

Money & the Root of All Kinds of Evil

Paul's Instructions about Wealth

1Tim 6:2b Teach and urge these things.

³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,

⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,

⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain,

⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession,

¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time-- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"

²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

(1 Timothy 6:2b-10, 17-19)

Money and Mammon

“*Money. It’s a gas. Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash.*” So sings **Pink Floyd** at the beginning of their song titled, “Money” (1971). Throughout time, people have tended to react to money in one of **two very opposite ways**. Barrett Strong (1959) encapsulated the first well in 1959,

*The best things in life are free
But you can give them to the birds and bees
I need money (That’s what I want)*

The hedonistic, self-indulgent lifestyle of the rich and famous is something that many envy and desire, and it seems to me carrying it out on a mass scale could only arise in a culture itself immersed in material wealth and prosperity. But it wasn't just pagans and rock-n-roll.

Predating anything that could ever be called popular music, there was the late 19th century Prosperity theology (sometimes called mindcure, success literature, positive thinking, or self-help) that arose as a combination of Pentecostalism, occultic magical New Thought (the power of the mind over matter), and American pragmatism and upward mobility.¹ Perhaps first popularized by Russell Conwell, founder of Temple University, in his famous sermon “Acres of Diamonds,” which he delivered more than 6,000 times, he essentially concluded that everyone “can and ought to get rich and then use that money for the good of others.”²

This, of course, got transformed over the 20th century and on into our own, especially through slick salesmen TV preachers and the infamous “Health and Wealth” garbage they exported not only to our country, but to the rest of the

¹ See Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

² “Russell Conwell: American Lawyer and Educator,” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Russell-Conwell#ref115086>.

world. In an ironic use of one of the main verses in our passage today, Gloria Copeland was talking about, “**How to handle wealth.**” She continued, “**That’s important, because ‘the love of money is the root of all evil.’** So if you handle it wrong, it’s gonna hurt you. We’re gonna handle it right. What would be handling it right? Well, you give God the first and best 10% off the top and that would help you a lot to keep out of the love of money. And then you would just begin to prosper and prosper and prosper and prosper and you would just grow financially and your still tithing, and your tithe would get so big you could build church buildings...”³

What’s ironic about this? Well, guess where she wants *your* tithe to go? To her. And boy has it, for her and her husband Kenneth was worth a whopping \$760 million at the end of 2021.⁴

Of course, there have always been those who could **see beyond the charades**. In the early 90s, as several of these preachers were falling before a watching world, several

³ **Gloria Copeland**, “The bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil...” *Twitter* (Oct 31, 2019), <https://twitter.com/CopelandNetwork/status/1190040535127511040>.

⁴ **Jay Root**, “Kenneth Copeland is the Wealthiest Pastor in America. So Why Does He Live in a Tax-Free Texas Mansion?” *Houston Chronicle* (Dec 15, 2021), <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/unfair-burden/article/kenneth-copeland-wealth-pastor-tax-free-mansion-16662283.php#:~:text=The%20Lubbock%20native%20also%20tops,net%20worth%20at%20%24760%20million>.

songs came out mocking their Prosperity teaching. Poison for instance sang,

*Well I see him on the TV
Preaching about the promised lands
He tells me believe in Jesus
Steals the money from my hands
Some say he was a good man
Lord I think he sinned⁵*

Meanwhile, even the Pink Floyd lyric I began with is actually a mockery of the love of money, even alluding to our verse,

*Money
It's a crime
Share it fairly, but don't take a slice of my pie
Money
So they say
Is the root of all evil today
But if you ask for a rise
It's no surprise that they're giving none away*

It is out of this understanding of the dangers of money that **the other extreme** sneaks in. In the early church, it

⁵ **Poison**, “Give Me Something to Believe In” (Capitol Records, 1990). Others include **Dire Straits**, “Ticket to Heaven” (1991), and **Genesis**, “Jesus He Knows Me” (1991).

became increasingly popular to condemn wealth of any kind. Basil and John Chrysostom likened a rich man to a thief and a robber. Jerome said that wealth is always the product of theft.⁶ Ambrose condemned sea-merchants wholesale, telling them to use the sea for catching fish to eat, not for trade.⁷

By the Middle Ages (12th-14th centuries), monastics and reformers became even more radical in response to the ever-growing corruption of the Roman church. The so-called Mendicant orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans as well as sects like the Waldenses began to teach so called “Apostolic poverty,” renouncing all personal ownership of lands or money, in a similar way to Jesus’ directives to his seventy disciples in Luke 10:1-24. St. Francis (b. 1181) was probably the most famous of these. Born into a wealthy merchant family, as a young man he spent money lavishly. He had rich friends, bright clothing, and loved the pleasures of life. But when a beggar came up to him one day asking for alms, he emptied his pockets and gave him everything he had, so stricken was he by guilt. After being beaten, bound, and locked up by his father for selling some cloth and trying to

⁶ Alan S. Kahan, *Mind vs. Money: The War Between Intellectuals and Capitalism* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 44. [file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/Alan%20S.%20Kahan%20-%20Mind%20vs.%20Money%20The%20War%20Between%20Intellectuals%20and%20Capitalism-Routledge%20\(2010\).pdf](file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/Alan%20S.%20Kahan%20-%20Mind%20vs.%20Money%20The%20War%20Between%20Intellectuals%20and%20Capitalism-Routledge%20(2010).pdf)

⁷ Kahan, 45.

help a local church, he turned a life of poverty and was so charismatic that he quickly founded the order of Franciscans, a group of friars devoted entirely to owning nothing and liking it (of their own accord).

Before Francis, **Honorius of Autun** (1080-1140) would set the stage, saying that merchants had little chance of going to heaven whereas farmers were likely to be saved. **Peter Lombard** (1100-1160) would say that merchants could not perform their jobs without sinning.⁸ So the stage was set for a comprehensive denunciation of money in some Christian circles that continues in various forms to this day.

When we go to the Scripture, we find many places talking about money. Sometimes it is viewed **positively**. Think of **Jesus' parable of the Ten Minas**, where the nobleman entrusts various servants with money, commands them to engage in business, praises one for putting it to such good use that it doubled, but castigates another for doing nothing with it, including even putting it in a bank collect it with interest (**Luke 10:11-27**). Or **Proverbs** such as, “**A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich**” (**Prov 10:4**). We find promises of riches and great blessing

⁸ **Kahan**, 46.

and men like **Abraham** become some of the wealthiest men in the world.

On the other hand, Jesus also said, “No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and Mammon” (**Matt 6:24**). Unlike Abraham, the wealth of **Solomon** is viewed quite negatively because of his apparent greed and insatiable lust for more. Another saying of Jesus is that it is easier for a rich man to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the kingdom of God (**Matt 19:24**; etc.). Consider how Mammon, usually translated as “money” today, was viewed in the days after the Early Church. **Gregory of Nyssa** (*The Lord’s Prayer*) said it was another name for **Beelzebub**. **Peter Lombard** (II, Dist. 6) said that “Riches are called by the name of a devil.” **Milton**, in *Paradise Lost*, describes a fallen angel named Mammon who, while in heaven, could not stop thinking about the golden pavement. He becomes a miser who hordes his wealth. He is cast into hell where he then begins seeking out precious metals to build Pandemonium (Hell’s capitol). Still later, he escapes hell and is the one who first inspires men to dig out treasures from the bowels of the earth.⁹

⁹ **Robert C. Fox**, “The Character of Mammon in Paradise Lost,” *Review of English Studies* 13.49 (Feb 1962): 30-39. [file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/\[The%20Review%20of%20English%20Studies%20vol.%2013%20iss.%2049\]%20Robert%20C.%20Fox%20-%20The%20Character%20of%20Mammon%20in%20Paradise%20Lost%20\(1962\)%20\[10.2307_512583\]%20-%20libgen.li.pdf](file:///Users/douglasvandorn/Downloads/[The%20Review%20of%20English%20Studies%20vol.%2013%20iss.%2049]%20Robert%20C.%20Fox%20-%20The%20Character%20of%20Mammon%20in%20Paradise%20Lost%20(1962)%20[10.2307_512583]%20-%20libgen.li.pdf)

Can we conclude anything from this so far? You may not hear this in a local seminary or Bible school that has been taken over by such ideologies as social justice or Liberation theology, but clearly there is **some kind of a balance** that must be struck when considering the idea of money. Is money in and of itself evil? No. And yet, it has great power over the minds of many people. Like the dwarves delving too greedily in Moria for mithril, it can so grip the mind that people accidentally delve too deep and release hellish thoughts and entities that prey upon them and others.

1 Timothy 6:1-21 – Context and Structure

As we **near the end of 1 Timothy**, we come to its last chapter. Though this will not be the end of our study, we must look at **the whole of the chapter** in order to properly interpret its teaching, especially its teaching on money. The 40,000ft. flyover reveals a **simple chiastic structure**. Assuming you could get them to see the obvious, I believe most would break it down something like this:

- A. Doctrine, words, understanding, controversy, truth (1-5a)
- B. Contentment vs. the love of money (6-10)
- C. Instructions to Timothy and a doxology (11-16)
- B¹. Having money and good works (17-19)
- A¹. The deposit: words, contradictions, knowledge (20-21)

It is vitally important to see the chapter as a whole in a way that is something like this, because if you do not, then you can easily take vv. 5-10 out of context and make it say something like, “Paul says money is evil,” and thereby justify the second extreme we have discussed. After all, it is in vs. 10 that we find one of the most abused and misquoted verses in the Bible. Some think it says, “Money is the root of all evil.” In fact, the verse isn’t talking about money, but greed—“the love of money.” But I’ll say more about that later. If there is a chiasm here, then vv. 17-19 are the complement, and there, Paul talks to rich people. He does not say, “Abandon all your money and go live like Francis of Assisi.” Rather, he gives them instructions on how to behave with their money. This must complement vv. 5-10. It cannot contradict it. Seeing the unit tied together helps this greatly.

Because I want to focus on this major theme of money and riches for today, we will not look at vv. 11-16. Instead, we will focus on 2b-10 and 17-21. First, we will look at the idea of false doctrine one last time. Of course, we’ve seen this topic before, especially in ch. 1 (also ch. 4), and Paul returns to it now as he works his way out of the large chiasm that makes up the book. Then we will look at riches, as some particular false doctrine is what leads the Apostle to discuss

this. We've also seen something of riches in the book before, especially hints of it in ch. 2 (which we would expect). As such, there are parallels you can glean by comparing the two passages:

A. 1:1-2. Paul greets Timothy as a true child of the Faith, and blesses with grace, mercy, and peace.

B. 1:3-7. Timothy is urged to command against heresy.

C. 1:8-11. The reason the Law is established. List of sins.

D. 1:12-17. Jesus came to save sinners. Doxology.

E. 1:18-20. Wage the good war.

F. 2:1-8. Pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarreling.

...

F'. 6:2b-11. Against heresy caused by envy and greed. Quarrelling.

E'. 6:12. Fight the good fight.

D'. 6:13-16. Keep the commandment. Doxology.

C'. 6:17-19. Store up treasure with God, so to take hold of true life.

B'. 6:20-21a. Timothy commanded to guard against heresy.

A'. 6:21b. Grace.¹⁰

Beginning of 1 Timothy	End of 1 Timothy
Doctrine	Doctrine
God our Savior (1:1)	God, who gives life to all things (6:13)
Christ Jesus, who is our hope (1:1)	Hope [not] on the uncertainty of riches, but on God... a good foundation for the future (6:17 – 19)
Strange doctrines... myths... endless genealogies... fruitless discussion (1:3 – 6)	Worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' (6:20)
Sound teaching... the glorious gospel... with which I have been entrusted (1:11)	O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you (6:20)

¹⁰ From **Joseph Norris**, "Heretics in the Latter Days: The Structure of 1 Timothy, Parts I, II, and III." *Theopolis* (June 4, 11, and 16, 2014), <https://theopolisinstitute.com/heretics-in-the-latter-days-the-structure-of-1-timothy-part-i/>, and <https://theopolisinstitute.com/heretics-in-the-latter-days-the-structure-of-1-timothy-part-ii/>, and <https://theopolisinstitute.com/heretics-in-the-latter-days-the-structure-of-1-timothy-part-iii/>.

For my full chiastic look at ch. 6, which is quite complicated and truly fascinating, see the Appendix at the end of the chapter.

It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1:15)	Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate (6:13)
Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1:17)	the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. (6:15 – 16)
Fight the good fight (1:18)	Fight the good fight of faith (6:12)
Shipwrecked faith (1:19)	Gone astray from the faith (6:21)
God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved (2:3 – 4)	Foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction (6:9)
Knowledge of the truth... I was appointed... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth (2:4, 7)	Teach and preach... sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ... deprived of the truth (6:2, 3, 5)
I was appointed... a teacher of the Gentiles in faith (2:7)	Some by longing for [money] have wandered away from the faith (6:10)
Deception: And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (2:14)	Deception: He... understands nothing... of depraved mind and deprived of the truth (6:3 – 6)

Ethics (with Riches)	Ethics of Riches
Love from a pure heart (1:5)	Instruct them to do good (6:18)
Use the Law... for those who are lawless and rebellious (1:8)	Instruct those who are rich (6:17 – 18)
Life in all godliness and dignity (2:2, 10)	Conforming to godliness... godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment (6:3 – 6)
Entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgiving (2:1)	Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness (6:11)
Materialism critiqued: modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments (2:9)	Materialism critiqued: 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. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil... (6:6 – 11)
Childbearing (2:15)	We have brought nothing into the world (6:7) ¹¹

¹¹ These are taken from [Mako A. Nagasawa](http://www.newhumanityinstitute.org/pdfs/paul_1timothy-chiasm-&-women-as-elders.pdf), “The Implications of the chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy on the Question of Women in Church Leadership,” (July 13, 2021), http://www.newhumanityinstitute.org/pdfs/paul_1timothy-chiasm-&-women-as-elders.pdf.

Back to Bad Doctrine

Often, Paul's letters are written in such a way that most if not all of the major theology and **doctrine** takes place at the beginning, while the **ethics** takes place at the end. Romans is a great example of this. However, this is not the case with 1 Timothy. After finishing his discussion of the family of God in **6:2a**, he gives the young pastor a general command to “**teach and urge these things**” (**2b**). What things? Both what he has just discussed, *and what he is about to discuss*.

There is a connection between the end of **vs. 2** and the beginning of **vs. 3**. Timothy is told to **teach** (*didaskō*) **these things**, which there are those within the midst who are **teaching different things** (*heterodidaskaleō*). Different things is our word for **heterodoxy** again (see **1:3**, the only other time it is used in the NT). Right doctrine, on both theology proper and ethics is so important to the mission and purpose of the church that it begins and ends this letter and is also **its central focus** at the end of ch. 3 on into ch. 4. Sadly, when you visit many church websites to search their stated “beliefs,” you often get just a paragraph or two and sometimes even nothing. Many Christians don't even believe there is such a thing as “right doctrine,” as they have fallen prey to the

postmodern view that all truth is relative. Too much of the church is in terrible shape today as it regards right doctrine.

Where does doctrine come from? It comes from those who **speaking words**. Thus, sound doctrine is next compared with **sound vs. unsound words**. “**If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ...**” (3a). In John’s Gospel, Christ is the Word (*Logos*). Here, is it Christ’s words (*logos*, technically *logoi* a plural). We saw how in the previous chapter Paul had not only quote the OT, which Christ inspired, but also Luke’s Gospel, and Jesus specifically. Right doctrine isn’t made up by men, but by God.

The thing about Jesus’ words that is so important here is that it is “**teaching that accords with godliness**” (3b). Everything we’ve learned in this letter about the churches **creed and conduct** has been to **promote godliness**—corporate prayer, the way women and men behave in worship, the order of church offices, how a pastor is to behave, how the family is to respect and treat one another, it all has godliness as its aim. And, if you remember, this was in fact the central point of the center verse of the letter: “**The mystery of godliness...**” (3:16).

But we can say more about godliness as we talk about the opposite. Many people think it is just about **outward behavior**. But we are talking here about words, which come from *within*. You say what you think. Those who teach contrary to Jesus' and his Scripture are “**puffed up with conceit**” (4a). “**Puffed up with conceit**” is just one word in Greek—*tuphoō*. It literally means to be wrapped up in smoke, figuratively like you are **clouded** with pride. The noun *typhos* is related, it means **smoke, mist, fog**. Figuratively, it is a **stupor** or the mind, **confusion**. Curiously, the disease called typhus, an acute infectious fever accompanied by prostration, **delirium**, and red spots is directly related.¹² So, someone who is in a delirious state due to a high fever is the **physical counterpart** of someone who is puffed up with conceit about his doctrine that contradicts the teachings of Christ.

Like the **delirious person**, he “**understands nothing**” (4b). The focus here is on **knowledge**. True knowledge is the fear of the Lord. Those promoting these kinds of false doctrines do not have that.

This false knowledge then works its way out in practice through “**an unhealthy craving for controversy and quarrels about words**” (4c). “**Unhealthy craving**” is translated by the

¹² See “Typhoid (adj.),” *Etymology Online*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/typhoid>.

NAS as “**morbid interest.**” **Morbid** contains the idea of **death**. And, in fact, the word here (*noseō*) literally means “**to be sick, ail; having suffered from the plague; diseased...**” (LSJ). This fits with the delirious state of the sick mind.

What they are fixed on in their illness is **controversy and quarrels** about words. So far in the letter we’ve seen a lot of this. Strange doctrines, myths, endless genealogies, fruitless discussion, the doctrines of demons ... and at the end of the letter he will add worldly and irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge.” You must beware the temptation to **always fight and quarrel** over words, not because it isn’t sometimes right to do that, but because sometimes it arises from a sick mind and a morbid desire that “**produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction**” (4d-5a). If these fruits of the flesh are present in a relationship you are in, you can be sure that something is causing it. Paul says here that it is a need or even a love to fight and quarrel. This is the opposite of loving your brother. It often stems from hate. Sometimes it comes from pride. When **our need to be right** ends up harming the family, causing us to be suspicious of one another, lends itself to gossip and slander of one another, this is dangerous territory to be on.

But notice that **he goes farther**. He says that these things go two ways. It isn't that one person is fighting, but that **two or more are**, and each (all) of them have been captured by this same evil spirit. “... among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth” (5b). Sometimes, when a church or movement is known by this, it **attracts people of like mind** and soon the entire body is taken over with the disease of pride and conceit that harms and kills.

But there is **one specific thing** that was happening at Ephesus. Somehow, these depraved people with their harmful doctrines and sinful speech were “**imagining**” through what they were doing “**that godliness is a means of gain**” (5c). In other words, **outwardly**, they are promoting godliness, which of course is the whole point of bringing the doctrine into the church! Few would tolerate it if they thought it was actually morally and theologically satanic.

Now, the word “gain” refers to **financial gain**, and as such it finally introduces us to the idea of **riches** in the passage. Before getting to that, your Bible might have a **little phrase tacked on at the end** which is not in the ESV. The KJV (following the Textus Receptus) says, “... **supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.**” It is a very ancient manuscript tradition that has these last words; however, the

best Alexandrian and Western manuscripts do not have them. It appears to be a gloss that is difficult to explain why it would have been dropped instead of added. Curiously, it does appear that these words may help unify the larger chiasm of the passage,¹³ so I'm less certain that they are not original that most scholars. If they are original, the point is obvious, and has already been made in this letter. You are not to have them gain a foothold in the church.

In order to move now into the theme of riches, I want to go to a story in Acts that at the very least is an example of what could have been going on in Ephesus. I'll use the word "imagine" as a jumping off point. "Imagine" is a strange word choice from the ESV for a word that is ordinarily translated as "consider" or "believe." But imagining is a word that, especially in the modern Word of Faith occultism, is strongly related to magic. Thing is, Ephesus was a city steeped in using words as magic.¹⁴ So the word may actually be better than people realize. The story goes that,

There was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city [perhaps Shechem] and amazed the

¹³ See for example how Christine Smith puts ch. 6 together. Without this phrase, the chiasm doesn't work, but it works nicely with it. Christine Smith, "1 Timothy 6," *A Little Perspective* (Sept 30, 2016), <https://www.alittleperspective.com/1-timothy-6-2016/>.

¹⁴ See Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989).

people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the power of God that is called Great.’ And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart

may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

(Acts 8:9-24)

While it appears that Simon wanted to buy the gift of God, it was the reason for it that is related here. This magician saw that the Disciples had a great power that he did not have. **If he could only capture this power, his itinerant ministry would be unstoppable.** Think of all the money he could make! This is precisely the kind of thing that Paul warns us against in our passage.

The Love of Money...

This leads then to his extended discussion on **riches** in **vv. 6-10**, which is picked up again in **17-19**. Just as we saw a connection between Timothy “**teaching**” and false teachers “teaching” in **vv. 1 and 2**, so also there is a connection in **vv. 5 and 6** with the word “**godliness.**” **Some imagine that godliness is a means of gain (5).** However, the truth is that **godliness itself is the gain.** Specifically, **godliness with contentment (6).**

Contentment is the opposite of **disappointment, dissatisfaction, trouble, unhappiness, agitation, worry, or being**

upset. If you are feeling these emotions, then chances are good that you are not content. But if you are not content, then whatever godliness you have is being destroyed. Godliness *with contentment* is great gain.

The Apostle narrows in on all of the possible things in this life that can cause discontentment and puts the spotlight on our need and then often lust for wealth and luxury and ease. Just about everyone I know right now is wanting to move out of Colorado, because it is so blasted expensive, and I get that (I also get the mass corruption of our government). But we must all watch where these desires are coming from. There are other reasons to be in a place than just expense, which is what is keeping many of you here still!

He says, “For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world” (7). This is a very clear echo of, of all things, Job! “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return” (Job 1:21). The thing is, Job only came to acknowledge this after “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away.” It is much better to acknowledge it before he takes away, so that you will not put your trust in riches. How do you know if you are putting your trust in riches? Because you are anxious about tomorrow. You worry if you will have enough. The

solution is first theological. Understand who God is. “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father ... you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt 10:29, 31). Then apply it. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matt 6:34). Or, as Paul continues here, “But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (1Tim 6:8). It’s as Jesus says, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

There is a warning here. “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” (9). The temptation of money is likened to a snare. No one walks into the woods and purposefully chooses to step on a bear trap, with its iron teeth and jaws of steel. If it doesn’t snap your leg clear off, it will chomp down into your skin, through your muscles and tendons and bones and latch so tightly and painfully that you would wish you were dead. At that point, unless someone is there to help you, you will be immobile and likely die. This is what the temptation to be rich is like.

Senseless and harmful desires come from it, not only the desires of worry and anxiety and unhappiness and disappointment that you hate that often plague so many, but the love of things that can be bought with money are also a snare. Power. Sex. Amusement (literally, turning your brain off). Fame. Toys. The list is nearly endless. These things do not lead to contentment, but often replace it when the lust for money is near.

It is at just this point that the Apostle gives that most famous of all sayings. Not “Money is the root of all evil,” as so many misquote it. As if money itself is an evil to be shunned. No. Money is inevitable and necessary and unavoidable. Money is simply one thing that another agrees to give in exchange for something else. It isn’t just coins and dollar bills. It can be anything you agree to exchange: stones, ammo, potato chips for hash browns, whatever. That’s money.

What the Apostle says is that “The love of money...” that is greed, “is a root...” not *the* root (there is no definite article in the Greek, nor are there even any textual variants with “the”), “of all evil,” meaning not every single evil ever committed is over money, but rather, “all kinds” of evil.¹⁵ Much evil arises over money.

¹⁵ Blomberg puts it nicely. “First, there is no article in the Greek before ‘root’. It would be difficult to demonstrate that the love of money is *the* most foundational cause of all kinds of evil,

What is **greed**? Thomas **Aquinas** said, “**Greed is a sin against God ... in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things.**” **Henry Edward** said it “**plunges a man deep into the mire of this world, so that he makes it to be his god.**”¹⁶ The Desert Fathers were the first to classify it as one of the “**seven deadly sins.**”

What does **the Bible say about greed**? A lot, and it’s never good. “**For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD**” (**Ps 10:3**). “**Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood ... they set an ambush for their own lives. Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain**” (**Prov 1:17-19**). “**Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household**” (**15:27**). “**A greedy man stirs up strife**” (**28:25**). “**In their greed they will exploit you with false words**” (**2Pet 2:3**). It usually makes lists of other terrible sins in the NT (**1Co 5:11; 6:10; Eph 4:19; 1Tim 3:8**; etc.).

These are all reasons that lead our Lord to teach us, “**You cannot serve God and money**” (**Matt 6:24**). “**Money**” here is

but it certainly is *an* important one. Second, no scripture ever declares *money* as the root of all kinds of evil, but rather the *love* of, allegiance to or attachment to money in the fashion that led Jesus to declare, ‘**You cannot serve both God and Money**’ (**Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13**).” **Craig L. Blomberg**, *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 7, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 1999), 210–211.

¹⁶ Both of these are on the wiki for “The Seven Deadly Sins.”

the famous *mammon*, and while I do think that there is certainly a spiritual component to greed, one that Milton truly understood and personified, there is **no known god or demon or fallen angel called Mammon** in the ancient world. He was literally talking about money or materialism.¹⁷

Paul lays the importance of taking this seriously at the end of **vs. 10**. “**It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**” The love of money eventually causes people to **lose faith in God** altogether. Their end is hell; and in the meantime, they pierce themselves with a lifetime of misery from sins that we have already discussed.

Now, because Paul takes up this theme again in **vs. 17**, I want to go to the end of the chapter as we finish thinking about riches. Up to this point, what he has said **could easily be interpreted** as Paul hating the very idea of money and riches. That one extreme reaction to money that we discussed at the beginning could easily be justified from **vv. 6-10**. The problem is, we must also deal with **vv. 17-19** where Paul specifically addresses those who are rich in the church at Ephesus.

¹⁷ See **R. T. France**, “God and Mammon,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 51.1 (1979): 9-10. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1979-1_003.pdf.

Before looking at those verses, I want to point out that there are some deep literary parallels that tie these latter verses to the former. In other words, they are *meant* to be read together:¹⁸

- A. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine...
- B. and the teaching that accords with godliness,
- C. ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.
- D. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels
- E. which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions
- D'. ⁵ and constant friction
- C'. among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth,
- B'. imagining that godliness is a means of gain.
- A'. z(Withdraw yourself from such as these)

- A''. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare,
- B''. into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction
- C''. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.
- D''. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- A'''. ¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age
- B'''. charge them not to be haughty
- C'''. nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.
- D'''. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,
- ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future,
- E'''. so that they may take hold of that which is truly life (this vs. parallels vs. 11).

What these later verses do is contrast the greediness and need to be rich with those who already are rich and how they are to act in light of it. Vs. 3 begins, “If anyone teaches a different doctrine...” They are specifically identified in vs. 9 as,

¹⁸ Again, the fuller chiasm is at the end of the chapter as an appendix.

“Those who desire to be rich...” Now vs. 17a shows the contrast. “As for the rich in this present age...” What will he tell these people? To give up all their money, sell their houses, live as beggars and poppers? No.

He tells them, “Charge them not to be haughty...” (17b). It is very easy for rich people to look down their noses at others, thinking themselves superior, acting superior, above everyone else. James has much to say in his letter about the rich, because of this most basic attitude. Someone who can’t talk to the poorest among the brothers as an equal in Christ is already guilty of this sin. Pride comes before the fall.

They are worshiping their god of money. So he adds, “... nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches” (17c). We’ve already discussed “tomorrow,” it has enough worries of its own. It is a pernicious snare that many are not even aware that they have fallen into, because we are so clever at justifying our hopes in money, cloaking them in spirituality and religiosity. But it is really fairly easy to see when this occurs, especially if you ask the person next to you if you are committing this sin or not. They can tell.

But why do this at all? This world is passing away. It’s pleasures are fading like the mist and fog. Instead, set your

hopes “on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy” (17d).¹⁹ “Everything” is not constricted to the basic necessities of life. It includes even those things that go well above and beyond them. It is God’s grace and kindness that is lavished upon his people, and so our hopes are to be set on him, who gives us all we have anyway. When they are, the glory of money and riches fades away, and we are able to see them for what they are—temporary blessings God gives us to enjoy, but not just enjoy for ourselves...

He continues, “They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” The first sin of Mammon in *Paradise Lost* after his internal covetousness and greed was that he became a miser. This is the lesson that Scrooge learned the hard way when the three ghosts came and visited him on Christmas Eve. Miserliness is the hoarding of wealth, refusing to spend it, refusing to enjoy it, and especially refusing to let others enjoy it. It is caused by a basic greed that is never satisfied with what it has. It always needs more. It is a craving.

This is precisely why this craving that causes many to wander from the faith (10) is now contrasted with being generous. You combat greed with generosity ... with your

¹⁹ A purpose of the doxology in the previous verse was to show you the greatness and the glory of this God, to attract you to him rather than money.

family, with your neighbors, with your church. Gloria Copeland was actually correct about how **tithing helps** this tendency. The problem is that she uses the truth as a cloak for her own greed, just as we were warned earlier not to. Though not all hyper-wealthy people are greedy, a supposed pastor and his wife who sit there day after day fleecing poor widows on fixed incomes with promises of paradise if they will just give to their ministry is nothing but pure greed.

When we share, we “**store up treasure**” for ourselves “**as a good foundation for the future**” (19a), that is, “**so that we may take hold of that which is truly life**” (19b). This very much seems to be coming from our Lord Jesus who said, “**Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys**” (Luke 12:33). God gives riches to some as a test, to see if they will obey him with their wealth or not.

Let’s contrast Judas with someone 17 centuries later. As Origen reminds us, “**In appearance Judas championed the cause of the poor and said with indignation, ‘This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to**

the poor.’ But in reality he ‘was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put in it.’ If, then, anyone in our time who has the bag of the church speaks like Judas on behalf of the poor but takes away what is put in it, let there be assigned to him the portion along with Judas who did these same things” (Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 11.9).²⁰ Jesus has rich people in the church so that those in need might be helped by them, either indirectly through their tithes and offerings, or directly through personal giving.

Compare Judas to John Wesley.²¹ Some have estimated that during his lifetime, \$50 million passed through his hands. But you only needed 30 pounds a year to live comfortably. At one point, his income reached £1,400 (so, 46x the cost of living). Born into grinding poverty, he once saw his father, an Anglican priest, being carted off to debtor’s prison because he couldn’t feed the nine children. When he grew older, Wesley was able to make a fairly good living, which he spent on cards, tobacco, and brandy. But, like Francis, he was stuck by a poor beggar girl who was freezing

²⁰ Peter Gorday, *Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 9. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 211.

²¹ Stanley T. Ling and Charles Edward White, “What Did Wesley Practice And Preach About Money,” *Arbor College* (Dec 2019), <https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/news/what-did-wesley-practice-and-preach-about-money/>.

in the cold. He gave her all his money and was instantly convicted that God did not like the way he was spending his.

He decided from then on that **he would live only on £30 a year**, and whatever was left-over, he would give away. The first year, he was able to give away only a couple of pounds. The third year he made £90, and gave £60 away. One year he gave away nearly £1,400, still living on only £30 a year. Obviously, he didn't have to deal with inflation, but the point remains. He set out to please God, and the Lord blessed him, and as the Lord blessed him, he still set out to please God.

At the end of the day, what Paul is showing us is that **it is not a sin to be rich**. As I said earlier, there were many rich people in the Bible, including in the NT church. Often, those people used their wealth in fantastic ways, to spread the kingdom of God. However, it is equally as clear that **money is a temptation and ia snare** that one is easily caught in. I can't conclude without thinking of Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-11**). This early family of Christians **sold a piece of property**, but **kept back** some of the proceeds, lying to the Apostles about what they had made. Greed got the better of them. For their efforts, the Holy Spirit killed them both dead on the spot when Peter

confronted them. They serve as a warning and example to us the way Nadab and Abihu did to the OT church.

You must **flee the temptation to *be* rich**. You must learn to obey the Apostle better than that you have in the past. Otherwise, beware of the possibly **eternal consequences** when those riches take over your heart. At the same time, we can't flee money. As I said, it is inevitable, necessary, and unavoidable. Even St. Francis had to come to that realization. I think that perhaps the best way to deal with this tension was told us long ago in the Proverbs. It is interesting that it was *not* Solomon, but **Agur son of Jakeh** who wisely concludes, “**Give me neither poverty nor riches ... lest I be full and deny you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ ‘or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God’**” (**Prov 30:8-9**).

Appendix: The Complex Chiastic Structure of 1 Timothy 6

A. 1 Timothy 6:2b Teach and urge these things.

B. ³ If **anyone teaches** a **different doctrine** and does not agree with **the sound words** of our Lord Jesus Christ

C. and the teaching that accords with **godliness**,

D. ⁴ he is **puffed up with conceit** and understands nothing.

E. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words,

F. which produce **envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions**,

E. ⁵ and constant friction

D. among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth,

C. imagining that **godliness** is a means of gain.

B. **From such** withdraw yourself.

C. ⁶ But **godliness** with **contentment** is great gain,

CC. ⁷ for we brought **nothing** into the world, and we cannot take **anything** out of the world.

CC. ⁸ But if we have **food and clothing**,

C. with these we will be **content**.

B. ⁹ But **those** who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare,

C. into many **senseless and harmful desires** that plunge people into **ruin and destruction**.

D. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.

E. It is through this craving that some have **wandered away from the faith** and **pierced themselves** with many pangs.

E. ¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, **flee** these things.

F. Pursue **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness**.¹²
Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called

G. and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

H. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things,

G. and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession,

F. ¹⁴ to **keep the commandment unstained** and free from reproach

G. until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time—

H. he who is the blessed and only **Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords**,

I. ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who **dwells in unapproachable light**,

I. whom **no one has ever seen or can see**.

H. To him be honor and eternal **dominion**. Amen.

B. ¹⁷ As for **the rich in this present age**,

C. charge them **not to be haughty**,

D. nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

E. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,¹⁹ thus **storing up treasure for themselves** as a good foundation for the future,

F. so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

B. ²⁰ O Timothy, guard **the deposit** entrusted to you. Avoid the **irreverent babble** and **contradictions** of what is falsely called "knowledge,"

²¹ for by **professing it some** have swerved from the faith.

A. Grace be with you.

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