

## So You Want to be Rich?

*1 Timothy 6:6-19*

Do you want to be rich? Really, do you want to be rich? Do you want all the luxury and financial security that wealth brings? The good news is that you can have it! But the bad news is that it will not bring you the happiness that you have been longing and hoping for!

There is a Russian folk story that illustrates this point. You can find it at [The Fisherman and the Goldfish](#).

In our scripture reading today, Paul has been writing to Timothy about the false teachers and had gotten to what motivated them and the subject of money and how they sold their services to become rich! He warns Timothy and us, about the dangers of covetousness, wanting what belongs to someone else. Paul shares four facts that caution us about our desires for wealth:

1. Wealth does not bring contentment, or “an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.” Paul later used the same word in the letter to the Philippians church: “For I have learned, in whatever state I am to be content.” True contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not wealth in the hand. A person who depends on material things for peace and assurance will never be satisfied, because material things have a way of losing their appeal. You may want to be rich, but it is the wealthy people, not the poor people, who go to psychiatrists and who are more apt to try to commit suicide.

So you want to be rich? Paul shares that wealth is not lasting. “We brought nothing into this world and we can carry nothing out. When someone’s spirit leaves their body at death, it can take nothing with it because, when that person came into the world at birth, they brought nothing with them. Whatever wealth we amass goes to the government, our heirs, and perhaps to the church and charity.

We always know the answer to the question, “How much did they leave?” The answer is everything!

So you want to be rich? Paul taught that our basic needs are easily met. Food, clothing and shelter are basic needs; if we lose them, we lose the ability to secure other things. A miser without food would starve to death counting his money. There is a story of a simple-living Quaker who was watching his new neighbor move in, with all of the furnishings and expensive “toys” that “successful people” collect. The Quaker finally went over to his new neighbor and said, “Neighbor, if ever thou dost need anything, come to see me, and I will tell thee how to get along without it.”

It seems that God periodically uses the economic and energy crises to encourage people to simplify their lives. Too many of us know the “price of everything and the value of nothing.” We are so glutted with luxuries that we have forgotten how to enjoy our necessities.

So you want to be rich? Then Paul said that the desire for wealth leads to sin. “They that will be rich,” describes a person who has to have more and more material things in order to be happy and feel successful. But riches are a trap; they lead to bondage, not freedom. Instead of giving satisfaction, riches create additional lusts and desires; and these must be satisfied. Instead of providing help and health, an excess of material things hurts and wounds. The result Paul described very vividly as “harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. It is the picture of a man drowning. He trusted his wealth and “sailed along,” but the storm came and he sank.

Paul turns his attention to Timothy. While caring for the needs of his people, Timothy needed to care for himself as well. Paul called Timothy a “man of God.” This special designation was also given to Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and David; so Timothy was in good company. Paul gave four admonitions to Timothy that, if

obeyed, would assure him success in his ministry and a continued testimony as a “man of God.”

Paul said flee! There are times when running away is a mark of cowardice, but there are other times when fleeing is a mark of wisdom and a means of victory. Joseph fled when he was tempted by his master’s wife, and David fled when King Saul tried to kill him. The word “flee” that Paul used here instructed Timothy to separate himself from the sins of the false teachers. Not all unity is good, and not all division is bad. There are times when a servant of God should take a stand against false doctrine and godless practices, and separate themselves. But we must be sure that we are acting on the basis of biblical conviction and not about just wanting to have our way. Paul instructs Timothy not just to separate but to add graces of the Spirit. He was to add:

Righteousness: personal integrity

Godliness: practical piety

Faithfulness: dependability

Love: love that sacrifices for the good of others. It seeks to give, not to gain.

Patience: endurance; sticking to it when the going is tough. It is not a complacency that waits, but a courage that continues in hard places.

Meekness: power under control.

Paul instructed Timothy to fight and keep on fighting. It describes a person straining and giving their best to win the prize (as an athlete) or the battle (as a soldier). This fight is not between believers; it is between a person of God and the enemy around them. They are fighting to defend the faith, that body of truth deposited with the church. But there is a caution: It is sad when some Christians spend so much time fighting the enemy that they have no time to do their work and build the church. On the other hand, if we do not stand guard and oppose the enemy, what we have built could be taken from us.

Paul encourages Timothy by reminding him that he has been called by God, and this assures him of victory. Like Timothy, we have made our public profession of faith in Christ, and others in the church stand with us.

Another encouragement in Timothy's battle and our battle, is the witness of Jesus Christ our Savior. He "witnessed a good confession" before Pontius Pilate and did not relent before the enemy. He knew that God the Father was with Him and watching over Him, and that He would be raised from the dead. It is "God who makes all things alive" who is caring for us, so we need not fear. Timothy's natural timidity might want to make him shrink from the battle. But all he had to do was remember Jesus Christ and His bold confession, and this would encourage him.

Paul gave Timothy military orders. He was to guard the commandments and obey it, because one day the Commander would appear and he would have to report on his assignment. The only way he could be ready would be to obey orders! We do not know when Christ will come again, but it will be "in His own time" and He knows the schedule. Our task is to be faithful every day and abide in Him.

Timothy lived in the godless city of Ephesus, but God dwells in glorious light. Light is a symbol of holiness. God dwells apart from sin, and God is glorious in His holiness.

Paul reminds Timothy and us that only God has "honor and power everlasting." If Timothy was going to fight the good fight of faith, he had to decide that Jesus Christ alone was worthy of worship and complete devotion.

So you want to be rich? There is no sin in being rich, but our wealth must not become our God....only God is worthy of our worship and service.