hearts and our lives so that we may be facing the right direction, so that when you come again, when you come calling, Lord, that deposit that you've entrusted to us would be returned to you with 100, 1,000 fold gain.

Lord, we thank you for this letter that you've given to Paul to write to Timothy and given to us. Lord, there are so many lessons here that we can learn and we still are learning.

And we pray, Lord, this week as we gather in life groups, Lord, as we gather even around the table this morning, Lord, we pray, Lord, that you would remind us that this is about following Jesus.

Lord, it is about making you our treasure, our all in all. And Lord, we pray that you would help us to do that this week for your glory.

And in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[39 : 58]