

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

A Survey of 1 Timothy

Study #6 Sound Words (1 Timothy 6:1-21)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul wrote this letter to his young protégé, Timothy, whom he had left behind in Ephesus to lead, to feed, and to correct certain errors happening there. We are surveying this letter chapter by chapter, pulling out the main principles in our attempt to understand the proper functioning of the household of God. The key verse of the entire letter is 3:15. Here we see that Paul's intent in the letter is to explain to Timothy how the body of Christ is to conduct itself, corporately, as the household of God. Therefore, if we are to function properly as a body, we must allow God to teach us how.
- B. We have previously examined the first five chapters, from which we have pulled seventeen basic principles: **1.** the role of the teacher / the goal of the teaching; **2.** the place of the Mosaic Law; **3.** the primacy of grace; **4.** the church as a battleground; **5.** the call and motive for social intercession; **6.** gender roles within the church; **7.** the desire to lead; **8.** the qualifications for leadership; **9.** the purpose of, and qualifications for, deacons/deaconesses; **10.** the nature and function of the church; **11.** the reality and nature of desertion; and **12.** the discipline and activity of a good servant; **13.** handling conflict in the church; **14.** supporting widows; **15.** supporting elders; **16.** using medication; and **17.** exercising proper judgment.
- C. Tonight we will examine Chapter 6, from which we will derive six principles: **1.** slave/master relationships; **2.** the conceited ignorance of dissenters; **3.** the godly view of material wealth; **4.** the pursuit of righteousness; **5.** the time of Christ's return; and, **6.** guarding our treasure.

II. PRINCIPLE ONE: SLAVE/MASTER RELATIONSHIPS (6:1-2)

- A. **A Note on Slavery in the New Testament.** The Bible never explicitly condemns slavery (neither in the Old nor in the New Testament). On the other hand, the New Testament never explicitly condones it either. That is not to say the subject never comes up. But when it *does*, it is dealt with as it is: simply the social situation in which the world existed at the time. This does not mean that slavery is a good, or even an acceptable, practice. But it means that the Scripture (and therefore those who adhere to it) is not particularly focused on correcting or addressing all of the evil and corrupt social practices that exist in society. Rather, the Scripture's focus is on teaching believers to live godly lives in *whatever* social circumstances they may live in. This leads us to several conclusions:
1. *Being Born Again Does Not Mean a Change in Circumstances.* First, we learn from this that when Christ saves us, it does not necessarily mean that all my negative physical circumstances will improve. Where slavery, in specific, is addressed for example, note how Paul deals with slaves in the Roman world who had been saved (see *1 Corinthians 7:17-24*). Whatever circumstance you were in when God saved you, it is obvious that it is possible to be a *saved* person in those circumstances. If it weren't, God couldn't have saved you while you were there. And since this is an obvious reality, it leads us to another:
 2. *God Expects Us to Live Godly Lives in Every Circumstance.* Rich men are to live godly lives. So are poor men. Free men are to be godly. So are slaves. Jews are to be godly. So are Gentiles. Kings are to demonstrated godly character. So are peasants. Men with full bellies are to be righteous men. So are those who are starving. In any and every circumstance in which the Lord places us, we are to live righteous godly lives *right there in that situation*. And this is possible because Christ gives us the strength to do so (see *Philippians 4:11-13*). This leads us to another clear reality.
 3. *Disciplers Must Focus on Improving Spiritual Health, Not Physical Circumstances.* Like Paul, all believers are both **disciples** and **disciplers**. As those who disciple others, our focus for them must be on spiritual growth and development, not on improving life situations. While this does not mean that we are blind to physical needs, it does involve recognizing the truths of God's word, which are to be applied by every person in every circumstance. Neither in our own lives, nor in the lives of those to whom we

minister, can we accept or affirm the premise that “I will be godly as soon as...” Be godly now! Be godly right where you are! No excuses.

- B. **Slave/Master Relationships Today.** In the world in which we live, it is true that many are still living as slaves of one kind or another. Yet in most places, such practice is illegal and illicit. And most of those who *are* in that situation are placed there illegally by the threat of force or harm. In that context, slavery, as an illegal institution, is sin and must be addressed as such. The slavery of Paul’s day was not the same criminal exploitation that exists today, and so what is said about slave/master relationships does not apply in the same way under those circumstances. What we learn, instead, is the concept and mentality of godly submission.
1. *1 Timothy 6:1* = Any believer who is under the authority of another person must *honor* the one in authority over him. This involves more than simply *saying* the right words or *doing* the right deeds (cf. *Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25*). It involves the right heart-attitude. We are to serve in the sincerity of our hearts, just like we are serving Christ; because, in fact, we *are*. And to claim Christ as Lord while living in rebellion against the human authority Christ has established in our lives, is blasphemy and rebellion. This is true of the citizen toward his government; the child toward his parents; the employee toward his employer; the wife toward her husband; and the children of God toward our heavenly Father.
 2. *1 Timothy 6:2* = And if the one in authority over me is a believer, as well, then my standards must not be lax, but actually even *more* stringent, because I am bringing benefit to a beloved brother; and in so doing, I am a vehicle of God’s blessing in that brother’s life.

III. PRINCIPLE TWO: THE CONCEITED IGNORANCE OF DISSENTERS (6:3-5)

- A. *1 Timothy 6:3* = The pronouncement Paul is about to make applies to a specific group of people, whom he will describe in three ways:
1. *Anyone*. In other words, there is no partiality. Power, position, prestige or personality make no difference. If *anyone* meets the criteria Paul gives, the pronouncement applies to them.
 2. *Teaching Other Doctrine*. The phrase “advocates a different doctrine” in the NASB is actually rendered from a single Greek word, *heterodidaskaleo*. This is the additive side of their behavior, what they *do*. They teach a different doctrine.
 3. *Not Agreeing With Sound Words*. The subtractive side of their behavior, what they *don’t* do is this: they don’t *come to* or *approach*, **healthy words** (literally). These healthy words are further apposed in two ways: they are the words of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, and they are the **doctrine conforming to godliness**.
- In other words, the pronouncement that Paul is about to make applies to *anyone* who *does* teach error, and who *does not* approach truth correctly and consistently. What does Paul want Timothy to know about such people?
- B. *1 Timothy 6:4a* = Paul describes such a person in two ways. First, he is **conceited**, or puffed up. He thinks more highly of himself than he should, and exalts himself in a way that is both inappropriate and out of touch with reality. Second, he **understands nothing**. He thinks he has wisdom, he thinks he knows and perceives truth. But in reality, he does not have a grasp of even the most basic of truth, let alone the *deep things* he thinks he knows (cf. *Jeremiah 8:8-9*).
- C. *1 Timothy 6:4b-5a* = Rather than being absorbed with *healthy* words, such a person has a **morbid interest** (Gr. *noseo* = nausea, sickness or infirmity) in debating or arguing and disputing about the meanings of words. Where the teacher of truth is trying to produce love (see *1 Timothy 1:5*), this kind of controversy gives rise instead to envy, strife, abusive language (lit. “blasphemies”), suspicion and a friction that just won’t let up (Gr. *diaparatribo* = think a *diatribe* involving two opposing speakers).
- D. *1 Timothy 6:5b* = This friction is evil. It is unhealthy, and it is the result of error in the teaching. The men who perpetrate this error are further described by Paul, using two passive participles: they have been *destroyed in mind*, and they have had the *truth held back* or *stolen from them*. (The fact that both participles are passive indicates strongly the existence and action of a demonic enemy working behind the scenes.) These men have been led to think and believe that the pursuit of godliness is a way of achieving material wealth.

IV. PRINCIPLE THREE: THE GODLY VIEW OF MATERIAL WEALTH (6:6-10, 17-19)

- A. *1 Timothy 6:6* = Paul states that on the other hand, godliness *is* profitable...but it does not yield its reward in physical wealth. The wealth resulting from godliness comes in conjunction with **contentment**, a translation of the Greek word *autarkeia*, which means “sufficiency” or “having enough.” In other words, when one believes one has enough and needs no more, that contentment, combined with true godliness, is *very profitable*. Contentment is the key.
- B. *1 Timothy 6:7* = This is because everything that earth offers, all its wealth and affluence is temporal and temporary. When you entered the world, you brought nothing in with you. And when you leave the world, you will not be able to take anything out with you, either.
- C. *1 Timothy 6:8* = So the accumulation and amassing of huge amounts of *stuff* is pointless and profitless. If you have food to eat, and clothing to cover your body with, that should be all the satisfaction you need in this life. Does that sound unrealistic? Think of some living in remote parts of Africa. They literally have food and clothing...and not much else. And they profess to be quite happy with their lives. Sometimes going back to the simple basics can be very clarifying to the priorities.
- D. *1 Timothy 6:9* = By contrast, the drive to amass a temporal fortune causes those so occupied to *fall into* three adverse things:
1. *Temptation*. The word means *tests* or *trials*. The desire to acquire riches causes the driven one to be *tested* and *tempted* toward evil things in a way that contented people are not. The availability of money often opens doors...not all of them good ones...that otherwise remain shut. The depravity of the world is obtainable and available if one can afford it. Those who cannot afford it have an added protection. Some of the worst degeneracy is not even an option, because the necessary means are lacking. Poverty, in that sense, can be a blessing.
 2. *A Snare*. The Greek word, *pagis*, means to set up a tent that looks attractive on the outside, in order to lure the victim inside, where death or destruction awaits. Wealth looks good...but its end is often destruction.
 3. *Many Foolish and Harmful Desires*. The more money I have, the more ways I can think of to spend it. The more ways I can imagine, the more I want those things. And many of these resultant desires are **foolish** (Gr. *anoetos* = mindless, against the better judgment) and **harmful** (Gr. *blapto* = to hurt, cause pain or harm). I rush headlong into a stupid activity or behavior, and the result is that I am hurt by it (cf. *Jeremiah 8:4-7*), *sunk* or **plunged** into ruin, destruction and waste.
- E. *1 Timothy 6:10* = This is because the desire for money (the Greek word literally means to be “a friend of silver”) is a root of all sorts of evil. Just like the roots of a plant allow the plant to grow, so the love of money is a root that allows all sorts of other evil things to grow. And when one gives oneself to longing after it, two awful things can happen:
1. *Wandering from the Faith*. When a person starts to focus on the acquisition of material *stuff*, their attention tends to be turned from the truth of Scripture. The result is that they begin to wander away from that truth.
 2. *Piercing Themselves with Grief*. They also tend to substitute the real joy of simplicity for terrible, grievous anguish and distress. This anguish and distress acts like barbs or arrows, and pierce the soul causing pain and injury.
- F. *1 Timothy 6:17-18* = And yet God does bless some with material wealth (and let’s be honest, in our country we experience an affluence that most people in this world can’t even imagine). To those in such a position, Paul instructs Timothy to give what amounts to five commands (the word *instruct* is the Greek word *parangello*, which means to command):
1. *Don’t Be Conceited*. The Greek word essentially means proud, arrogant or haughty. Those with affluence often tend to look down their noses at those without. The world sees *haves* and *have nots*. The church is not to function with such a mindset (see *James 2:1-6*). So the first command God gives wealthy believers is not to be arrogant or haughty (cf. *Romans 12:16*).
 2. *Don’t Place Hope or Expectation on Your Money*. Your future does *not* depend on financial security. It *does not*. Period. Earthly, material riches are uncertain, in the first place; and temporary in the second

- place. As Paul has already said, you are not taking *anything* with you when you go into the next life. So the second command is not to place your hope or your expectations for your future on those shifting, uncertain and temporary riches. Instead, Paul commands us to put our hope in God (who, actually, is the Provider of that temporal wealth anyway). And unlike physical wealth, God and His provision *will* follow me into the next world. That's where I need to fix my hope.
3. *Do Good.* The wealth that God has given you is not for you to fritter away on silly nonsense. Use it to do good to others. This does *not* mean bankrolling someone else's bad decisions. It means that the resources that God has given you are to be used, in part, to do what is in the best interest of those whom He has placed into your life. This is an imperative in Greek, a command.
 4. *Be Rich in Good Works.* Often when a person has an abundance of financial wealth, they use a good portion of that to fulfill their desire for entertainment and pleasure (the so-called *good life*). Paul says that a higher priority is to place one's time and resources into *good* (Gr. *kalos*, worthy, worthwhile) work (Gr. *ergon*, energy, effort). If you have money, don't let that fool you into thinking that because you can afford to fulfill every desire, you should waste your time on doing so. Instead, focus on work that is worthy and worthwhile, and give your time, attention, energy and resources to doing that.
 5. *Be Generous and Sharing.* John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, is famously quoted as saying, "Earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can." His point is that we ought to work hard to earn as much money as we can. We do this so that we can give as much away as we can...and we do that so that we can save as many people as possible. While this is backward thinking, in the eyes of a world that says we should earn as much as we can so we can have a better life for ourselves and our children, it is actually right in line with biblical teaching. You *should* work hard to earn as much money as you can. That way you can give away as much as possible, and by so doing, save as many souls as you can.
- G. *1 Timothy 6:19* = By obeying Paul's commands here, those who are affluent are storing up a good foundation for the future that is coming, so that they can really take hold of that new life. It's all about being focused on the new world, that new kingdom. We have to start getting our eyes off of this fading world, and get ready mentally for what is coming!

V. PRINCIPLE FOUR: THE PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (6:11-14A)

- A. *1 Timothy 6:11* = The man (and woman) of God, all those that belong to Him and are part of His family, are to flee (Gr. *feugo*, fugitive, run away, escape) from the things that sprout from a love of money. We are not to pursue money or material prosperity (consider *Matthew 6:31-33*), but instead are to pursue the five things that Paul mentions here: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Our focus, in other words, is to be on internal character and piety, not on external materialism.
- B. *1 Timothy 6:12-14* = Paul commands Timothy (and by extension, *us*) to do three things:
 1. *Agonize the Worthy Agony.* We are to stay in the spiritual battle. Keep striving, keep fighting, keep agonizing (literally). Don't grow weary, don't desert in the middle of the altercation, don't run from the battlefield. This is the same idea, expressed in different words, that Paul expressed in *1:18*. There, he instructed Timothy to *war the good warfare*. Here, the emphasis is on the effort we must expend to keep fighting, rather than on the nature of the fight itself. Keep expending the effort. You can rest in heaven. ☺
 2. *Take Hold of Eternal Life.* This may seem like a strange command, but the basic verb means to grasp, grab or arrest (cf. *Acts 21:33*, where the military commander arrested, or took hold, of Paul). Paul is not saying that Timothy should try to make sure he is saved. He is saying that Timothy should grasp tightly, or take hold of, that to which he has been called. In other words, it is *that* truth to which Timothy should cling tightly. When things get difficult for him in life and ministry, he is to remember what he was called to, the confession that he made in front of witnesses, and take hold of that truth.
 3. *Keep the Commandment.* The command here, given in the presence of God the life-giver, and Christ Jesus the good testifier, is that Timothy must keep (observe, obey, guard) the commandment. He is to stay focused on his responsibility before God to be holy, and is to observe this commandment without

stain or reproach. How long does he have to keep that up? Until Christ appears, which leads us into the next principle...

VI. PRINCIPLE FIVE: THE TIME OF CHRIST'S RETURN (6:14B-16)

- A. *1 Timothy 6:14b* = Here, at the end of the body of this letter, Paul tells Timothy that the battle will not be over until Christ returns. Timothy must continue to agonize, fight, pursue righteousness, keep the commandment. He must not relent or lose hope or heart. He has to keep going, until Christ appears (Gr. *epiphaneias*, epiphany) for the church. This serves to remind Timothy that the battle is *not endless*. It is not an *eternal* struggle. There is an end in sight. There is hope for cessation of hostilities! Christ is coming back. But when will this happen?
- B. *1 Timothy 6:15-16* = God has not revealed to any man at any time the exact, preordained moment of the rapture. Although we can know and be confident in the timeline as given in Scripture, there are no dates attached to that timeline. Anyone who would attempt to put a specific date on that event is a charlatan, a hoax, a liar and a false teacher. The angels don't know the exact date. Even Jesus, while on earth, was not given that revelation (cf. *Matthew 24:36*). It is arrogance of the highest order for any man today to claim he knows what Jesus did not. But the confidence we have is this: God will bring it about at the proper time (literally, *in His own time*). It is God's timing, and therefore it will happen at the exactly perfect moment. Not a second before. Not a millisecond after. This great God that Paul describes can be trusted. He will rescue us at just the right moment. Until then, we must be faithful.

VII. PRINCIPLE SIX: GUARDING OUR TREASURE (6:20-21)

- A. *1 Timothy 6:20* = The last statement of the letter is an emotional call (*O Timothy!*) for Paul's young protégé to guard (keep watch, protect) the treasure with which he has been entrusted (see *2 Timothy 1:14*). This means that Timothy must be proactive. First, he must keep his eyes on that treasure. Second, he must avoid being distracted away from it. It is this last aspect that Paul warns against specifically. He tells Timothy to *avoid* (Gr. *ektrepo* = turn away from) three things:
1. *The Worldlies*. There is no noun associated with this adjective, therefore it is not a modifier, but a substantive. The word is *bebelos*, meaning worthless, pointless things. Timothy must not allow himself to get sidetracked by things that don't matter. In other words, the *main* thing is to keep the *main* thing the *main* thing.
 2. *The Empties*. Another substantive. Anything that lacks substance or value. Anything that is without profit or empty. Timothy has to avoid such things. There are things in life and ministry that matter. There are other things that don't. Timothy is to exercise discretion to know which are which, and then turn away from the things that don't so they don't distract him from the things that do.
 3. *Contradictions of the False Knowledge*. The word *contradictions* is the Greek *antithesis*. I make a point, you rebut it. I try to prove a point, you try to refute it. I give you my argument, you try to invalidate it. These kind of conversations are distracting and pointless. Timothy is to give the truth, and allow no one to disregard or ignore him (see *Titus 2:14*). There is not to be a debate about the truth. It is to be taught and then lived, not argued about. This does not mean that there can never be a legitimate conversation about the interpretation or application of God's word. It means that those who hold to *false knowledge* are not allowed to give their views on these things. In fact, some men that Paul and Timothy both knew, had professed this so-called *knowledge*, and went astray from the faith. Serious business.

VIII. PRAYER