

Title: Danger – Don't be Robbed of the Truth!

³ If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.

⁶ Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of evil*, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Introduction

About 37 years ago I bought a house in a city called Exeter in the southwest of England.

The outside of the house was well built with red bricks and it had an inside wall of cement blocks.

Because we had a loan to buy the house, there was a need for a full structural survey.

Everything was 100% O.K. except for one problem.

The structural engineer discovered that there was evidence of very small woodworms slowly eating away at the roof struts. We couldn't see the evidence ourselves.

However the structural engineer was a professional in recognising the early signs of woodworm in many houses.

He wasn't too alarmed because he knew that you could spray all the wood with a very strong poison which would kill all the worms inside the wood.

The spray would also protect the wood for at least 10 years.

We had all the work done, and then we got a loan to buy the house.

We sold the house when we went to Bible College.

If we hadn't needed a loan and hadn't had a full structural survey on the house, eventually these wood worms would have slowly eaten all the wood of the roof struts.

Then a few years later, the whole roof would have collapsed.

It would have been a **severe disaster**.

Another serious issue in houses in the U.K. is what is called "**dry rot**".

At first you do not notice anything, but gradually it spreads to the whole house and then it **destroys the whole building**.

What do you do if you want to buy a house in the U.K., especially an old one?

You first of all have a **full structure survey**.

Then have regular checks to deal with any outbreaks of woodworm or dry rot.

Why am I telling you this?

Well because our spiritual life can be like U.K. houses.

We have to have regular spiritual check-ups in case we have developed wrong thinking about the Bible.

Sometimes the culture of the day very slowly erodes away the truth of God's word in our hearts.

It happens little by little, and **we don't even notice it**.

In other words, **we have turned away from the words of Jesus Christ**, little by little without even being aware of it.

As we start this passage Paul returns to the main theme and reason for writing this letter.

The main reason was to **address the problem of the false teachers in the Church** and the way that these teachers have **eroded the truth of God's word** and because of this, had brought about wrong **behaviour in the Church**.

There are two main themes in our text.

These are 1. Rejecting the Word of Jesus Christ – Chapter 6: v. 3-5.

2. Accepting the love of money – v. 6-10.

1. Rejecting the Word of Jesus Christ – 6: v. 3-5.

a) The content of the false teaching. - v. 3 & v. 5a.

Paul identifies the false teaching in two ways. Firstly, by **what it rejected** which is identified in v.3. These false teachers **rejected** the **words of Jesus** and His teaching which **encouraged godly living**.

Secondly the passage teaches what happens when false teaching is supported.

At the end of v. 5 it says **“who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”**

The thinking of the false teachers had led them to the conclusion that **godliness would lead to financial gain**.

In other words, these false teachers had **embraced religion for financial gain**.

The false teachers had moved away from the teaching of Christ and genuine godly behaviour.

Their wrong thinking led them to the conclusion that their new situation would lead to financial gain.

It is amazing to discover that **people think that they know better than Jesus Christ**.

However, so often that is the case with many Christians today.

The text tells us that by taking away the words of Jesus Christ, it will empty out all meaning and **provide people with nothing**.

This is the case with all false teaching.

False teaching **robs people of the truth that God wants them to hear**.

In Japan people are **usually very honest** and you are **less likely to be mugged or stolen from in the streets**. However, that is not the case in parts of the U.K. and Europe and also America.

In most European cities they warn of pickpockets operating.

These are professionals who can steal your wallet without you even knowing it.

False teachers can **steal the truth and operate in Churches without you even realizing it**.

When it comes to fleecing you for money the false teachers are usually raising money for a very good cause, and promise blessing from God if you financially give to this cause.

Sadly, it is the poor people who give in the hope of getting money from God.

This is why false teachers like to target Africa, and poor parts of Asia.

Many years ago when I was a professional salesman, I was trained in techniques which helped me to sell products.

In one company I was one of the top salesmen and won a competition.

The prize was a very expensive weekend in Paris with my wife Wendy.

Why am I telling you this?

Well, when I was a Pastor in London, I was invited to the launch of a big evangelistic course by a Church in London.

This course eventually went world-wide.

I attended this training course and little by little I started to **recognise features** that were **very similar to the sales techniques** that I had learnt many years previous to this.

In the end I left the meeting, feeling that false teaching or certainly wrong ways of presenting the gospel were clearly in view.

The point I am making is that **everything seemed very plausible to the mind** and **to the flesh** but it was **empty of real Biblical truth**.

We really do have to be careful about false teachers in the Church.

Please do not be robbed of the truth of God’s word, by listening to or being entertained by false teachers.

The only way to **protect yourself from false teaching** is to read and study the word of God for yourself. Also when you do this study, your commentary and teaching references need to come from godly men who exegete the Bible correctly.

Many Bible teachers have their own agenda to **prove a particular point of doctrine**. They don’t use the whole Bible to come to a correct conviction on what God’s word actually teaches. They also **don’t present other points of view** and **explain why they take a particular thinking on a point of doctrine**.

These Bible teachers are only out to tell you what they think.

If you are going to buy a Bible Commentary. Firstly, look at the back of the book and read the "**Bibliography**".

This is a list of the books that the Bible teacher has read and they will usually quote from these books.

If there are not many quality books quoted on the given subject, then don't buy it.

I do not profess to be the best Bible teacher in the world, but I do profess to consult books written by the best Bible teachers in the world.

By following correct Biblical exegesis, you are unlikely to be seduced into false teaching.

You also need to attend a Church every week where the Bible is clearly taught in a systematic and expository way.

b) The results of the false teaching – v. 4b & 5a.

Paul points out some of the results of this false teaching in v. 4 and 5a.

The two main results were the behaviour of the false teachers which led to the behaviour of the congregation.

It was **like a virus that spread quickly in the Church.**

If you have **false teaching in leadership,** you will soon have **members who will embrace that false teaching.**

One thing to note here is in v.4b. We are told that when the words of Jesus are rejected, it leads to quarrels about words.

If we don't agree with the words of Jesus, then we will find ourselves disagreeing with other people.

We will then hold a different point of view with what Jesus teaches.

This will result in a dispute with those who hold with the teaching of Jesus.

The text in v.4 tells us that the result of these different views will result in envy, strife, reviling (which comes from a French word that means to cause a rebellion) and evil suspicions.

(Chapter 6: v. 4 in the N.L.T. for clarity of understanding)

⁴ Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions.

If you want to get to Hiroshima and suddenly you discover that you got on the wrong Shinkansen train (Bullet Train) at Shin Osaka, and you are heading for Tokyo, you will not arrive at your correct destination.

It was like this with the false teachers.

They were taking people in a different direction, with false teaching, which eventually would lead to ungodly behaviour.

Correct Bible teaching should challenge people to live godly lives with the help of God's Holy Spirit. Make sure that you are travelling in the right spiritual direction in your Christian life. If you are not, then you need to make a complete turn-around, and go in the right direction.

The Bible calls this repentance. It is easy to make mistakes in your Christian life.

The devil is very subtle and seductive, and he works in small steps to take you away from the truth of God's word.

In fact, after a period of time you actually believe the devil's lie and it takes lots of humility and courage to admit your wrong thinking and to come back in line with the teaching of Jesus in God's word.

We now move from rejecting the words of Jesus in v. 3-5 to accepting the love of money in v.6-10.

2. Accepting the love of money - 6: v. 6-10.

Paul now develops the mind-set of the false teachers. His teaching is designed to expose the direction and path which the false teachers and their followers were taking. Paul also pointed out their destination.

The structure of these verses contrast the two directions and destinations that are in view.

The correct destination was **godliness with contentment**, which was great gain. However, the wrong direction was the **love of money** which was the root of all kinds of evil. Let us discover more about these two paths.

a) The path of contentment – v. 6-8.

The references to contentment appear at the beginning and at the end of this short passage. (v. 6-8) This helps us to discover where the focus of Paul's thinking was anchored.

Paul, having pointed out that the false teachers wanted financial gain, wanted to show the members that there was great gain in just having a godly life which would not necessarily include any financial rewards.

Philippians 4: v. 10-13 in N.L.T.

¹⁰How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. ¹¹Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. ¹²I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

So in conclusion it is godliness with a contented attitude regarding issues relating to wealth and poverty, that will lead you to a great gain.

Q. So how is this mind-set or attitude possible?

Paul answers this in v. 7 by telling us to have an eternal perspective on life.

The path of contentment is always focused on the eternal and not the present.

We are told that we brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing with us when we leave this world.

Any gain that comes from godliness is **ultimately linked to eternity** and what we will receive as believers, rather than on the amount that we might possess now.

In v. 8 Paul tells us that the simple material benefits of food and clothing are all that we really need. Of course God may choose to give us much more than these, but with these things only and the simple needs of life we should be content.

The question we need to ask ourselves is "Are we content with the simple provisions in life" or are we "craving for more"?

The false teachers had become focused on the material things of the present world, rather than on the future blessings in eternity.

b) The path of craving for more – v. 9-10.

Verses 9 and 10 inform us about the opposite pathway to contentment.

Contentment will lead to great gain spiritually in the future, but the lust for more which comes from false teaching, will lead to danger and disaster.

Both of these verses teach us the same thing.

Let us examine them.

Firstly, Paul talks about people who desire to be rich.

These people want more than what they have at present. They are not satisfied with their present circumstances.

These people are hungry for riches and wealth.

Paul teaches us that the result of this thinking leads people to be ensnared.

The picture here is of an animal which is caught in a trap.

When people have a heart desire to be rich, they are animals caught in a trap; they can't break the habit. They are hooked like a fish.

When these people have their desires satisfied it only leads to greater desires and bigger desires to be richer.

The Greek word used here for desire or want to be rich is a strong word.

It refers to a **settled desire**, which is entertained fully by the mind.

It is not an emotional decision that can be changed. The present tense of the verb “fall” indicates a continual falling into temptation and traps.

Greedy people are continually entrapped by their consuming passion for more.

Sadly, the ultimate destination for these people the Bible says is perdition, or hell as it is often called. This is separation from their creator God forever, and punishment eternally.

Secondly Paul teaches the same thing in v.10 from a different angle.

Paul tells us that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

The Greek word literally means an affection for “silver”.

The Bible teaches that we can’t serve God and serve money.

We have to decide which way we are going to go.

The false teachers in Ephesus were promoting the way of money.

Today some false teachers still do this.

It is called the **“Prosperity Movement.”** It is very big in America but as I said before most of these false teaches go to poor countries to get their wealth.

People give in the hope of getting rich. However, it is only the false teachers that get rich.

A man by the name of C.T. Studd was one of the greatest cricket stars of the 19th century.

After his conversion to Jesus Christ he decided to become a missionary.

Before leaving for the mission field he decided to give away his total inheritance.

At that time, it was a lot of money.

C.T. Studd was engaged to be married and gave some of his money to his fiancée as a wedding present. She decided not to keep the money and gave it away too.

Lots of Christian organisations received money.

This is how the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago was started.

Then C.T. Studd went with his wife to Africa as missionaries.

God wonderfully provided for them and the legacy of their life continues through a missionary society called W.E.C.

Summary and application

I have been making application to the text as we have gone along today, so there is not too much to add.

1. In Japan you have a physical health check every year.

The doctor tries to discover if there is anything wrong with your physical body. If there is, he will educate you on how to treat this illness or avoid an illness that may happen if you don’t change your diet.

Why don’t we have a spiritual check-up in our lives every year?

How should we do this?

You can examine your thinking about the teaching of Jesus for a start.

He is the one who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life”.

Read everything that Jesus ever said, as recorded in the Gospels.

You can examine your thinking based upon the first three chapters of Genesis.

You can examine your thinking as you read through John’s Gospel and Romans.

We have nearly finished 1 Timothy. Has the teaching from this highlighted something in your thinking that has challenged you?

Discovering a problem is not solving a problem.

You need to do something about it.

May God help us to have regular spiritual check-ups in our lives.

We don’t want to be going in the wrong direction in our spiritual lives.

We also need to be very discerning when it comes to understanding the Bible.

2. A craving for worldly things that consumes your life will always damage your spiritual life. The thing might be money, it might be sport, or even golf.

If it is binding in your life, then give it up.

Learn to balance your life well, giving time to the people and things that God wants in your life now. It changes as we get older, and our circumstances change, but God never changes. His will is always the best for us, whatever our age or circumstances.