



Text: 1 Timothy 6:17-21¹

Series: Living the Gospel

Title: Part 15 -- Living the Gospel with Grace **OR** "More saving. More doing." ...
by God's grace.

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Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Home Depot, the home building material supplier, has a motto that goes something like this... **"More saving. More doing."**² It strikes me that if we just reverse the order that that could also serve as the catch phrase for these final words of Paul to Timothy. In essence, Paul instructs Timothy that the work of the church should be "More doing; more saving."

Here are Paul's concluding words to Timothy. See if you think that that motto fits Paul's instruction. I'm reading from Paul's First Letter to Timothy, chapter 6, verses 17 to 21. Let's listen to God's Word for us this morning...

¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," ²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.

If we understand "the deposit" which Timothy was to guard as the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, then I think that **"More doing. More saving."** serves as a concise summary of Paul's closing instruction. But please understand that that's not the order in which those two activities occur in the church. In fact, I'd suggest that "More saving. More doing.", *Home Depot's* motto, could serve as a piece of "bumper sticker wisdom" for the church of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that Paul ends his letter to Timothy with the thing which in his mind is upper most and that is the proclamation of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's out of our experience of God's saving grace that we employ his "serving" grace in doing the works for which he saved us. We need to be very careful to preserve that

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² <http://www.homedepot.ca/>



spiritual order. We do not serve our way into salvation; the consistent message of the Bible is that saved people serve.

In his Letter to the Ephesians Paul spelled out the connection between saving and doing very clearly. He wrote...

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

We don't earn salvation by doing good. God's saving grace that forgives us of our sins and makes us members of his eternal family is his gift to us. When we receive that gift by trusting in Jesus Christ as the One who died for us, God's gift enters our lives and begins a work of transformation that has as its goal the creation of the life of Jesus in us. God's Spirit comes to dwell in us and by him we are empowered and directed to do the work of God, the good work of God.

An old Christian slogan puts it, quite correctly, we have been “saved to serve.” The saving grace of God is also his serving grace. As Paul put it in his letter to Titus...

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Titus 2:11-14

Paul's consistent message throughout all of his letters is that...

We are saved by God's grace for the accomplishing by God's grace of good works.

In other words, “More saving. More doing.” And all of it accomplished by God's grace. Paul ends his letter to Timothy with the words...

“Grace be with you.” 1 Timothy 6:21

There's something about his final word to Timothy of which we need to take note. This letter was a personal letter from Paul to Timothy. Throughout this letter, the communication has been from Paul to Timothy, one to one. Whenever Paul has spoken about the church as a whole, he usually referred to other believers as “them” or “they.” But here, in his very final word, he brings us all together under God's grace. The word “you” is plural. Paul has the whole church in view, not



just Timothy, and he blesses us all with God's grace. Why? Because it's only by God's grace that we can fulfill the command of "More saving. More doing." It's by God's grace that we accomplish good works in the name of Jesus Christ and for the glory of God. It's by God's grace that we proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and it's by God's grace that people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as they hear that Gospel and believe it. In fact, it's only by God's grace that we can do anything for God's glory. As Jesus told us so simply and so clearly...

"apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

So this morning, I want us to end our study in this letter by thinking together for a few minutes about these two aspects of God's grace. First of all, let's think about **"More doing ... by God's grace"** and secondly, about **"More saving ... by God's grace."**

First then...

"More doing ... by God's grace"

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them ... to be rich in good works...." 1 Timothy 6:17-18

Paul's challenge to "more doing" is made to "the rich in this present age." (v.17) You might be tempted to think: "Well, that let's me off the hook. Clearly, I'm not rich." But that's probably because you're measuring yourself against someone who you believe to be richer than you are. But if you measure yourself against the vast majority of this world's population, you and I are among "the rich in this present age."

One man, reflecting on Jesus' meeting with a rich man of his era, prayed...

Dear Lord, I have been re-reading the record of the Rich Young Ruler and his obviously wrong choice. But it has set me thinking. No matter how much wealth he had, he could not ride in a car, have any surgery, turn on a light, buy penicillin, hear a pipe organ, watch TV, wash dishes in running water, type a letter, mow a lawn, fly in an airplane, sleep on an innerspring mattress, or talk on the phone. If he was rich, then what am I?³

If we have money and time beyond what is needed to keep body and soul together, we fall into the class the world's wealthy. Back in the late 1970s, Ronald Sider wrote a book that created much soul-searching among North

³ © 2010 PreachingToday.com William Boice, Phoenix, Arizona in The Christian Standard. Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 4.



American Christians. The title of the book explains why. It was entitled: *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*, (IVP 1977). To make the point that North American believers were among “the rich in this present age,” Side quoted from a study done by an American economist, Robert Heilbroner, comparing the life-style of the average American with the majority of the world’s population. Heilbroner wrote his study in the early 1960s, but the disparity has remained much the same. Heilbroner wrote...

We begin by invading the house of our imaginary American family to strip it of its furniture. Everything goes: beds, chairs, tables, television set, lamps. We will leave the family with a few old blankets, a kitchen table, a wooden chair. Along with the bureaus go the clothes. Each member of the family may keep in his "wardrobe" his oldest suit or dress, a shirt or blouse. We will permit a pair of shoes for the head of the family, but none for the wife or children.

We move to the kitchen. The appliances have already been taken out, so we turn to the cupboards. ... The box of matches may stay, a small bag of flour, some sugar, and salt. A few moldy potatoes, already in the garbage can, must be hastily rescued, for they will provide much of tonight's meal. We will leave a handful of onions, and a dish of dried beans. All the rest we take away: the meat, the fresh vegetables, the canned goods, the crackers, the candy.

Now we [strip] the [rest of the] house: the bathroom...[is] dismantled, the running water shut off, the electric wires taken out. Next we take away the house. The family can move to the toolshed. ...

Communications must go next. No more newspapers, magazines, books—not that they are missed, since we must take away our family's literacy as well. Instead, in our shantytown we will allow one radio. ...

Now government services must go. No more postman, no more firemen. There is a school, but it is three miles away and consists of two classrooms. ... There are, of course, no hospitals or doctors nearby. The nearest clinic is ten miles away and is tended by a midwife. It can be reached by bicycle, provided that the family has a bicycle, which is unlikely. ...

Finally, money. We will allow our family...\$5. This will prevent our breadwinner from experiencing the tragedy of an Iranian peasant who went blind because he could not raise the \$3.94, which he mistakenly thought he needed to receive admission to a hospital where he could have been cured.⁴

⁴ © 2010 PreachingToday.com Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Great Ascent: The Struggle for Economic Development in Our Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 33-36; as cited in Ronald Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Thomas Nelson, 2005), p. 12; submitted by Larry Trotter, Wake Forest, North Carolina



You get the picture, don't you. We are "the rich in this present age" and so Paul's command comes to us. "More doing ... by God's grace."

But it's not enough to just "do."

First of all, Paul **challenges us to "more doing" in the right spirit.** We are...

"not to be haughty" 1 Timothy 6:17

The word "haughty" translates a compound word that literally means "high minded." We're not to think inflated thoughts about ourselves because we're better off financially than others. The poverty of many in this world is due to forces beyond their control: to drought, to disease, to war. It's tempting to think that we have stuff because we're smarter, or more godly, or more Christian than others. But let's pop that self-promoting balloon! The truly godly Christian follows the example of Jesus who "humbled himself" (Php 2:8) and though he was rich, for our sakes, became poor. (2 Cor 8:9)

There is no spiritual benefit to us at all in writing cheques and giving money for the needs of others when we give that money out of a spirit of pride.

Second, Paul **challenges us to "more doing" with the right confidence.** Believers are not ...

"to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy." 1 Timothy 6:17

Our ability to help others does not come out of our abilities or our bank accounts. God graciously enables us to give out of his abundant provision for us. The recent downturn in the world economy has shown us "the uncertainty of riches." Cash in the bank isn't cash in the bank anymore ... but of course, it never really was! During my studies in history I remember seeing a picture of a man in a European country in the first half of the twentieth century with a wheelbarrow full of banknotes. The caption under the picture explained that he was on his way with his pile of banknotes to buy a single loaf of bread. The Book of Proverbs injects reality into our view of money when it says...

"Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven." Proverbs 23:4-5

Jesus warned us that "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22) will choke out our spiritual lives. We need to avoid the seduction of putting our confidence in our resources and in ourselves and instead, intentionally place our confidence in God who is never stingy but who "richly provides us with everything to enjoy."



Thirdly, Paul challenges us to “more doing” with the right involvement. It isn't only a matter of giving money. It's also a matter of giving ourselves with it. Paul challenges “the rich” – you and me –

**“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”
1 Timothy 6:18**

Early in this letter, Paul identified some of the “good works” that were to mark the lives of mature, godly women. A godly woman has

**“a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted...”
1 Timothy 5:10**

You can't do these kinds of things from a cheque book. When you wash feet, you get wet; when you bring up children, you change diapers; when you care for the afflicted, you listen to their pain; when you show hospitality, you wash dishes. As important as financial giving is, Paul is clear: we are to give of ourselves, too.

Fourthly, Paul challenges us to “more doing” with the right goal.

It's worth noting that Paul doesn't completely avoid self-interest in his counsel to “the rich.” Did you notice? He tells them that by engaging in good works they are...

“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.” 1 Timothy 6:19

In other words, investing good works in the lives of people in this life is building up a “treasure” in heaven which they will take hold of in the next life. The investment is made now; the dividends are paid in later. On this side of eternity we may never see a nickel of the “treasure” that is accumulating in heaven. Great! That will make the wonder all the more wonderful when we see it for the first time!

When John D. Rockefeller died, one reporter asked his personal secretary; “How much did he leave behind?” Rockefeller's secretary answered: “Everything.” But when, by God's grace, we invest in the lives of people for the sake of Jesus Christ, we are “storing up” ahead of us a treasure in heaven. We don't leave it behind; it goes ahead of us.

As we've made our way through this letter we've been discovering that being a follower of Jesus Christ dramatically affects the way we view our money. Let me tell you story about someone who learned the lesson of “More doing ... by God's grace” and how it changed his life.



Kevin Miller, an American writer and pastor, wrote...

When I was a kid, my dad told me two stories all the time. In the first one, a couple goes to Harvard University and asks to see the president, because they want to give a donation to the university. The president agrees to see them, but he doesn't know them, and because they're from somewhere way out west, he treats them curtly. After a few moments, the woman finally turns to her husband and says, "Come, Leland; I think there are better things we can do with our money." The man was Leland Stanford, founder (with his wife) of Stanford University.

Even as a child, I understood that the moral of this story was not, "Be nice to strangers." Instead, this story was about who has real power. The moral is, "If you have money, you can tell anyone—even the most established, respected, or powerful person in the world—to go take a flying leap."

The second story my father used to tell me went like this: One day a minister was invited to John D. Rockefeller's mansion. As he drove up the winding drive lined with tall trees, he said, "My, my! This is what the Lord might have done—if he'd had the money."

As a child, I understood the moral of this story, too. The minister, who represents belief in God, is overwhelmed by Rockefeller's wealth. Not only that, he says God himself doesn't have as much money as Rockefeller. Implicit in this claim is that he doesn't have as much power, either. Rockefeller is more powerful than God, because money is more powerful than God.

As you might guess from the stories my dad told me growing up, he spent most of his life working really hard to make money. But then he made a tactical error. My mom and I were going to an Episcopal Church service, and he decided to come along. The priest was full of old-time religion, and he gave an altar call. Something connected with my dad that day, and he went forward and began to follow Jesus. He was 60-years-old. He began to read a small, blue King James Bible, and for the first time in his life, he began giving with real interest. He told me, in what was a rare sharing of his personal life, "Kevin, I've started to tithe, and it's been a great adventure."

My dad suffered a heart attack at age 70. He lay in a hospital bed for 5 days, and then he died. At the funeral home, they laid him in a casket with his navy blazer and a Lands' End tie. A woman I'd never seen came up to me and said, "You don't know me, but I was in a bad marriage; my husband was beating me, and I needed to get out to save my life. But I didn't know what I would do to support myself. Your dad paid for me to go to junior college and get a degree, so I could be a dental hygienist. He paid for the whole thing, and nobody else knew about it. Now I have a job, and I'm making it. Your dad literally saved my life."



I wonder what would have been my dad's legacy if he had kept loving money and trying to be like Leland Stanford and John D. Rockefeller. He would have died with a lot of money, but not a lot of love. Instead, he took a risk. He tried to learn how to "keep his life free from the love of money." And when he died, he left behind a woman who knows every day when she cleans people's teeth that it's a miracle she's still alive.⁵

People that is what I call "more doing ... by God's grace." Let's invest in eternal legacies of gracious good.

Finally, let's think about...

"More saving ... by God's grace."

Paul concludes his letter to Timothy with the challenge...

"O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith." 1 Timothy 6:20-21

As I suggested earlier, "the deposit" that had been "entrusted" to Timothy was the Gospel message about Jesus Christ. Paul viewed the Gospel as something that had been entrusted to him by God and which he in turn entrusted to Timothy and which Timothy was to entrust to other preachers and they in turn to others and so on and so on and so on right down to today. (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2)

Paul was deeply aware of his responsibility to pass along "the deposit" of the Gospel without alteration. In his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul spelled out both his duty to transmit the Gospel unchanged and the unchanging Gospel he was to transmit. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers...

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the

⁵ © 2010 PreachingToday.com Kevin Miller, in his sermon "Financial Contentment," PreachingToday.com



apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me... so we preach and so you believed.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 11

Notice **“the first importance” elements of the Gospel “deposit”**...

- That **Christ died for our sins according to the Bible promises** and prophecies
- That **Christ was buried** ... he was truly dead but...
- That **Christ was raised from the dead on the third day** as prophesied by the Old Testament prophets
- And **Christ’s resurrection was verified** by his appearance to hundreds of **eye witnesses** most of whom, at the time of Paul’s writing, were still alive and could verify his claim

This is the “the deposit” that Paul entrusted to Timothy and that has been entrusted to you and me. Anything that claims to be the Gospel must contain these elements. That’s why Paul refers to these truths as things “of first importance.” The Gospel must contain the death of Christ, it must contain the understanding that his death was for our sins and it must contain his resurrection from the dead as a fact of history. Anything less is not the Gospel.

You might think: “But the Gospel is the declaration of God’s love for us.” And you’d be right. But the Bible tells us...

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

You see, you simply cannot tell the story of God’s love for us without also telling the story of our sin and of our Saviour’s death on the cross for our sin.

This is the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and we are to “guard” it. We are to keep it. We’re to preach it. We’re to believe it. We’re to hold fast to it. And we are to avoid anything that causes people to “swerve” from it.

Part of guarding the Gospel entails being on guard against anything that detours people from the Gospel. When Paul warned Timothy to “avoid the irreverent babble” and the “contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’” that cause people to “swerve” from the faith he was referring to false teaching by people inside the church who alter the Gospel message.

Albert Mohler, the president of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, recently identified eight major detours that are commonly taken away from the Gospel and I would encourage anyone who loves the preaching of the Gospel to familiarize themselves with Dr Mohler’s analysis.⁶ What I call “detours”

⁶ Albert Mohler, “How Does It Happen? Trajectories Toward an Adjusted Gospel,” *Together for the Gospel*, 2010, www.t4g.org/conference/t4g-2010/



he calls “trajectories” and his message is entitled, **“Trajectories toward an adjusted Gospel”** and you can find it on the website of *Together for the Gospel* (www.t4g.org).

I can’t possibly summarize all eight trajectories in the next few minutes so I’ve chosen to highlight just one of the detours. The reason I’ve chosen this one is that it is a detour that is commonly taken by people who want to make Jesus appealing to those who don’t believe in him. This detour is motivated by a desire to draw people to Jesus, but sadly, it seeks to do so at the expense of “the first importance” elements of the Gospel. And even sadder, it is a detour that I’ve heard in the conversation of people in this church. Brothers and sisters, I bring this detour to your attention in order to warn you off this road.

The fourth trajectory Dr Mohler refers to is what he calls **“an aesthetic trajectory”** from the Gospel in which people try to make the Gospel more appealing to modern sensibilities. The word “aesthetic” means “pleasing in appearance.” Let’s be honest. There is little that is “pleasing in appearance” about the cross of Jesus. The story of the cross is a story full of blood and violence. It is vulgar and offensive to the modern spirit.

Some years ago I spoke to a man who objected to the story of the cross, calling it an obscenity. I told him that in one sense, he was right. The cross is an obscenity, but only because the sin that made it necessary is obscene. Paul anticipated that man’s objection to the cross when he wrote...

“we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” 1 Corinthians 1:23

Dr Mohler recounts a fictional story of a pastor who was committed to making Jesus appealing. He preached glorious, wonderful sermons full of the dazzling beauty of God and the love of Jesus. But he avoided the cross. One day, a group erected a billboard across the street from his church. The billboard contained just two words: “Jesus saves.” This pastor was angered! He petitioned the town to have the billboard removed. How could he compose his beautiful, artful messages, he argued, while staring at such a vulgar, simplistic declaration?

Yes, the Gospel is a simple message. Yes, the cross is vulgar. “Vulgar” means “lacking in refinement.” The cross is “in your face” preaching. But it is a message preached by the Son of God himself, stretched between two thieves, dying in our place for our sin. How can any redeemed sinner be ashamed of it?

“We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:23-24



What is that transforms the cross from a stumbling block and folly to power and wisdom in our eyes? Is it our artful, pleasing presentation of a story stripped of the blood and the sin? No! The only thing that makes the cross beautiful to us is the Holy Spirit's ministry of opening our eyes to the reality that it was our sin that was nailed to His cross. The cross becomes beautiful to us only when we come to understand that it was on the cross that Jesus, the Son of God...

“loved me and gave himself for me” Galatians 2:20

Let me ask you: are you tempted to try to make Jesus more appealing by stripping away the story of the cross? In speaking of Jesus' love for us are you tempted to avoid the mention of our sin that made the cross a necessity? And let me ask the question that must be asked: Are you ashamed of the cross? Are you embarrassed by the Gospel? Paul said...

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” Romans 1:16

A man on a road trip stopped at a McDonald's drive-thru for lunch. After placing his order, he came to the drive-up window to pay. He noticed an attractive, hand-carved cross hanging from the neck of the woman who was serving him, so he commented, "I like your cross."

Her reply was a lesson in how simple it is to share the Gospel. She said: "Thank you. And I like the person who died on it for my sins. And I love the person who rose from the grave after having died on the cross."

The man who encountered that woman said: "She easily could have left it at 'Thank you.' But her faithful witness touched me and drew me even closer to the Lord that day."⁷

We've been entrusted with the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ: let's guard it, let's teach it, let's share it, let's believe it, let's love it because we love the One who died and rose again for us.

Let's pray.

- **Invitation to prayer ministry**
- **Final Song:** Grace Unmeasured
- **Benediction**

⁷ © 2010 PreachingToday.com Greg Huffer, Lebanon, Indiana