

Overcoming Prosperity's Pitfalls 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Introduction:

1. There are two extreme views concerning wealth and riches that Paul dealt with in this chapter.
 - First, that it is God's will for every believer to be rich. This was refuted in vs. 5-9.
 - Second, that it is God's will for every believer to be poor. This is refuted here in our text.
2. Solomon observed, "*The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.*" **Proverbs 22:2**
3. A few things jump out right away. According to 1 Timothy 6:17-19, there will be wealthy people in the body of Christ (in fact most of us in America would be classified this way).
 - As we said, it is not God's plan that every person be rich or poor, and it certainly is not a sin to be rich. There were "well to do" people in Paul's day.
4. Paul doesn't rebuke them for being rich, but he does issue warnings and some instructions for the grace believer today.
5. It isn't a sin to be rich, but there are some intrinsic temptations and potential dangers that come with wealth. Every believer can overcome prosperity's pitfalls. How can we do this? Paul will explain to the body of Christ.
6. He told Timothy, "*Charge them...*" This means to exhort, challenge, and remind them of some things.

First, by overcoming the temptation of pride.

1. "...*that they be not highminded.*" This means "to be lofty in mind; arrogant." Anybody in here ever heard of the term "rich snob." That is exactly what Paul is talking about here.
2. Do you think this can happen to believers?
 - **Illustration:** "It's hard being the richest people in the church." You talk about thinking of yourself more highly than you ought to think.
 - Self-deception—godly believers that have wealth don't act like it. Most often, you would never know.
3. What is the problem when believers get "*highminded*" about their riches? It is a completely wrong mindset. God warned Israel about this in Deuteronomy 8:13-14, 17-18.
 - God said, "Do you know what the temptation will be for you when you experience wealth and riches? You will forget and say in your heart (attitude)..."
4. Do you know what the difference is between a wealthy, godly believer and an ungodly, wealthy believer? They have two completely different mindsets.
 - Ungodly attitude—"Look at all that I possess and own."

- Godly attitude—"I don't own anything. It all belongs to God. I am simply a steward over it."
5. Christian, never get prideful about what you have. A person can be humbled very quickly. The Bible says that riches have a way of making wings and flying away. Proverbs 23:4-5
 6. Or, we could leave them all behind and enter eternity. Proverbs 27:1

Second, by overcoming the temptation to trust in our riches.

1. Isn't it ironic that printed on our money is the slogan "In God we trust?" People fight, kill, steal, embezzle, go to court, gamble, sell their bodies, and cheat to get something that says, "In God we trust." It seems kind of ridiculous, does it not?
2. If the inscription "In God we trust" should be true of anybody, it should be true of believers in Jesus Christ.
3. Notice what Paul says in verse 17. He said, "*Nor trust in uncertain riches...*"
4. Riches are uncertain. Thieves can steal, investments can drop, businesses can collapse, health can decay, etc. This is why our trust must be in the Giver and not the gifts.
 - **Illustration:** The rich fool. Luke 12:15-21; Psalm 52:5-7

Third, by overcoming the temptation to get sticky fingers.

1. What do I mean by sticky fingers? The more we have, the more we want. We become greedy and miserly, only concerned with accumulating more wealth.
2. What did Paul instruct wealthy believers to remember concerning their money? In verse 18 he told them to use their money to "*do good,*" "*be rich in good works,*" be "*ready to distribute*" (meeting needs), "*willing to communicate*" (to share what you have with others).
3. When wealth comes, the attitude is not, "What can I buy?" The attitude is, "What can I give?" This attitude says so much about where our heart is with God.
4. Paul says that we should not view riches as something to selfishly cling to, but rather see ourselves as a channel for God to work through to be a blessing to others.
 - **Illustration:** Funnel vs. a sponge

Fourth, by overcoming the temptation to lose focus on eternity.

1. If Jesus were to come up to you and say, "How are your investments?" what would you think? He does care about your investment portfolio. Not your earthly one; he couldn't care less about that. But He cares a lot about your heavenly one.
2. Jesus taught Israel that there were investments that were heavenly in nature. Matthew 6:19-20
3. Paul also taught the church the same thing. Notice in our text what verse 19 says. "*Laying up in store...against the time to come.*" Paul encourages believers to lay hold (seize) on that which is eternal—living and lasting forever.

4. It is so easy to lose focus on eternity. It is so easy to begin living like we are going to be here forever. Everything we see is uncertain and temporary. That is what we learn here in our text.
5. What we hoard down here, we will lose forever. What we give away with a right heart will abound to our account in heaven. Philippians 4:17