

1 TIMOTHY

February 19, 2023

1 Timothy 6:17-21

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. ¹**

“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”

The letter to the pastor comes to a close. It’s an interesting close, because it appears to be a postscript. The previous verses actually ended in a doxology and an amen, but it seems as if Paul was thinking... “Oh yeah...as for the rich...” to give one more instruction before the letter was rolled back up and stored.

The truths for God’s church in the first century remain true for the church in the twenty-first century. Progressive theology is not affirmed. Rather, God-breathed orthodoxy and doctrine...good teaching...is the focus.

The church exists for the glory of God and none of us have a right to be part of his church on our own merit. Thanks be to God he made a way for us to be redeemed and part of his family. Thus, the church.

Good news. This truly is good news.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (1 Ti 6:17–21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

As we close out this series by finishing up the first letter to Pastor Timothy from Paul I remind you that this letter gives us instructions on how to be the church and how to live holy, truthful, full and abundant lives in the joy of the “one anothers” of his commands.

The teaching is offered. The “how to” is provided. The church in the first century heard this. Whether they believed or not is up for discussion. We hear this as well. Whether we believe enough to surrender fully is the question.

The truth is that throughout our lives we are given biblical instruction, truth from godly teaching, scripture-centered and gospel-focused insight. And, eventually all will believe.

But, it is better to believe fully sooner than later.

Paul goes back to addressing the rich in the church. There is much in scripture when it comes to riches. There’s the rich, young ruler whom Jesus told to sell all his possessions, but he didn’t and missed Jesus.

There’s the warning about rich people getting into heaven being harder than getting a camel through the eye of a needle.

Jesus gives the warning about trying to serve two masters and how it is impossible. Then he states that the two masters he speaks of are God and money.

Warnings throughout scripture to the wealthy regarding their handling of wealth, drive for more wealth, the way it pulls focus from worship, and how what the world says is good can actually be bad.

Yet, there *are* wealthy people in scripture who feared God and sought to follow him well. Some in the Old Testament such as Abraham, David,

and Solomon. In the New Testament even Paul was benefitted by wealthy brothers and sisters who funded his trips and cared for him.

But we get a warning here.

I doubt many will be motivated by a listing of those who gained much in the world but lost the most valuable things. Whether it's lottery winners, treasure finders, inheritance gainers, or other such biography, the history books are overflowing with such examples.

And yet...while we have seen the story play out over and over, many still find themselves pursuing that which they **KNOW** will eventually not bring peace.

Yet, wealth and riches are not necessarily sinful. Otherwise, godly examples in scripture and throughout church history would not exist.

For the church, this reminder is vital. Why? Because even as Christians we are a forgetful people. Even a gathering of Christians can experience collective amnesia when it comes to the truth of God's Word.

Look at the church in Laodicea mentioned in the final book of the Bible. It *was* a church...and while we know it as the lukewarm, vomit-inducing one in scripture, we must not miss that it was a church with members, a pastor, and brothers and sisters who gathered weekly if not daily, for communion, fellowship, worship, and teaching. But somewhere along the line...they forgot. They forgot the fullness of the teaching of God.

They believed an lie was true. They began to think more highly of themselves. They were forsaking what it meant to be the church of the living God. They were a local expression of the bride of Christ who began to cheat on the bridegroom...but justified it and "amened" one another to death.

Revelation 3:17-18

¹⁷ For you say, **I am rich**, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.²

You say “I’m rich,” but you are the opposite. You may have more money and possessions than another, but you if your love of money and wealth and possessions drives you...you’re dead inside.

They were arrogant. Selfish. Proudful and believed themselves better than others.

Nothing new here. It is not that having money is a sin. Yet it is a warning.

And this was what some in the Ephesian church were drifting toward. The church apparently had some wealthy individuals in their diverse membership. There were men, women, wealthy, poor, masters, slaves, widows, children, and every demographic category that made up their family. But Ephesus was drifting toward Laodicea. And any church can.

So God leads Paul to close the letter with the warning to the rich.

THE ILLUSION OF WEALTH

Wealth can create an illusion. That’s what happened in Laodicea. They thought because they were comfortable, they were good. But in their comfort, they were missing the true riches God desired to bestow.

Have you ever just stepped back to consider the evangelical sub-culture that exists in our nation today? The verse-a-day influencer vibe exists.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 3:17–18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The screaming preacher with huge biceps saying spiritual stuff and Christian-sounding things while a Grammy award winning band plays on gets promoted well. What is happening? As Christians, we are the Lord's sheep, but many seem to be more like lemmings blindly following pied piper preachers giving spoiled milk rather than meat in their sermons.

It's frustrating, but I'm not too worried. Why? Because Christ's church prevails. I know this is true. He said it. It has done so for centuries. Long before Gallup polled populations to see what average Joes thought of the church, this thing God birthed and built has prevailed. Even Jesus said the gates of hell will not prevail against it. So, there will be some mega-groups shut down, celebrities will fall off their pedestals, and some truly painful and sad things will continue to occur in the name of Jesus (but falsely in his name) but THE church will prevail.

Thus...the postscript. Hey you all, don't forget – this world is corrupt and the bait remains tempting, but don't buy the lie.

To the rich...and the wannabe rich. The illusion is still drawing many. So let Christ change your mind, your motives, your attitudes, as you say he changed your heart. Surrender and live.

THE DELUSION OF LIFE

The lies from the liar lead to a false understanding of life. The illusion leads to a delusion.

As my ninth-grade language arts teacher used to say to us “A word to the wise is sufficient.” Paul's words here to this church he loved dearly was clear. God's instruction was unapologetic. Life in Christ leads to changes in living. Total surrender is what Christ is calling for in each of us.

The heart is a factory of idols as John Calvin said and we are continually fighting to shut that factory down.

That's the principle – what is the most important thing in your life? Money? Power? Influence? Home? Cars? Your family? Your kids? Grandkids? Spouse?

It's a simple equation – that which is most important to you sits on the throne of your heart. Thus, anything or anyone other than Christ that drives you, motivates you, fulfills you, legitimizes you...is your idol. Give it up. Follow him.

Here's the reality – he will shut down the idol factory as we surrender to him. He gives us eyes to see how he sees, ears to discern truth – as Paul warned in the final verses regarding false “knowledge” and biblical truth.

The church in Ephesus was continually having to hear this message, to relearn this truth, to check themselves. So too must we relearn this.

Christ changes everything. He creates generous hearts in the lives of his people so that the attitude of haughtiness that Paul warned about does not occur. He isn't calling everyone to move to a commune and become communist with a distribution of wealth developed by a government structure, but to live generously, not storing up treasures here on earth, but sending it ahead into eternity. How? By giving to missions, funding ministries that preach and teach the gospel, feeding the hungry and giving clean water to the thirsty, not in our name, but in Christ's name. By seeing others as image-bearers of his just as we are. By refusing to see others as projects, but as souls destined for eternity somewhere.

Oh church, may we worship well, pray deeply, hunger for sound doctrine and holy orthodoxy and may we see Christ celebrated and his kingdom grow.

As Paul closed the letter to Timothy, so do we close today.

Grace be with you.