

March 30, 2014

**PAUL'S LETTER TO TIMOTHY, PASTOR AT EPHESUS:
XVII. "The Folly of Material Satisfaction in Life"
I Timothy 6:6 – 10**

Introduction:

Our series is on Paul's letter encouraging Timothy to do remain at his post in the face of false teachers and teachings. Paul wanted his dear son in the faith Timothy to be a man of **T**_____.

The three truths that are central to the letter: **S**_____ for the faith, lead the church to **I**_____, **H**_____, and **I**_____ and **D**_____ the followers of Jesus.

The vital importance of personal worship, prayer, intercession, service, time in His word daily... Jesus uses that time to whisper His loving **D**_____ and **C**_____

The Brethren in Christ Church comes out of three streams of doctrine

For us the **H**_____ of **D**_____ is cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He leads us in a lifestyle of repentance.

Permitting the Holy Spirit to **C**_____ us, to **C**_____ us of our needs and to **T**_____ us from the inside out!

I. The Kingdom of the Heart that is Filled with God's Love:

The Biblical teaching on an experience with God that **C**_____ a person's **H**_____

Samuel and Eliab, I Samuel 16:7

We are all engaged in a battle to keep our hearts devoted to **G**_____ and **L**_____ God

The inner battle that we face is for the **C**_____, **C**_____ and **A**_____ of our hearts

The too often missing ingredient in North American Christianity

In our culture today the value is consumerism...

Paul wrote to Timothy about different values, I Timothy 6:6

II. Living the Values of a Different Kingdom Today:

Jesus words were clear about the call to enter the kingdom of heaven

We all enter His kingdom through the same doorway: **H**_____, we **O**_____ our **S**_____, and **C**_____ that we need a Savior

In His kingdom of the heart there are transcendent **T**_____ and **V**_____ that each one of us is called to embrace and live out...

The pathway that Jesus described for us to living in the blessing of God is clear and simple: **H**_____ Him with our hearts, desires, and choose to **G**_____ to those in need.

Jesus said: “What is highly esteemed among humans is detestable to God.”

III. The Folly of Material Happiness:

Proverbs 23:4, 5 and I Timothy 6:6 – 9

We must examine what the Bible says about the creeping allure of consumerism.

We are called to live a life that is not comprised of things that this world system can supply to us. We are called to **L**_____ **S**_____ with a generous and giving heart.

I Peter 2:11, Matthew 6:19, and Psalm 49:16, 17

IV. The Choking Effect of Things:

Luke 8:14 and I Timothy 6:10

Jesus taught us about how love for material things can choke out our ability to see and understand what really matters in life.

Paul writes about ‘loving money’

Four categories:

- 1. **V**_____
- 2. **T**_____
- 3. **A**_____
- 4. **D**_____ **L**_____ / **W**_____

Concluding Thoughts:

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

- 1. What were your thoughts about the call to permit the Holy Spirit to do His work in convincing us of our need and convicting us to draw us to repentance?*
- 2. What were your thoughts as you heard the teaching about each of us being in a battle for the contents, character, and affections of our hearts?*
- 3. What were your thoughts as you heard the teaching about the culture's value of consumerism finding its way into our hearts?*
- 4. What did you think of the truth that Jesus calls us to engage in a kingdom that has transcendent truths and values for all of us to embrace and live out?*
- 5. Do you agree or disagree with main point of the foolishness of thinking that we can find lasting satisfaction from acquiring material things?*
- 6. What were your thoughts of the four different ways that materialism chokes out the real meaning and our ability to live our spiritual life?*
- 7. Read aloud together Matthew 6:19 – 33 and discuss insights that you have regarding what Jesus taught about materialism and prosperity.*
- 8. Read aloud together Luke 12:13 – 31 and discuss insights that you have regarding what Jesus taught about riches and accumulation.*
- 9. Think about your choices in lifestyle as you seek to live out the simple message of the Gospel of Jesus. What are things that you will want to take away from the message on desiring wealth and consumerism, to think about, and to perhaps embrace in your value system?*

March 30, 2014 AM
Pastor Ken Hepner

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Introduction:

This morning we reengage in our study of Paul's letter to his son in the faith Timothy, whom Paul had commissioned to pastor the church in Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to encourage his son in the faith to remain at his post and to do the right thing as a man **Truth**. The fact was that Timothy had to stand for the simple Gospel of Jesus in the face of false teachers and teachings in Ephesus.

There are three central truths that stand out in this letter, which are really relevant to our church family life at Cedar Grove nearly 2000 years later: Paul writes to him to **Stand for the Faith** as it has been passed on to him, the Gospel of Jesus. He tells Timothy to lead the church to **Internal Health** by insuring that in every leader he can see the life of the Spirit of Jesus living daily. He tells Timothy to **Instruct and Disciple** the believers at Ephesus in the truth, to make the connection between their beliefs and how they lived the message daily.

My heart-cry is for our church to be comprised of people of the Truth of Jesus. I want all of us as attendees of Cedar Grove Church to be men and women, teens, and children, who engage in your own spiritual disciplines. We are each responsible to be people of worship, prayer, service, and who are reading and thinking about God's Word to us in the Bible! When we faithfully do these activities we give the Spirit of Jesus a place to whisper His loving **Direction** and His **Correction** in our hearts and souls!

The key reason why I am so intent on having you **Read** and **Reflect** on God's Word daily, to **Pray** and intercede before Him is that I want you to have a time in your life when Jesus can come to you and speak His truth deeply in your heart and soul and mind. I passionately desire to have all of us to be in possession of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus so that we have within us the ability to discern false teachings when we hear them.

In our local church family here at Cedar Grove, we are part of the global community called the Brethren in Christ Church. We have embraced three streams of truth or beliefs that focus our attention on what is going on in the **Heart** of each **Believer** in Christ Jesus:

- Wesleyan thought, is a focus on seeking to live a life that is pure in the sight of God, as the Holy Spirit lives in us;
- Arminian thought focuses on the belief that we keep our will after we meet Jesus and must cooperate with His working in our hearts;
- Anabaptists who believe that we are called to live in this world but not be of this world's value systems, so for us loving others and living in peace with people are very important.

For us, these things that we believe and hold precious as truth, tell us that when we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit, repent of our sins, and believe in and receive Jesus in our hearts, that is the beginning of our spiritual journey, not the heart of the journey. For us the **Heart of Discipleship** is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit of Jesus as he leads us to live an ongoing lifestyle of repentance, love for God and others, service, and obedience to His will for our lives!

We believe the real issue in discipleship is growth and maturing in the image of Jesus as the Holy Spirit lives in our lives, **Confronts** us with our selfishness and self-interest, **Convicts** us of our need of His truth, and works to **Transform** us from the inside out over our lifetime. This walking with Jesus, this cooperating with the Holy Spirit is at the heart of what Paul was writing to Timothy to preach and teach at Ephesus!

The Kingdom of the Heart that is Filled with God's Love:

I am thoroughly captivated by the Biblical teaching on an experience with God that radically **Changes** a person's **Heart**. In the Bible the heart is considered to be absolutely essential in living the Christian life. The heart is seen as the very essence of one's life, the seat of one's affections and decision-making, the place in our lives where the Holy Spirit dwells, and the issue that the Lord God considers first when he looks at our lives.

There is a marvelous story found in the Old Testament that illustrates how the Lord God views the contents of our hearts. When God was issuing the call for the second king of Israel to arise, the one He had chosen to take Saul's place, He told His man Samuel he wasn't looking at the right things when he saw Jesse's son Eliab and thought he was the one. In I Samuel 16:7 God says, *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I the Lord have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*

--When God looks at the heart of each one of us, does He see us leaning into His love and mercy, longing to know His presence and power, or does He see us leaning away from Him into sin and selfishness? The way we are leaning is incredibly important to God!

I'd like us to remember the truth that we are all engaged in a significant battle to keep our hearts devoted to **Knowing** God personally and **Loving** God so much that we will choose to do what gives Him great delight. When Solomon wrote in the Proverbs, 4:23 *"Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life,"* he was giving us a pretty important message about our heart's desires. You and I are the keepers of what we cherish in our hearts. Spiritual passion is essentially embracing a deep desire and longing to know and walk with God. Spiritual passion in my heart is first a choice of my will and then it becomes my motivation and guide to my actions.

Let's be really honest with one another at the outset of this message today: We are all involved in a battle for the **Contents**, **Character**, and **Affections** of our hearts! We are all involved in the daily battle to make quality choices of the heart, to espouse godly desires within, and then act in our lifestyle choices in God-honoring ways.

Could we establish together another thing that is open and honest? In our culture here in North America we do not do the heart part of our spirituality well. We tend to serve the Lord with our heads and our deeds, and we tend to think that passionate spirituality is little more than emotionalism for the uneducated. I couldn't disagree with that more strongly than I do! Passion can be emotional but is definitely not emotionalism. Passion is a choice to follow a way of life with yearning and desire to do it well. I think passion of the heart and will is the missing ingredient in North American Christianity.

This missing ingredient is a reason why we get all caught up in the stuff of this world system! Rather than being passionate about following Jesus in life, we get ourselves all lathered up about earning money and getting things in life, thus we misplace our passions and desires. We make the huge mistake of getting our hearts focused on loving and wanting material things

In our culture in North America, we are confronted with a set of cultural values based on consumerism, which is the unbridled pursuit of everything we didn't know we needed in order to be happy. This system of values teaches us that true happiness and inner satisfaction are just one purchase away. And, of course, the truth is that happiness always remains one purchase away. Consumerism's mantra is "You are what you own or have the ability to buy." By way of contrast, our Christian value is that your worth is based on what you are, not what you possess.

Consumerism is in essence absolutely opposite to what has been true of historic Christianity for two thousand years. Jesus is Lord can't be merely a creed I recite, but rather must be a lifestyle I embrace in every way. Unbridled selfishness is the exact opposite of living a godly, content, and self-controlled lifestyle under His leadership. Paul wrote to his son Timothy, in the context of turning away from loving money, I Timothy 6:6 "*godliness with contentment is great gain.*"

Living the Values of a Different Kingdom Today

Jesus' message was pretty clear when He began His ministry among us. "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near you.*" This is a call to think in terms of God's Kingdom invading the earth and living in my heart. It's a call to think about something that is far bigger than my own life and my little corner of the world. It is as though Jesus was saying straight to my heart, "Ken, because of who I am and what I have come to do for your salvation, the kingdom of God is within your grasp right now. Knowing God intimately Ken, is right at your fingertips so reach out and touch Him."

We all enter the kingdom of God through the very same doorway of voluntary **Humility**, to **Own** our **Sins** and to **Confess** our need of a Savior. We are all called to repent of sin, believe in Christ Jesus' finished work on the cross, that His death pays the penalty of our sin, and receive Him into our hearts as risen Lord Jesus! The gift of salvation by faith in Christ is really the miracle of new birth – there are two people, two personalities, two mentalities, and two sets of desires living in one body. You and I live in our physical body with the Holy Spirit of the Living God.

In the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus there are inherent transcendent **Truths and Values** that each adherent is invited to embrace and live out in our decision making processes. One of the key values in this kingdom of heaven on earth is that we **Love both God and People**. Loving

God first, with all my heart, soul, mind, will, and body is a call to value what God values; to esteem as precious what God esteems as precious. That means we care for people far more than we value the stuff of this world system, possessions, status, and material things.

As we unpack this concept of inherent and transcendent values I would like you to consider with me that the Bible teaches us a basic truth about living in the blessing of God. If we know the truth and seek to live the truth we will be blessed, that is we will enjoy the smile of God's favor in our lives. The Lord Jesus taught us that if we **Honor** Him with our hearts, our desires, the material possessions we're entrusted with, and if we **Give** to those who had need we would experience the blessing of God.

And let's be honest at even deeper levels. Jesus said, "What is highly esteemed among humans is detestable to God." The Holy Spirit of God will work in our hearts removing things that are crowding out spiritual life and health, things that are valued by the world system in which we live.

- Let's be clear that the Word of God teaches us to value what God values, to keep in step with the Holy Spirit who lives in us.
- Let's also be clear on the fact that the material blessedness of the North American value system is not a kingdom ethic.

God's blessing may include material prosperity and it may not. But one thing is certainly true of materialism as it works its way into my life: It definitely has a desensitizing effect on my heart's pursuit of God's presence!

The Folly of Material Happiness

Proverbs 23:4, 5 *"Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."*

I Timothy 6:6 – 9 *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."*

The first thing we need to do is to examine what the Bible has to say about the insidious creeping allure of consumerism, the insatiable quest for material happiness! The world's value system blares at us with alarming regularity: "If you can just get this better paying job, this thing -- car, house, or recreational activities, you will have found material nirvana and you will be truly happy!"

The philosophical issue behind that statement is that we are ultimately living for the here and now. Consumerism thrives on being driven to achieve true happiness. One doesn't have to actually be rich in the things and goods of this world to have this issue be a really significant

inward wrestling match. Paul told Timothy it is a matter of getting our wants and needs mixed up, a matter of the heart's desires. *"People who want to get rich fall into temptation."*

The Bible calls us to be the people of God in Christ Jesus, who are called to not live ultimately for the things that this world can supply to us. We're asked to make the choice of the heart to live simply, with a generous and giving heart attitude, in the here and now. There is a huge difference between living for something and living in something!

Peter wrote to the followers of Jesus and encouraged us all to think of ourselves as passing through this world on our way to another destination, and therefore to think of the desires we deal with for the things of this world in light of that truth. I Peter 2:11 *"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*

The truth is that materialism cannot deliver the goods promised because the fact is that nothing outward will ever bring us to a place of deep inner satisfaction or happiness. Material things were never meant to be cherished in the heart. They were meant for our use, not for our adoration. The Lord Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:19, *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth."* And as He finished that thought He told us why we shouldn't store up treasures for ourselves in the here and now, *"where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal."*

Jesus wasn't saying that material things are necessarily evil in and of themselves, but that it isn't very smart to put high value on something that doesn't last. The Psalmist says, in Psalm 49:16, 17 *"Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him."*

The Choking Effect of Things:

Luke 8:14 *"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature."*

I Timothy 6:10 *"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."*

Notice that what Jesus is talking about in the parable of the sower is the choking affect things can have on the ability to know and understand what really matters, the essence of where real life is lived. Notice also in Paul's words to Timothy it isn't necessarily the accumulation of things but the desire to have many things that is at the very root of all kinds of evil. So how does love of money or material things break in and choke out the life of Jesus in the hearts of His people?

Let's break this choking affect down into four categories:

Values – the accumulation of material things often has to do with our search for significance. In North American culture, our contemporary society seems to determine status and significance on the basis of income, possessions, and accomplishments. The moniker is: "You are what you

have the ability to buy.” It seems that if we want to be highly regarded a good income, a great house, a nice wardrobe, the outward appearance of success are good places to begin. When we permit ourselves to get sucked into the values of materialism and accomplishment, we can miss the truth that there is a completely different and ultimately higher value system in the kingdom of God. We must take our primary significance questions to the Lord, to our sonship or daughterhood to God. Our calling in life as God’s people is to love God deeply, love people, and use the things of this world to invest in kingdom ethics.

Time – The accumulation of our stuff is one thing. Taking care of all of our stuff is another thing entirely. The time constraints put on us, by all of the time and labor saving devices we own, is staggering! The value of living simply demands that I take a look at the time constraints my accumulation of things has placed on me. If I am too busy taking care of things to get alone with Jesus on a daily basis in prayer and worship, in reading and reflecting on the Bible, I am too busy. If I am too busy to hold my wife’s hand and take her for a walk, or roll my grandchildren around on the living room carpet, I am too busy and some things have to go. In the verse cited earlier from Luke 8:19 Jesus said the things of this world can have a choking affect and one of the things they can choke is our time to invest in relationships.

Attention – The accumulation of our stuff has another significant affect on us that we, as followers of Jesus, God’s sons and daughters, must think about. The things we have to do in order to get and maintain the material things of this world can and does sap our ability to give attention to other values in life. The accumulation of what we can provide for ourselves also has a net affect of removing us from the immediacy of knowing that we are ultimately dependent on God as our ultimate source of life and peace. Jesus’ words are also relevant regarding choking out true life. When having and attaining things in life choke out my ability to understand that I really do need to know and walk with God, I have permitted materialism to grip me!

Debt Load/Worries – For people in North American culture debt load and worries over making ends meet truly affect the pace we live on and the peace we live in. Worries over finance charges, maxing out credit cards, and 120% mortgages are a significant drain on the inner resources of joy in the human heart. If you are in a position to do so, get out of debt as quickly as you possibly can. If you have any credit cards with a 15 % or higher APR get rid of them. Pay them off and cancel them as quickly as you can. The amount of communication that we are receiving from our culture telling us to get into debt more and more is alarming. Our nation is on the brink of financial disaster because of our growing and out of control spending habits!

The Bible is clear that the antidote for the disease of consumerism and materialism creeping into our hearts and choking out our spiritual lives is to live a life of personal **Worship**. As a personal and private worshipper, we are brought into His presence and we are invited to deeply surrender to His presence and power living in us transforming us. We invite the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and impassion us with His holy love. Where the Spirit of Jesus lives, that heart and life embraces His values. He leads us to be gracious and kind to others, to have a giving heart and a life characterized by **Generosity!**

Concluding Thoughts:

