



## 1 Timothy - Chapter Six

### VII. 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2a - Duties towards Believers (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Six

Having given instructions to Timothy on how to honour widows and elders, Paul concluded the theme by giving further instructions showing how Christian slaves and servants should honour their masters, whether they are believers or not, for that was the servant's duty in the faith they themselves professed.

Paul returned again to false teaching reaffirming the damage it does and just how far it was from the truth that was taught by Jesus. Not only that but it was clear that they were also attempting to gain significant financial reward for themselves in peddling their lies. The lure of financial reward was perhaps even the motivating factor for them departing from the Gospel.

Paul then warned that seeking wealth simply for the rewards in this life is fraught with dangers, labelling it as the root of all kinds of evils. However, he also noted that wealth can also be seen as a good gift from God and can allow believers who are blessed with wealth to use it to benefit the church and others, thus providing themselves with everlasting riches.

Paul then started to draw the letter to its final conclusion by again returning to the false teachers, exhorting and encouraging Timothy, showing that Paul had every confidence in Timothy's God-given abilities to deal with the problem, praising God for all his goodness. Paul's final thoughts were further encouragement to Timothy to hold on to the truth of what he had been given in the Gospel message of truth.

#### VII.d 1 Timothy 6:1-2a - Honouring masters

Here, Paul addressed Christian bondservants, Greek *doulos*, who are under either unbelieving or believing masters. This issue shows up often in early Christian literature: **<<Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not only while being watched, and in**

*order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free>> (Ephesians 6:5-8), <<Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality>> (Colossians 3:22-25), and: <<Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh. For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls>> (1 Peter 2:18-25).*

The Greek word *doulos* is often used to translate the Hebrew word 'ebed that can mean slave, servant, or bond servant, depending on the context. In New Testament times, *doulos* is often best described as a bondservant – that is, as someone bound to serve his master for a specific, often lengthy period of time, but also as someone who might nevertheless own property, achieve social advancement and even be released or allowed to purchase his freedom.

Onesimus was the bondservant of a Christian master, who ran away to Rome, probably stealing money from his master to help pay his way. Paul sent him back to his master Philemon with a letter requesting that Onesimus be accepted back, not just as a servant but as a brother in Christ. Paul even promised to reimburse Philemon the money, even though he was still a prisoner in Rome: <<So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say>> (Philemon 17-21).

<sup>1</sup> Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed.

## 1 Timothy 6:1

Paul calls for all those under the yoke of slavery to offer good service to their master. This is something Paul had written to the Ephesians about before: <<*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ*>> (Ephesians 6:5). In this, the servant would bear good witness to Christ, especially if their master was an unbeliever.

Worthy of all honour. Paul is addressing the third of his groups here and this completes the escalation of honour in this major section. Paul had called for widows to be honoured (1 Timothy 5:3), and for double honour to be shown to elders who serve the church well in teaching and preaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

May not be blasphemed. The motive for bondservants honouring their masters is similar to the motive mentioned previously in the letter: giving a good impression of the faith to unbelievers and giving no genuine occasion for others to blaspheme God due to the poor witness of those who profess him as Lord.

Many of the bond servants of Paul's era enjoyed a certain amount of social mobility, engaging in business and even holding junior positions in governance. The promise of freedom that the Gospel offered had attracted them to the faith, perhaps with an expectation of immediate fulfilment, rather than it being spiritual freedom immediately and total freedom at Christ's return. The false teachers were proclaiming that the resurrection of all had come and it appears that many of the servants and slaves were starting to show disrespect for those in authority, believing they now were freed from all earthly authority, something that is contrary to the teaching of the true Gospel: <<*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God*>> (Romans 13:1). Thus Paul had to issue these corrective commands. Although Paul would not have wanted to disillusion this group concerning their faith, his main concern was always the wider perception of the faith by the general public and the good name of God: <<*Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to answer back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Saviour*>> (Titus 2:9-10).

<sup>2a</sup> Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.

## 1 Timothy 6:2a

Christian bondservants must not be disrespectful to believing masters for, despite their differing roles in society, they are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Their equality was in servanthood. For this reason they are called to serve them all the more, for the masters themselves are serving others in the faith through their call to service.

## VIII. 1 Timothy 6:2b-21 - Confronting the False Teaching Again

This concluding major section of the letter bears strong similarity to the opening major section on teaching (1 Timothy 1:3-20). Both major sections are bracketed by discussions of false teachers. Both contain exhortations to Timothy in light of this false teaching, specifically calling him to fight the good fight of faith against it; and both contain a doxology.

### VIII.a 1 Timothy 6:2b-10 - False Teaching and True Riches

The concern with false teachers here centres on their greed and their apparent exploiting of the faith for material gain. A number of the problems listed here are answered in vv.17-19.

<sup>2b</sup> Teach and urge these duties.

#### 1 Timothy 6:2b

Teach and urge these duties. This summary statement connects strongly with what precedes and what follows. These duties most likely refers to the preceding major section of instructions (1 Timothy 5:1-6:2a), although some take it to refer to all that Paul had taught up to this point in the letter. This sound teaching then provides a contrast to the false teachers (vv.3-10).

<sup>3</sup> Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, <sup>4</sup> is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions,

#### 1 Timothy 6:3-4

Whoever teaches otherwise marks the start of a very long single sentence in the Greek that covers vv.3-6, showing how strongly Paul felt about the damage the false teachers were doing to the reputation of the faith, as well as to individuals, like the bondservants recently mentioned, who were starting to show dissent to their masters, rather than showing the respect that Christ commanded.

Sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ does not refer to specific statements of Jesus but affirms that Paul's Gospel and its ethical implications flow out of the teaching and work of Jesus. It is this teaching that will lead to genuinely changed lives, something that the false teachers could not claim. It is not the words of men that people should be listening to as Paul records: <<*And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual*>> (1 Corinthians 2:13).

A morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words is not just something restricted to false teachers but can be seen in many others in the church who seem to want to haggle over words and their interpretation without making any real attempt to align their lives to the Gospel and thereby serve the Christ they have professed as their Lord and Saviour.

Teaching that is in accordance with godliness. True apostolic teaching is that which fits with or leads to godliness, as opposed to the negative effects of the false teaching. True doctrine is often recognisable by the impact it has on everyday living: the natural outworking and fruit of the disciple. The only true words to be taught are those of Jesus for, just like the prophet, he could claim: *<<The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught>>* (Isaiah 50:4). Others too have been given the gift to teach the words of God but it must be this that they are teaching and not their own ideas!

<sup>5</sup> and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

### 1 Timothy 6:5

Wrangling among those depicts a complete lack of the gentleness of spirit that comes when the true Gospel is proclaimed: *<<I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ – I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away!>>* (2 Corinthians 10:1), *<<And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth>>* (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

Depraved in mind. The false teachers are often referred to in the Pastoral Epistles as having faulty reasoning: *<<As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth>>* (2 Timothy 3:8). These teachers were not simply misguided, they were totally ignorant. This was apparent as their doctrine was measured against the apostle's and as their conduct was measured against true godliness. Moreover, from the context it seems that this condition was a culpable one, for it came about as the result of decisions made about the apostolic Gospel which they knew. Since the Gospel is the truth, to deny it is to think in a faulty manner.

Imagining that godliness is a means of gain. People who wrongly preach that God will give material health and wealth, if only one has enough faith, fall under the condemnation of this passage. Although God can and does provide such things to many, there is also a guarantee of trials, persecutions and/or hardships to be endured as part of a life of service to Christ and his church. True Gospel teaching should provide an holistic message so that there are no false promises and no nasty surprises for those who come to faith. Paul had clearly stated that his Gospel was not proclaimed for financial gain: *<<As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed>>* (1 Thessalonians 2:5).

There was plenty of apostolic warnings to believers about those that would peddle different doctrine for gain: *<<I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offences, in opposition to the teaching that you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded>>* (Romans 16:17-18), and: *<<Even*

so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned>> (2 Peter 2:2). It was something that Peter warned his fellow elders specifically not to do: <<Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly>> (1 Peter 5:2).

False teaching and false prophets had always been a problem for the people of God: <<So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day – elders and dignitaries are the head, and prophets who teach lies are the tail; for those who led this people led them astray, and those who were led by them were left in confusion>> (Isaiah 9:14-16), <<And the Lord said to me: The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds>> (Jeremiah 14:14), <<Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God’, when the Lord has not spoken>> (Ezekiel 22:28), <<And if any prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, ‘You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the Lord’; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy>> (Zechariah 13:3).

<sup>6</sup> Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; <sup>7</sup> for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; <sup>8</sup> but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

### 1 Timothy 6:6-8

There is great gain in godliness for it leads a person into a life of reward in the promises made: <<Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you’>> (Hebrews 13:5). Paul will express a similar concern over the love of money in v.10.

Godliness combined with contentment is what is promised in this life. An eternal perspective (v.7) helps believers to avoid the allure of greed, with the result that they are content with what God has given them, even if it consists of only food and clothing. In some parts of the world there are believers who do not even receive the basics to sustain life and yet they are willing to persevere in the promises that they will one day inherit. These people live in great hope and can still say: we will be content.

Paul himself was a man contented with the life he had, despite all its hardships: beatings, death threats and long periods of imprisonment. Contentment had a prominent place in Stoic philosophy, where it defined an attitude of ‘self-sufficiency’, meaning detachment or independence from things or possessions. Contentment came from within. Paul approved of this idea but naturally supplied a Christian basis for it: <<Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have>> (Philippians 4:11). Job had lost

nearly everything in his life and yet still praised God in all sincerity: <<*Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshipped. He said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'*>> (Job 1:20-21); a sentiment with which others concurred: <<*For when they die they will carry nothing away; their wealth will not go down after them*>> (Psalm 49:17), and: <<*As they came from their mother's womb, so they shall go again, naked as they came; they shall take nothing for their toil, which they may carry away with their hands*>> (Ecclesiastes 5:15).

The true source of contentment that Paul is teaching is a genuine personal relationship with God that is possible for anyone who will come to him with a repentant heart and an acceptance of Christ Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. It should always be remembered that: <<*Better is a little that the righteous person has than the abundance of many wicked*>> (Psalm 37:16).

Lack of contentment and a sense of self-reliance have always led to the downfall of so many: <<*Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes*>> (Haggai 1:5-6).

Human contact with the material world begins at birth and terminates at death. But Christian hope takes the believer beyond the material limitations to a boundless eternity, and logically then, eternal values must shape everyone's view of temporal things. To put it simply, Job and Paul meant that things, their value and usefulness, pertain to this world, which is but a temporary home, whereas the eyes of a believer are on their permanent home that is yet to come: <<*For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God*>> (Hebrews 11:10).

How can the Christian learn to be content with simple living? Certainly not by accepting the standards set by this world. Paul suggests that an eternal perspective and an attitude of detachment toward things are prerequisites. As an eternal perspective develops, dependence on material things will decline: <<*Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need*>> (Proverbs 30:8).

But the reverse is also true. An obsession with acquiring wealth is a self-feeding fire. It consumes not only time and energy but also values. Strangely, this panacea, money, leads more to ruin than to wealth. People will do anything necessary to obtain it. As Chrysostom said, 'Riches are not forbidden, but the price of them is'.

<sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For 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 6:9-10

What is condemned here is the desire to be rich, not material things per se when they are accepted as a gift and rightly used for the glory of God. Those who want to be rich often fall into temptation. This in turn results in the love of money, which Paul identifies as a root of all kinds of evils. The connection between false teaching and the desire to be rich has been a problem from the church's very beginning. King Solomon wrote of such people as these: <<*Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households, but those who hate bribes will live*>> (Proverbs 15:27), and: <<*The faithful will abound with blessings, but one who is in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished*>> (Proverbs 28:20). Paul would later find that one of his own supporters would abandon him in an hour of need through the draw of the world: <<*for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica*>> (2 Timothy 4:10a). Paul considered this more of a problem for Demas than for himself, despite his own pending martyrdom in Rome. It is certainly a warning for all believers just how easy it is to be drawn away just at a time when they may be called to be most useful in service to the church and therefore to God.

Harmful desires that plunge people into ruin. The language might seem dramatic, and that was almost certainly intended, for the word plunge provides imagery of the person drowning in their own desire for wealth and what they hope it will provide.

Senseless and harmful desires are not only for wealth itself but are probably also immoral cravings, unleashed by access to wealth. Wealth leads people into circles where the rules are different, the peer pressure is tremendous, and the values are totally distorted. Many people who strive to acquire wealth for its own sake find themselves in a world where they do not naturally belong, bringing disappointment and disillusionment into their lives, instead of the contentment that Paul speaks of, which is something that is much more of a blessing than any amount of money.

Wandered away from the faith. The warning is not simply that the love of money is harmful but that this has led some to deny the faith, showing themselves to be unbelievers: <<*I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith*>> (1 Timothy 1:19), and: <<*They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us*>> (1 John 2:19).

Part of Timothy's duties as a believer, and indeed a duty for all disciples, would be to try to persuade those who had wandered away from the faith to return back to the truth that can only be found in Christ: <<*My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins*>> (James 5:19-20).

## VIII.b 1 Timothy 6:11-21 - Final Charge to Timothy

Paul was aware that he had made some significant demands of his younger co-worker and wanted to conclude the letter on a positive note, encouraging Timothy to approach his task with determination, knowing that it was God's will that he should see this through to the end.

Paul emphasises the weight of this dual responsibility by closing the letter as he opened it, with a solemn charge to Timothy in the presence of God. The dangers of unfaithfulness, both to the leader and to the church, have been graphically spelled out in the interplay between descriptions of the false teacher and the faithful minister throughout the letter.

Now, as the final contrast is made, the clarion call to faithful service resounds. The shape and tone of the text suggest that Paul may have adapted a formal ordination or baptismal charge for emphasis. But again, although the focus in this passage is on leaders, the instructions Paul gives apply to all disciples in all ages.

### VIII.b.i 1 Timothy 6:11-19 - The Good Fight of Faith

Paul provides probably the strongest exhortation in Scripture that would have provided Timothy with all the motivation he would need for his work. Paul included a doxology of praise and further instruction to clarify his final point.

#### VIII.b.i.1 1 Timothy 6:11-16 - Timothy's behaviour in contrast

Paul draws a direct and intentional contrast between Timothy and the false teachers. True ministry is not motivated by greed but by the reality of eternal life and an awareness of accountability to God.

<sup>11</sup> But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

#### 1 Timothy 6:11-12

But as for you draws the contrast between the faithful minister of Christ and the faithless false teachers in Ephesus. The reference to Timothy as a man of God affirms his authority and stands in further contrast with the false teachers, who are not men of God.

Man of God is often used in the OT to identify a prophet, especially Moses: <<*This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the Israelites before his death*>> (Deuteronomy 33:1), and; <<*They took their accustomed posts according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests dashed the blood that they received from the hands of the Levites*>> (2 Chronicles 30:16). Timothy was indeed in illustrious company, for it was not just Moses but other great men who were to be called a man of God. These include Samuel: <<*But he said to him, 'There is a man of God in this town; he is a man held in honour. Whatever he says always comes true. Let us go there now; perhaps he will tell*

*us about the journey on which we have set out’>> (1 Samuel 9:6); David: <<And the leaders of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua son of Kadmiel, with their associates over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, section opposite to section>> (Nehemiah 12:24); Elijah: <<She then said to Elijah, ‘What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!’>> (1 Kings 17:18); and his successor Elisha: <<She came and told the man of God, and he said, ‘Go, sell the oil and pay your debts, and you and your children can live on the rest’>> (2 Kings 4:7).*

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. The six virtues together describe the lifestyle of balanced spirituality that ought to characterise any believer in Christ. A Christian leader must be a model of these things. As an holistic portrait, it encompasses one’s walk with God and disposition toward unbelievers. Are these standards impossibly high? If one thinks in terms of human effort, yes; but with the high calling to ministry, also go vast resources for godly living. This statement has the highest affirmation: <<*Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible’>> (Mark 10:27).*

The call to fight the good fight of the faith and to take hold of the eternal life involves both fleeing from sin and vigorously pursuing righteousness. However, it should be noted that the pursuit of right is not to be done alone but along with other believers. Connection with the community of faith is essential for both progress in sanctification and perseverance in the faith. There were no doubt still many true believers in Ephesus that Timothy could rely on to stand shoulder to shoulder with him in his endeavour to remove the false teachers; and then to reach those with the truth of the Gospel, who had been tainted with their lies,.

The fight that Paul is talking about no longer has the militaristic tone of: <<*I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith>> (1 Timothy 1:18-19), to one that is more in line with an athlete preparing for the main event, which can also be seen in: <<*Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified>> (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).**

Take hold of the eternal life. Salvation is a reward, not for good works or any other human endeavour, but is offered to all as a free gift of God’s grace and mercy. It is both the individual believer’s goal and also their aim to bring others within its reach. However, the command take hold does show that positive human interaction is also essential. The Christian faith is not a passive pastime but requires distinct and deliberate choices to be made and actions to follow such decisions once they are made.

But while the athletic imagery emphasises the human side, it is the prior action of ‘calling’ that establishes the believer’s future success. In the passive, the verb refers clearly to God’s call to eternal life. Yet divine sovereignty does not preclude human responsibility. Timothy had an obligation to participate in his salvation. Likewise, all believers must view faithful Christian living and service, in whatever context God places them, as their necessary responsibility to God.

For which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses is clearly a reference to a public acceptance of the faith by Timothy that could either have been his baptism or more likely the occasion of what today would be called his ordination into ministerial office, and may well relate to: <<***Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders***>> (1 Timothy 4:14).

<sup>13</sup> 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, I charge you <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

#### 1 Timothy 6:13-14

In the presence of God. The presence of God was something that the Hebrews had feared, despite the reassurances of Moses: <<***Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin’***>> (Exodus 20:20). Although reverential fear is required in God’s presence, his presence remains something to be sought and cherished, for God’s ultimate purpose is for good: <<***This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the Lord your God disciplines you***>> (Deuteronomy 8:1-5). This is not just biblical history but an active part of God’s leading throughout the church age as well. In fact, God’s constant presence should spur the Christian on to excellent service. Equally, this truth provides encouragement and strength, for the ever-present God is the one who gives and sustains life.

Without spot or blame is a similar call that both Peter and Paul have called for from the church: <<***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind – yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish***>> (Ephesians 5:25-27), and: <<***Therefore,***

*beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish>> (2 Peter 3:14).*

God, who gives life to all things is deliberately phrased in the present tense, thereby referring to more than just the creation account. It is a function and purpose of God throughout all ages to give and sustain life in all its forms. Jesus likewise spoke in a tense that is not time bound: <<*Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'* Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'>> (John 11:24-26).

I charge you is another solemn command that Paul makes using the Council of God as his witness and authority, as he did earlier in the letter: <<*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality*>> (1 Timothy 5:21).

Jesus' good confession made before Pontius Pilate: <<*Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so'*>> (Mark 15:2), and: <<*Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.'* Pilate asked him, 'So you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice'>> (John 18:37-38), is the example for the believer's <<*good confession*>> (v.12). It should also be noted that Jesus statement, recorded by John, that his Kingdom was not from this world, supports Paul's claims against hoarding wealth or seeking status in this life.

Until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ refers to the Second Coming of Christ that Paul expected to happen in his own lifetime, an expectation that all should have and herald in, although Paul's words elsewhere remain a timeless prayer: <<*And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints*>> (1 Thessalonians 3:13). This reference would have held two key elements for Timothy and indeed all other disciples who have followed since: the future promises that Christ's return has for the believer who perseveres to the end; and a sense of urgency that time is short and the work must be completed in preparation for this event.

<sup>15</sup> which he will bring about at the right time – he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup> It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

## 1 Timothy 6:15-16

Which he will bring about at the right time. Although no one other than God knows when this will be: <<***But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father***>> (Matthew 24:36), all of humanity can be assured that it will be timed to perfection, as was his first coming: <<***For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly***>> (Romans 5:6).

The blessed and only Sovereign is acknowledged throughout the ages: <<***For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe***>> (Deuteronomy 10:17), <<***The Lord, God of gods! The Lord, God of gods! He knows; and let Israel itself know! If it was in rebellion or in breach of faith towards the Lord, do not spare us today***>> (Joshua 22:22), <<***They go from strength to strength; the God of gods will be seen in Zion***>> (Psalm 84:7), <<***O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures for ever***>> (Psalm 136:3), <<***The king said to Daniel, 'Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery!'***>> (Daniel 2:47), and: <<***On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'***>> (Revelation 19:16). Although Paul has inserted this doxology as an opportunity to praise God, such a clear vision of the true nature of God is a strong motivation for holy living and service for all Christians.

While there were some who currently opposed his work in Ephesus, Timothy was to labour on in view of one day standing before God, who dwells in unapproachable light. Paul focuses on the glory of God in order that the corresponding insignificance of Timothy's opponents might be clearly seen and put in context. The prophet speaks of being brought out of darkness into the light: <<***Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I must bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he takes my side and executes judgement for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall see his vindication***>> (Micah 7:8-9), a hope for all sinners, especially when they realise just what their sin really represents to such an awesome God that Paul describes here.

He alone who has immortality speaks of a God who has always and will always exist, who has no beginning and no end: <<***Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen***>> (Psalm 41:13), <<***But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children***>> (Psalm 103:17), <<***Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable***>> (Isaiah 40:28), and: <<***Are you not from of old, O Lord my God, my Holy One? You shall not die***>> (Habakkuk 1:12a).

That his dwelling place is unapproachable light, speaks symbolically of his absolute purity and holiness: <<***Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring***>>

*fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel>> (Exodus 24:15-17), <<Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. But Moses called to them; and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. Afterwards all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off, until he came out; and when he came out, and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining; and Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him>> (Exodus 34:29-35), and: <<This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin>> (1 John 1:5-7). The mystery becomes complete in the reference to his invisibility: <<To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen>> (1 Timothy 1:17).*

The actual phrase, whom no one has ever seen or can see, recalls God's response to Moses, who in preparation for leading God's people requested to see God: <<'But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live'>> (Exodus 33:20). Still, enough was shown to Moses to carry him through in confidence. Jesus, of course, has seen God: <<Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father>> (John 6:46), although three of the apostles were afforded the privilege of seeing the transfigured Christ: <<Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white>> (Luke 9:28-29), something Peter also recalled: <<For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain>> (2 Peter 1:17-18).

To him be honour is appropriate for all honour should be ascribed to God: <<Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!''>> (Revelation 5:13). Yet there is great honour for those who will one day stand in his presence. The Queen of Sheba once observed in King Solomon's court: <<Happy are your wives! Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom!>> (1 Kings 10:8), how much happier still will those be who will stand in the eternal presence of the King of kings?

That Christ has eternal dominion over everything was prophesied more than 500 years earlier: <<*To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed*>> (Daniel 7:14).

#### VIII.b.i.2 1 Timothy 6:17-19 - Charge to the rich

The charge directly to rich believers may seem unexpected in this place. However, it provides a corrective to the wrong view of wealth seen in the greed and motivation of the false teachers. Furthermore, the downplaying of riches by stressing that they are merely for ‘this present age’ appropriately follows the moving description of appearing before God on the final day (vv.15-16).

The call for the wealthy to use their wealth to prepare for the future either means that how they use their wealth demonstrates whether or not they are saved, or that they should seek for greater reward in heaven through its use, or both.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

#### 1 Timothy 6:17

In the present age are rich. Earthly wealth is transient and cannot be taken forward to guarantee a better eternal life. This is confirmed elsewhere: <<*Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them*>> (Psalm 62:10), <<*Why do you boast in your strength? Your strength is ebbing, O faithless daughter. You trusted in your treasures, saying, ‘Who will attack me?’*>> (Jeremiah 49:4), and: <<*But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*>> (Luke 12:20). However, it can be used effectively in a way that will demonstrate a person’s true acceptance of God’s gracious gift, especially if they follow the teaching of the Lord: <<*Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me’*>> (Mark 10:21), and: <<*Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys*>> (Luke 12:33).

Paul was concerned that people with material wealth had become too reliant on that wealth and the status it brought and had forgotten their true reliance on God, whereas the poor were actually more blessed for they had a truer understanding of God’s good providence in their lives. Paul alludes to this elsewhere: <<*I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little’*>> (2 Corinthians 8:13-15). There is a great deal of wealth in the hands of a few

people in the modern world, with many Christians now having good levels of disposable income, yet this has made little impact on the world's poor. Although there is nothing wrong with Christians enjoying the benefits of their wealth, they are called to be good stewards of what they have been entrusted with, learning from those who are worldly but applying it for Kingdom purposes: *<<And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes>> (Luke 16:8-9).*

Not to be haughty. Wealth or social status should play no part in Christian life, at least not in terms of relationships between believers for: *<<There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus>> (Galatians 3:28).*

The uncertainty of riches. Wealth can come and go in this life, as King Solomon had observed: *<<When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle towards heaven>> (Proverbs 23:5).* Also, it is no guarantee of contentment, fulfilment or good health. Disciples are called instead to focus on accumulating heavenly wealth that will count in their eternal life: *<<Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also>> (Matthew 6:19-21).*

The bible tells of one man who placed all his hopes in his wealth, possessions and status: *<<Haman went out that day happy and in good spirits. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and observed that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was infuriated with Mordecai; nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Then he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh, and Haman recounted to them the splendour of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honoured him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the ministers of the king. Haman added, 'Even Queen Esther let no one but myself come with the king to the banquet that she prepared. Tomorrow also I am invited by her, together with the king>> (Esther 5:9-12), for it ended badly for the boastful Haman, for he had despised Mordecai for not bowing down before his wealth and status: <<So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated>> (Esther 7:10).* It is a proud heart that deceives and is the cause of the downfall of so many: *<<Your proud heart has deceived you, you that live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is in the heights. You say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord>> (Obadiah 3-4).*

God who richly provides us with everything. This simple fact is something that all people need to know and truly accept. Many people think they have earned a good living through their own skills and endeavours, which may seem to be the case for people need to take their opportunities and develop the skills they are given,

working hard at what they do, but ultimately it is God who provides all good things: <<*Therefore do not worry, saying, “What will we eat?” or “What will we drink?” or “What will we wear?” For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*>> (Matthew 6:31-33).

Everything for our enjoyment. God has always provided what is required: <<*In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy*>> (Acts 14:16-17). Christians need to remember that it is meant to be a life of joy not unhappiness, complaint or disappointment. It should also be remembered that Christ died on the Cross to free the captives, not just from sin and oppression, but from feelings of guilt. Life is not for serving penance but for enjoyment. This is another way of worshipping God.

<sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> 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.

#### 1 Timothy 6:18-19

Rich in good works. The wealthy, who may not need to work any longer to earn a living, may have many opportunities to spend their workdays doing good works for others and building up the church. Others with less time can invest some of their wealth in the work of the church, with the same overall result, although the giving of money should not negate the need to become actively involved in ministry.

Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future. The building metaphor with the time reference communicates an important truth. Responsible living in this life is a necessary building block or stepping-stone to the coming age. For the rich, responsible use of wealth, i.e. sharing, giving, etc. is evidence of genuine faith; in this way they ‘work out their salvation’ in this age. This practical evidence of new life provides unshakable certainty that one’s future hope is secure. Thus it becomes possible for them to take hold of the life that really is life, which is the same possibility held out to Timothy (v.12).

Take hold of the life that really is life. Wealth provides people with the privilege of doing things in this life that others may never get to experience, such as participating in expensive pastimes or travelling around the world. This may seem like the type of life that so many would wish to live, and indeed God should be given praise by those who can experience it, but Paul recognised that there is a much better life to be had that no amount of money could buy.

#### VIII.b.ii 1 Timothy 6:20-21 - Personal Instructions and Benediction

In his brief closing statement, Paul reiterates Timothy’s commission: <<*I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to*

*occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith>> (1 Timothy 1:3-5), and: <<I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme>> (1 Timothy 1:18-20).*

<sup>20</sup> Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; <sup>21</sup> by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

Grace be with you.

### 1 Timothy 6:20-21

What has been entrusted to you refers to the Gospel message that Timothy had been called to take to so many locations under the direction of Paul and, more significantly, the Holy Spirit.

Avoid the profane chatter is not a call to avoid confronting those who are engaged by such activities but is an instruction to Timothy to refrain from being drawn into such situations or listening to what is being said. Instead, he is to counter them with the truth that he has in the Gospel.

What is falsely called knowledge refers to the false teaching addressed elsewhere in the letter. Some have thought this to be evidence that the false teaching was a form of Gnosticism. However, there is very little evidence for this. More likely this is another instance of Paul critiquing the false teachers' 'thinking'. The false teachers may flatter themselves by labelling their teaching knowledge, but since they reject the truth, i.e. the Gospel, their teaching cannot be true knowledge.

Knowledge is the Greek word *gnosis* from which Gnosticism comes. Those that profess some secret knowledge, revealed to them but not to others are clearly not proclaiming the true Gospel for that was given openly to all who would listen and remains just as open for all today. Jesus himself made this clear: <<**And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables'>> (Mark 4:11), <<For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light>> (Mark 4:22), <<Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret'>> (John 18:20), and Paul stated: <<Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner>> (Acts 26:26).**

Grace be with you is bestowing all of God's loving care upon Timothy. It may be a short blessing but it is a full, comprehensive blessing; a blessing indeed.