

## An Exhortation to Christians Who Are Rich

### 1 Timothy 6:17-21

1 Timothy 6:17-21: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. <sup>20</sup> O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge- <sup>21</sup> by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.”

#### Background Notes

What is the difference between the people mentioned in verse 9 and the people mentioned in verse 17? Verse 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.” And verse 17: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.” The answer is obvious. The people in verse 9 **want to get rich** and the people in verse 17 **are rich**.

When we studied verse 9, we saw that believers should not try to get rich. It’s not wrong to **be** rich, but it’s wrong to **desire to be** rich. Don’t try to get rich! If you want to be rich, you will suffer the consequences: “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts.”

But suppose that you’re rich. You didn’t try to get rich. You’re not hung up with money, and you’re not a materialist. You just happen to be rich. Maybe you were born into a wealthy family. Maybe you inherited some land that has become very valuable. Maybe God has blessed your business, even though you weren’t trying to get rich.

This weekend I heard that one of my former students has become quite wealthy. He wasn’t trying to be rich; he just happened to be at the right place at the right time! And I know a Christian young man who got a job with Microsoft when he finished college a few years ago. He became so wealthy that he could easily retire today - and he’s only in his 30s! God has allowed him to become rich.

What does God’s Word have to say to Christians who are rich, or have become rich without even trying to be rich? Verses 17-19 are specifically addressed to those people. Maybe you’re not in that category now - but maybe God will test you in this area!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Riches are uncertain as to their future existence.

Verse 17: *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”* We are not to trust in “uncertain riches.” You may be rich today - but you may not be rich tomorrow, for any number of reasons – business failure, theft, value of the dollar, medical expenses, lawsuit against you, bad investment, etc.

Money really does have wings. Proverbs 23:5 says, *“Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.”* Riches have wings, and they can fly away when you least expect it.

There’s only one certain thing about riches: **they are uncertain**. Because of riches are uncertain, there are two things a rich Christian should not do:

#### **a. Don’t trust in your riches.**

Verse 17 says don’t *“trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.”* Don’t trust for your security in treasure on this earth. Trust in the living God - not just for salvation, but for your security as well. He’ll take care of you if you seek Him first (Matthew 6:33-34). Riches may fail, but the living God will never fail you.

#### **b. Don’t be conceited.**

Notice in verse 17: *“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty...”* This is a verse that is rarely obeyed by well-to-do Christians. Why do Christians with money tend to always look down on Christians who don’t have money? This is wrong. 1 Corinthians 4:7 says, *“And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”* This verse can be applied to everything we have, including our money.

So if you’re a rich Christian now, or if God happens to make you rich in the future, watch out for these two pitfalls: putting your trust and security in money, and being conceited because of your money. Remember, riches are uncertain.

### 2. Riches are unnecessary for present enjoyment.

*“Don’t trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (v17).* At first glance, the last part of verse 17 seems to be saying that rich Christians can splurge and be self-indulgent with their money, because God gave them the money so they could “richly enjoy the good life”! No! Verse 17 is **not** saying that at all – in fact, it’s saying just the opposite.

Verse 17 is saying that the living God gives “*all things to enjoy*” to **all of us** - not just to those who are rich. Notice that the verse does not say: “God gives **them** richly all things to enjoy.” No, it says “God gives **us** richly all things to enjoy.” In other words, riches are unnecessary for present enjoyment.

When I look back at our family times when I was a boy, and then as a father, and now as a grandfather, the best family times did not require a lot of money. We used to go camping with a small tent for family vacations. We enjoyed many of the most beautiful places across the United States, and we had great family times - with very little money.

God gives **all of us** richly all things to enjoy. The idea that you must have money to enjoy the so-called “good life” is a myth! Riches are unnecessary for present enjoyment.

### 3. Riches are unlimited in their potential use.

Verse 18: “*Let them [rich Christians] do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.*” Here Paul gives us the reason why God makes some Christians rich. They are to use their money for the glory of God! They’re to get involved in good works, and they’re to support good works. They’re to be ready and willing to share and to give.

Unfortunately, many wealthy Christians are not ready or willing to give. I would not want to be in their shoes at the judgment seat of Christ. They are in for a surprise, when it comes to their rewards in Heaven. Their token financial contributions are not going to carry much weight at the judgment seat of Christ. They will have salvation, yes - but reward in Heaven, not so much.

Maybe we should thank the Lord if we’re not rich. Do you want to hear the Lord say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant?” If you’re a rich Christian, how you are greeted in Heaven may depend on how much is in your bank account when you die. Yes, saving appropriately for future needs is biblical - but there’s no biblical basis for hoarding money! Verse 19 says that if Christians with money give to the Lord’s work, they will be “*storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come...*”

Verses 18-19: “*Be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life*”(NIV). The Greek word that is translated “share” at the end of verse 18 is *koinonia*. *Koinonia* means more than just sharing your money – much more. It means getting involved. Often it’s easy to write a check to help with a need - but the Lord wants us to give of ourselves, not just of our money.

And you **can** take it with you! Not your money, of course, but the results of the proper use of your money. If we support Bible-teaching churches and ministries and missions with our money, souls will be saved and believers will be built up in the faith.

This is what our Lord meant when He said, *“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home”* (Luke 16:9). In that verse, the Lord was teaching His followers to use their *“unrighteous mammon”* (money) for the salvation of souls. And when the money fails (and it will fail, because money is only for this present age), *“they will receive you into an everlasting home.”* That is, the souls who were saved and the believers who were helped as a result of the proper use of your money will welcome you into Heaven when you arrive at the pearly gates. What a blessing!

This is the Lord meant when He taught us to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6). And this is what is meant in verse 19: *“that they may lay hold of eternal life.”*

In the context, this exhortation is addressed to rich Christians, but it applies to all of us. Almost all of us are wealthy by the 1<sup>st</sup> century standards when this was written and by the standards of most people around the world today. And all of us will be held accountable for how we use our money. The good news is that riches are unlimited in their potential use!

## Practical Application

### Are you guarding the gospel?

Verses 20-21: *“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.”*

The apostle Paul commanded Timothy to guard the content of the faith that had been entrusted to him. Like a soldier guarding a national treasure, he was to guard the gospel.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the gospel was under attack. Already the Person and work of Christ were being attacked. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ was under attack. The “profane and idle babblings” of false teachers were watering down the gospel. The supposed “superior knowledge” of Gnostic teaching was already raising its ugly head. Some believers were being taken in, and they were straying from the faith (v21).

As the gospel was under attack then, it is under attack today as well. The full deity and full humanity of Christ is not preached. Christ as the only way of salvation is being attacked. The Christian worldview is watered down. The doctrine of hell is being questioned. The “battle for the Bible” continues to be fought. And just as in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, some believers are being taken in by false teaching and are straying from the faith.

The Lord asks us to do what Timothy was commanded to do: **Guard the faith!**

Are you guarding the gospel?