

1 Timothy 6:6-16 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴ to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*

What do you want out of life?

1. Material abundance?
2. Righteousness and truth?
3. Remembering who is the real King

There are millions of pets in New York City. However, when a pet dies there's nowhere to bury it. So the city offered to dispose of them for a fee of \$50. A woman thought she could make easy money. She offered to do the job for only \$25. How did she dispose of the animals? She would go to the Salvation Army store and buy the best-looking suitcase she could for under \$5. She would place the deceased pet in the suitcase and then take a ride on the subway. Without fail, as she sat dosing, someone would come running along and snatch the suitcase. That's how she got rid of the deceased pet.

How often don't we run after things in life, thinking they will be the suitcase of happiness, only to be disappointed.

Lotteries, casinos sports betting. Our world is infected with "get rich quick" schemes. So many think that money will solve all their problems. If they can just hit the big jackpot then they can buy all things that will make them happy. In our text today the Apostle Paul would have us think differently about wealth. This lesson leads us to ask the question, "What do you want out of life?"

We learn very early in life the power of money. You walk into a store, look at an item and what's the first thing that you look at? The price tag. You want to buy something and you want to know if you have the money to buy it. That's when you learn the power that money possesses. How much money you have can either allow or prevent you from having certain things, doing certain things and even being certain things.

Money makes some pretty bold promises. It tells us that it can make us happy, that it can make us popular, that it can bring us pleasure and security. And it can deliver those things . . . for a while. It's just a while. You heard the warning Amos gave to the Jews who chased after material abundance: Therefore, you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end. (Amos 6:7)

So what do you want out of life? Material abundance? If so, Paul gives us this warning: *Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* Not a pretty picture, is it? One of the worst things that can happen to a runner is to fall. As you run the race of faith, one of the worst things is to fall into the love of money.

Paul calls it a root of all kinds of evil. My neighbors have a ground cover that started to spread into our property. At first, we didn't mind, but then it started taking over everything. Connie wanted it gone, so this spring I started pulling it out. If I got a good grab, I could pull up several plants connected to roots that spread 10 to 15 feet.

So, the love of money by itself can't be easily seen, but like a root it grows and spreads in our heart. Then it sprouts and produces all kinds of sins: greed, worry, selfishness, cheating, stealing and lovelessness. Like a weed the love of money crowds out time to serve our Lord, read his Word or join him in worship.

And where does it lead? The rich man who lived in luxury every day and would not even share a morsel with Lazarus ended up in agony.

Look at your life. How often do you think about money? How much of your happiness is built on what you can buy or what you can do because you have money? How often do you feel disappointed because you didn't have enough money to do what you wanted? Are getting money, spending money or saving money the most important factors in your decisions?

Paul warned Timothy, *But you, man of God, flee from all this.* Flee it like you have encountered a rattlesnake. Flee it like it's the plague, because it is deadly to your eternal soul.

Instead, Paul presents a different path. *But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.* Does this seem unrealistic to you? We have had too much stuff for too long that we can't be content with just food and shelter. Our problem may come when we find ourselves unwilling to separate the basic necessities of life from the things with which we have surrounded our lives.

Contentment is a point of view. It's not about what we have. It's about what's in our hearts. Contentment is the opposite of the love of money. It's being satisfied with however much God is willing to bless us. *For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* In other words, nothing we have is ours. It's on loan from God for a while, and I can't keep it.

We can be content because we already possess everything we truly need. Paul wrote, *Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* God took your death and put it on Jesus and now he gives' Jesus life to you. At your baptism God called you to eternal life. Of all the things that God entrusts to us, this is the only thing that we can keep forever.

So what do you want out of life? Material abundance that doesn't last? *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.* What do you want out of life? We want what will help us and our families hold on to the eternal life that Jesus won for us. We want godly virtues that will be a blessing to those around us. We not only will want that, we will fight for it.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. What fight is Timothy and we to fight? It is that to which Jesus testified to before Pilate. On Good Friday, already beaten and bloodied, Jesus stood before Pilate and testified to the truth. His kingdom, he said, is a kingdom of truth.

So, we are to fight for the truth. We are to stand up for God's truth when it is being attacked. We are to be willing to confess the truth, especially when others deny the truth. Of course, that means we need to know it ourselves and that means spending time in the Word so that we can know the truth.

The fight for the faith is a fight for eternal life. We should see every attack on God's truth as someone trying to take life away from us and our children. Would you let someone kill your children or abuse your children? No, of course not. Can we then let someone spiritual harm our children by robbing them of eternal life?

What do you want out of life? May our goal not be material abundance but righteousness and truth. What we want out of life is life, the life that we possess for eternity. And where do we get that life? *In the sight of God, who gives life to everything.* God gives life. By his resurrection Jesus conquered death and opened the gates to eternal life.

"As Alma looked at Clarence's body, she wished that she were the one lying in the coffin. How could she go on? What would be the point? For 47 years, Clarence had been in inseparable part of Alma's life. . . . She could not imagine life without him, and she was not sure that she wanted to try. She just wanted to die. . . .

"At the kitchen table where she and Clarence had sat each morning and drank coffee, she sat quietly with the bulletin from the funeral service. A part of the sermon text was printed inside: 'He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.' Alma realized that though Clarence was dead *physically*, he was really still living . . . and she would see him again." (Jacob Preus, *Just Words*, pp. 49-50)

What do you want out of life? Whatever you want out of life, what are you willing to pay for it? If we want material abundance in this life, are you willing to pay with eternity? May what we want out of life is to live. To live eternally.

And for that gift of life may we constantly thank God through Jesus Christ. *God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*