

An elderly carpenter was ready to retire. He told the contractor that he worked for of his plans to leave the business of building homes for other people... so that he could enjoy a more leisurely life with his wife and extended family. ... He would miss the paycheck... and never realize his dream of owning a nice home (as he had built for so many people over the years)... but he needed to retire.

The contractor was sorry to lose such a good worker and friend. ... He asked the old carpenter if he would consider doing just one more house as a personal favor. ... The carpenter reluctantly agreed... but on this (his final house) one could easily see that his heart really wasn't into his work. ... He resorted to shoddy workmanship... and he used inferior materials. ... It was an unfortunate way to end such a distinguished career that he had.

When the old carpenter finished the house... the employer came by to inspect the house. ... He handed the front door key to the carpenter saying: "*This is your house... "My gift to you."* ... The carpenter was shocked! ... What a shame! ... If he had only known that he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently.

So it is with us. ... As we build our future in Heaven by the work we do here on Earth... we often put less than our best into the building. ... We go about our Christian lives - as though there is nothing in Heaven that we are building. ... One day with a shock... we will realize we have to live in a house that we so scantily built.

Today we are going to close our study of 1 Timothy... as we have come to the end of this book. ... We have been studying 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy for **18 weeks**... and today we come to its conclusion. ... Paul closes this letter to his

disciple... by giving us instruction for how to handle two very important things. ... They are treasures that He has entrusted us with. (And) yours and **my** failure to handle these two very important matters correctly... will leave us like that old carpenter... saying: *"If I could do it over... I'd do it much differently... If I would have known how directly my shoddy work was going to affect me personally...I would have handled these matters better."*

Last week... in the passage just before today's... we studied six attributes of God's character. I mentioned (last week) that most of the Bible commentators point out that those verses were probably a hymn of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church. (It was a common focal point of their worship.) Now... from those glorious heights of worshipping God's make-up... this morning we come crashing down (as it were) to some earthly duties we are to follow. But there is good reason that worship and duty are expounded in close proximity together.

(LISTEN) It is important for us to recognize that our walk with God is to consist of BOTH worship and duty. The highest form of worship - is to **do** the will of God.

**Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

(Let me tell you something...) Duty that does not spring from a worshipful heart- is sheer **legalism**. (I'll say it again...) ... Duty that does not spring from a worshipful heart- is sheer **legalism**. ... Please keep this in mind

as we continue... and as we look at our duty. Get your worship right... and you will see the powerful effect that it will have... in motivating you into right action!

Look... I want to share something with you... that has been a REAL eye-opener for me this week. Take a look with me at Psalm 37:4.

**Psalm 37:4 (ESV)**

*<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Over the years... I have found a lot of encouragement from this verse. My 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday School teacher (Mrs. Appleford) gave me a plaque (once) with this verse on it... and for years (I think until her death) my mother displayed it... on the walls of her house.

I used to think that the verse meant: “Focus intently on God’s character... worship Him in great joy... and He is going to fulfill the desires that you have been hoping for (which have been inside your heart.) But I no longer believe that is the Psalmist’s message here. Evaluating it by the surrounding verses... and other Bible texts... (now) I see its message as: Worship the Lord joyfully... and he will give... (meaning: He will **place** the RIGHT desires) in your heart. “... How many times have you wanted to know what God’s will is... for your life...? Delight yourself in the Lord so that you can find out! ... He will put the right desires (in other words “what His will is) in your heart.

Psalm 37:4 is explained by Phil. 2:13.

**Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**

*<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

(Now here is why this is so important to our passage today...) If you should find yourself NOT wanting to fulfill the duty that we are about to study in our passage... it is probably a matter of your poor worship.

... [ P A U S E ] ... You are not delighting yourself in the Lord... and He is not giving you the right desire. (In other words... Please don't try to obey today's passage with legalism. Delight yourself in the Lord – and out of the desire that He places in your heart – be obedient.

Now (as I said earlier)... our passage today is about the proper handling of two different treasures that God has entrusted to us. The first treasure... is our duties with money.

I can almost hear what many of you are thinking. *“Is that why you took us through a study of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy...? Because we would come to such a direct teaching on this subject...? Is that a delight for you to preach about Pastor...?”*

Actually... “No!” the exact opposite is true. I HATE TO PREACH ON THIS SUBJECT, MORE THAN ANY OTHER SUBJECT IN THE BIBLE. The reason is - because it is one of the main reasons my Dad said that he didn't want to have anything to do with Christianity and the church. *“They are always begging for money.”* I dare say... that it turns a lot of people off. ... But the Bible **does** speak of it a lot – and I will not avoid it – whenever it presents itself in a book that we are studying.

I would far rather preach sermons that concentrate on the heart... (get your heart right with the Lord!) ... When people's hearts are right with the Lord... the church will never suffer any financial struggles. ... That is very **true**. ... But here is a problem... that I have only recently understood. ... It is not

very easy for people in the church today... to make the connection between the proper handling of their money... and being in right relationship with the Lord. ... More and more people want to separate the two – BUT... ... they cannot be separated. ... A genuine believer cannot be withholding from the Lord... and be walking in the Spirit. ... So I am finding that (as uncomfortable as it makes me feel)... I need to be blunt and point this connection out.

Another realization that has been helpful to me is this clipping that I got from a church bulletin a few years back. It is entitled, “I’m Glad This Church Needs Money.”

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it wasn’t supporting missionaries and the preaching of the Gospel in other places.*

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it wasn’t doing anything to help the needy.*

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it was stagnating and wasn’t interested in expanding into other areas of service.*

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it didn’t care about impacting the lives of teenagers.*

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it wasn’t interested in educating children with the Word of God during their most formative years,*

**I’M GLAD THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

*If it didn’t it would mean, it has forfeited its enthusiasm... compassion... evangelism... vision... expansion... concern... and future.*

**THIS CHURCH NEEDS MONEY!**

And I wouldn't want to be a member of any other kind!

I hope that is how you feel, too. With that in heart and mind... lets now turn to our passage.

### 1 Tim 6:17-19

The first thing that we should notice is WHO Timothy is to command.

Verse 17 tells us: "*As for the rich in this present age.*" These instructions about wealth are for "*those who are rich in this present age...*"

So let's be VERY HONEST. (We have an elephant in the room that we just cannot ignore!) ... By the world's economic standards... there isn't a soul in this room who cannot place themselves in this category of which the Apostle is calling "*rich in this present age.*" Some Bible versions read: "rich in this present world." (It doesn't matter.)

This phrase speaks of anyone who has discretionary money of any kind. If the simple demands of staying alive have kept you from ever owning any books... radios... T.V.'s... If you have never been able to go to the theater to a movie... watched a video... never enjoyed a candy bar... coke... or other non -essential food item... EVER!!! – ONLY then will you be able to exclude yourself from this category of being "*rich in this present world.*"

The truth is that we have so much discretionary money to use in ways- other than our food and shelter. (Being "*rich is this present world*" speaks of that.) ... Millions of people don't have the simplest of pleasures that you and I take for granted.

But being "*rich in this present age/world*" is not presented as sin. It is not a sin to be rich. Notice that Paul does not condemn those who God has

enriched with material wealth. This passage does (however) deliver the plain truth about the dangers and responsibilities of wealth... as it calls upon each and every one of us... to exercise a proper stewardship of our God-given resources. ... It is not a sin to be wealthy... but it is a sin to LOVE riches and fail to use what God gives us as He directs. ... It is a sin... when we close our ears off.

We do not read (here... or anywhere in Scripture) that money is bad and that all wealthy people have been corrupted by it. To those who work hard... and are fortunate enough to receive material abundance... I say: *“Praise the Lord!”*

Throughout my years in ministry... I have been humbled by the unselfish generosity of wealthy Christians... who see their monetary fortunes mainly as a means of advancing God’s work around the globe. ... More than once... someone has secretly passed (through me) a generous donation for a special project of our church... or designated it to a Christian organization that our church supports... on the condition that I keep the giver’s name confidential. ... These godly... open-handed people didn’t want any reward... except the pleasure of their heavenly Father.

No. Money is not evil... and not all people allow money to corrupt them. ... But the potential for corruption DOES exist! And that is why Paul (in our passage today) issues four commands... two negative (we see in verse 17 two dangers to avoid) and two positive commands (that are presented in verses 18–19). Look again at our negative commands. ... Verse 17 spells out the two dangers we are commanded to avoid.

## **1 Timothy 6:17**

The first danger (here) that we are to avoid is haughtiness.

The world honors money. Practically everyone in the world wants more money... and most are actually *seeking* more money. ... Few persons would turn down money. ... Money (the thought of riches and wealth) is so interwoven in the fabric of this world... that it is probably the most honored thing in this world. ... The result is that the rich person is lifted up in the minds of most people. ... Most people want to be like the rich person. ... Most people put the rich person upon a pedestal. This makes it extremely difficult for a rich person to keep a proper perspective of himself.

In addition to this... here in America... many of us were raised by what is called the “*Puritan Work Ethic*.” (Work hard and reap great reward.) Our nation (it is said) was built by it. ... And when I was growing-up... the puritan work ethic was held up as the ideal. My family would have quickly disowned me – if I ever cast any negative aspersions on it. (“*Depart from us... we never knew you!...*”)

But just like ANY human system... it has flaws. Only when Jesus returns we will see perfection. And Paul touches (here) on something... that is often a byproduct of the Puritan Work Ethic. ... The puritan work ethic can produce great reward... and it can also produce great pride (or haughtiness.) I’m sorry... Dad! I’m sorry... Grandpa!

Wealth deludes people into imagining they are of superior value... because they worked hard and therefor DESERVE it. The delusion goes like this: “I have more than other people—therefore I am superior. I applied myself in a superior way than others did. (I was smarter and more clever.) And now everyone – including God - acknowledges my superiority!

That is the way our culture thinks. Superiority is believed to be a matter of homes and cars and yachts and designer labels. But Paul tells Timothy to warn people (who may have been very much like us): “*Do not let it swell your head. Do not let it make you feel you are better than someone else. It has no place in the believer.*”

Has the arrogance of wealth ever darkened your soul? ... Do you ever look at what you have worked hard for... as evidence that you deserve greater honor than others...? (Even if you quickly dismissed it as wrong thinking... have you ever imagined yourself as (somehow) better than someone whose house is not quite as nice as yours... or someone who drives a vehicle that is pretty beat-up... rusted paint... and cardboard taped over the window where there used to be glass...? They pull right in front of you (with a haze of smelly black smoke covering your windshield.) Are you better than them? Be honest. God knows.

When our conscious TWACKS us upside the head... we'll try to justify our attitude. (“*Well... if they would only work as hard as I do...*”) ... But let me challenge that justification. ... In order for that justification to work... there is an assumption that must be true. The unchallenged notion is: that talent and hard work will always reap financial rewards. ... But they don't.

Here are some things that I tend to forget... whenever I want to justify my arrogance toward those who don't have as much. ... Very often - smart... hardworking... and honest people... apply themselves with diligence and wisdom (day in and day out)... only to suffer constant financial setbacks. ... (Stocks go down... countries go to war... cultural tastes and styles change... thieves steal... fires destroy... health fails... and someone always comes out with a better product or idea... competitively leaving you

behind in the dust.) ... .. No matter how hard I worked for it – I cannot take the main credit for what I own. ... Here's the bottom line: God (the sovereign controller of all circumstances... including my abilities... opportunities... intellect... energy... and health) has allowed me to possess what I have. – And He has a purpose. I am to build something for eternity.

Do not credit your cleverness... your education and your ability to spot a good investment - as the reason you have any of the riches that you own. (Just stop and think!)... there are a lot of people just as clever... just as well educated... who do **not** have riches. Furthermore... (there are PLENTY of)... honest... diligent workers who struggle against a **world system** that *rewards evil and punishes good*...

(Please do not misunderstand me.) I still believe in the value of hard work! But not to the extent that our efforts are solely responsible for the resources that we own... Such thinking makes us haughty. And neither can we see the misfortune of others... as a reflection of God's attitude toward them. ... As a believer... the Lord sovereignly gave to you whatever is needed to cultivate a heart of righteousness... and to use your resources **as He directs**.

Avoid haughtiness! Second... *don't fix your hope on the uncertainty of riches*. ... We must never look to money as the source of our security. Money can be the means of God's provision and protection... but it is only a **means**.

GOD is our safety and our strength. And He never runs out of ways of pointing us back to this truth. ... Riches are about the most uncertain thing in life. ... The world's economy is never certain... fluctuating up and down

every few years. Crisis follows crisis in world affairs... and the markets respond and react to each crisis. ... Even if a person can ride this roller coaster and keep his wealth... disease or accident can happen overnight... and the person's wealth does him no good whatsoever. ... Riches (their value and benefit) may be here today - but they are just as easily gone tomorrow.

**Proverbs 23:4-5 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> *Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.*

<sup>5</sup> *When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.*

Rather than trusting in riches... believers are to fix their hope on God... Who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. God provides us with a far greater security.

**Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

There are two dangers we are to avoid. One is haughty conceitedness and the other is a misplaced hope. ... Next... we come to a duty to fulfill.

**1 Tim 6:18**

We are to do good with our money.

Verse 18 is a “I-am-going-to-make-certain-you-don't-miss-my-point” verse. It repeats the **same message** three times! Each repetition becomes a little more specific... and by his third reiteration... he nails the meaning down... emphasizing the kind of giving that is from the hand ... as well as ... from

the heart. He says: “*One’s whole being is to be involved in giving.*” We aren’t guilty... coerced... or otherwise compelled... into this type of giving. No. It comes from our own heart... (nothing superficial or minimal.)

Today Christians talk a lot about helping out - “**IF THEY COULD**”. ... But it is just talk.. You see... they have gotten themselves into so much personal debt... And their “*I wish I could...*” is just **talk** - because there is no action toward getting out of debt. ... (And) in most cases... they do have discretionary money that they continue to spend on personal pleasure.

With regard to our finances... so far we have seen #1. THERE IS A DANGER TO AVOID. #2. THERE IS A DUTY TO FULFILL.

### **1 Tim 6:19**

We need to set our sights on giving - not hoarding... on sacrificing - not indulging. ... We store up treasure for ourselves “*for the age to come*”... so that we “*may take hold of life that is real.*”

Real life (or “*life indeed*”)... is eternal life. ... Believers who don’t take hold of this... more firmly than they grasp the passing and fleeting pleasures of this world... will not discipline themselves enough to purposely do good with their money. We will be like that old carpenter... saying: “*If I could do it over... I’d do it much differently... If I would have known how directly my shoddy work was going to affect me personally...I would have handled these matters better.*”

If every Christian truly believed what they say with their mouth that they believe - that there truly is a Heaven which is “life indeed” - there would be no need to exhort anyone with verses like 1 Timothy 6:18-19.

The first treasure that we are told by our passage this morning to handle properly is our finances. There is yet another treasure Paul gives instruction for the proper handling. (And let me warn you... the toe stomping may not be over.)

### 1 Tim 6:20-21

We are to handle money properly and we are to handle truth properly. These are two treasures God has given to us to exercise good stewardship over. As in his charge to Timothy concerning wealth... Paul now gives the same two admonitions concerning TRUTH.

#1. THERE IS A DANGER TO AVOID. #2. THERE IS A DUTY FULFILL.

Verse 20 speaks of our duty toward the TRUTH in terms of protecting and defending it.

*“Guard the deposit entrusted to you.”* What is that? It is the truth as it is set forth in the Scriptures. Timothy is to guard that (don’t let it be discarded... or distorted.) ... Now I know that Paul wrote this to Timothy because he faced the danger of doctrinal error where he was (in Ephesus.) ... And so do we!

Boy! I have never been so punched in the gut with this charge to *“guard the deposit entrusted to you”* ... as I was this week. Over the years we have been witnessing mainline denominations abandon Biblical truth. ... But that wasn’t very close to home. ... I was comforted that it wasn’t Evangelical Christianity. Doctrinal caving-in was happening way over there! There was a big gap between the liberal liturgical denominations and the denominations that I more closely identify with. However... slowly... but surely... it began to creep closer and closer.

(What I've noticed, lately) is that it seems to start with an acceptance to pick and choose (at will) which Bible passages to accept as literal... and which ones to explain away as allegory. Now... some Bible passages ARE to be interpreted allegorically – but we don't pick and choose which ones. They define themselves (and an obvious way... is by the type of literature they are). For example... Christ's parables are to be interpreted by looking for the meaning behind the story... (They have a meaning that is beyond the literal wording.) ... Another example is the Bible's poetry (like the Psalms... and other sections throughout Scripture - which always show internal evidence that it is **not** to be understood literally)... Throughout Scripture there are clues – within the passage itself – for when we are to take-up a non-literal understanding.

But lately... what I have been seeing among scholars that I *have* (previously) admired... is that they are (apparently on their own – without the text *itself* providing reason)... reading concepts of Scripture as allegory. ... And sadly... that is **not** a liberty they have! ... It ends up being a convenient tool to throw out any Biblical concept that the reader doesn't like. ... "*Hell...? Oh... it is not literal!*"

The punch to my gut this week came from a video that I watched of a popular seminary professor (from the school that I graduated from) as he taught that Hell is not a Biblical concept. On his YouTube video (that has over 2 million views)... he was teaching that Heaven is in the Bible... earth is in the Bible... but Hell is **not**. ... My beloved seminary had a reputation for being one of the most conservative Biblical seminaries in the world!

The attacks to our faith are accelerating from the outside AND from within... ... Jesus is coming back REAL **SOON** folks! ...And He wants us to keep on doing everything that He has asked. (“*Occupy until I Come...*” as Luke 19:13 famously says it in the King James.)

Over the next several weeks we are teaching the basic Christian doctrines... that are coming more and more under attack. Also this week... I heard recordings of pastors and Bible teachers – who I used to hold in very high regard – as they mocked and denied these very doctrines. Pastors in our very own association of churches of Central Oregon are denying some of these precious held doctrines.

This is what motivated us (at one of our elder meetings) to start teaching these truths. FOLKS! We need to know them... in order to guard them. ... (“*Guard the deposit entrusted to you.*”) Basic Christian doctrine is being discarded and forgotten at an ever-increasing rate! ... It will accelerate even faster if churches don’t teach it... and people don’t bother to learn it. Please pray and determine if God wants you to answer this charge... and come join us Sunday mornings at 9:00a.m.

#1. THERE IS A DANGER TO AVOID. #2. THERE IS A DUTY FULFILL.

We are to handle money properly and we are to handle truth properly. These are two treasures God has given to us to exercise good stewardship over.

But in closing... be encouraged! You see... **we do not fight this war for victory; we fight this war from victory.**

.....

The safe landing of a Continental Airlines flight at Corpus Christi, Texas achieved one of every pilot's top priority - a smooth landing with no passenger injuries or damage to the plane. ... When he braked to a stop at the end of the runway (however) the embarrassed pilot discovered that he had failed at another important airline priority - to land the plane at the right airport.

Instead of Corpus Christi International... he had landed at a nearby WWII airbase that had not been used for over 40 years. ... The passengers had to wait two hours for a truck with stairs and a bus to take them to the right airport.

With all the priorities you have in your life - don't neglect these two main concerns of: how to handle money and how to handle truth.