

Set Your Hope on God

1 Timothy 6:17-19

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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.

Do you know Jesus spoke about money and possessions more than about heaven and hell combined? It is said that one out of every ten verses in the Gospels deals with money or possessions.

And Paul here in this letter to Timothy spends a good deal talking about *money* in chapter six. And this is not the only place he talks about this issue. In the book of Acts, Paul told the Ephesian elders how he had lived a life working hard so he could provide for himself and be generous to others. In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul says God loves a cheerful giver.

Now, we have seen Paul cover at least *three* subjects related to money in this chapter. *First* subject - Paul talked about true gain and contentment. True gain, profit or benefit for your soul is not found in having more money *but* in godliness. “*But godliness with contentment is great gain..*” That was verse *six*. *Second* subject - Paul preached *against* pursuing wealth, money and possessions. Paul tells Timothy that the pursuit of money plunges people into ruin and destruction (1 Timothy 6:9). And the ground reason he gives as why that is so is in verse *ten* – “*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils*”. Notice what Paul says. The *love* of the money. Not money by itself but the *craving*, *the inordinate desire* of money, wealth and possessions. That is a root of all kinds of evil.

Third subject – we are going to cover this subject in this passage for today. And the subject is the message title – “*Set your hope on God not money*”. And who is Paul addressing? Verse 17 – “*the rich in this present age*”. Paul is addressing those who are already wealthy in this world. While it is true that true contentment is not found in having more and more *and* that craving for money and wealth will lead people into all kinds of depravity. It is also true that there are people whom God had blessed with wealth and possessions. If you took Paul’s benchmark or standards for who is a wealthy person, he says it in verse eight – if we have *food* and *clothing* that will be enough. So anyone who has more than enough food and clothing and stuff is a wealthy person. If Paul were to walk around today among us, I have no doubt he would be shocked to see how wealthy we are.

Surely, we live in the wealthiest or one of wealthiest nations into the world. No wonder this country is most sought after destination for many, many people in this world for pursuing the “American Dream”.

And Ephesus, the ancient city that Timothy was shepherding was a wealthy city too. The church there in Ephesus had a good number of wealthy people. How do we know that? Paul addresses masters in a few of his letters.

Before we dig in your passage, let me lay a road map of this passage we are going to look at.

In verse seventeen, Paul addresses the Head and Heart issues for people with wealth. Then, in verse eighteen, Paul addresses the *implications*, what ought to be the *habits* and *behavior* of the people with wealth. Lastly, in verse nineteen, Paul tells us the *incentives* of living a generous life.

Let's see what Paul says about what ought to be the mindset and heart of people with wealth. Verse 17.

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.

- This is the first imperative – Do not be haughty.

Paul tells Timothy to charge the rich, the wealthy people, the people with resources and possessions to NOT be haughty, proud or conceited. The word that Paul uses here is “high-mindedness”. Paul is saying don't think to those who wealth to not think of themselves too highly. Paul explicitly wants Timothy to preach such a message in his day and age. This is needed even more urgently in our day. And I realize some may resent such a message. But Paul is addressing Christians who are wealthy not unconverted people. This can be so obvious but why does Paul want to make this explicit? Paul knows and understands the dangers of being high-minded because God hates such a mindset and heart. It is pride that led to the downfall of Satan. It is pride that God actively opposes because pride leaves no room for accommodation and compassion. James chapter 4 verse 6 – “*God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble*”. And proud mindset leads to prejudice and treating others lower than yourself *just* because you have wealth. Jesus called out the Pharisees for being so high-minded. Let me read Luke 16 verse 14 and 15.

“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Luke 16:14-15

What is highly exalted among men is the money, the wealth, the fact that they take pride in the stuff they have that others don't have and gloat – all that is an abomination in God's sight. So this high-mindedness. Haughtiness is such a stumbling block to our Christian faith and others.

What is cure for pride? Lowliness. Self-degradation. Self-forgetfulness. Humility.

“You save a humble people, but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them down” 2 Samuel 22:28

“For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.” Psalm 138: 6

“Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.” Proverbs 18:12

There is no man more humble than our Lord Jesus Christ. The most humble person will be ashamed when you see the life of Jesus.

○ Second imperative – Do not set your hope what is uncertain

Notice, Paul does not say “do not set your hope on riches itself but on the *uncertainty* of riches”. This is a word that is not found in the New Testament a lot. This is only place that is used in the NT. In some sense, money and wealth provide some hope. But riches are uncertain, unreliable, unsure and unpredictable. There are people who constantly lose sleep over the stock market the investments. What a unstable place we live in. And how uncertain are riches? Someone wrote about money this way – Money will buy “*a bed but not sleep, food but not appetite, fine chinaware but not beauty, a house but not a home, medicine but not health, amusements but not happiness, earthly comfort but not eternal life, a good casket but not heaven*”. Wealth may provide some thing but ultimately is uncertain but you cannot take it beyond this life.

“man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!” Psalm 39: 6

“Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases. For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.” Psalm 49:16-17

“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income”
Ecclesiastes 5:10.

It is said that rich man Rockefeller made this statement “*I made millions but they have brought me no happiness*”.

Jesus himself said that mammon and God are opposed to each other. “*You cannot serve God and money.*” Luke 16:13

So we saw the first two instructions and they are sort in the negative. Don’t be haughty, don’t set your hope on the uncertainty of riches but what should be we setting our hope on. Paul tells us. Set our hope on God. That is the third imperative.

○ Third imperative – Set your Hope on God.

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.*

Why? God is the one who gives true wealth. True riches. True possessions are from God. That may include material possessions but not always.

Two observations based on this positive command.

- First – Set you hope on God because God is lavish giver. God is not a penny-pincher or parsimonious or stingy when he comes to giving. To know this nature about God, when we look back in the nation of Israel, we see that God incredibly blessed them. Moses the prophet of God writes to the people of Israel this way –“ *You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth*” Deuteronomy 8:18. What context was Moses writing to the people of Israel and why? Let me read from verses 7 through seventeen. “*For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, ¹² lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ¹⁶ who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. ¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’”*. Do you see what Moses says here? God is the Giver and He gives lavishly. But Moses warns the people that they could enjoy all this wealth and become haughty to the point of saying, “I have done this”. God says. No, we ought to be thankful and grateful not haughty.
- Second observation. Material possessions or earthly are not always the indicators of prosperity. Many times than not, they are false indicators of true prosperity. When we see what God has given us, it is not wealth that God has given us. Rather it is His Beloved Son that God has given to you and I. Listen to Romans chapter 8 verse 32 “*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all*”. “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him*”. John 3:36. You take the

money of the top billionaires of this world and try and attempt to buy eternal life. God will say it is de-monetized. It is worthless. The price is calvary. That is the only way. That is why Paul reminds the Corinthians to not hope in this life only. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 like this – *“If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* (verse 19). Here is my exhortation for this morning – If Jesus Christ is the most precious gift you have, then live as you have received the most expensive, the most amazing, wonderful and magnificent gift you have ever received. Nothing tops this gift. Every other gift pales in comparison to what you have in Jesus Christ. And as a Christian if you still pursue worldly riches and possessions as if they are your identity, how can anyone be convinced if Christ is your treasure? And if you have not received Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of your soul, then repent and trust in him today. You will not regret it.

So, here Paul tells Timothy to charge the wealthy to not be haughty, not set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but hope on God.

And what happens as a result of such mind and heart attitude adjustment? Or rather what ought to happen? What are the **implications** of setting our hope on God? Verse 18.

⁸ *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,*

Such mindset results in change in habits and behavior. At least it ought to. You start living generously.

- Live generously

Paul uses two verbs and two adjectives to describe those who set their hopes on God and have resources.

- To do good
- To be rich in good works.
- Generous.
- Ready to share.

Now I can exhaust the whole day by talking about a generous life but two observations.

- Doing good is one of the characteristics of those who have eternal life. Paul tells the church in Rome this way. *“to those who by perseverance in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are self-serving and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, He will give wrath and indignation”* Romans 2:7-9
- God loves a generous person. When you consider the poor and needy and have a generous heart, it’s as if you giving to God. God does not need anything from us but that is how God sees a generous heart. *“Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed”* Proverbs 19:17

What are the **incentives** of living generously?

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.

- Treasure for the future
- True life

Being generous itself will not give us eternal life but having the heart and attitude of Christ will pave a way for others to be blessed and for our own souls to live with joy and happiness.

I was reading about CT Studd, the wealthy famous cricket player from the 1800's. In 1884, his brother George was taken seriously ill and CT Studd was confronted by the question, "*What is all the fame and flattery worth ... when a man comes to face eternity?*"

As a result of the experience he said, "I know that cricket would not last, and honor would not last, and nothing in this world would last, but it was worthwhile living for the world to come." CT Studd left his life of fame and wealth to serve God in India, China and Congo. His heart was where his treasure was. Jesus Christ and eternal life. That is what you and I called to follow as well.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Set Your Hope On God.** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Why does Paul charge wealthy believers to not be *haughty* and not set their hope on the *uncertainty* of riches? Job 27:19, 41:9, Psalm 49:17, Ecclesiastes 5:15, 19

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. Why should we set our hope on God? Deuteronomy 8:18, Proverbs 10:22, Psalm 33:18, 146:3-7, Jeremiah 14:22, Romans 5:4-5
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: What are some ways you can live generously in light of eternal life?