

“Snares That Will Sink The Servant of God”

1 Timothy 6:3-10

Introduction: 1) In God’s amazing grace He called us to salvation. In God’s amazing goodness He called us to service. Neither calling is something we deserve!

2) The great reformer Martin Luther understood this so very well. He said, “If I could become king or emperor, I would not give up my office as preacher.” (Fred Meuser, *Luther the Preacher*, 39). To this Henry Blackaby adds, “You are the custodian of the most important information in the world. You are the specialist in what God has to say to people through the Bible. Your divine calling far supersedes all other professions. Your presence and impact have eternal consequences.” (*The Power of the Call*).

3) To be a servant of King Jesus is indeed a high and awesome calling. It is also a calling filled with dangers and temptations, quicksand and landmines, some of which can be of our own making to our ruin.

4) In this text Paul warns us of 4 specific snares (v. 9) that can sink the servant of God. You will see very quickly that these are snares; they are sins, that find their origin in the human heart. However, they never stay there but reveal themselves in words and actions that can drown and destroy (v. 9), leading us astray and piercing our hearts with many sorrows (v. 10).

5) This text is a call to “be on guard” and to refuse to allow these snares to even get a “foot-hold,” no a “toe-hold,” in your life!

I. We must avoid the sin of unhealthy pride. 6:3-4

- Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”
- Proverbs 3:34, James 1:5 and 1 Peter 5:5 remind us 3 times, “God resist the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

- 1 Timothy 6:4 speaks of a proud person living in a settled state of pride (perf. tense) who though he thinks he is something, he actually is nothing. The *NEB* refers to him as a “pompous ignoramus!” Eugene Peterson in *The Message* says they are “ignorant windbags.” Professing to be wise, they actually play the fool.
- What is the reason, in this particular text, that the sin of pride receives such a scathing rebuke?

1) **Pride will reject healthy doctrine. 6:3**

- “Teaches otherwise” is a single word in the Greek text and is a pre. act. verb denoting a continuous action. It is the word *heterodidaskalei*, literally a “different teaching.” The *NASV* and *ESV* translate it “a different doctrine.”
- Such doctrine does not consent or agree with wholesome or sound words, words described as 1) “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ” (full majestic title) and 2) “teachings that promote godliness” (*HCSB*)
- “Wholesome” or sound is a single Greek word, *hygiainousin*. You can hear our word hygiene in it. Pride rejects healthy teaching, healthy words, healthy doctrine that is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, grounded in our Lord Himself and that is consistent with godly living.
- Anticipating what is to follow, Paul warns us that corrupt words, false teaching, unhealthy doctrine will cause us to both think wrongly and live wrongly. It will lose its right focus on the Lord Jesus Christ and it will leave the path of Christlikeness which is the natural outgrowth of godliness.

2) **Pride will lead to empty thinking. 6:4**

- Verse 4 continues the diagnosis of a “spiritually sick” person. Because they have left healthy doctrines they digress further into pride and empty thinking that leads to all sorts of complications. Like a spiritual cancer, pride spreads throughout the body infecting organ after organ, cell after cell.
- Its major symptoms?
 - You think you know something when actually you know nothing!
 - You are puffed up when actually you should go low!
 - You are conceited when actually you should be humble.
- You lose a proper perspective on who you are and who God is all to your spiritual destruction.
- ❖ Pascal said, “Knowing God without knowing our own wretchedness makes for pride. Knowing our own wretchedness without knowing God makes for despair. Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because He shows us both God and our wretchedness.” (192).

II. **We must avoid the sin of useless word wars. 6:4-5**

- The spiritual cancer of pride cannot be isolated and contained. It is of a malignant sort. And, unlike bodily, physical cancer, it has the capacity to go airborne! In fact, it always does!
- It is a germ, a disease that once it has infected and corrupted you, moves quickly to attack and infect others.
- Its goal? Total infestation of the body, “the body of Christ!”

1) **It will corrupt how you live.** 6:4-5

- Pride will turn you into a “word warrior.” Because you know you are right and everyone else is wrong, you will revel, be obsessed, have a diseased or “morbid interest” (NASB) with disputes and controversy. The fact is you love to fight.
- You would rather fight your brother and sister in Christ with words than use them to share the gospel with the lost and edify the body of Christ with healthy words rooted in Jesus (v. 3).
- As the cancer of pride spreads thru the arteries of word wars what is the result?
Envy – I want what you have, and I will stop at nothing to get it. Further, I believe God is holding out on me. At its very root envy is grounded in unbelief, a lack of faith in God’s providence and goodness.
Strife – “dissensions” (ESV). Always looking for a theological or church fight.
 Ready to fight at the drop of a hat and willing to drop that hat yourself!
Reviling – (Lit. blasphemies), here meaning slander, abusive language.
Evil Suspicions – Always looking to criticize; never giving the benefit of the doubt.
 Questioning others motives, something you could never know. You would rather misrepresent others than take the time to find out the truth.

2) **It will corrupt what you believe.** 6:5

- Paul says this corrupt and unhealthy lifestyle is nothing more than “useless wrangling” or “constant friction.” Instead of bringing health and healing to the church, you are an irritant that wears the body out and only causes needless pain.
- Why do some people, some minister’s act like this? It is rooted, once more, in the way they think. Having left the centrality of Christ in all things they are:

- 1) Men of corrupt minds (W.A.R) depraved in thinking.
 - 2) Destitute of the truth (W.A.R.) deprived of the truth.
- Paul notes one particular malady or symptom that accompanies such thinking: “They imagine godliness is a means of gain.” Warren Wiersbe says of such spiritual shysters, “what they do is not true ministry; it was just a religious business...they are religious racketeers” (78-79).
 - These men are hirelings not shepherds, wolves in sheep’s clothing who will slaughter the sheep and destroy the church if it will further their agenda!
 - Here is the evidence of a sick mind completely devoid of the truth and love of Christ!

III. We must avoid the sin of ungodly ambition. 6:6-8

- Eugene Peterson says of Christian ministry, “I don’t know of any other profession in which it is quite as easy to fake it as is ours. [We can do it] by adopting a reverential demeanor, cultivating a stained glass voice, slipping occasional words like ‘eschatology’ into conversation-not often enough to confuse people, but enough to keep them aware that our habitual train of thought is a cut above the pew level....without [prayer, Scripture study, and spiritual direction], there can be no substance-without these practices, the best of talents and best of intentions cannot prevent a thinning out into a life that becomes mostly impersonation.” (*Pastor’s Weekly Briefing*, Feb. 28, 1998, page 1).
- I am convinced few things contribute to “ministerial impersonation” more than personal ambition, an ambition we may even cloak in pious jargon “that is easily exposed by an “I” exam! What is the salve that can bring healing from this treacherous disease?

1) Be content in who you are in Christ. 6:6

- Paul contrast true godliness in v. 6 with pseudo-godliness in v. 5. The *ESV* makes plain this contrast quite well, “Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment.”
- Here is a person set free from external circumstances or expectations. Why? Because they simply trust in God day in and day out. Here is a life not of self-sufficiency, but Christ sufficiency!

2) **Be content in what you have from Christ.** **6:7-8**

- Paul makes a simple and basic observation far too many people either forget or willfully ignore.
 - You came into this world with nothing and you will leave this world with nothing. Here is a healthy “left behind” theology!
 - Job 1:21, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return.”
- Getting this basic truth down in terms of a life philosophy, v. 8 puts things in proper perspective: “If I have something to eat and something to wear I’m doing good!” False teachers say we need more, but God says you just need enough. I believe Jesus had something to say about all of this as well in Matt. 6:25-24 in His Sermon on the Mount. Verse 33 sums it up, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”
- By God’s grace Charlotte and I have always been truly content in the Lord. When we had a little or now that we have more, we have found that His grace really is sufficient. (At Northlake, Audelia Road, Criswell, SEBTS, SBTS, and now SEBTS again.)

IV. We must avoid the sin of unbridled greed. 6:9-10

- Apparently the human heart is especially susceptible to the seduction of riches and the snare of money. Paul, therefore, returns to the theme he briefly mentioned in v. 5, but now with an expanded commentary and exposition.
- All of us need to heed what he says about greed.

1) Greed will destroy you. 6:9

- Those who continually desire, resolve, to be rich will always fall into temptation. Indeed they will be 1) snared, 2) drowned and destroyed by the deadly waters of foolish and harmful lusts.
- They don't see it and thus they are snared. They don't discern these are dangerous waters and they are drowned.
- Money and riches became their god, and their god does not satisfy them, it destroys them.

2) Greed will deceive you. 6:10

- The god of money always promises one thing but eventually gives you something altogether different and totally unexpected.
- You love it and give it your heart. In return this silver seductress births to you all kinds of evil (the correct understanding). You see greed in one area will almost certainly lead to greed in another. It is no accident that money and sex so often go together.
- You see at the root of a love for money is an idol, a false god, and false gods never satisfy and they never give you what they promise and what you really need.
- Money is not condemned here, but the love of it is!

3) **Greed will disappoint you.** **6:10**

- Greed leads you away from God and dependency on Him, it leads you away from Jesus and satisfaction in Him.
- But not only does it lead you away from Jesus, but because it does, you pierce yourself, you inflict upon yourself a mortal wound filled with pain and sorrow.
- You sell out your family for wealth. You compromise your ministry for wealth. You rationalize your ambition for wealth.
- Suddenly the pangs of conscience will not let you sleep. The siren call of the stock market will not let you rest. Spiritual compromise has you always looking over your shoulder and unable to look at yourself in the mirror. Your false god has robbed you, yes your money has robbed you of the joy, happiness, peace and contentment God gave you the day you met Jesus!

Conclusion: For years I have heard Johnny Hunt admonish ministers, “Stay close and clean,” that is, “stay close to Jesus and clean in your personal life.” The two do go together. Stay close to Jesus and your doctrine and life will be clean! Stay close to Jesus in doctrine and life, and you will find peace and contentment wherever God sends you. Stay close to Jesus and the snares that sink servants of God will never capture you!