

“Rich in Good Works?”—1 Timothy 6:17-19

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Rich in Good Works?”, is 1 Timothy 6:17-19 → *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. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

There is a scene from the musical “Fiddler on the Roof” where a father has arranged a marriage for his teenage daughter with a well-to-do widower. When he brings this news to his daughter he expects her to be thrilled and to receive it as a blessing from God since she will be well taken care of throughout her life. Needless to say, she is not as excited as her father. When he asks the radical university student about congratulating his daughter, the student says sarcastically, “Congratulations. You’re marrying a rich man.”

This prompts the father to ask him, “What’s wrong with being rich?”

“Riches are the curse of the world!” replies the student.

The father looks to the sky, lifts his hands up to heaven and replies, “Then may God curse me with it! And may I never recover!!”

While this may be the prayer of most people in the world, those same people may believe that money is the root of all evil . . . at least the money that’s in **everyone else’s hands!** While people may attribute the world’s struggles and woes to money, Scriptures attributes them to the sinful human heart which is prone to idolatry. One of the most misquoted verses of the Bible is 1 Timothy 6:10 → *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.* The problem lies not in the gift of money, which God provides for living, but in the sinful heart which idolizes the gift over and against the Giver.

In our text Paul points out two temptations which the devil places before us when we have a lot of money in our possession. He tells Pastor Timothy to charge . . . *the rich in this present age. . . not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches.* (Verse 17) These are two very real temptations which satan throws at us when we use money.

The sin of haughtiness connected with riches expresses itself by entitlement on various levels. Because we are putting up the money we may be tempted to treat the other person harshly, disrespectfully and even

abusively. A wealthy person can be tempted to look down on others who are less fortunate with contempt. He may feel entitled in many ways simply because he has money and treat others likewise.

The other temptation to which Paul alludes is *to set our hopes on the uncertainty of riches*. Satan can present the delusion that our money brings security and guarantees a good life and future. However, *this present age* eventually comes to an end and then we enter the age to come. Earthly riches cannot guarantee the life to come in heaven. This was the point of Jesus' parable of the rich fool. According to Luke 12:19-21 this rich man had stored up wealth and said to himself, "*Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.*" But God said to him, "*Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?*" So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not **rich toward God** (i.e. has faith in Christ). Riches provide no solid hope and mean nothing to you in death or on Judgment Day.

Rather, Pastor Timothy was to tell them *to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.* (Verse 18) These Christians whom God has blessed with material wealth had the opportunity to use their wealth governed by their relationship with Jesus Christ. It would be one expression of the fact that they *set their hopes . . . on God, Who richly provides us with*

everything to enjoy. Being rich in good works can only happen as one is rich in God's grace! 2 Corinthians 8:9 says: For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.

Good works are the natural fruit of faith in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit will produce those good works which will have lasting value in the age to come, your eternal *future*! In fact, you were created for doing good works according to Ephesians 2:8-10 → *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.* Being rich in good works will naturally flow from being rich in God's grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Thus, we do good works not to get to heaven but **because we are already going to heaven!**

Paul talks about the lasting value of your good works in verse 19 of our text: *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.* The purpose of your good works is to provide open doors of opportunity to share God's Word with people. People experience the **grace** displayed in your good works because showing kindness to those who are undeserving will go against

everything they've ever been taught. Curious, the Holy Spirit will move them to ask questions, the answers to which will reveal the riches of God's grace, love and forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, His Son! Through this Gospel message the Holy Spirit creates faith in the hearts of people to confess their sins and thank Jesus for His work of grace in their lives. You see, the *treasure* you are storing up as *a good foundation for the future* is more souls in heaven **for the LORD!** The results always belong to Him!

Following His parable of the shrewd manager Jesus tells us this in Luke 16:9 → *Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.* Being rich in God's grace in Christ Jesus transforms our whole perspective and purpose of life. It causes us to *take hold of that which is truly life* now for eternity! Thus, we view work, money, possessions, relationships and so forth as ways and avenues to share with others the riches of God's grace in Christ as we are *rich in good works*. God treasures every sinner in Christ and we want them all to belong to Him eternally!

Being rich from the world's point of view is truly relative. What one man values another man may throw away. Thus, it is tempting to read these words and think about all those rich people who are haughty and living in idolatry and fail to see the last time you treated the store clerk in an unchristian manner

because your money entitled you. It is tempting to read these words and recognize that God has richly provided you with everything to enjoy and then cling to your stuff at the expense of disregarding the riches of His grace in Christ for you and others. We may even be tempted to read these words and count all the good works we've done and feel pretty secure of our eternal salvation because of them.

Once again, it's not a matter of the stuff. We all need hearts created in Christ Jesus with His sin cleansing work for us! As we come to Him in repentance of our sins daily and trust in His work for our salvation we are made rich in His grace and forgiveness anew! So if you find yourself looking up to heaven, asking God to curse you with riches and that you never recover, also thank Him that you already have the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus to be rich in good works. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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