

1 Timothy 6:17-21, Which treasure are you working for?

Previously God warned those who weren't rich but wanted to be. Now, God warns those who are rich but whose wealth has corrupted them; they're full of disdainful pride. Finally, God closes the letter by encouraging Timothy to carefully guard what He put in his trust: he must not engage Satan's teachings, i.e., the godless and mindless contradictions masquerading as knowledge touted by those in Ephesus, and allow them to derail his calling, mission, and faith.

6:17, "Command those who are *rich* in this present age not to be haughty" in 6:17-19 God makes a play on words. He uses the words "rich" and "good" to make several points. He first tells the "rich" not to be arrogant to the point of seeing themselves as VIPs, as some sort of god who is above others looking down. This is the behavior present in the wealthy of Ephesus and God's about to pull them up short.

"nor to trust in *uncertain riches* but in the living God, who gives us *richly* all things to enjoy" the wealthy must not put their trust in their "riches" because they're uncertain. The more wealth you have, the more certain you become, the more secure you feel. God says, "You've got it backwards; riches aren't secure at all. In fact, they're uncertain." The recent Pandemic devastated stock markets worldwide. In an instant, the wealth of many was greatly diminished. Wealth has the allure of security, but it actually brings you more trouble. The more you have, the more you have to lose, which makes you anxious and restless. Instead of relying on your wealth, what can you rely on? There's only one thing: the *living* God. He is the only certain thing in this universe. You may lose your fortune, but God will still be there to provide more of where that came from. In fact, the "riches" you had to begin with came from Him who gives to us "*richly* all things to enjoy." In Ecclesiastes 5:19 we learned that God is the one who gives the rich their wealth and the power to enjoy it; 1 Timothy 6:17 echoes this sentiment. The rich must not trust in their wealth but in the One who "richly" gives everyone their wealth.

6:18, "Let them do *good*, that they be *rich* in *good works*, ready to give, willing to share" instead of looking down on everyone with scornful pride, God wants the rich to do "good" so that they will actually be "rich." The rich think they're rich but God says, "You're not rich at all; in fact, you're poor as can be." If they want to be truly rich, they must do "good works." And notice what those good works are: it's not that being rich is a bad thing; God doesn't want the wealthy to give all their money away and become poor. Instead, God wants them to stay rich but instead of using their wealth to inflate their pride, He wants them to be ready to give and share their wealth with others. Thus, when God blesses you with great wealth, He doesn't just want you to use it for yourself. He wants you to use it to bless others. At the core of His being, God is a generous Giver and we are made in His image. Therefore, God wants the wealthy to emulate the One in whose image they are made.

6:19, "*storing up* [treasuring up] for themselves a *good* foundation for the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life" God reveals why it's so crucial for the rich to be rich in good works instead of rich in money. If they use their wealth to bless others, this good work will turn into real treasure later, i.e., they will treasure up "for themselves a good foundation for the time to come." Previously God revealed just how beneficial godliness is for the afterlife, 4:8. Amassing a fortune here on earth will do nothing for you in the afterlife, 6:7, in fact, it can rob you of your riches in the afterlife. Thus, if the rich act appropriately and pursue good works with their wealth, then they will "lay hold on eternal life." Does this mean that the wealthy and others have to work for their eternal salvation? NO, that is acquired by faith alone, 1:16. But once God gives you eternal life, it's your job to live it to the best of your ability, to fight the good fight of faith, 6:12.

1 Timothy 6:17-21, Which treasure are you working for?

6:20, “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” God wants Timothy to protect what He put in his trust. About 12 years prior, God called this young man to a specific calling and mission (Acts 16:1-5). He spoke through Paul and the elders of his church, 1:18; 4:14, concerning His purpose for Timothy. And Timothy himself testified to it and lived it, 4:6; 6:12. So God doesn’t want him to be derailed by Satan’s demonic teachings, i.e., “the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge” which is what the erroneous false teachers in Ephesus are preaching and teaching, 1:3-4, 19-20; 4:1-3. He’s to avoid them not only because it would be fruitless to engage them, 4:7; 6:3-5. But because it can lead you astray.

6:21, “—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.” Timothy must not allow the allure of such false teaching to lead him astray as it has done to those in Ephesus, which include Hymenaeus and Alexander, 1:19-20. He must guard his calling, mission, and faith.

“Grace be with you. Amen” Paul wishes Timothy God’s grace as he confronts the difficult task in Ephesus. He wants God’s grace to be with him every step of the way.