

USING YOUR GOD GIVEN WEALTH FOR ETERNAL GAIN

1 Timothy 6:17-19
Ezekiel, Oghenekaro

A wealthy merchant took a journey, carrying with him his most valuable jewels. Another traveler befriended him along the way. He made it seem like a chance encounter. But he planned to rob the merchant of his precious stones. Each night, they stopped at an inn to rest. The merchant insisted that his new friend wash up first. As he did, the merchant hid his jewels under the would-be thief's pillow. As the merchant washed up, the thief would rummage through his belongings unsuccessfully. As this reoccurred for several nights, the thief gave up. As they parted ways, the merchant told the thief, *"The wealth was nearer to you than you thought."*

How close are you to true wealth? **1 Timothy 6:17-19** helps us answer this probing question. 1 Timothy 6 addresses money matters directly. Verses 3-10 rebuke materialism. Specifically, verses 9-10 issue a stern warning to Christians who desire to be rich: *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving*

that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." In our text, Paul issues a similar warning to a different audience:

- Verses 3-10 address those who desire wealth.
- Verses 17-19 address those who possess wealth.

There were rich saints in the Ephesian church. They became rich through hard work, inheritance, or other legitimate means. They may have been the *"believing masters"* mentioned in verse 2. Paul does not tell them to divest themselves of their wealth. He shows them how to live as rich Christians. It is a great reminder none of us can afford to forget: God is worth more than your money. C.S. Lewis said: *"The one who has God and other things has no more than the one who has God alone."* How do you use your God given wealth for eternal gain?

What Not To Do

Verse 17 begins: *"As for the rich in this present age..."* "Rich" was and is a relative term.

- It may mean they did not have to work to survive.

- It surely meant they had more than what they needed.

Is that you? Compared to those in the ancient Ephesus, most of us are rich. You may be tempted to complain about your situation. Count your blessings and name them one by one. You are richer than you may recognize. Yet material prosperity does not mean you are truly rich. Verse 17 addresses *“the rich in this present age.”* The things of this world are temporary. **Job 1:21** says, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return.”* Going by this discussion, Apostle Paul identified two great dangers to avoid.

Do not be prideful. Verse 17 says, *“Charge them not to be haughty.”* To *“charge”* is to solemnly command. Think of an officer giving orders to a soldier. Paul charges Timothy throughout this letter. Here Paul tells Timothy to charge the rich not to be haughty. *“Haughty”* translates a compound term that means *“high-minded.”*

- The haughty think they are more than what they are.
- The haughty think others are less or lower than them.

1 John 2:16 says, *“For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world.”* The pride of life is pride in possessions. It is to think you are big, blessed, or better than others

because of the things you have. Worldly wealth does not make you special, important, or different. **Luke 12:15** says, *“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*

Do not be foolish. Verse 17 issues a second charge to the rich: *“Nor set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”* Feel the tension of the text. You either trust riches or you trust God. Why should you trust God instead of riches?

Wealth is fleeting. *“Sets their hopes”* rebukes the false security affluence gives. **Matthew 6:31** says, *“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’”* Confidence in God is not the only thing that drives away worries about what you will eat, drink, or wear. We are prone to feel safe when we have access to funds to get what we need.

Verse 17 says do not set your hopes on *“the uncertainty of riches.”* This phrase is self-explanatory. You know what you have now. You do not know what tomorrow will bring. John Stott wrote: *“Many people have gone to bed rich and woken up poor.”* Wealth is fleeting. **Proverbs 23:4-5** 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."

God is faithful. Set your hopes "on God, who richly provides." Note the play on words. You are rich because God richly provides. What does God provide? "Everything." **1 Corinthians 4:7** asks: "What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" False teachers in Ephesus taught asceticism that a godly life is one of self-denial. **1 Timothy 4:3** says they forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods.

God is no "Cosmic Killjoy." He gives everything to enjoy. **Hebrews 11:25** says Moses chose mistreatment rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. Suffering for God is better than the pleasures of sin. **Ecclesiastes 2:24-25** says, "There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?"

What To Do

- Verse 17 records negative admonitions.
- Verse 18 records positive exhortations.

The two work together for our sanctification. Godliness is about the bad you abstain and the good you practice. Cultivating the fruit of the

Spirit involves pulling weeds and planting seeds. So it should not be a surprise that, after telling us what not to do, scripture often then tells us what to do. How should we live as rich Christians?

Do Good. Verse 18 says, "They are to do good." Doing good is the simplest and greatest way to describe Christian service. **Acts 10:38** says Jesus "went about doing good." This is the calling on the lives of all who would follow Jesus. **Galatians 6:10** says, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

What does it mean to do good? It is a call to strategic service – find a need and meet it. Just ask this question: Is there anything I can do for you? What if the person does not deserve to receive good? Do you? **Matthew 7:12** records the Golden Rule: "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Verse 17 says, "They are to do good, to be rich in good works." The latter explains the former. To do good is to be rich in good works. "Rich" is the key term of this text. It is used as a noun, verb, adverb, and adjective in these three verses. The passage does not just charge the rich. It explains what it means to be rich.

- Being rich is not about what you have.
- Being rich is not about what you do.

To be rich is to do good works for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Being rich in good works is not about earning righteous merit. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, *“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.”* We are not saved by good works. We are saved for good works. **Ephesians 2:10** says, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

Be Generous. Verse 18 says the rich are *“to be generous.”* To be generous is to be benevolent, charitable, hospitable, liberal and unselfish. It is to live with an open hand toward others. That is how God treats us. Verse 17 says he *“richly provides us with everything to enjoy.”* If God was stingy, we would be thankful for every little blessing we could pry from his miserly hands. Because God is so generous, we take his grace for granted.

- We should respond to God’s goodness with gratitude.
- We should respond to God’s goodness with generosity.

Generosity and sincerity go together. A genuinely generous

person does not give to get. It pays to give. But if you give only because it pays, it won’t pay. Generosity is its own reward. But you can’t beat God giving, no matter how hard you try. **Proverbs 11:24-25** says, *“One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”*

Verse 17 exhorts us to be generous and “ready to share.” Again, the latter explains the former. To be generous is to be ready to share. There are three types of givers – the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. *Hammer a flint, and you will get chips and sparks. To get water from a sponge, you must squeeze it. The more pressure, the more you get. But the honeycomb overflows with its own sweetness.* **2 Corinthians 9:7** says, *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

- Be ready to share for the Lord’s sake.
- Be ready to share with those who are needy.
- Be ready to share to advance the gospel.

Why Should We Do What this Text says

- Verse 17 records two admonitions.
- Verse 18 records four exhortations.

- Verse 19 records two motivations.

Why heed what this text teaches about being a rich Christian?

Spiritual Reasons. Verse 19 explains: *“thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future.”* There is nothing wrong with storing up treasure. Must make sure you store up the right kind of treasure. **Matthew 6:19-21** says, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* Shifting metaphors, Paul says store up treasures for yourself *“as a good foundation for the future.”* What treasure do you stand on to hold you up? You need a good foundation for the future. This is the economy of scripture: What lasts the longest is worth the most.

Luke 12:13-21 is the Parable of the Rich Fool.

- He planned for today but not tomorrow.

- He planned for life but not death.
- He planned for his body but not his soul.

Luke 13:21 concludes, *“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*

Eternal Results. Verse 19 ends: *“So that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”* To “take hold” is to catch, trap, or seize. It is to take possessions of. It is good to have possessions. It is not good when possessions have you. How can you have possession without being possessed? Take hold of that which is truly life.

- Life is not about what you have.
- Life is not about where you work.
- Life is not about where you live.
- Life is not about what you wear.
- Life is not about what you drive.

Christ is our life. He is life. He gives life. He blesses life. He changes life. He secures life. **John 10:10** says, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”* How are things between you and Jesus?

Conclusion

What is your life worth? Who do you belong to? What is your worth? A man spent his Saturday visiting local garage sales. On his last stop, he saw a Harley Davidson in the back of a garage, covered by a mattress. He asked if it was for sale. The owner gave it to him for twenty bucks. When he got around to working on it, he called his local dealership for parts. When he gave him the serial number, they started acting

strangely. They asked if it was an inscription on it. He found the inscription that read: "The King." They offered him \$100,000 for the bike. Before he gave them an answer, representatives for Jay Leno called him and offered \$250,000 for the bike. The large offers came because the bike belonged to the King of Rock & Roll – Elvis Presley. Because of its condition, it was only worth a few bucks. Because of its owner, it was worth a fortune. Who do you belong to?

Reference

H.B. Charles Jr. - How to Be a Rich Christian, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, [*How to Be a Rich Christian / 1 Timothy 6:17-19 · H.B. Charles Jr.*](#)