

1 Timothy Lesson 13

1 Timothy 6:1-21 – Fight the Good Fight

INTRODUCTION

Paul's letter to Timothy, composed around AD 63-65, addresses the practical functioning of the church in Ephesus, a city plagued by false teachings and social tensions.

Building on earlier chapters' focus on doctrine, personal responsibility, and leadership standards, Chapters 5 and 6 delve into conduct within God's household, described as the pillar and support of the truth.

This section provides specific information. Remember that 1 Timothy acts as a "corrective manual" for a church experiencing systemic breakdown, but we cannot get caught up in the details; we need to understand the principles of the letter so that we, as people and a local assembly, can use the principles to help us correct when necessary or remain on target.

In Chapter 5, Paul instructs Timothy on how to address various groups within the church, emphasizing that correction should always be delivered with love and respect, not in a demeaning way. Paul points to a family dynamic: older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, remaining unmixed with the world. He establishes that widows truly in need should receive honor and, if within means, material support from the church in exchange for dedication to the local assembly and God. But he stresses that a widow's family bears primary responsibility for her care. Paul warns that neglecting family responsibilities is a serious denial of the doctrines and intent of God, and he outlines criteria for church support: genuine need, a proven record of good works, and a dependence on God. He cautions against indiscriminate charity, provides guidelines for the care of widows and the honoring of elders, and insists that leaders must be protected from baseless accusations but publicly corrected if found in sin. The principles that we found are family responsibility, qualified benevolence, and the importance of purity and character in the local assembly.

CHAPTER 6 OBSERVATIONS

- I think it is clear that chapter 6 is simply a continuation of chapter 5. Remember, there are no chapter breaks in the original letters.
- Verses 1-2 – slaves are indentured servants; this has been well established and does not refer to a kidnapped person.
- Verses 3-5 deal with a person who is contrary to sound teaching, and Paul exposes the mental attitude and results.
- Verses 5-10 – This goes back to the contrast of the temporal and the eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). Godliness is more valuable than any earthly treasure if accompanied by contentment.

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- Verses 11-21 – Paul returns to Timothy in his final thoughts. Every imperative (instruction, command) is in the second person singular. Timothy is directly spoken to in this section.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 1-2) – BEHAVIORAL WITNESS DESPITE SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Paul begins by addressing the relationship between servants (**δοῦλος** *doulos*) and their masters. In the first-century Roman world, slavery was a complex economic reality. Paul's instruction here is not a commentary on the morality of the institution but a guide for how a believer functions within a pre-existing social hierarchy.

The command is for servants to regard their masters as worthy of all honor. The motive is purely theological—so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. If a believer in a subordinate position acts with rebellion or disrespect, it brings reproach upon the message of the Gospel.

When the master is also a believer, Paul warns against taking advantage of that spiritual equality. Instead of serving with less diligence because the master is a "brother," the servant should serve all the more. This is because the one benefiting from the service is a believer and beloved. The goal is to demonstrate that the Gospel produces a character of excellence and love that transcends social status.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 3-5) – THE PATHOLOGY OF FALSE TEACHING

Paul shifts his focus to those who advocate a "different doctrine" (**ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω** *heterodidaskaleō*). These individuals reject the "sound words" of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine that conforms to godliness. Paul provides a diagnostic look at the mental state of such teachers.

The root issue is *conceit* (**τυφώω** *tuphoō*), meaning they are "puffed up" or clouded by pride. This pride leads to an epistemological failure; they do not *understand* (**ἐπίσταμαι** *epistamai*) the truth because they have elevated their own speculations above the objective Word of God. Paul describes their mind as "diseased" (**νοσέω** *noseō*) with a morbid interest in controversies and disputes about words.

The fruit of this diseased mind is constant friction, envy, strife, and evil suspicions. These teachers view "godliness" as a means of financial or social gain. They are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, using an outward show of piety to mask a desire for temporal profit.

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EXPOSITION (VERSES 6-10) – GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT

In contrast to those seeking gain through piety, Paul declares that godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by *contentment* (**αὐτάρκεια** autarkeia). This gain is not monetary; it is the spiritual stability that comes from being satisfied with God's provision.

Paul uses the "Naked in Naked Out Principle" to ground this logic. We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out. Therefore, if we have food and covering, we should be content. This does not forbid having more, but it establishes a baseline for perspective.

The danger of the "desire to be rich" is that it creates a snare. It plunges people into ruin and destruction because it shifts their focus from the eternal to the temporal. Paul clarifies that it is the *love of money* (**φιλαργυρία** philargyria), the mental attitude and mis-prioritization of value, that is a root of all sorts of evil. Both the rich and the poor can fall into this trap if they do not maintain a perspective of contentment.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 11-14) – THE PURSUIT

Paul addresses Timothy directly as a "man of God," a title that implies he belongs to and serves God's interests. Timothy is commanded to flee the greed and friction of the false teachers and instead pursue a specific set of virtues:

- **Righteousness** (**δικαιοσύνη** dikaiosynē): Living in accordance with the objective standard of God's truth
- **Godliness** (**εὐσέβεια** eusebeia): A respectful, reverent attitude toward God
- **Faith** (**πίστις** pistis): Adherence to the body of apostolic doctrine
- **Love** (**ἀγάπη** agapē): Self-sacrificial work for the benefit of others
- **Perseverance** (**ὑπομονή** hypomonē): Remaining under pressure while holding to the truth
- **Gentleness** (**πραῦπάθεια** praupatheia): Controlled, considerate behavior even in conflict

Timothy is told to "fight the good fight of faith." This is the struggle—to maintain objective doctrine against all opposition. He is also to "take hold of the eternal life." This refers to the quality of life that belongs to the age to come, the life of Jesus Christ manifested in his current character and behavior.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 15-16) – THE DOXOLOGY

Paul anchors the command to remain "without stain or reproach" in the nature of God Himself. He describes God in a doxology that emphasizes His absolute nature:

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Attribute	Description	Impact
Sovereignty	The blessed and only Sovereign	God's authority is unrivaled by any earthly power or false deity.
Immortality	Who alone possesses immortality	God is indestructible and eternally constant, unlike temporal wealth.
Transcendence	Dwells in unapproachable light	God is holy and set apart from the corruption of the world.

By fixing his eyes on the Immortal King, Timothy gains the perspective necessary to ignore the "ruin and destruction" that claims those who pursue temporal gain.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 17-19) – STEWARDSHIP FOR THE WEALTHY

Paul provides specific instructions for those who are "rich in this present world." He does not tell them to give away all their money, but he tells them how to manage it with a sound mind.

They are not to be conceited or fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches. Instead, they must trust in the living God. They are commanded to be "rich in good works" and "ready to share." By using their temporal resources for eternal purposes, they store up a good foundation for the future and "take hold of that which is life indeed." This is the same principle of living in alignment with Christ's life that Paul gave to Timothy.

Notice who the instruction is to and who it is for.

EXPOSITION (VERSES 20-21) – GUARD WHAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED

The letter ends with an urgent personal plea: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you." That which is entrusted is the truth of the Gospel and apostolic doctrine, and the task that he must hold and fight for the truth.

Timothy must avoid "worldly and empty chatter" and the "opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge." Some have strayed from the faith (the objective body of truth) by following these distractions. Paul's final word is "Grace be with you," reminding Timothy that both the guarding of the truth and the living of the life are motivated by God's unearned favor.

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CONCLUSION

In summary, 1 Timothy 6 continues the essential themes begun in the previous chapter, offering practical and theological guidance for the church community facing internal and external challenges.

Paul urges believers to honor one another, even within difficult social structures, ensuring that their conduct reflects the reality of the Gospel. He warns against the dangers of false teaching and the pursuit of material gain, emphasizing instead the enduring value of godliness accompanied by contentment.

Timothy, as a leader, is called to pursue virtue, safeguard the foundational truths of the faith, and guide others with integrity and love. Paul's closing exhortations remind us that true life is found not in earthly possessions or status, but in faithful stewardship and unwavering commitment to the truth entrusted by God. As members of God's household, these principles encourage us to build a community marked by character, generosity, and a steadfast focus on eternal values.