

It's only Money

1 Timothy 6:6-10

MISQUOTES

"Elementary, my dear Watson" - never written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (actually used by P G Wodehouse.

"It's life, Jim, but not as we know it." Not Star Trek but Star Trekkin'

"Play it again, Sam."

You dirty rat!

It's surprising how many of the world's most famous quotes are misquotes – either never said or not quoted correctly. One of the most famous misquotes is from the Bible and I'm sure you recognised it from our reading.

MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL > KJV

Yes, you spotted it. What Paul says is the *love of money*. In fact, the rest of the off-quoted phrase is the AV translation which is also a poor translation of the Greek – so we get another misquote.

GNB

In fact, the GNB for a change gets it spot-on: *For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil.*

MONEY IS AMORAL

When we hear the verse like that we get the idea of what Paul is talking about. Money itself is amoral. It's a medium of exchange designed to allow us to trade in goods and services. It's useful stuff because we use it to buy food, clothing, provide shelter, get around and all the rest of it. In modern society it's difficult to do without it. In truth, we can do a lot of good things with it. As a church we regularly make gifts of money, both through the offering and also individually, and that's used to do good things here and throughout the world.

It's the *love of money* that's a source, a root, of many kinds of evil. The Greek word for "love of money" might be more simply translated as avarice. It's an old fashioned word is avarice but it correctly gets the sense of the Greek word. Having money is one thing, but what happens when we make it an end in itself; when we make it our focus in life, when we get greedy, then bad things happen. We all know the extent to which people go to to acquire wealth and the evils that are perpetrated by greed. Go through all the major issues in the world today, and one major source in each of them will be simple human greed – people acquiring wealth and power at the expense of others. Other factors may be present, but analyse any major world issue and avarice is in there somewhere.

THE THEME OF THE DECADE

Comment on Slides

The whole background of the past few years has been that our economy crashed because people wanted more – buying with money they didn't have, speculating to accumulate, paying themselves outrageous bonuses, inflating prices beyond what things were worth. And who was most hurt by the crash when it came? Not the people who caused it, but the poor and disadvantaged in society. And as you know, there still is a deep feeling of injustice in society that the people and the institutions most responsible for the crash have

never been brought to account.

What caused it? Simple avarice. The love of money and we have seen how it is indeed a source of many kinds of evil.

Note Paul's words though. VERSE The GNB translation is spot on – a source of many kinds of evil. It's not the root of all evil. Just a root of many other kinds of evil. If you think about it avarice is just one sin, but there are plenty of others that have the same kind of effect – infidelity, lust, unforgiveness – and they are also the source of many kinds of evil.

But let's not get away from the fact that love of money is a major issue in scripture.

SLIDE WITH INFO

Larry Burkett notes that there are some 1600 verses in the Bible that have to do with money or finances and over 500 that have in them the words "money", "wealth" or "riches". Why? Because there is a recognition that people can respond to money in a negative and destructive way.

At the very worst, love of money can result in acquisition of wealth and material things can become someone's sole purpose in life, together with all the things that wealth also brings such as status and power. Spiritually it can be an idol that takes or vies for God's place in the lives of His people. It's the worst thing we can possibly do. Jesus said that we can't serve two masters; God and money/mammon.

We have all heard the stories of people who have got rich and lived to forget it. When we were in Swaffham, a young dustman and local tearaway from Kings Lynn won £2m on the lottery. He bought a posh house in Swaffham, bought a Ferrari even though he didn't know how to drive, had mad parties at his house. He got in all sorts of trouble and ended up in jail whilst his family continued to live off his wealth – until it was all gone!

Wealth doesn't bring happiness as anyone who hasn't got any money will tell you! As someone once said, a second after death, the richest man in the world and the poorest man in the world both have the same status – they have nothing!

But there are plenty of greedy businessmen and bankers that are not living miserable lives in their ostentatious wealth. They really enjoy the mansion, the tropical holidays and a choice of Ferrari when they go to the shops. But how many people have they trodden on to get where they have, or who have they exploited, directly or indirectly?

As Paul notes in the earlier part of this chapter, even in the first century, there was also no shortage of people that made a good living out of religion too. They even had the nerve to criticise Paul for being too poor to be a preacher!

So what should be our attitude to money and wealth as God's people? Let's see what Paul has to say here in 1 Timothy.

ENOUGH IS AS GOOD AS A FEAST

6 Well, religion does make us very rich, if we are satisfied with what we have. 7 What did we bring into the world? Nothing! What can we take out of the world? Nothing! 8 So then, if we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us.

Yes, verse 6 is correct. We are richest when we are satisfied with what we have. That's But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

10 For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows. so true isn't it. The happiest Christian people I've ever met haven't necessarily been rich or poor, but they have been satisfied with what God has given them in life.

"... I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."
[Phil.4:11-13]

We didn't bring anything into this world and we certainly can't take anything out. So if we have all we need to live – food, clothes, shelter - we should be content. That's why God's people have always been concerned to support the poorest in society – because they are people who don't have enough. But for most of us, enough is should be as good as a feast. Actually the phrase enough is as good as a feast is the motto of the sustainable development people. The principle of enough is something that's globally important because it's the greed of western society – our society - that is using up the world's resources, destroying the global environment, creating food shortages and fuelling conflict in large parts of the planet. Therefore the principle of enough isn't a personally spiritual thing for us as God's people, but it's a matter of social justice – because our country is one of those responsible for significant global problems.

We live in a world where we are conditioned to want more and to better ourselves. But what does God want for us and what He has given us?

AVARICE DESTROYS US SPIRITUALLY

9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction.

Wanting more, coveting more is what's dangerous and that's what Paul is challenging us about.

Coveting tends to affect those that don't have much and those who are already rich in different ways.

For those who don't have much but want more, the temptation to want to try and get rich at all costs is very great. One temptation that they fall into is gambling. The greatest spending on gambling in this country, whether it be hardened gambling or just having a flutter, is by people who can least afford it. It's interesting that betting shops tend to be concentrated in down market neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, for those that have, the danger is to chase after more whatever the cost, whether they need it or not. Jesus said much about those that relied on their wealth for power, status and influence. The challenge I'm sure influenced Paul's words here:
Matt 16:26 What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Money can't buy you everything. Money certainly can't buy you eternal life. Because

that's free. Someone else paid the price. But for those of us who know Christ, let's remind ourselves that our ultimate security is not in what we have:

"Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." [Heb. 13:5]

PUT YOUR ENERGY INTO THE RIGHT THINGS

But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

I said at the beginning that money is amoral. So the thrust of this passage isn't to say that we should all take a vow of poverty like some in the past did. What's wrong with our society and so many individuals is that they love money. As God's people we are called to love God, and love our neighbour as ourselves. It's a different kind of love to avarice. Avarice is all about me basing my life around money at any cost. Agape love is all about surrender of self to others, putting others first whatever the cost because that is what God has done for us as demonstrated in Christ.

Commenting on these verses John Piper said: *The root of all evil is that we are the kind of people who settle for the love of money instead of the love of God.*

The challenge this morning is that when we look at our lives and belongings, where do our priorities lie? What does Paul say? *Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.* If we are doing all these things, then we are doing what God does. We are bringing our minds in line with the mind and will of God. And when we do this; when we love the Lord our God first, then our attitude to what we have changes, because our wealth becomes His wealth, what He's given us. So it's not wrong to have money and possessions if we recognise God has given them to us – it's just a question of what we do with it as the Holy Spirit guides us.

And we seek to use what we have to His glory. I have told you this story before but when I was a student I bought a commentary on John's gospel. I was being visited by a friend when I got it out of the back, showed it to him and then put my name inside. He snatched it off me and wrote. This book belongs to God but has placed it in the custody of Mark Reid for his use and the use of his friends. I would show it to you but I gave the book away!

How do I know if I have the right attitude to money. Simple If God is loved first. If I strive *or righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness* then I've probably got the right priorities.

Let's examine ourselves and get the priority right this morning, so what we have will not just be something we are blessed with, but something we can be a blessing with.