

# **The Danger Of Covetousness**

**1 Timothy 6:1-10**

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The tenth of the Ten Commandments, known as the Decalogue, is, "Thou shalt not covet," then he goes on and says, "thy neighbor's wife...nor his ox...nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Covetousness is the warning that we're going to get in our passage tonight.

I heard the story about a simple-living Quaker who was observing a neighbor that was moving into a house next door to him. He was moving in all this rich furniture, all these luxury items, and just real extravagant things being moved in as the Quaker watched. After watching for many hours the Quaker went over to introduce himself to his new neighbor and said, "Friend, if thou dost ever need anything, come and see me; and I will tell thee how thou canst live without it." Paul is going to warn us of the sin of covetousness. It was a sin that was very dangerous in the New Testament times; it's a sin that we actually have to contend with today. Particularly, most of this passage is going to be with a warning about false teachers that were teaching that godliness is a way to get rich. Have a familiar ring? It's quite popular on television today. A lot of television preachers sang that God wants you wealthy, God wants you healthy, and God wants you to be rich.

Let's look at the first section beginning in 1 Timothy 6:1-2 where Paul actually moves in relationships in the family of God and in the church to the relationship of slaves. In the Roman world there were a lot of slaves, and they were mostly Gentiles. They were coming to know Christ and Paul wanted to give them instruction. Normally, when Paul addressed slaves, he would also address their masters; but this is unique in that he only addresses the slaves. He puts them into two categories: those that had unbelieving masters and those that had believing or Christian masters (verses 1-2). Let's read it. "Let as many servants," or slaves, "as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

In the King James translation it says, "servants," but a better rendering of that in verse 1 is slaves. He's actually not talking about an employee like today, that could quit your job and try to find another. This was actually a slave, and he's telling these Christians who are slaves, and notice they were kind of working under very difficult circumstances, "as are under the yoke," that was a figure of speech for difficulty, hardship, or bondage. He was saying, "You're working in this slave relationship and it's very hard and difficult." Let them, "...count their own masters worthy of all honour." He tells these Christian slaves that they should give respect and obedience to their masters.

The word "honour" there was also the same word that was used for the elders that were to be given honor. They were to be given double pay. The widows, who were "widows indeed," were to be honored as well. It's the same concept that we're to respect and honor them. Paul gives

two reasons why in verse 1, "...that the name of God," which is God's person, "and his doctrine," that is, God's program, "be not blasphemed." He talks to these believing slaves and says, "You have unbelieving masters." He doesn't say to run for your life now that you're Christian, you should be free. He doesn't say that they should rebel, complain, or gripe. He actually says that they should be devoted to their masters and should do it so that they do not bring a stumbling block to the name of God or "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." The best way for them to evangelize, for them to reach their unbelieving masters, was for them to be committed and obedient.

I'm going to talk just a little bit (I don't want to get sidetracked because I'm anxious to get to the larger section, verses 3-10) about slavery as it was in the New Testament times and is today and about the issue of does the Bible address or endorse slavery. A lot of critics of the Bible have attacked it on this issue, so I hope I can bring some balance and some understanding to that. By way of application, in case you're tuning me off right now saying, "What did I come tonight to hear about slaves for?" I believe that today it would have application for us. The principles have application for the employee-employer relationship.

Most of you, I assume, have jobs. You'll go to work tomorrow. You have a job, and you have an employer. You have a boss or a superior or manager over you, and the principle is the same. If they're not a Christian (and even if they are Christian) you are to give them your best. Whatever you do, you're to do it as unto the Lord and from the Lord you will receive your reward. You're not working for men, you're working for God. Christian employees ought to be the most diligent and devoted and conscientious and hard-working. You need to be careful that you don't use time when you're getting paid to do evangelism or to study your Bible or whatever it might be, but that you're there to work and you work hard and you are devoted; so the principles are there for us as employees—that we're to work hard and give our masters honor on the job and in the workplace.

The second group Paul addresses in verse 2 is of slaves that had believing masters. Now, this was probably because if you were a slave and your master got saved you would probably think, "Oh, praise God! Now I can be set free," or "He will be less harsh," or "Maybe I can have my freedom," or something like that, "because this person's a brother," but Paul's saying, "No, you still need to be committed to the structure and committed to your master." So, "...they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service," why, "because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit," so they're going to be blessed and benefit by your devotion, by your service. "These things teach and exhort."

Let me say a couple of things as I draw from the beginning of verse 2. When you read verse 2 and say, "Well, you're talking to slaves that now have Christian masters, you would think Paul would immediately turn and address the masters and say, 'You know, this slave is a brother in Christ, you ought to release him. You ought to set him free.'" The criticism often of the Bible is that it doesn't attack slavery directly. It doesn't tell the slave masters that this is wrong, they should set them free, and this is not right. Let me give you some perspective. In this text, especially in 1 Timothy, Paul is addressing slaves not masters. It is unique. In the other places,

he does turn to the masters and tells them, “Masters, you give to your slaves that which is just and equal,” and “You masters ought to remember that you have a Master in heaven and one day you’re going to answer to God.” It doesn’t say that you should free your slaves, but it says that you should treat them with respect and be just, fair, and equal. In this passage, he’s not addressing the masters, he’s only addressing the slaves.

The subject is submission to authority. It’s not the morality of slavery. This passage isn’t about slavery being bad or good or the moral issue of slavery, it was part of the Roman Empire and the culture of the time. As I’m going to talk about in just a moment, it did differ from the American or British slavery that we know in our contemporary scene. It was quite different in New Testament times and was a part of the fabric of their economy, their structure; and Christianity, rather than overthrowing that, came and would change men’s hearts with the gospel. Christianity is not primarily a social gospel. It’s not about right reforming our culture, it’s about changing the heart of man. When a person gets born again, they get a new heart. God changes their heart and then it changes institutions that are unjust or not right. I do believe that the abolition of slaves, especially here in America and in the United Kingdom or Great Britain, the way was led by Christians because of their understanding of the Scriptures.

The third thing I’d like to say is that slavery did differ in the Bible days (in New Testament times or in Roman times or in Paul’s day). Now, I can’t go into all the aspects of which it differed, but there were several reasons why men would become slaves. Let me mention this. In our slave world that we had in early America, we were actually going to Africa and kidnapping people, purchasing them with goods (I’m actually reading a book about this right now), then we were shipping them back, and we would trade slaves. The Bible actually does condemn that. It’s called menstealers. Even here in 1 Timothy it talked about these wicked men who were menstealers and perjured persons, so it does condemn the concept of kidnapping which would cover that in that aspect.

In New Testament times there were several different ways a person might become a slave. The first way you would become a slave is to be born one. If your mother was a slave, you were a slave and you were property of your mother’s master; so you were born in that condition. In New Testament times a lot of slaves in the Roman Empire were actually released at about age 30. They didn’t live as slaves their whole lives. Many of them would be released. Many of them were actually paid a tiny bit and, in a point in time, could actually purchase their freedom; so it was different than the slavery in America. Many slaves in Bible times, in New Testament times, were actually highly-trained individuals. They would be cooks, chefs. Luke, the beloved physician who wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, some actually theorize he was a slave and had then purchased his own freedom. Sometimes physicians were slaves and sometimes large households would have slaves who would actually be tutors and teachers of their children. Sometimes they would be students. People would give them all of their money, all of their wealth, to be a steward over that; so they were very trusted and were actually greatly loved in a way that wasn’t during the slavery of our time.

There was also those who would become slaves because they would voluntarily—this was very

common in the Roman world—sell themselves. It was almost like you're selling your service. You would sell yourself to become a slave to get out of debt with the idea that you would then pay off your debt, you would get some money, and then actually re-purchase your freedom and be released. There were those that were slaves because of war. They would conquer another nation and take those people, and they would become slaves. Slaves had a status in a relationship with their masters in a way that we didn't see in American slavery. It was kind of a different thing. One thing that the Bible does clearly condemn is cruelty to another individual. It's very clear in the Scriptures.

In the New Testament you have the small epistle of Philemon, which was actually a slave owner who had a slave named Onesimus. Onesimus ran away from Philemon. He was in Colossae, went to Rome, heard the gospel that Paul preached in Rome, became a Christian, and Paul, talking to Onesimus says, "Where are you from?" "I'm from Colossae." "Well, who's your master?" "My master is Philemon." Paul said, "I know Philemon. He's a Christian, too. He's one of my converts. I'll write a letter and ask him to forgive you and to take you back and accept you now as a brother in the Lord." That little epistle in your New Testament called Philemon, read it before you go to bed tonight. It's only one short chapter and was actually hand-carried by a runaway fugitive, a slave by the name of Onesimus, as he went back to his master, Philemon, and handed him...He said, "Before you hit me, read this letter," you know. "It's from Paul the apostle, a friend of yours," and "I'm now a Christian and you're now a Christian, so he asked you to receive me as a brother in the Lord."

Another thing I'd like to say is the focus in the Bible is on the gospel and its power to change men's hearts. It actually would change the heart of man which would actually change the institution of slavery; but the application, as I said, for us today is clearly that if you are employed, you are not to take advantage. Say you have a Christian employer, "Oh, praise the Lord! I can take a two-hour break because he's a Christian, and I can read my Bible and it's going to be cool." No. You're to give honor to your employer and be devoted to them on the job. Ask yourself, "Am I, in my work ethic, a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is my life a testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ?"

Moving to verses 3-10, we have the warning against false teachers. It has two sections, and verses 3-5 are their marks or characteristics. He says, "If any man teach otherwise," note at the end of verse 2 that there are those who would teach and exhort, now he says, "If any man teach otherwise," these are the false teachers, "and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud," these are the characteristics of the false teachers, "knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness," and Paul says to Timothy, "from such withdraw thyself," get away from these false teachers that are teaching that godliness is a way to get rich. It's a really sad thing.

I want you to note the marks of these false teachers, and you'll be able to see how clearly and relevant it is for us today. First, they teach error. Notice it in verse 3. "If any man teach

otherwise,” so they were teaching contrary to sound doctrine. They were teaching “otherwise” or other things. Again, it’s a contrast from the end of verse 2, “These things teach and exhort,” but “If any man teach otherwise,” so they were actually teaching error. This is what’s called heterodoxy. There’s orthodoxy, which is correct doctrine, and heterodoxy, which is the opposite or contrary. They were actually actively teaching things that were in error. You know, you need to be careful when you listen to a preacher, when you listen to the radio, when you listen to especially Christian television. There are some great Bible teachers on Christian television, but there are a lot of them that are teaching things that aren’t true, that are error. You need to be discerning. You need to be Bereans and search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so.

Notice the second characteristic is that they reject the truth, so they actively teach error. They’re not teaching the true Word of God even though sometimes they use Scripture. They kind of cloak it in Bible verses to give it legitimacy, but it’s not sound doctrine. It’s not right interpretation. Notice verse 3. It says, “...and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” The word “wholesome” there in verse 3 is the word sound or healthy. We actually, from that Greek word, get our word hygiene from. All through the pastoral epistles you find this word mentioned. It’s the word sound. It’s translated sound in your English Bible, but it literally means healthy or life-giving. Good doctrine, sound doctrine, is healthy. It produces a healthy individual, a healthy believer; but those who teach error, it’s not healthy. It’s not “wholesome words,” and they’re described in two ways: they’re not “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and they’re not “the doctrine which is according to godliness.” In other words, they’re not teaching what Jesus taught.

Let me give you a little rule of thumb when you study and read your Bible or listen to people preach. You ask yourself: 1) Did Jesus teach that? 2) Was it practiced in the book of Acts? Was the early church doing that as well? 3) Is it talked about in the epistles? If you have a “yes” to all of those questions, then you have a solid foundation for believing something. What happens is (I see it so often with teachers of error) that when they’re preaching, they pull an obscure verse from the Psalms or the book of Job or from the Song of Solomon. They love to preach from Old Testament narrative. Now, I believe the whole Bible is the Word of God, okay? “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” all the stories in the Old Testament, every book of the Bible is given by inspiration of God, but they like to preach from the historical narratives because then they can impose into the narrative their ideas or their concepts. Usually they’re life situational and very practical and that’s okay, but they do it to the neglect of the doctrinal portions of the whole New Testament and especially the epistles.

When you interpret a narrative passage, you have to interpret it through the lens of an epistle; and when you’re reading the Bible, always ask yourself, “What kind of literature am I in? Is it poetry? Is it history? Is it prophecy? It is the gospel, the book of Acts? What kind of material am I in?” You interpret it in light of that and use the doctrines to shed light on the Old Testament and vice versa, but you need to make sure that you take the whole Bible and compare Scripture with Scripture. They weren’t doing that. They weren’t paying any attention

to the words of Jesus Christ and also, “the doctrine which is according to godliness,” which an interesting point is that when you have sound doctrine, guess what follows that? Sound behavior. What you believe determines how you behave. If you have bad doctrine, it will result in bad behavior. If you have sound doctrine, it should be healthy and life-giving. It should result in good behavior. I know that there are those that can be orthodox in what they believe and unorthodox in how they behave, but that’s not a normal situation. When we believe properly, then we should behave in a godly way—sound in belief and behavior, the two go together. We can’t excuse our behavior because we believe properly. “Well, I have my doctrine right. I know the truth,” but you’re living in a way that’s dishonoring to God. The two are vitally linked. Again, in these pastoral epistles of Timothy and Titus, doctrine and duty or belief and behavior are all linked and tied together.

First, they teach error; secondly, they reject the truth; and here’s the third, they’re proud and arrogant. Notice verse 4, “He is proud, knowing nothing.” The truth is that they are puffed up. Let me make another point. If you truly know your Bible, guess what it does? It gives you a humble heart. If you really know your Bible, you’re not going to have a big head, you’re going to have a humble heart. If I meet somebody that is so proud and so puffed up because of how knowledgeable they are, how much they know, and how knowledgeable they are about the Word of God, I know that their knowledge is false. If you have a right knowledge of God and God’s Word, it’s going to humble you; so the Word of God gives us a humble heart not a big head. These false teachers are proud, but it’s interesting it says that they “knowing nothing,” so they are proud, but the truth is they have no real knowledge, no understanding. It says, “...but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.” Not only are they teaching error, they’re rejecting the truth, they’re proud, ignorant, and arrogant, but also spiritually sick.

The word “doting” in my King James translation literally means they are sick. They’re not spiritually healthy. They’re sick individuals, and they’re asking questions. They’re questioning with envy and strife, so they’re also in personal conflict with other people. They don’t get along with others, and there’s strife in their life and in their ministry.

Lastly, they are perverted in their minds, notice verse 5. “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth,” so they teach error, they reject the truth, they’re proud, arrogant, ignorant, they are spiritually sick, and they are in personal conflict with others. There’s strife—false doctrine brings strife into a congregation—and they also have perverted minds, “disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth.” That is the character of these false teachers.

I want to move on because we’re going to get more clarity on who they are. Their motive is in verses 5-10. It says, “...supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,” Paul says, “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment,” that word “raiment” is more than just physical clothes. It involves shelter as well, so we have food, clothing, and shelter. He says, “...let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation

and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

Paul will go on in this chapter to speak to believers that do have riches, “...that they be not highminded,” but humble, “nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Let me say this right off the bat. Nowhere does the Bible condemn riches in and of themselves. Do you know that money is neutral? Money in and of and by itself is not evil. It’s neutral—it can be used for good; it can be used for evil. It can be used to promote the gospel, to help people, to be a blessing, to provide food for the hungry, or it can be used for evil purposes. It’s the heart that God is looking at. He’s not looking at your wallet. He’s looking at your heart and where your heart is at.

There are some important things that we need to see here. The doctrine that these false teachers were promulgating is that gain is godliness. Now, a better rendering of that statement from the Greek would be that godliness is a way to get gain. Some free paraphrase actually renders that, that godliness is a way to get rich. Now, I don’t know about you but I see it pretty clearly that there are so many today that are preaching a doctrine of health and wealth, that if you’re a Christian and you have enough faith, God wants you to be wealthy, God wants you to be healthy, and all God’s children—you’re a King’s kid—ought never be sick and ought to be able to have lots of money, live in a nice house, drive a nice car, wear nice clothes, you know, you’re a King’s kid.

Maybe some of you are sheltered from that. You’re not aware of that. Maybe some of you are new believers and you’re looking at me right now like, “I don’t have a clue what you’re talking about.” I don’t encourage you to go looking for it on t.v., but you can find it on so-called gospel television. It’s been around a long time. I could very easily name names of those who are proponents of the health and wealth gospels. I won’t do that, but I do believe that you need to understand that nowhere in the Bible are you promised or guaranteed that because you are a Christian that you are going to be perfectly healthy.

You are not yet redeemed physically. I don’t understand how a person cannot see how clearly that is taught in the Bible. We’re waiting for the redemption of our bodies. We’re saved, but my body is still under the curse—it’s still getting sick, it’s still getting old. If what they taught were true, the aging process would stop the moment you are born again. If I got born again when I was 19, I’d still be 19 years old here, you know. (In a high, squeaky voice,) “Hi, let’s open our Bibles tonight.” I say that because I listened to an audio of myself from 45 years ago the other day and thought, Man! What a punk I was! It’s just like unbelievable to me! My hair wouldn’t get gray. I wouldn’t get wrinkles. You’d have no more blemishes in your complexion. You wouldn’t gain weight. You wouldn’t have any aches or pains. There’d be no cancer, no strokes come to you.

I understand that they believe that it’s up to you to claim by faith what you have in Christ, but I think that they’re Scripture twisters. They’re twisting the Scriptures. They’re taking it out of

context. Whenever you deal with this subject...and I've actually done a whole series many years ago. It's on our website titled Beware of Counterfeits where I actually go into great depth, about seven or eight weeks, on all the things that they teach that are false and kind of show you in the Bible where what they're saying is not true; so you can listen to the audio of it on the website. They like to twist the Scriptures, take them out of context, and misapply it to gain a following, "God wants you rich," and they emphasize the seed faith concept that, "If you give \$100 to my ministry, God will give back to you \$200, and God will bless you." It's all about money, money, money, money, money, money, money. One of their main emphasis is always riches, and what they would do is use religion as a way to get rich.

Remember when Jesus went into the temple and saw the money changers? They're not dead. They're still alive. Sometimes when I'm watching one of these guys on t.v. I'm just waiting for Jesus to come out with a whip on the set of the screen. He went into the temple there and they had the money-changer tables. A couple of things were happening. The Jews had to pay a tax to the temple, so they had a special coin that they would only accept for the tax. You would have to exchange your money for this special coin, and they would rip you off when you exchanged it. They had an exorbitant change rate. You also had to offer a lamb in sacrifice, and they would have to examine it—the lamb would have to be without blemish or spot. If you brought it from home, which was the least expensive way to bring your lamb, they would inevitably find a blemish on your lamb, but they would be more than happy to direct you to their pre-approved table of lambs over here that you could buy for twice the amount of what it cost you to bring it from home.

When Jesus shows up, He makes a whip, drives them out, overthrows the money-changers' tables and says, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves," and the same is so true today. They make God's house a den of thieves. Their focus is if you're godly, you can be rich; and the emphasis is on your faith, on your words, the power of your words that you can speak prosperity. They're teaching that we have the ability to create our own reality that if you feel a little sick you just say with your mouth, "I'm not sick. I'm healed. I'm well," and man, you know, you'll get the victory by just saying those words, which is not taught in the Bible at all.

Only God has the ability to create. He's got what's called fiat. He can speak things into existence that don't exist. You can't go into your garage and say, "Porsche be," and a Porsche will be. "Ferrari, in the name of Jesus!" BOOM! There it is. No. It's not gonna happen. You don't have the ability to do that. Not only that, the Bible actually says that, "...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and it doesn't promise us. Jesus said, "...a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Nowhere does it really teach that we'll be healthy or wealthy. Now, healing does take place. God can heal and God can bless and prosper you, but it's not carte blanche or guaranteed in the atonement nor is it guaranteed in the Scriptures for believers. I want you to notice that that's what they're teaching—gain as a way to get rich—and there are a lot of prosperity preachers that are quite popular, have large ministries on the television, and they preach a health and wealth gospel that's not the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notice that there are some things that these false teachers forget. I want you to write them down. First, wealth doesn't bring contentment (verse 6). We know that, but they forgot that, these false teachers, that wealth doesn't bring contentment. Notice verse 6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Now, what is contentment? Contentment is the absence of desire for more. It's not complacency, but it's content. It's that you're not always wanting more, always wanting bigger, always wanting better, that kind of keeping up with the Joneses mentality. We all struggle with that. You buy a brand new car, drive it home, and then someone goes by with the same car in a different color you didn't see when you bought yours and go, "Whoa! I like that one better!" You were happy until you saw that color. Keeping up with the Joneses—buying things you don't need to impress people you don't like with money you don't have. Contentment is just that ability to say, "You know, I'm content with what I have."

Paul the Apostle was writing to the Philippians from a Roman prison or actually under house arrest at that time, but he was in chains and said, "...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound...both to abound and to suffer need," so God takes care of me, but contentment is the absence of that desire to have more. It's that inner sufficiency. The concept of contentment actually would be illustrated with a self-contained camper vehicle. You know we have these motorhomes that are bigger than the house that I live in today. I saw a dude going down the freeway the other day with this monster with pop-outs all over, you know, and probably had a jacuzzi pop out on one side. These things are just massive, and you can go out where there's no hookups and you can turn on your own generator and you're all self-contained.

I remember years ago, one time, when I was driving my 1972 Nissan station wagon. It didn't have any air conditioning in it, and I was in L.A. in August stuck on the freeway. This was a long time ago, and right in front of me was this big motorhome. You could tell that they were in there having fun. They were walking around drinking iced tea. They had a t.v. on and were lying on the couch watching the football game, and I'm sitting here in my little Nissan station wagon sweating. I'm like, "Whoa! That's crazy! They're just like partying in this place." It was hot and smoggy. I'm just like, "God, I'm mad at You right now because they're probably not even Christians and I'm a pastor driving a Nissan station wagon. That's just not fair." We sometimes don't realize that, you know, God hasn't promised that we're going to have all of our greeds, but He promised that He would meet all of our needs. Amen? It's so important to remember, but wealth doesn't bring contentment—you can have all the money you ever want and you still won't be happy or content.

I heard the story of a college professor the first day of a class. The students came into class, and he gave them an assignment to write a one-page essay on: If I Had a Million Dollars, What Would I Do With It? The students all sat down and started working frantically. A little while after working on this, one of the students got up in a kind of frustration and slammed his paper on the teacher's desk and said, "It's not enough, Teacher, I need another million dollars." You know, how much is enough, right? It's never gonna satisfy. The Bible says, "...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."

Notice the second thing they forget, they forget that riches or wealth are not lasting (verse 7). “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing.” Isn’t that a great verse? If you’re a parent, and you were there when your kids were born, they came in naked, right? None of them came with a Rolex watch or with Vans tennis shoes. They came in naked. Job said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither,” right? “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away.”

The story is told of Alexander the Great that when he was going to be buried, he wanted his hands outside his casket so that everyone could see that he took nothing with him. Now, that would be kind of freaky. You show up at a funeral and the dude’s hands are hanging out like he wants to shake hands with you or something. I heard of one guy that had a classic car that he loved, so he made these exotic arrangements that when he died he would actually be buried in his car. This is a true story. They did that. They propped him up in his car, put his hands on the steering wheel, got a big crane and lifted up the car and lowered him and this beautiful car into his grave. One of his friends that was watching what was going on said, “Man, that’s really livin!” No, that’s really dying is what that is. You know, you’re not going to take it with you when you die. We brought nothing in, we’re gonna take nothing out.

Notice the third thing that they forgot in verse 8, that our needs are easily met. It says, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” By the way, verse 8 is actually an imperative. It’s a commandment for us to be content. God actually says if you have food, clothes, and shelter, then you ought to be content.

Fourthly, notice that the desire for wealth leads to sin (verses 9-10). Here’s the contrast, “But they that will be rich,” now, what you need to understand is that “they that will be rich” actually is they who desire to be rich. What the Bible is condemning is not riches but covetousness—the desire to be rich. That’s all you think about, care about, work for, and you live to make more and more and more money and have more and more things. So, those that desire to be rich, they fall. What do they fall into? They fall into temptation. This is a solicitation to sin and evil, and they fall into “a snare,” which is a trap from the enemy, “and into many foolish and hurtful lusts,” or desires. It hurts you. It hurts your loved ones in your family and your friends. A husband that just gets consumed with material things and wants to have and make more money, it will destroy him. He’ll fall, and it’ll bring much hurt—or a woman or a young person, it doesn’t matter—many “...hurtful lusts.” Notice you’ll also “...drown,” you’ll be taken down. It’ll “...drown men in destruction and perdition.” Some feel that the destruction is that that is temporal right now in this world and the perdition is actually a reference to hell and judgment that will come eventually and in the future, so your sin will hurt you and others and maybe damn your soul to perdition.

In closing, notice verse 10. “For the love of money is the root of all evil.” Again, it’s important for you to understand that this is a statement that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It’s a better way to translate that statement. The Greek would actually read that way, “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” It’s not saying that the love of money is the root of evil. It’s saying the love of money is the root of different kinds of evil. People lie. People steal.

People commit murder for money, right? They do it all the time—perjury for money, commit adultery because of the love of money. It's interesting in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet," that so many of the other commandments are broken when we are covetous. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," you covet someone else and commit adultery. "Thou shalt not steal," you covet someone's money and you take that money. "Thou shalt not bear false witness," you lie because you're covetous and want to get gain. You lie to get ahead. "Honour thy father and thy mother," you don't honor your parents because you're covetous, so it brings many snares and many hurtful lusts and drowns your soul.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil," kinds of evil, "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith," notice what happens, "they have erred from the faith." It doesn't mean they don't have faith anymore, but they err away from the doctrine of Christianity, "the faith," the body of truth that we believe, "and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." What a sad and tragic thing. When I think in terms of the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and those who covet after pierce themselves through with many sorrows, I think of Achan in the Old Testament. Remember when the children of Israel came into the promised land and took the city of Jericho? The instructions by God were, "You don't touch anything. You don't take any silver. You don't take any gold. You don't take any loot." When they got into Jericho, the man Achan, saw a Babylonian garment—he saw some beautiful clothes—and he stole them secretly and stashed them in his tent. Then, Achan was achen, wasn't he, as he was taken and judged and destroyed—he and his whole family.

How about Balaam, that prophet in the Old Testament. He loved the wages of unrighteousness and was tempted because of the loot to do a wicked thing. How about Gehazi in 2 Kings 5, the servant of Elisha. When Naaman, the Syrian general, came to be cleansed of his leprosy and went down to dip in the Jordan River seven times and was cleansed, he came back to the prophet Elisha and said, "Thank you for healing me." He wanted to give him gold, silver, and all this treasure and all this stuff. The prophet said, "No. I don't want to take that stuff. God healed you." That's commendable, but Gehazi, his servant, was standing there thinking, What are you doing? Man, we could be rich! This wealthy king wants to give you this money. Why don't you take it? The Syrian general turned to ride away, and the prophet went another direction.

Gehazi looked around and took off after the Syrian general and said, "Hey! Wait a minute! My master changed his mind. He'd like some of that money." "Oh, great! I'll be glad to give it to you." He gave him the money, so he went back secretly and stashed it under his tent. Then he comes walking out, (whistling sound). It doesn't say he whistled, but I picture him kind of, you know, I see the cartoon picture version of him whistling. I love the coolness of the prophet, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" "Oh, no where. Just hanging out," yeah right. You know, when you've been sinning and a prophet looks at you and asks you a question, you're busted! He's thinking, Oh, no. He's staring right at him with those prophet eyes, no doubt. I've always pictured most of the prophets to have long, bony fingers when they pointed at you. "Is this the time to be buying property and planting vineyards and storing gold?" The prophet said to Gehazi, "The leprosy that was on Naaman is going to come upon you." Immediately, that servant, because of his covetousness, was struck with leprosy. How about Solomon, the man

who had so much wealth, he said, "It's all emptiness. It's all vanity. It's all vexation of spirit." How about the rich young ruler who had great wealth and turned and went sorrowfully away because he didn't want to give up his riches to follow Jesus Christ.

Let me wrap up some lessons here on the warning against false teachers who preach that godliness is a way to get rich. First of all, I would say that success is spiritual and inward, not material and outward. Look at verse 6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." If you have godliness, you have great gain. You may not have the things the world can afford, but if you have God in your life, you are rich. Secondly, an understanding of the exact nature of life recognizes the superiority of the eternal and the spiritual to the temporal and the material. Go back with me to verse 7. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," you do not take it with you. The only way that you can get it in eternity is to invest it now in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Thirdly, notice possession of the basic necessities of life should foster contentment. In verse 8, "...let us be therewith content," literally would be rendered, "we shall be content." We need to fix our eyes, not on the things that are temporal, but in the things that are eternal. Remember in Mark 8 (we saw Sunday morning) Jesus said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" I love Psalm 23. When David opened that Psalm he said, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Let's pray.