

## Set Your Hopes On God

1 Timothy 6:17-21

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*<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” <sup>21</sup> for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.*

My message title this morning is “Set Your Hopes On God”.

Less than ten percent of world can afford what fifty-six percent of Americans can afford.

We are blessed to be a nation of plenty.

However, it appears that we are a nation consumed by materialism.

Randy Alcorn, in this book titled, “*The Treasure Principle*” writes that about a malaise Americans have called *possession obsession*. Randy writes about a PBS documentary that was aired a few years called *Affluenza*. Here are some observations Randy makes –

1. The average American shops *six* hours a week while spending forty minutes with children.
2. In a given year, more Americans declare bankruptcy than graduate from college.
3. In ninety percent of divorce cases, arguments about money play a prominent role.

His concluding observation is that money does not make you happy! I could not agree more. Materialism is a spiritual disorder or malady that needs a constant check.

If you thought that having more or craving for more leads to more contentment or happiness, we heard from the Apostle Paul two weeks ago that “*godliness with contentment is great gain*”. Paul also said, “*if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*” <sup>9</sup> *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction*”. This is a good instruction for those who crave after more and more with the *hope* that more leads to happiness or contentment. A desire for more is vanity. A desire for more results in ruin and destruction. This was two weeks ago.

In this closing passage, Paul returns to the subject of money. As I said this passage is an after-thought.

Why does Paul write this passage?

Perhaps, Paul realized, while on one hand that not all have surplus and disposable income, they are some who God has blessed with wealth, riches and resources. These are wealthy believers. These are people who have plenty and yet Paul knows they need a word of instruction too.

Paul specifically wants to address them in this passage and offer a closing exhortation to Timothy.

Here are some general observations before we unpack this passage.

- Paul is rather forceful or emphatic in his use of the word *charge*. The word charge is to command, instruct, teach or train.
- Paul uses this word *charge* at least seven times in this letter to Timothy.
- The first time you see such a *charge* in 1 Timothy 1:3, “remain in Ephesus that you may *charge* certain persons not to teach any different doctrine”.
- In 1 Timothy 4:11, after Paul writes about godliness, he says to Timothy, “*Command* and teach these things”. Same word and emphasis.
- In 1 Timothy 5:7, after writing about older men, women, younger men, women should be treated, how children and grandchildren ought to behave, how widows ought to conduct themselves, Paul re-enforces his instruction by saying, “*Command* these things as well”
- And last Sunday, we saw the personal charge to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:13. Paul calls Timothy the “man of God”. “I *charge* you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus.. to keep the commandment”.
- Now, you may be hearing these instructions and thinking – “well, this is only for Timothy or pastors or church leaders. How do this apply to me?” Are you not a child of God? Then everything we have been teaching and preaching in this letter apply to you or the church. If you are a child of God why would you not want to heed God’s Word? Jesus called the Pharisees “children of the devil” because they did not love Him. But you as children of God love him and therefore desire to obey Him. God desires your obedience first sacrifice second. “If you love me, you will *keep* my commandments” (John 14:15). Paul knew this about Timothy. Before Timothy was a pastor or church leader, he was a child of God. 1 Timothy 1:18 - “This *charge* I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare”. Every child of God has a charge from God – to *flee*

from sin, to *follow* godliness, to *fight* the good fight of faith and to hold *fast* to eternal life.

- As we arrive at the last passage in 1 Timothy 6, Paul closes his letter with another *charge*. To the wealthy. Look at verse seventeen.

<sup>17</sup> *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 does Paul want Timothy to *charge* the wealthy in the same way he emphasizes other instructions? Does Paul have anything against the rich or wealthy? Is it wrong to have wealth? No but here are a few reasons:
  1. First of all, it is very likely, there are wealthy believers in the church in Ephesus who need to know about stewarding their resources and need to be humble. And Paul is concerned about them because the wealthy can be susceptible to false hope. Paul wants to call out the lie that those who believe money is their savior. *“Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!”* Psalm 40:4. Perhaps, these wealthy believers were putting on a show and leading other believers to be greedy, we don’t know. But surely Paul’s charge shows his concern.
  2. Secondly, Paul’s motivation is love. He loves the poor, the wealthy, the have’s, the have nots and everyone in between – *“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith”* - 1 Timothy 1:5.
  3. Thirdly, Paul makes a connection between having plenty *and* being haughty. The word Paul uses here for haughtiness is found only once in the New Testament. It is a compound word. It can be translated as having a feeling of high-mindedness, being lofty or arrogant. Paul does not say every believer who is rich is proud, haughty or arrogant but believers who have been blessed with wealth and plenty are very prone to this spiritual condition. Just as those who are very poor and lazy can be prone to stealing, those who have much can become proud. Being haughty is a condition that is so detrimental or damaging to your soul that God literally distances himself or even hates pride. We have covered the consequences of being proud before. The Bible gives warning after warning about being haughty. Here are a few warnings and examples:
    1. *The LORD tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow’s boundaries.* Proverbs 15:25.
    2. *It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.* Proverbs 16:19

3. *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.* Proverbs 21:4
4. *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* James 4:6
5. Uzziah was a king of Judah. This man had much wealth and resources. Here is what is written about him – *“Uzziah built fortified towers in Jerusalem...<sup>10</sup> He also constructed forts in the wilderness and dug many water cisterns, because he kept great herds of livestock in the foothills of Judah and on the plains.. He had many workers who cared for his farms and vineyards, both on the hillsides and in the fertile valleys.<sup>11</sup> Uzziah had an army of well-trained warriors, ...<sup>12</sup> These regiments of mighty warriors were commanded by 2,600 clan leaders.<sup>13</sup> The army consisted of 307,500 men, all elite troops..<sup>14</sup> Uzziah provided the entire army with shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and sling stones.<sup>15</sup> And he built structures on the walls of Jerusalem, ... His fame spread far and wide, for the Lord gave him marvelous help, and he became very powerful.<sup>16</sup> But when he had become powerful, he also became proud, which led to his downfall”* 2 Chronicles 26: 9-16
6. Ezekiel chapter 28 is addressed to the king of Tyre but also interpreted as the passage about the downfall of Satan. Let me read the first five verses. *“The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God: “Because your heart is proud, and you have said, ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,’ yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god—<sup>3</sup> you are indeed wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you; <sup>4</sup> by your wisdom and your understanding you have made wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; <sup>5</sup> by your great wisdom in your trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth”.*
7. God had to destroy a city because of the sin of pride and other sins. Sodom is known for its sin of homosexuality. There are other sins it is known for too. *Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.<sup>50</sup> They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.* Ezekiel 16:49-50  
Do you see the relationship between pride and wealth?
4. Paul instructs the wealthy because they cannot take one dime out of this world into this next. *“for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world”* 1 Timothy 6:7. That is why Paul addresses as “the rich in the present age”. The present age is the age, the era or the world we live in. This age is not going to last forever. All will die and return to the dust and this age will be gone. The apostolic instruction is we don’t desire much from this dying age but set our hopes on the age to come. On God. Worldliness is loss but godliness is gain. Great gain! Godliness is where Paul puts all his energies into. *“For to this end we toil and*

*strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe*". 1 Timothy 4:10. Paul charges the rich, and by extension you and I, to not set your hopes on the *uncertainty* of riches but on God. Set your hopes on God. Why? Wealth can surely help you enjoy creaturely comforts but without godliness, wealth can end in ruin and even premature death. Amy Winehouse was famous singer. Sold 30 million records. Won five Grammys and yet at the age of 27 she drunk herself to death. This is not enjoyment. This is misery from having too much!

Demas was a fellow Gospel worker along with Paul but by the time Paul writes his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, Paul says Demas "in love with the present world has deserted me". 2 Timothy 4:10.

God has a way for you to enjoy life. Paul says "*God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*". What does Paul have in mind?

Verses 17 and 18.

<sup>18</sup> *They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,* <sup>19</sup> *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.*

Paul gives the remedy for materialism and redefines what enjoyment of life looks like.

1. The antidote craving for more is generosity. Paul does not say "become an ascetic or a monk". Rather enjoy life by giving yourself, doing good works, sharing your resources. Paul's instruction to the wealthy is they are to do good. In case they did not hear it the first time, Paul repeats with a play on words. Be rich in good works. Be Generous. And ready to share.
2. What is the incentive? You are making a future investment for others and storing up heavenly treasure. This is what life looks like. It much blessed to give than receiving.
3. Randy Alcorn quotes A.W Tozer in his book saying, "*As base a thing as money often is, it yet can be transmuted into everlasting treasure. It can be converted into food for the hungry and clothing for the poor; it can keep the missionary actively winning lost men to the light of the Gospel and thus transmute itself into heavenly values. Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality*"
4. We were at the Shepherds Conference for pastors and leaders near LA last week. During a break we were talking to another pastor from another state. He said, their

church sends pre-fabricated homes to Mexico. And where do they build them? In their church parking lot. They invite the youth, kids and perhaps the whole church, build the homes and load them onto a truck and send them to needy families in Mexico. What a good deed!

So set your hopes on God not on the uncertainty or the unsteadiness of riches.

I remember years ago, when I going to pursue seminary full time. I was leaving my full time job to take a part time job to support my family. And the answer for a part time job seemed to take forever. I was leaving rather hopeless. And this verse came as an answer – *“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God”*. Psalm 42:5. You think God is absent or distant? Hope in God!

Paul ends his letter with a personal note to Timothy. Verses 21 and 22.

<sup>20</sup> *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”* <sup>21</sup> *for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.*

Yes, Timothy is to instruct. He is to correct false teachers. He is to shepherd the church. But Paul’s closing exhortation to Timothy is to guard the deposit entrusted to him. Timothy has a huge responsibility. To guard sound doctrine. To keep the Gospel pure. Spurgeon said that *“Men go after novel and false doctrines because they do not really know the truth”*. That is why Paul says *“Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions”*. Why? A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Because that can swerve you from the faith. Last night we were returning from the airport, we saw a car end up on an incline on the road shoulder. How do you think it got there? The car swerved! It does not take long for a church to swerve – if the leaders go gnostic – claim to have secret knowledge or embrace false knowledge.

I want to conclude with where we began this letter. In verse one of 1 Timothy.

*“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope”* 1 Timothy 1:1

Hope is not just the expectation of better future. Hope is a person. The person of Jesus Christ. Do you have Christ? Then you have hope. Jesus Christ is our living hope. All your hopes are gone the moment you are gone. Jesus offers hope beyond the grave.

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

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Set Your Hopes On God. Timothy 6:17-21

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

1. What is the relationship between having much and being haughty? What reasons does Paul give to not set your hopes on wealth but on God?

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

2. Do you believe that a comprehensive view of God's Word is necessary for a believer? What are some dangers about contradictions and vain babbling? Go around and share implications.
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 will you do to keep yourself from swerving from the faith?