

INTRODUCTION

This is now the fifth week in which the church is not able to meet because of the COVID-19 epidemic. I miss being together with you, and long for the day we can return to our normal Lord's Day meetings for worship. But in the meanwhile, I am glad to be able to provide the church with these devotional thoughts for growing strong in the Lord during the present crisis.

A few weeks ago, when the run on groceries and other supplies was first taking place, and word was coming in that many people were becoming unemployed as certain businesses were having to shut their doors, a line from the bible grabbed my attention. Ever since then, I have wanted to share that line with you, that we may be blessed by the Lord together through it. Today I put it to you as part of a passage instructing us how to live as disciples of Jesus Christ regarding our own possessions and the needs of others.

TEXT

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. (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.

BODY

I. Consider Who Those Are, the Rich in This Present World

A. 1 Timothy 6:7-9 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. (8) And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. (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.

1. I bring you to this passage because it is part of the context for today's verses, and because in it we can see two kinds of people are contrasted here
 - a) those who are content with food and clothing
 - b) those who desire to be rich
2. we see, in this, one part of what it means to be rich in this present world

- a) those who have enough to meet their basic needs, but not more, are not rich in this present world
 - b) those who have more than enough to meet their basic needs are rich in this present world
3. on this matter of desiring to be rich
- a) read and re-read the book of Proverbs for wisdom on this subject
 - b) a wise man seeks not to be rich, but to be faithful; he trusts that as he stays faithful, God will cause him to abound with blessings - Proverbs 28:20a
 - c) a foolish man tries to get rich quick, and does not maintain innocence in the process - Proverbs 28:20b
 - (1) he exploits those weaker than himself - Proverbs 22:16
 - (2) he deceives - Proverbs 21:6
 - (3) he robs - Proverbs 21:7

B. Luke 3:10-11 So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" (11) He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

- 1. I come here because where it says, "let him part" or "let him impart" or "let him give" or "to share," that is the same Greek term that we find in our 1 Timothy verses, about what the rich are to do
- 2. those who have twice as much as what they need to meet their basic needs are the rich in this world

C. APPLICATION

- 1. let it be that those of you who are not rich in this present world do not take upon yourselves a man-made burden, as if you were responsible to reduce yourselves from poor to destitute
- 2. let it be that those of you who are not fabulously rich recognize that what is said here to the rich still applies to you, to some degree
- 3. in the recent past, our society has been incredibly prosperous, so that there has been very little actual want of life's necessities
- 4. but during the present crisis, there are more people who are in need
- 5. we don't know what the rest of the year will hold; but there seems to be the real possibility of a serious recession or even depression in our society; there might be days coming when many more people are in want of necessities, with no way to get what they need

II. I Charge You That You Trust Not in Uncertain Riches, but in God

A. Do not trust or hope in uncertain riches; in the uncertainty of riches

1. For those who are rich in this world, who have some surplus income or some surplus stored up, it is a very strong temptation to trust in those riches
2. But those riches are not worth trusting, because they are uncertain; to trust in them is to do the absurd - to trust in uncertainty
3. Proverbs 23:4-5 Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease! (5) Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; They fly away like an eagle toward heaven.
4. Matthew 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

B. Instead, trust and hope in the living God

1. He is worth trusting, being the living God
2. He is to be trusted as the one who gives us all things to enjoy
3. see the wonderful use of words for our instruction
 - a) trust not in riches
 - b) but trust in God who gives richly

III. I Command That You Be Not Highminded, But Rich in Good Works

A. Do not be highminded, or haughty

1. literally "high-minded"
2. viewing yourself as high, and those who are not rich as low, beneath you
3. viewing yourself as high, up near God, as if you are something of a demi-god
4. the truth is that you are exactly a human being, and riches do not elevate you above other human beings, or make you anything like God
5. think of yourself not as high, but as low
 - a) down here on the same level with all other men
 - b) down here below God, who is infinitely high above us

B. Instead, be rich in good works

1. this concept of good works: 1 Timothy 5:9-10 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, (10) well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.
 - a) consists mainly in faithfully caring for your own family
 - b) extends to caring for others in need, specifically the saints

2. this concept of being rich in good works: Acts 9:36-39 At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. (37) But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. (38) And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. (39) Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.
 - a) Tabitha Dorcas had done the good works of supplying the poor widows with clothes (verse 39)
 - b) the bible says that in this she was “full of good works” (verse 36)
 3. this is the way of being rich in the kingdom of heaven
 4. so, you who are rich in this present world, do not consider yourselves to be rich in any way that matters in God’s sight
 5. seek to be rich in good works, as Tabitha Dorcas was
- C. See a three-fold prescription for how to be rich in good works (1 Tim 6:18)
1. do good
 - a) Luke 6:33-36 And if you **do good** to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. (34) And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. (35) But love your enemies, **do good**, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (36) Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.
 - b) Acts 14:17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 2. be ready to give; ready to distribute; generous
 - a) G2130 *eumetadotos* lit. good at giving; good at imparting; good with turning over your excess to supply what someone else lacks
 - b) Luke 3:10-11 So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?" (11) He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him **give** to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." give, share, impart, part with
 - c) be good at giving
 3. be willing to communicate; ready to share
 - a) G2843 *koinonikos*

- b) you probably have heard G2842 *koinonia* fellowship, communion, from its well-known place in Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- c) also used to talk about a charitable contribution for relief of the poor Romans 15:25-26 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. (26) For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain **contribution** for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.
- d) so our word here in 1 Timothy 3:18 indicates that we are to be of that mind; we are to be apt to fellowship, willing to have that kind of communion; ready to share with others
- e) instead of being apart from my fellow men, we are to consider ourselves as with them in this life, and so willing to share what we have if they need it
- f) instead of being above or apart from the church, we are to consider ourselves as with the church, and so willing and ready to communicate, to share, to consider our riches as the common resource of the church

D. As we make these things our way of life, we will find that rather than being high minded because of our riches, we will be rich in good works

IV. Think how our Lord Jesus is the great example of this way of life

- A. 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.
- B. [Here I follow some things I read in John Gill.]
- C. From eternity, as the Son of God, He enjoyed infinite privilege and honor
- D. But He left His place in heaven to come down here with us
 - 1. he took on our human nature, bringing nothing into this world
 - 2. he came as a poor child, and lived not to be served, but to serve
- E. What little he had, as His garment, even that was taken from Him
- F. The last thing He had, His own life, He willingly gave for us, who had only death
- G. By His being willing to come down here with us and give His life for us, we who trust in Him are now rich beyond what we can understand
 - 1. we have forgiveness of sins
 - 2. we have joy inside
 - 3. we have hope of eternal life

V. Understand What You Do By Living This Way

A. You lay up in store for yourself a good foundation for the future, for the time to come

1. whatever you might build with your riches in this present world will not do you any good in the future, the time to come, the next life
2. but when you live as Jesus Christ lives, giving of what you have for the good of those who are in need, you store up what will be treasure in heaven for all eternity

B. You lay hold on eternal life, or that which is truly life

1. you cannot keep hold of life in this present world; it is slipping through your fingers even as we speak
2. but by trusting in the living God through Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, you can take hold of true, eternal life in the world to come

CONCLUSION

My dear brothers and sisters, to whatever degree you are rich in this present age, this present world, I charge you

Do not trust in your riches, but in the living God

Do not be high minded, but be rich in good works

Even as our Lord Jesus Christ, who was rich, made Himself poor for our sakes

Amen.