

Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy 6 – Pastoral Faithfulness, Greed, and the Sovereignty of God

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Session 7 (1 Timothy 6)

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Abstract

In this lecture on 1 Timothy 6, Dr. Robert Yarbrough addresses the apostle Paul's final pastoral directives regarding social structures, false teaching, and financial contentment. He examines the ancient context of Greco-Roman slavery, demonstrating how gospel principles transformed relationships and ultimately undermined the institution. Yarbrough contrasts the destructive nature of greed and false doctrine with the great gain of godliness paired with contentment, warning leaders against placing trust in earthly wealth. Culminating in an exalted doxology on God's supreme sovereignty, the lecture urges pastors to guard the sacred deposit of faith and pursue a positive ethic of righteousness until Christ's return.

Outline

I. Introduction and Context of 1 Timothy 6

- A. Relation to the broader discourse of 1 Timothy
 - 1. Chapter divisions as post-biblical additions
 - 2. Continuity with chapter 5 demographic instructions (older/younger men/women, widows, elders)
- B. The transformative impact of the gospel on social relationships

II. Social Relations and the Question of Slavery (1 Timothy 6:1–2)

- A. Biblical imperatives for slaves and believing masters
 - 1. Honor and respect for masters to protect God's name and teaching
 - 2. Superior service for believing masters out of mutual devotion
- B. Historical and theological analysis of Greco-Roman slavery
 - 1. Slavery as a fallen, ubiquitous social reality rather than a divine creation
 - 2. Key distinctions between ancient Roman slavery and 19th-century American South slavery
 - a. Socioeconomic ubiquity and economic dependence

- b. Non-racial nature and paths to emancipation (typically by age 30)
 - c. Rights to education, property ownership, and public assembly
- 3. The historical role of Christianity in eroding and abolishing slavery
 - a. F. F. Bruce on New Testament teaching creating an environment where slavery withered
 - b. Modern abolitionist movements (William Wilberforce, British Empire, American Civil War)

III. Confronting False Teachers and the Trap of Greed (1 Timothy 6:3–10)

- A. Characteristics of false teachers
 - 1. Rejection of sound instruction from the Lord Jesus Christ
 - 2. Unhealthy interest in controversies, quarrels, and word battles
 - 3. Corrupt minds resulting in envy, strife, malicious talk, and friction
- B. The illusion that godliness is a means to financial gain
 - 1. Exploitation of ministry for power, status, or income
 - 2. The treadmill and destructive trap of seeking riches
- C. True gain: Godliness with contentment
 - 1. Realism about temporary earthly possessions (nakedness at birth and death; 'payable on death')
 - 2. Sufficiency of food and clothing paired with trust in God's providence
 - 3. The root of all kinds of evil: The destructive nature of the love of money

IV. The Final Charge to the Man of God (1 Timothy 6:11–16)

- A. Personal imperatives for Timothy
 - 1. Flee from greed and false teaching
 - 2. Pursue a positive ethic: Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, and endurance
 - 3. Fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life
- B. Solemn mandate before God and Christ Jesus
 - 1. Remembering Christ's good confession before Pontius Pilate
 - 2. Unwavering obedience without spot or blame until Christ's appearing
- C. Doxology on God's supreme grandeur and sovereignty
 - 1. God as the blessed and only Ruler, King of kings, and Lord of lords
 - 2. Immortal dweller in unapproachable light
 - 3. God's majesty as the supreme motivator for faithful ministry

V. Pastoral Directives Concerning the Wealthy and Final Guard (1 Timothy 6:17–21)

- A. Instruction for those rich in this present world

1. Warnings against arrogance and placing hope in uncertain wealth
 2. Exhortation to do good, be rich in good deeds, generous, and willing to share
 3. Laying up treasure in heaven as a firm foundation for true life
- B.** Final charge to guard the gospel trust
1. Guarding the sacred deposit of faith
 2. Turning away from godless chatter and falsely named 'knowledge'
 3. Benediction: Grace be with you all

VI. Synthesis and Core Themes of 1 Timothy

- A.** Sound doctrine as theology with practical ramifications (sapiential theology)
- B.** Two poles of pastoral leadership: Teaching and spiritual oversight
- C.** Propriety in public worship and encouragement of women's discipleship
- D.** High standards of integrity, competence, and diligence for pastoral leaders
- E.** Preeminence of Christ as the true Head of the church
- F.** Pastoral care for souls as a sacred trust to be guarded