

The Great Gain in Godliness -- 1 Timothy 6:3-10, 17-19 .

Adapted from: Money Is The Root Of All Evil, by Brian Bill @ SermonCentral.Com

Do you know what a "meme" is? It is a self-perpetuating thought, phrase or proverb, that culture latches on to and continues passing along because it gives voice to the way we currently think. One very current example of a meme is "Me Too" and the movement it inspired. Today's message contains several popular memes: some Biblical, some very unbiblical, and one that would be Biblical if it were not so often misquoted. I'll identify these later, but for now here's another example of a very popular, unbiblical, meme: **SHOW ME THE MONEY!**

Where did "show me the money" come from? It originated in the movie Jerry Maguire, when a cocky football superstar played by Cuba Gooding Jr. demands that his struggling sports manager Tom Cruise get him the \$10 million contract he thinks he deserves. Thereafter, "show me the money," has come to mean "***if you want me to do something for you, make it financially worth my while.***" Sadly these days money, or more than enough of it, is what our culture considers as the primary ingredient for making our life worthwhile, for making us happy.

How about you, has money been the driving force for WHAT you do or did and HOW you did it? How happy are you now as a result your efforts? How much money is needed to make someone happy today?

Two years ago, the Mega-Millions jackpot went over \$1.5 billion. People all over the country went crazy buying tickets (truth in advertising: I also bought a couple); Three people split that prize; a mere \$500 million apiece.

What is the draw that makes many people shell out so much money to buy a chance at becoming a millionaire? Is it so that all their wishes for a happy life would come true? But, remember what your mother always said: **money can't buy happiness** (she was right of course, and while this meme is not a quote from the Bible, its lesson is certainly Biblical). But then there is always the wise guy who says money may not buy happiness, but sure can take your mind off being sad.

The world tells us that making enough money will easily take away all our troubles; it will make us happy. Maybe that is why so many rich people never have any troubles, right?

Or, how many times have you heard someone say I don't need to be rich but I just want enough money that I do not have to worry about anything, Or I just want a nice car or a house that is paid for.. If I didn't have to work I could help people all the time. Then I would be content. I would be happy. But there are plenty of people with all of this and more – who are apparently very unhappy.

Yes I know these desires for at least security through sufficiency, having struggled with them myself; such desires are universal in our fallen world. And surprise! According to today's text, they also struggled with the same desires in Timothy's day.

Isn't it interesting that apparently demonically inspired individuals were offering the same lies back then as they are today. Paul remarks on an early form of the Health and Wealth, Name it and Claim Gospel that was already circulating in his day. False Christians telling their followers that enough faith on our part, and of course enough faithful contributions to their cause, will insure that God will make you equally wealthy, and all your other dreams come true.

Well as you can read in today's text, Paul has plenty of critiques to lay down on these charlatans: they are puffed up, conceited, understanding nothing of God's gospel, with unhealthy cravings, a depraved mind and in denial of the truth which is that **God doesn't want to make you rich He wants to make you happy. And the only path that leads to happiness is contentment.**

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment;
for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it;
but if we have food and clothing,
we will be content with these

1 Timothy 6: 6-8

As Paul reminded Timothy, there certainly is great gain with godliness as long as it is combined with contentment. In verses 6-8, Paul gives us three ways to become a contented Christian.

1. seek faithful godliness over financial gain. Look at verse 6: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The word, "but" highlights the contrast between this truth and the common thinking. Instead of focusing on wealth and health, we're to prioritize growth in godliness. Godliness does not give financial gain; it is itself gain when combined with contentment. Jesus taught that God knows and wants to provide what you NEED. So if you place your priority on seeking His Kingdom and His righteousness in your life, then God will give you all the rest of what you need, but not necessarily all that you want (Matthew 6:31-33). As the Rolly Stones sang so long ago, *You can't always get what you want, But if you try sometime you find, You get what you need.*

2. Realize that what you get is not really yours, it never has been. Everything you have has been given to you and you can't take what you do have with you when you die. Look at verse 7: "**for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it.**" This is a truth that our Bible has several times earlier tried to impress upon us. :

- Job said, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return"* (Job 1:21).
- Solomon discovered this as well: *"As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand"* (Ecclesiastes 5:15).
- And so did David, *"Do not be afraid when some become rich, when the wealth of their houses increase. For when they die they will carry nothing away; their wealth will not go down with them"* (Psalm 49:16-17)

All these same truths boiling down to another modern meme: **you can't take it with you**, meaning that you will never get to keep what you think you have acquired. You don't own anything, you just get to use it – wisely or unwisely – for a time.

A tightwad of an old man, on his death bed, told his wife he intended on taking it all with him. That he had loaded all that money he had saved through the years and had stuffed it in a suitcase that was now sitting in the attic directly over his head. A few days later after he had died, his wife went up to check on the attic and seeing the suitcase right where he had left it, she remarked, *silly fool, I told him he should have put it in the basement.*

3. **Practice wanting what you already have.** Notice verse 8: *"But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."* If we have the necessities of life, our needs are met, right? Contentment is not having everything you want; contentment comes when you realize that you truly have all that you need. Remember that contentment is the surest path to happiness.

Multi-millionaire J.D. Rockefeller was once asked, *"How much money is enough?"* He replied, *"Just a little bit more than what I have now."* After he died, someone asked, *"How much did Rockefeller leave behind?"* The answer: *"All of it."*

In contrast, listen to the wisdom of Corrie Ten Boom: *"I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."*

Contentment is not a function of what you possess but what you cherish. Christians can be content because Christ is with us and gives us a solid hope for this life as well as the next. As Hebrews says: *"Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'"* (13:5).

Now in verse 9 Paul illustrates a contrast between contentment and greed:

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction
1 Timothy 6:9

Here, Paul lays out the slippery slope of chasing after "*just a little bit more.*"

- First there is "**Desire.**" The word for "desire" means, "to crave and long for; Desire is an unfulfilled hunger.

Some time ago, Money magazine declared that money is now the #1 obsession of Americans. Newsweek reports that we have achieved a new plane of consciousness called "transcendental acquisition." It's easy for our desire for money to become an idol. And one of the problems with idols is that they need to be fed because they're always hungry. Their needs are insatiable and they demand an ongoing sacrifice.

- Desire then leads to **temptation.** Abraham's nephew Lot is a good example of where temptation leads you. Having followed God's command not to settle near the cities but to live out in the wilderness, still their wealth of sheep had become too large for them to live close together (God can prosper you even in the wilderness). Abraham gave his nephew Lot the choice of whatever land he wanted. *If you go east I will go west...* (Genesis 13:8-13)

Lot looked around and chose the best land for himself, but in doing so, he set up his tents right next to Sodom; a city who hadn't gained their odious reputation overnight. **Are you aware we never stand still spiritually? If we try to coast, we'll eventually compromise.** Here's how his spiritual slippage happened.

Settling down near Sodom he initially stayed away from the town, living in tents out on the grassy plain (Genesis 13:12)

But within just a few years, when the angels came to check out the reports of Sodom's sinfulness, they found Lot sitting in the gateway of the city (Genesis 19:1) He no longer lived near Sodom, now he lived in and with the wicked.

- Desire, leads to temptation, and then to a trap. Let's face it, most traps lead to very dark places "...*that plunge people into ruin and destruction.*" Having found not even ten righteous people in Sodom, the angels quickly usher Lot out of town before destroying the city and all the plains around it. In the wilderness, God had prospered Lot with more wealth than he needed. But having made the forbidden move into the city, Lot left town with nothing. Even with his wife, who in her desire to have stayed in town, had turned back to her own destruction. While our Bible still calls him a righteous man, because he followed his temptation for more, Lot ended his days homeless, living in cave.

This word "plunge" refers to sinking to the bottom of a lake. Like Lot, If we don't control our desire for dollars we can sink to the bottom of the devil's lake as well. According to the National Endowment for Financial Education, about 70 percent of people who win a lottery actually end up broke in a few years. Other studies show that

lottery winners frequently become estranged from family and friends, and incur a greater incidence of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, divorce, and suicide than the average American. If you won 500 million dollars, you would probably have to quickly move to an anonymous location, change to an unlisted phone number. And thereafter question whether your "friends" were actually after your wealth.

So we come now to our meme in verse 10, the one that I said would be very biblical if not for being so often misquoted.

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,
and in their eagerness to be rich some have
wandered away from the faith and
pierced themselves with many pains
1 Timothy 6:10

Notice right away that money is the not the root of all evil but "*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*" It is not wealth, but our desire for wealth that leads us to ruin. It's also interesting to see that verse 9 and verse 10 are almost exact parallels. Paul wanted to double up on this warning.

Verse 9 describes those who "desire" to be rich and verse 10 talks about, "the love of money."

Verse 9 says that those who desire to be rich "fall into temptation" while verse 10 describes the love of money as "a root of all kinds of evils." Interestingly, the root determines the fruit for sure. The sin of coveting, which is covered in 10th commandment, is often at the root of breaking the other nine.

Verse 9 describes how these desires will "*plunge people into ruin and destruction*" while verse 10 shows that they have "*pierced themselves with many pains.*" The word "pierce" is quite graphic, it means, "*to pierce through or impale.*" Which is a reference for putting meat on a spit for roasting over a fire. The desire for, and love of money, will ultimately deceive and destroy you, causing you to lose what matters most.

So Paul has given us two warnings against loving money versus being content with what God has given us. If you have struggled with this, or any other issue of out of control desires, here is some great news about how to be delivered from all this in

But as for you, man of God, shun all this;
pursue righteousness, godliness, faith,
love, endurance, gentleness.
Fight the good fight of the faith;
take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called
1 Timothy 6:11-12

Flee and Fight! We're to "shun," to flee from those things that trip us up and we're to fight for the things that grow our faith. Let's drop down to verses 17-19 for specific ways to be fruitful with our finances.

- As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.
- They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share,
- thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, ***so that they may take hold of the life that really is life***

Paul addresses "the rich in this present age." You may think that doesn't include you but compared to the rest of the world, most of us have way more than what others have. Even if you don't consider yourself wealthy, the wisdom Paul shares is spot on for all of us.

1. Don't be **haughty** about what you have. To be "haughty" means to proud and even arrogant. Having some wealth can make us feel like we're worth more and that we're better than those who have less. The issue is not how much money you have but how much does money have of you? **Albert Schweitzer** once said, "***If you have something you can't live without, you don't own it, it owns you.***"

We all need to ponder this question: Do my possessions possess me?

2. **Don't set your hopes on what you have.** Riches are "uncertain," which means that they are not safe. Anyone who has put money in the stock market this last decade learned that painful lesson.

Money is like seawater; the more you drink it the thirstier you get. Ecclesiastes 5:10 wisely warns us : "*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.*"

In the Pursuit of God, A.W. Tozer wrote, "*Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and 'things' were allowed to enter...God's gifts now take the place of God and the whole course of nature is upset by this monstrous substitution.*"

Jesus said it like this in Matthew 6:24: "*No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money.*"

You will never grow in contentment without a consuming passion for Christ. It's time for us to surrender everything of our life to the Savior and be completely saved in thought as well as desire, and deed. So that we will serve God, not money, as our Master. One

offers only ruin and destruction while the other offers contentment and great gain. The choice is yours.

Let's pray about this.