

1 Timothy 6:1-10     “The Economics of Sound Doctrine”  
Proverbs 15  
Psalm 8

(October 23, 2011)

I have taken 1 Timothy 3:14-15 as the central point of the book:

“I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay,  
you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God,  
which is the church of the living God,  
a pillar and buttress of the truth.” (3:14-15)

You need to see that truth and goodness are related.

The church of the living God is “a pillar and buttress of the truth.”

If you believe what is true, then you will behave rightly –  
you will do what is good.

If you believe a lie, then your behavior will follow the lie.

Right up front you will say to me,

“But pastor, that’s just not true!

There are all sorts of unbelievers who lead very good lives!

Mormons, Jews, Muslims, atheists – all can be very kind people.”

Certainly!

They *can* lead very good lives and be very kind people.

But they cannot behave rightly.

Because the first – and greatest – commandment is to love the LORD your God  
with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

You must love the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit –  
above all else.

Being faithful to a lie is not a good thing.

It is good to be faithful – and I’ll admit that I am very impressed  
with the fidelity of a devout Muslim or Mormon.

And the faithfulness that they show is (in the abstract) quite admirable.

But faithfulness to a lie is bondage.

Think of the classic story of the prince or princess who is kidnapped as a baby,  
and raised by someone else for their own advantage.

Whether C. S. Lewis’s “Shasta” in *The Horse and Its Boy*

or the recent *Rapunzel* –

the child shows admirable fidelity to the false parent.

And it says good things about that child –

but the truth is still the truth.

And in the same way,  
if you serve a false god, then you are not loving the true God with all your heart.

At the intersection of truth and goodness is godliness.  
Godliness (or piety) is where your practice embodies your beliefs.

And godliness, as Paul makes clear in 3:16  
is all about Jesus.

The incarnation and the resurrection of Jesus *is* the mystery of godliness –  
the incarnation and resurrection – not merely as intellectual doctrines,  
but as historical realities that were attested and proclaimed in heaven and on earth.

As Paul says in 3:16, when he declares the truth of which the church is a pillar and buttress:

“Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness.”

And what is the mystery of godliness?

What is the secret of piety?

“He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”

So as we go through Paul’s exhortations as to how to behave in the household of God –  
never forget that all this is rooted in the mystery of godliness – Jesus Christ himself!

I’ve entitled the sermon “the Economics of Sound Doctrine” –

because economics means literally “the law of the household.”

Paul has said that he is talking about how to behave in the household of God –

in other words, he is laying out the way in which the household of God should operate:

the rules for Christian living (“the economy” of the church).

### **1. Slaves, Honor Your Masters (v1-2)**

And Paul starts his exhortation regarding economics with two exhortations to slaves.

Scripture neither promotes nor condemns slavery.

Rather, it *assumes* slavery.

Slavery has existed in some form in almost every culture in human history.

Nowadays we tend to think that democracy is good and slavery is bad,

but for most of human history was dominated by monarchs and slavery,  
rather than democracy and free labor.

And it’s worth pointing out that free labor is not quite as free as the rhetoric suggests.

One of the brilliant insights of the modern industrial movement

was the recognition that if you allow slaves the freedom of movement,  
the freedom to choose their own master,  
and give them more time off and more control over their work environment,  
they become more productive –  
and you make more money!

Oh, and if you stop calling them slaves and start calling them “employees” that really helps too!

But so long as you work for someone else,  
you are “under their yoke.”  
(And Paul says that’s just fine!)

<sup>1</sup> *Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.*

I want you to see two things here.

Paul does not merely say that you must *treat* your master with honor –  
but that you must *regard* your master as *worthy* of all honor.  
He is not just concerned for your outward actions –  
but for how you *think* about your master.

Your outward behavior is a reflection of your inward character.  
If you secretly despise your master,  
then that attitude will be reflected in your behavior,  
no matter how well you cover it up with sweet sounding words.

Your boss – and all those in authority over you – are “worthy of all honor,”  
not because they are such wonderful people,  
but because God has put them in authority over you.

Paul is articulating the same principle that Moses addresses in Deuteronomy 17-18,  
where he interprets the fifth commandment  
in terms of the honor you show to prophets, priests, kings, and judges.

So, how do you think about your boss?  
How do you regard those in authority over you?  
Do you consider them worthy of all honor – because of their position?  
Or do you dishonor them in your thoughts, words, or deeds?

And second, notice the result:

if you dishonor your master, then the name of God and the teaching will be reviled.

If you dishonor your master, then you dishonor God,  
because other people see no difference between Christians and non-Christians.  
When Christian slaves act like other slaves, then the doctrine of Christ is dishonored.

You should be known in the office as the person who shows the greatest respect and honor for those in authority –  
not merely to “curry favor,”  
but because you sincerely honor those who are in authority.

And what is more (v2):

*<sup>2</sup>Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.*

If those who benefit from your labor are believers,  
how much more should you show honor and respect!

Whenever you have the opportunity to benefit other believers,  
you should do so –  
and especially when they are in authority over you.

You can overdo this.

Steve Taylor once mocked this in a satire where he said  
“You should only drink milk from a Christian cow!”  
Paul’s point is not that Christians should create a “Christian ghetto” –  
but a “colony of heaven.”

The difference between a ghetto and a colony  
is that a ghetto is designed to be a safe place for “our kind”  
in the midst of a hostile world.

But a colony is an outpost of “our *king*”  
that seeks to engage the surrounding world  
as an advance settlement of our heavenly King of kings,  
who claims all the earth as his own.

The Kingdom of God has been established in the ascension of Jesus Christ  
to the right hand of the Father.

We are to live as children of our heavenly Father – as a family, a household,  
as a colony of that heavenly kingdom on earth.

It is why we pray, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

You do this, not by “retreating” from the world,  
but by advancing – colonizing the world with a new way of living:  
a way of living that is oriented around the cross.

Verses 3-5 then explain that any different doctrine will result in a different practice.

Listen to the whole section:

## **2. Different Doctrine Leads to Different Practice (v3-5)**

*Teach and urge these things. <sup>3</sup>If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup>he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup>and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.*

Note that it all starts with teaching a different doctrine.

If you do not agree with “the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ  
and the teaching that accords with godliness,”  
then you are “puffed up with conceit and understand nothing.”

The first thing I should say here is that Paul is not talking about “systematic theology.”  
Paul is not saying that if your systematic theology is exactly right,  
then everything else will fall into line!

The “doctrine” includes *both* what man is to believe concerning God,  
and what duty God requires of man,  
*and* how and what we are to *love*.

Faith, action, and love are all bound up in Paul’s idea of “doctrine, sound words, and teaching.”

A man can subscribe wholeheartedly to the Westminster Confession,  
and yet fail to agree with the “sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Indeed, if conformity to the Westminster Confession

becomes a higher priority than agreement with the teaching that accords with godliness,  
then the result will likely be that  
“he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words,  
which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,” etc.

But Paul is convinced that depravity of mind is a result of deprivation of truth.

There is a false kind of knowledge –

“the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’”  
of verse 20 –

but the truth (as it is in Jesus) produces godliness in thought, speech, and behavior

This truth plainly includes propositional content –

the “sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness”

but this doctrine – this teaching –

is nothing less than the mystery of godliness – Jesus Christ himself –  
“who was manifested in the flesh,

vindicated in the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.” (3:16)

The mystery of godliness – the secret of piety –  
is the incarnation and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because the incarnation and ascension of Jesus  
are at the heart of what God is doing in history –  
together with the proclamation of that truth by the church.

Therefore the teaching that accords with godliness  
is the teaching (the doctrine) that accords with Jesus himself.

There are some people who believe that godliness is a means of gain.  
In fact, there are a *lot of people* in this category.

The health and wealth gospel – the name it and claim it crowd –  
thinks that God’s purpose is to make you happy and wealthy.  
There are any number of others, who have identified God’s purposes for history  
with a particular nation:  
Eusebius tried to identify Christian-ness with Roman-ness.  
Others later did the same with Germany, England, or the United States.

If you are European in origin, then your ancestors probably converted to Christ  
out of a desire to share in the material prosperity of Christian Rome.

But it’s too easy to criticize others.  
*We* are guilty of this,  
when we think that God “owes” us;  
when we complain about the cross that God calls us to bear patiently.

All too quickly we begin to think that if I do my part,  
then God will bless me with what I want.

Paul says that this is the fruit of a depraved mind, deprived of the truth.

Godliness is *not* a means to gain.  
There *is* great gain in godliness with contentment –  
but not worldly gain.  
What you gain in godliness is Jesus.

He is the mystery of godliness.

He is the secret of piety.

And what you gain in Jesus is the inheritance of the new creation!

But don't expect much in terms of this age!

### **3. Godliness with Contentment vs. the Love of Money (v6-10)**

#### **a. Godliness with Contentment: Nothing In/Nothing Out (v6-8)**

*<sup>6</sup>Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, <sup>7</sup>for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. <sup>8</sup>But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*

Do you have food and clothing?

Then be content.

There is nothing more tragic

than seeing people who *could* live comfortably on their income,  
striving with all their might to live like those who make more than they do.

And what is the result?

They are hounded by debt, constantly trying to figure some way out,  
and yet are constantly *adding* to the problem,  
because they *will not* be content with what they have.

You brought nothing into this world when you came.

You will take nothing out of this world when you leave.

“Ah,” you say, “but I will leave my children better off than my parents left me!”

Will you, now?

You will leave them the example of a depraved mind – deprived of the truth –  
because you thought that godliness was a means of gain!

You thought that if you just did the right things,

then God would bless you, reward you, give you the stuff that you wanted.

And that is the legacy you will leave them.

#### **b. The Love of Money: a Craving that Plunges You into Ruin (v9-10)**

*<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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.*

I think that modern money-gurus like Dave Ramsey have lots of good financial advice,  
but you have to be careful to pay attention to your desires.

“Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation.”

“Oh, but I don’t want to be rich – I just want to have enough!”

How much is enough?

Paul says, “if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”

Do you have food and clothing?

Then be content.

Most of you – according to the standards of Paul’s time –  
are fabulously wealthy!

You can afford to eat meat practically every day!

You have servants that do most of your work!

(I don’t see many of you women down at the river doing your wash –  
you have that mechanical slave in the laundry room do it for you!)

And most of you were conveyed here in a style and fashion  
that Caesar himself could only dream of!

Sure, if you compare yourself to those around you,  
maybe you are nowhere near the “wealthy” of our day.

But you have food and clothing.

In verse 17 Paul will address the rich.

“As for the rich in this present age,  
charge them not to be haughty,  
nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches,  
but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good,  
to be rich in good works,  
to be generous and ready to share,  
thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future,  
so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Note that this charge is for the “rich in this present age.”

How are they to use their riches?

By doing good – by being “rich in good works” – by being generous and sharing.

And note that this generous lifestyle is a lifestyle that is oriented towards the future –  
towards that “which is truly life.”

The “good life” is not about having lots of stuff.



The “good life” – that which is truly life – is about the future –  
it is about the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ascended king,  
for when Christ, who is our life, appears, we also will appear with him in glory.

One 18<sup>th</sup> century pastor suggested to his congregation  
that they look over their household budgets:

divide expenses into “necessities, conveniences, and luxuries.”

Start by eliminating the luxuries – you don’t really need those!  
And then for every penny you spend on conveniences, give a penny to the poor.

What would that look like today?

I’m not going to try to define each category for you.  
Something that is a convenience for one might be necessary for another.

The point is not to judge others in *their* spending habits!  
The point is to examine your own use of money –  
your own use of wealth –  
so that you can re-focus your priorities on the kingdom of Jesus.

Too often we think that God simply requires “tithing” –  
give your ten per cent to the church, and then use the rest for yourself.

But that wasn’t even true in the Old Testament!

In the Old Testament they had tithes, firstfruits,  
burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, peace offerings, freewill offerings,  
gleanings left for the poor...

And nowhere in the whole OT does God ever give a simple “percentage”  
that will make him happy.

Because God will not be happy until you love him.

God will not be happy so long as you love money.  
As Jesus put it, “You cannot serve both God and money.”

The tithe was to signify that *everything that you have* belongs to him.  
You are to use the whole of your wealth in his service.

How are you using your wealth to “be rich in good works”?  
Do you look for opportunities to help your fellow believers financially?

I know that for some people,  
they cannot imagine giving 10% of their income to the church.  
But when you begin to internalize the priorities of the kingdom,

you start realizing that if I can pay \$30 a month for television,  
I can certainly afford \$30 a month for helping those in need;  
if I can fork out \$50 to take my wife out to dinner,  
I can certainly find \$50 to provide food for the hungry.

Ginger and I became convinced several years ago that we needed to include this in our budget.  
We have a category in the budget for “those in need.”  
Sometimes we find a “tax deductible” charity for that –  
but don’t worry about whether it’s tax deductible!  
Other times it’s hiring someone who needs work.

It’s really easy to be selfish.  
It’s really easy to say “Oh, I could spend that money on something I want...”  
but true generosity says “my brother needs this more than I need that...”

As you start trying to put these things into practice,  
you start realizing that things you once considered “necessary”  
are really only conveniences;  
and things you thought were conveniences  
were really luxuries.

And you start to realize that Paul’s statement,  
that “there is great gain in godliness with contentment”  
is true.

“If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”

And consider the alternative:  
“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.”

It may work.  
You may get rich!  
At a terrible price that destroys you and your family!

Paul says that the love of money is a root of all evil  
(I think the ESV properly interprets this as “all *kinds* of evil”).

Philarugia – love of money –  
is condemned by Paul in 3:3 – when he says that a bishop must *not* be a lover of money  
and it is contrasted in 3:2 with *philoxenon* (love of strangers – hospitality).

Christians should love *people* – not money.

And the craving for money – the desire for “stuff” –  
has led some to “wander away from the faith  
and pierce themselves with many pangs.”

We’ll come back to this next time –  
because the second half of chapter 6 continues on these themes –  
so let me conclude today simply by reading verses 11-16:

*<sup>11</sup>But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup>I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, <sup>14</sup>to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup>who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*