Message #38          I Timothy 6:17-19

As Paul winds down the letter to Timothy, he once again brings up the subject of wealth. The difference between these verses and 6:5, 9-10 is this: the previous verses address those who want to get rich and these verses address those who are rich.

Some people in the church want to cater to the rich; but the true man of God is to instruct the rich. He is to give them sound instruction, just like he does everyone else.

The verb “instruct” is an imperative, a command. The word literally means to transmit a message, which is an order or command of God (Smith, p. 338). Timothy has been commanded by God to transmit His truth to rich people concerning their perspective and use of money.

IF THE CHURCH IS TO BECOME A PILLAR AND SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH, IT NEEDS A MINISTER WHO WILL INSTRUCT THE RICH IN THE CHURCH CONCERNING A PROPER ATTITUDE AND USE OF MONEY.

There can be a tendency for the church to really take a special and partial interest in one who is wealthy. If a person comes into church who has a lot of money, the church can begin to show partiality and favoritism and God views this as evil sin (James 2:1-9*).

There is nothing wrong with being rich. There is something wrong when a minister or a church does not continue to proclaim God’s truth because one is rich.

INSTRUCTION #1 – Instruction concerning proper attitude. 6:17

A proper attitude toward money is “not to be conceited” about it. That word “conceit” means not to be high-minded or to think in lofty terms about money (p. 464). Now there are at least three Biblical reasons why a rich person should not be conceited about money:

Reason #1 - Because God has commanded him not to be.

When one begins to think in lofty terms because he has money, he violates a command of God. In fact, as we already sin, such thinking is sin (James 2:9).

Reason #2 - Because one rich in this life may not be in the next life.

Notice carefully the prepositional phrase “in this present world” literally “in the now age.” Wealth on earth is transitory. Paul is making a point that just because one is rich in this life, doesn’t mean one will be wealthy in the next life.

Reason #3 - Because God is the one who gave the wealth.

God determines who is rich and who isn’t (i.e. I Sam. 2:7). Once we begin to realize this, there is no cause for arrogance or haughtiness. Even believers can be duped into thinking they made themselves rich.
INSTRUCTION #2 – Instruction concerning improper hope. 6:17b

The perfect tense of the infinitive “to fix” means a rich believer can make a decision at one point of time that will continue to affect him.

One real problem with wealth is that the person who has it tends to think he can rely on it. Let us remind ourselves of the critical words of Proverbs: “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth. Cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens” (Prov. 23:4-5).

There is real danger for one with money to trust in his money. Money to some means power and security.

INSTRUCTION #3 – Instruction concerning proper hope. 6:17c

There is an either/or antithesis here. Hope for one wealthy is either in money or it is in God. On this issue, there really are no in-betweens (Matt. 6:24).

Martin Luther, the great reformer, once said, “I don’t care who he is, he may be an emperor or a pope, but no one is rich until he is rich in his relationship with God.” There is nothing wrong with having wealth. It is a gift of God. The last part of this verse makes it clear there is nothing wrong with enjoying wealth. God is the one who richly supplies us with all kinds of things to enjoy.

Paul himself knew what it was like to be rich (Phil. 4:12). It is interesting, in this verse, that he identifies the ones who are rich as being “those,” but he identifies ones who have enjoyed riches as being “us.”

But here is the key point–we may enjoy the gift, but we cannot ever forget about the giver! We must always keep our hope and confidence in God. Our trust is in God, not in money.

INSTRUCTION #4 – Instruction concerning proper works. 6:18-19

Those who are rich should be generous and should be ready to share what they have with others. Hendriksen says he should be quick to give and ready to share, especially with the brethren.

Reason #1 - Because this is a command of God.

It is a pure command of God that the rich person should be generous and ready to share what God has given him with others.

Reason #2 - Because this is will bring the rewards of God. 6:19

Believers should be ready to share of their abundance. They should lay up treasures in heaven and really grab hold of what is life indeed.

Which is it for us? Do we love God more than money or money more than God?