

Godliness & Giving

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. 1 Timothy chapter 6.

1 Timothy chapter 6. And if we read again at verse 9. 1 Timothy chapter 6.

1 Timothy chapter 6.

It's a subject which no one likes to raise, and yet it's required. It's a subject that's very sensitive, particularly in our current climate.

The subject, of course, as it was mentioned in verse 10, is money. Because when it comes to money within a church context, no one wants to talk about money or giving or tithing, especially the minister.

[1 : 47] But, you know, this is the good thing about studying books of the Bible, like 1 Timothy. Because when a serious or even a sensitive topic like this one comes up, you can't avoid it.

You can't just skim or skip over it. You have to deal with it as it is in Scripture. You have to deal with it directly. But the reason we usually sidestep or even steer away from these sensitive topics is often because we are reactive rather than proactive.

We are reactive rather than proactive. And what I mean by that is we often react to something. And you often see that in many different spheres of life.

We often react to something and do the opposite because others have gone to an extreme. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has never been afraid to mention their need for money.

In fact, the Vatican, as you know, it has been built on money, built on people paying for their family to be freed from purgatory. And they'd give their last penny to have their loved ones redeemed and rescued from purgatory and the possibility of an eternity in hell.

[2 : 59] If you remember Johann Tetzel, he was a traveling touter during the 16th century. And he traveled from town to town throughout Germany.

And he was always promising pardon from purgatory. And he would use all these rhymes to try and persuade people to cough up and to pay up.

He would use rhymes like when the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs. Or another one was place your penny on the drum, the pearly gates open and in strolls mum.

But you know, this indoctrination or manipulation or emotional blackmail, it was all in an attempt to make money. And sadly, it continues to this day.

But now in the 21st century, there's also Pentecostal prosperity preachers. And we know a few names. There's Joel Osteen. There's Joyce Myers.

[3 : 59] There's Rick Warren. These people are worth millions. But they don't promise pardon from purgatory. But they do promise healing from a handkerchief.

There's one prosperity preacher called Don Stewart. He's an American tele-evangelist. Maybe you've seen him on the God Channel. He claims to have apostolic status like the Apostle Paul. To the point that he can heal any disease with just a green handkerchief. A handkerchief that he has blessed with his apostolic status. Which is why Don Stewart, he sells all these green prosperity handkerchiefs.

With the promise of healing and prosperity when you buy one. And of course, Don Stewart, he lives in Paradise Valley in Arizona in a house that's worth 2.5 million.

And like him, there are many prosperity preachers who are not shy in asking for money to support their ministry. But you know, when it comes to the topic of ministers and money within a reformed Presbyterian church like ourselves, we are often reactive rather than proactive.

[5 : 12] Because in complete contrast to Roman Catholics and prosperity preachers who preach about money and giving and tithing almost on a weekly basis, we would probably mention it maybe

once a year.

But definitely once a decade. But you know, what we see here is that as Paul brings his first letter to a conclusion in chapter 6, Paul exhorts and he encourages Timothy to pastor his people about two things, godliness and giving.

He says to Timothy, pastor your people about godliness and giving. Pastor your people about godliness and giving.

There are two headings this evening, godliness and giving. So first of all, godliness. Look at verse 1. Paul writes, Now as you know, and as we've said over the past number of months, Paul wrote this personal and pastoral letter to gently guide Timothy through some of the pastoral problems he was facing as the pastor in Ephesus.

And we've put it together as under five Ps. There was problems, prayer, positions, passion, and pastoring. The problems were because the church was soft on sin.

[7 : 05] They were loose on the law. They were glossing over the gospel. Which is why Paul emphasized the importance of prayer. Pray for one another. Pray for those in authority.

And pray for those in positions of leadership within the church. Because as Paul explained in the third P, those who were in positions of leadership, they were actually the problem.

They were these erroneous elders and disobedient deacons who needed to be effective elders. And devoted deacons. Then the fourth P, as we saw in chapter 4, Paul emphasized and he exhorted Timothy to have a passion.

A passion for truth. By criticizing and condemning demonic doctrine. So he said to him, Have a passion for truth. Because if you don't, it will only get worse.

Satan will subtly and silently get a foothold and open the floodgates. And so having addressed the first four Ps, problems, prayer, positions, and passion.

[8 : 04] In these concluding chapters, chapters 5 and 6, Paul draws attention to the fifth and final P, pastoring. Where he encourages Timothy to pastor his people.

And he's to pastor them because as a people, he says, They are your church family. They are your church family. And as a family, as a church family, you're to love one another and look after one another.

You're to show care, concern, and compassion towards one another. You're to bear one another's burdens and baggage through prayerful and practical and pastoral care.

Timothy, he says, Pastor your people. And then in chapter 5, as we saw, Paul encouraged Timothy to pastor widows. We saw that in the first half of the chapter.

That widows would be godly, not gossipy. Then he said in the second half of chapter 5, to pastor the pastors. We saw that last Wednesday. Pastor the pastors so that they will be an effective leadership within the congregation.

[9 : 07] And now as we come to chapter 6, Paul encourages Timothy. He says to him, Timothy, Pastor your people in godliness and giving.

Pastor your people in godliness and giving. And you know, godliness is the theme in which Paul repeats and returns to time and time again in this letter.

Godliness and the need for godliness. It's mentioned nine times in this short letter. And four of them, what's remarkable is that four of these times where Paul mentions godliness are in this final chapter.

where Paul encourages and he exhorts Timothy to teach about godliness and to pursue godliness and to grow in godliness. Because as he says in verse 6, godliness with contentment is great gain. Godliness with contentment is great gain. Now of course, godliness is the opposite of worldliness. Godliness is the opposite of worldliness because worldliness is the desire to exalt and enjoy self.

[10 : 25] But godliness is the desire to exalt and enjoy God. So worldliness is the desire to exalt and enjoy self. Godliness is the desire to exalt and enjoy God.

And it was the 19th century free church minister, Horatius Boner, he wrote many hymns that I'm sure we're familiar with. But he once said, I looked for the church and I found it in the world and I looked for the world and I found it in the church.

I looked for the church and I found it in the world and I looked for the world and I found it in the church. It's a profound statement.

But you know, that statement is actually what Paul is highlighting here and homing in on. Because Paul is saying here that godliness is important in the life of the church.

But especially, godliness is important in the life of the Christian. And as Paul emphasizes, this applies to Christians not only in our place of worship on the Lord's day, but also in our place of work throughout the week.

[11 : 44] That's what he's speaking about in verses 1 and 2. He talks about slaves, but I suppose the modern equivalent would be employers and employees. You know, godliness or godlikeness, it is to be evident and it's to be expressed, as we say all the time, in our Christian commitment, our character, our conduct, and our conversation.

But as Paul highlights here, whether we are an employer or an employee. Therefore, godliness is not just a Sunday thing. Godliness is a daily thing.

We're to be godly and godlike in our Christian conduct, commitment, character, conversation. We're to be godly as a Christian employer or a Christian employee.

And we might wonder, well, what does godliness really look like? What is godliness really like? So godliness or godlikeness is seeking to imitate and emulate the character, the conduct, and the conversation of God himself, which, as you know, is a high standard.

We're not given a low bar in the Bible. We are given a high bar of holiness. Be holy, says the Bible, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.

[13 : 09] So it's a high standard that the Bible exhorts and emphasizes to us. And the Bible reminds us that God is a spirit and that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Therefore, the fruit of the spirit, which is the high bar of the Christian, the fruit of the spirit, should be evident and expressed in our Christian commitment, our character, our conduct, and our conversation as an employer or an employee.

Because as we said, as Paul is highlighting here in verses 1 and 2, godliness is not just a Sunday thing. Godliness is a daily thing. Godliness should not only be evident in our place of worship on the Lord's day.

Godliness should be evident in our lives, in our place of work throughout the week. There shouldn't be, Paul is saying, a contradiction. There shouldn't be a contradiction in our lives that we are happy and holy at worship on the Lord's day, but then horrible and harsh in the workplace on Monday.

There shouldn't be a contradiction, a Christian contradiction to what we are in church on the Sabbath and to what we are in the community on Tuesday or Wednesday.

[14 : 31] There shouldn't be this contradiction to what we are in the sanctuary on Sunday morning and what we are in the supermarket or the sports hall on a Thursday evening. My friend, godliness is not just a Sunday thing.

It's a daily thing. Therefore, how we treat one another, how we speak to one another, how we act to one another, how we interact with one another, it is integral and important.

It's essential in worship, but it's especially essential, says Paul, in the workplace. Why? Because in the workplace, in the workplace, the world is watching.

That's something we should never forget. In the workplace, the world is watching. That's something I always was aware of when I was working. The world is watching.

And as someone once said, a godly Christian life is an attractive advert for Christianity. A godly Christian life is an attractive advert for Christianity.

[15 : 45] But at the same time, a worldly Christian life is a discouraging, displeasing, and disappointing display for Christianity.

A worldly Christian life is discouraging, displeasing, and a disappointing display for Christianity. And of course, as Christians, we're not perfect.

We all know that. We all faint and fail and fall. But you know, we should never give the world an excuse. Never give the world an excuse to criticize or to condemn the Christian or the church.

And they'll always find something. They'll always nitpick at something. But you know, even as a Christian, as a Christian in the workplace, in the world, we should never criticize or condemn the Christian or the church to the world.

And it's always that fine line, isn't it? And I always go back to that saying I learned as a young Christian. Separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination.

[16 : 54] Separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination. And that's why Paul, he emphasizes and he explains in verse 3 that we're to speak with wholesome words.

Christ-like words. Godly words. We're not to get involved in filthy talk or filthy conversation. We're not to speak as someone who is proud or as he says in verse 4, is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy, Paul goes on, he has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

And what Paul is saying there is that, you know, there are some people in the world and in the workplace who love to have a discussion and a debate about Christianity with other Christians. I remember having loads of discussions and loads of debates and sometimes it's good and it's healthy to do that. But, you know, any discussion and any debate, it should always be, and it's very difficult, it should always be Christ-like.

[18:13] It should always be curtailed. It should always be controlled. That it doesn't get out of control and get heated and argumentative and aggressive. Sometimes, though, there are Christians, and that's what Paul is highlighting here, there are Christians in the church who love unhealthy discussion.

They love unhealthy debate. They discuss and debate the minor points of theology that they don't even understand themselves. Or they have unhealthy discussion and debate about Christianity with other Christians in front of other people.

And they do it because, as Paul highlights here, they're filled with pride. They want to feed their ego. They want to show off their knowledge. They want to show how godly they are.

They love controversy. They love quarrels. They're arrogant, sometimes even aggressive in their discussions and debates. And I'm sure we've come across these people. I'm sure we've experienced that in our own lives.

But Paul says that's not godliness. That's more like worldliness. Because that person, says Paul, is not mature in their faith.

[19:31] In fact, he says they're immature. They're ignorant of their Christian witness. They're ignorant of their Christian character and their conduct and their conversation before the world.

And as a Christian, they've forgotten their body ratio. They've forgotten their body ratio. That we have two ears and one mouth. Not two mouths and one ear.

We have two ears and only one mouth. Not two mouths and one ear. We need to be wise in the way we speak.

In our character, our conduct, and our conversation. Our Christian witness is important. That's what Paul is emphasizing. And our witness is important not only in worship on the Lord's day, but also in the workplace during the week.

And you know, Paul actually says here about those who love debates and discussions and heated arguments in public. He says, I think it's missing in the ESV, but it's in the authorized version.

[20:39] From such people, withdraw yourself. From such people, withdraw yourself. Timothy, pastor your people because godliness with contentment is great gain.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. Pastor your people, he says, in godliness. And pastor your people in giving. Which is what we see secondly.

Godliness and giving. Giving. So look at verse 6. He says, Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.

But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Now I'm sure that we're familiar with the lyrics of many pop songs. I'm sure we've heard them over the years such as Abba's song Money, Money, Money.

[21:51] It must be funny in a rich man's world. Or even the song by U2, I still haven't found what I'm looking for. Or the song by the Rolling Stones, I can't get no satisfaction.

But as Christians, as Christians, we know or we should know that we'll only find satisfaction in Christ.

We know or we should know that we'll only find what we're looking for and longing for when we've found Christ and everything is about Christ.

We'll only find what we're seeking and searching for when we have Christ. We'll only fill that void in our life when we fill it with Christ. Because as Paul says in verse 6, and it's the key verse to this chapter, godliness with contentment is great gain.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. But you know, what we must remember here as Paul writes, and this is him drawing to the close of his life and the end of his ministry, he's speaking here from experience.

[23 : 00] This is a man who has experienced lots in his life and in his ministry, and he's speaking from experience because you remember when Paul wrote to the Philippians.

When he wrote to the Philippians, he reminds the Philippians that he's in prison in Rome. He's chained to a Roman guard day and night. But as he comes to the close of his letter in Philippians chapter 4, Paul says, I have learned.

I have learned that in whatever situation I am in to be content. I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. And Paul explains that the way he learned contentment in Christ, so the way he learned to be content in Christ was as he says in Philippians 4, verse 13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. In other words, when he has Christ, he has everything. He lacks nothing.

[24 : 15] And that's why Paul speaks from experience when he says here in verse 6, godliness with contentment is great gain. Paul knew, as he says in verse 7, we brought nothing into this world and will take nothing out with us.

Therefore, if we have food and if we have clothing, we have enough because Christ is everything. Christ is everything. If we have food and clothing, we have plenty.

We should be content with that because Christ is everything. And you know, Paul is reminding us that we need to be wise with our finances. We need to remember that we can't live out with our means or get into debt.

But, says Paul, there's always that danger. And he always warns us of the danger. That's his pastoral heart. He warns us of the danger in verse 9.

those who desire to be rich, fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[25 : 22] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

He says, the love of money, verse 10, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. So, the desire and the determination for more and more and more.

You know, it was once said that the rich are not always godly, but the godly are always rich. The rich are not always godly, but the godly are always rich.

And the godly are always rich, as you can see from Scripture, is because whether they have earthly wealth or not, they know that their treasure is in heaven.

They know that they have an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, but is reserved in heaven for us. They know that they have the king's riches waiting them on the other side of the veil.

[26 : 32] That's why Paul says in verse 6, our key verse, godliness is more important. Godliness with contentment. That's what gain is.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. And as Paul is teaching here, he says that a demonstration of godliness is a desire to give.

a demonstration of godliness is a desire to give. Timothy, pastor your people about giving because it's biblical. Pastor your people about giving because it's biblical.

The concept, as you know, of the free will offering, it's a biblical concept. It dates all the way back to the Old Testament where the Lord gave Moses instructions on how to build the tabernacle.

And the Lord said to Moses, he said, speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution from everyone whose heart moves them. You shall receive the contribution.

[27 : 33] And that's the model we still use today because in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, Paul talked about giving to the work and the witness and the worship of the gospel.

But he said, you're to give your contribution not by command or compulsion or coercion. No, as Paul says, each one must give as he or she has decided in their heart for God loves a cheerful giver.

Therefore, without the free will offerings of its people, the church wouldn't exist. The maintenance, the ministry and the mission of the church, it would never move forward.

The work, the witness and the worship of the congregation couldn't be possible. Therefore, Timothy, as Paul says, Timothy, pass to your people about godliness and giving because godliness with contentment is great gain and a demonstration of godliness is a desire to give.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. But you know, just in conclusion, I want to draw your attention to the first American billionaire.

[28 : 54] He was called John Rockefeller. John Rockefeller was a 19th century businessman. He was influential in the oil industry to the point that at the time he was the world's richest man with nearly 25 billion dollars.

And it's said that if he was alive today, John Rockefeller would make Bill Gates look like a pauper. He'd be that rich. But many people said that Rockefeller was like the rich fool.

He was like the rich fool who had a love and a longing for more money which led to all kinds of evil. And that was because when he became the richest man in the world, Rockefeller was asked by a reporter, he was asked how much money is enough?

to which Rockefeller replied, just a little bit more. Just a little bit more. But I want to add to that, and this is what's often overlooked or even omitted about Rockefeller's life, is that what I've read about him is that he later became a Christian.

Like many of us, Rockefeller had an upbringing and an influence from a Christian mother. A mother who was devoted to the Lord and devoted in her godliness.

[30 : 16] And so when Rockefeller became a Christian later in life, he had that same desire and that same devotion for godliness. You read that Rockefeller was a Baptist, nothing wrong with that, but he was very devoted in his Christianity.

He would read the Bible daily as it says, he would attend prayer meetings twice a week and he would also host a Bible study in his own home. But more than that, Rockefeller believed that his wealth was a gift from God which he was to use wisely.

He was to use it wisely by giving it away to others. And that's what he did. You read what he gave away. Rockefeller believed that in the biblical principle found in Luke 6, 38, give and it will be given to you.

A good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And with that, Rockefeller, he sometimes gave tens of thousands of dollars to Christian groups, to churches, to organizations, to missionary movements, to missionary charities, and even universities, and also orphanages.

He once gave \$580 million to a university and \$550 million to hospitals and medical research.

[31 : 42] Rockefeller, he saw money as his God-given gift which he gave away. He gave away to support and strengthen the work, the witness, and the worship of the gospel.

And that's what Paul is reminding Timothy as well. Timothy, pastor your people. Pastor your people. Pastor them about godliness, not only in the place of worship, but also in the workplace.

And pastor your people about giving. Because godliness with contentment is great gain. And a demonstration of godliness is a desire to give.

So pastor your people about godliness and giving. Pastor your people about godliness and giving. May the Lord bless these few thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word, that Thy Word directs us and teaches us.

[32 : 47] It is the only rule to direct us and to teach us. And we give thanks that it even directs us about the sensitive topics of life. Topics that we might want to avoid discussing.

But we bless Thee that Thy Word deals with it so graciously. Reminding us that Thou art a God who has given us everything. And that we are to respond in faith and obedience to Thee.

Lord bless us as a people. Watch over us we ask and help us in all that we see, all that we do, the way we live our lives, that we would live godly lives to Thy glory and the furtherance of Thy kingdom.

Go before us and we pray. Watch over us we ask for we ask it in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. We're going to sing again continuing in Psalm 116.

Psalm 116, again in the Scottish Psalter, page 396. We're singing from verse 7 down to the verse marked 12.

[34 : 00] Psalm 116, we're singing from verse 7. And as you know, after we sing the Psalm, I'll ask two of the gentlemen to lead us in prayer and maybe for those who are maybe watching at home on the live stream.

Just to highlight the few prayer points that we receive every week, you get them by email. Just to remember to pray this week for Dow and Vale, Dow and Vale Free Church or as some might remember it as Partick Highland.

So to pray for the area of Partick as they reach out and to pray for the minister. The minister is Kenny MacLeod. Most people still call him Kenny Carloway.

So Kenny MacLeod is the minister there. So remember them in Partick. And we're also encouraged to pray for Wynchborough as a church plant and they're seeking to move forward with the church plant.

So pray for them. They're obviously total contrast as congregations. Dow and Vale, a long established church that many people know about, many people have worshipped in and yet Wynchborough, so fragile, so small, new beginnings, just a seedling and yet it's still as important to pray for that work as well.

[35 : 13] So Dow and Vale, Wynchborough, pray for the free church camps. We have a few campers I think from our own congregation this year. So pray for the young, pray for the young people as they're growing up and pray for the camps that have been blessed to many over the years.

many people have come to faith through camps, so pray for them and also remember the faith mission as they work or serve over in South Lochs.

So please remember them in prayer. So we'll sing Psalm 116 and verse 7. O thou my soul, do thou return unto thy quiet rest, for largely lo, the Lord to thee his bounty hath expressed.

We'll sing down to the verse marked 12 to God's praise. O thou my soul, do thou return unto thy quiet rest, for the Lord to thee for the Lord to thee his bounty hath expressed.

For my distress for my distress soul from death, delivered was by thee.

[36 : 48] Thou kids my mourning my eyes from tears, my feet from falling free.

I in the land of those that live will walk the Lord before.

I did believe, therefore I speak, I was afflicted sore.

I said when I was in my haste, that all men liars be.

What shall I render to the Lord for all his gifts to me?