**Grace to You** :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

**Handling Treasure, Part 1**
Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:17-19
Code: 54-49

First Timothy chapter 6 and we're coming to the end. Two more messages, today and next week, in 1 Timothy. And the Lord's really impressed upon my heart to go on to 2 Timothy. I just can't let it rest. That second epistle is so tightly tied to this first one that we've got so much ground work, we need to move on. So we'll do that in two weeks and go through those brief four chapters, I think, rather rapidly. But for today and next time we're going to come to the close of 1 Timothy. And after all these many many months of study, we're so excited to see what God has taught us through these days. And I know that my life will never be the same because of the intense study of this great epistle that the Lord has allowed me to engage in.

But as we come to this final section, verses 17 to 21, the whole issue here, although two different subjects are dealt with, really revolve around one theme and that is handling treasure...handling treasure. Every one of us at one time or another has had the opportunity to handle something valuable that belonged to somebody else. You remember as a child going through the department store and your mother saying, "Don't touch that, don't touch this," or holding something of precious value, something breakable and being very fearful that you might drop it. I remember as a little boy the first time somebody scooted me up in a chair and put a little baby in my arms, and the fear of the fragile nature of that little life. You know, we all know that. We know what it's like to borrow someone's new car and then rue the day we borrowed it because we can't find a place to park it where the door won't get dinged or we're worried about somebody bumping it in the back or whatever it might be.

We let our home out one time just kindness to some friends to stay there for a week while we were on vacation. And they had little children who took crayons and drew all over the walls. And we didn't feel that that was really part of the deal. But when we came home, they were chagrined. I mean, they were in horror. It was worse than as if it was their own home, you know. And, of course, it was a great shock also to find that their children were depraved. The parents need to wake up to that sooner or later, I think but not at the expense of someone else's house. We all sort of feel that.

If we're given something valuable to hold for someone else, there's a great sense of responsibility we have. And that's basically what this is all about. It's all about handling riches which really belong to God and all about handling truth which also belongs to God. We are stewards, to use a biblical word, we are not owners. Whatever we have is His given to us to hold, to manage, to be stewards of. And these two things occupy the heart of the Apostle Paul, riches and truth. And really there are...there

are really so many things to be said in these areas that just summing it up at the end leaves the subject frankly less than exhausted...but we're going to try to stick to the text and just say what the Apostle says and try to enrich it so you'll understand it and not go as far as we could go.

It's basic to the Christian life...get this thought...that you live out your Christianity on the basis of how you handle your stewardship. How you handle your riches and how you handle truth in many ways is the mark of the character and quality of your Christian faith, the measure of your Christianity.

Now let's put it in context a bit. You know that this entire epistle is a call to duty, a call to duty on the part of Timothy who has been placed in Ephesus as a delegate of the Apostle Paul with the task of setting the church in order...a great church, a church with a marvelous beginning, initiated by Paul himself over a three year ministry, a church used to found many other churches in Asia Minor, most of which are named in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, a church with great great roots and strong foundation. But in the years intervening since its beginning, it has drifted, it has drifted away from true doctrine and is on the edge of heresy. It has drifted in terms of its spiritual life, from godliness to ungodliness. So Paul coming out of his first imprisonment meets Timothy there, leaves Timothy there while he goes west and says, "Set this thing in order." He isn't gone very long until he writes this letter back and says here are the things on which you must concentrate your energies.

And so, primarily this epistle is a polemic against the state of the Ephesian church and a call to spiritual duty on the part of the man who has been given the ministry of bringing it around. Its primary theme then is duty...duty. This is what you are to do. And I believe that perhaps that's an insight into why Paul closes this epistle with a reaffirmation and a summary of Timothy's duty.

You will note in verses 15 and 16 the great doxology. It is the second doxology in this epistle. The first one is in chapter 1 verse 17. And this is the second one. The Apostle Paul writing about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is so enamored with that thought, is so lifted and uplifted by the reality of what he has to anticipate and hope for that he launches into this doxology, this paean of praise and speaks of the God who is the blessed, the only potentate, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords who only has immortality dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, the one to whom be honor and eternal power. And then he says an amen. And you might think that the "amen" would be it, that that great epistle would end in a glorious paean of praise, in a doxology that lifts you to the skies to think about the glory of God, but not so. Because Paul takes us from the magnificence and majestic heights of that doxology right smack down to earth with a jolt. And in 17 he goes right back and to the end of the chapter reminding Timothy of his duty.

Duty is the theme. The contemplation of the glory of God, the contemplation of the nature of God was really a spiritual and worshipful digression. And it shows you that on the tip of the pen, the tip of the tongue and the tip of the heart of the Apostle Paul was spontaneous worship. And as he began to contemplate the Second Coming, he launched into that glorious doxology, not because it was a part

of the logic of the epistle, not because it was part of the sequence of reasoning, but because it was in his heart to do so at the mere contemplation of the hope that he had in Jesus Christ. The logic of the epistle takes him back to duty. And so coming down from his spontaneous worshipful digression with a jolt, he speaks of duty. And the transition, frankly, is not unlike the worship service here this morning where for the first part of the service we sing the praise of God and extol His virtues and praise His name, and lift up His majesty and we adore Him, and we offer our worship, and then we come to this time and we're brought back down with a jolt to the matter of duty.

But keep in mind that we have learned long ago that duty and worship are not at all separate. In fact the highest form of worship is duty. The highest form of worship is duty. You never worship more truly or purely than when you do the will of God. That's why the Apostle Paul in Romans 12 says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your spiritual act of worship." And then goes on to say, "Don't be conformed to this world but be conformed to that good and perfect will of God. Duty is the highest form of worship. "Him only shalt thou worship....Him only shalt thou serve," such is the spirit of the words of Matthew 4:10.

So we come back to duty. And the first duty has to do with handling riches. And we're going to look at that this morning, just three verses, 17, 18 and 19, handling riches. Now Paul has already introduced the subject of riches back in verse 5 when he was describing the motive of false teachers and says they are primarily moved by gain, supposing that gain is godliness. And then down in verses 9 and 10, "They that will be rich fall into..." and he lists temptations, traps, foolish hurtful lusts, and ultimately can be drown in the destruction and perdition of eternal loss. And then says the love of money is the root of all evil and people who covet after it err from the faith and literally skewer themselves with many sorrows.

So he has talked about people who are motivated by money, primarily false teachers. And we said that earlier, false teachers are motivated by money because they need it to indulge their lusts. You see it all the time. It's...it's literally true from the beginning of recorded history to the present day and until Jesus comes and even through the Tribulation time, false teachers will be motivated by the desire to fulfill their lusts and gain money.

And so he talked about that issue but apparently didn't want to leave that issue at the point at which he stopped earlier lest some people who had money be falsely accused of loving it, or lest some people who had money be falsely accused of having gained it from ill conceived motive. He talked about in verses 9 and 10 the wouldbe rich, but in verses 17 and 19 he talks about the already rich. He now wants to speak to those Christians in the church who are wealthy, who are rich. And he wants to call upon them for a proper stewardship of that wealth...those who have riches already as opposed to those who seek to have riches. And many rich people are not necessarily motivated to that end. Maybe they inherited it, maybe they gained it because of the proficiency of the way they did whatever they do. Maybe they gained it because there was some providential circumstance which

brought it into their possession.  It is not necessarily true that the people who are rich love money. And it is not necessarily true that the people who are poor don't.  So he really here is talking about those who are rich rather than who would be rich at any price.  And he wants it clear that it's not a sin to be rich but it is a sin to misuse that stewardshipand that's the issue.

Obviously in a prosperous city like Ephesus there would be among those who came to name the name of Christ and were converted some who were wealthy.  In fact in chapter 6 verses 1 and 2 it talks about slaves and masters.  We assume that those masters who were believing masters in the church had means, certainly means surpassing that of those who were their servants.  So we assume that in that church as in our church, in most churches, even in the Corinthian church there were some who were wealthy, though there were not many who were noble, he says in 1 Corinthians, not many who were mighty, not many who were anything other than just common.  But the church has people who are wealthy and that's by the design of God, Deuteronomy 8:18, it is God who gives you the power to get wealth.  First Chronicles says essentially the same thing in chapter 29 as David speaks in verse 12, "Both riches and honor come from Thee."  And you remember that beautiful prayer of Hannah in which she expresses the same truth in 1 Samuel chapter 2 and verse 7, "The Lord makes poor and makes rich, He brings low and lifts up."

In other words, what the Bible teaches is that people are poor or people are rich because of God's purposes, God's design.  God allows people to allow what they have.  And that's why the Scripture says that whatever state you are you are to be...what?  Content because God has given you what He's given you.  Paul does not condemn the rich, nor does he tell them that they're more blessed by God because they have more money.  Money does not translate into blessing from God.  There are people who have nothing who are at the apex of God's blessing.  There are people who have everything and are in utter misery and rejected by God.  You cannot equate material blessing with God.  That is not the way God pours out His blessing in the new covenant age.

So Paul doesn't condemn people for being wealthy, nor does he say that they are specifically those most favored by God.  Riches in itself is no favor at all.  In fact, poverty has one wonderful benefit, you don't have to make decisions about anything which simplifies life, casts you on God, puts you in a position of trust and makes every small thing that comes your way the source of great joy.  Don't underestimate the value of having little as opposed to the value of having much.

Verse 17 says, "Timothy, command them that are rich in this age," and that's the essential character of the text of the next three verses.  It is in the command that must be given to the rich in this age.  In this age refers to time.  Literally the Greek text is "in the now age...in the present age," earthly wealth.  It is the treasure of this world that he is talking about...people who are wealthy not in spiritual things but in the mundane things.

Now let's ask the question: who are them that are rich that Timothy is to command? By the way, the word "charge" means to command. He is calling for a command. This is not a suggestion. This is not counseling. This is a command. You command the rich. Now you say, "Boy, that's not me. I don't have a Mercedes, a Rolls Royce, a BMW, a house on the hill, a large bank account, a boat, a camper, etc., etc., that's not me." Let me tell you what rich means. Here's a definition of rich. Rich means you have more than...finish the sentence...need. You got it, folks. You have more than you need, that makes you rich. That is, you have more than you need to live, eat, sleep, clothe yourself, and do what you have to do. If you have any discretionary funds, you have more than you need. You're rich.

You say, "Well I'll tell you, by the time I paid our house payment and by the time I've paid for the cars and by the time I have clothed our family and we've eaten, there's nothing left." Yes, you're still rich. Why? Because you choose to eat $15 meals when you're out instead of four dollar ones...because instead of wearing one suit of clothes for a month or six months, you choose to have 12 outfits for every month, because instead of having transportation you choose a certain kind of transportation, instead of having a warm place where you can sleep and eat you choose to have a furniture store that you call your home. You understand what I'm saying? Those are choices you make about the discretion of your dollars.

Now this is a difficult thing because I can't tell you specifically what God wants you to do in your life. And I'm not saying we should all have oneroom apartments with boxes to sit on and cots to sleep on and we should all have one suit of clothes which we wear all the time. Although frankly it's not a bad idea. I'm not thinking the Lord necessarily is advocating that. What I'm trying to point to you is that all of us are rich in the sense that we have discretionary dollars. If we choose to spend them on how we eat rather than that we eat, or on how we dress rather than that we're clothed, or on how we live rather than that we live in a place that's warm and provides shelter for us, then that is how we have chosen to use our discretionary dollar. But I'm not going to let you off the hook in the sense, nor am I going to let myself off the hook in the sense that I'm in the category of the rich. I am not eating three meals a day of bare minimum food, barely clothed and barely sheltered and crying to God for my next day's provision. So I'm not in the sense a poor person. I have to make decisions about my money. I have to decide what to do with it. And that happens every day and that makes me rich. I have more than I need. And frankly, I could enjoy a simple life where I didn't have those kinds of decisions, couldn't you? So let's just get it right at the outset here that we're the rich.

Nothing wrong with that. Acts 15, Lydia was a rich lady and she was able to house the Apostle Paul and all of his traveling companions. Nothing wrong with that. Dorcas was a wealthy lady and she was able to make garments and give it away to the poor. Nothing wrong with being rich. Philemon was a wealthy man, owned slaves, had a big house, a church met in his home. There were many people like that. It's not whether you have it, it's what you do with it, that's the issue.

So command the rich. There's no command here to give it all away. There's no command to take a vow of poverty here. There's no command to become an ascetic. The command here is to deal with your money with certain perceptions. One, I'll give you three, one, danger to avoid. You have an outline in your bulletin which will cover the next two weeks, that third point there I don't know what that is, somebody put that in. I don't know who or why, for there is no third point. But anyway, the first point has to do with handling riches and the first subpoint under that is of danger to avoid...danger to avoid.

The first thing is negative. Now what happens, Paul starts out by telling Timothy..command rich people..and the first thing you want to command them has to do with danger to avoid. Danger number one, verse 17, "Command them that are rich in the now age, that is rich in earthly things, that they be not high minded." The first danger has to do with your attitude toward other people. Riches has a way of pushing you in your own mind above the people who have less than you do. That's just part of our fallen nature. We tend to look down on people who are lower on the economic ladder than we are. This is the first concern that Paul has that rich people not because they have much look at people who have less or little as if they themselves were inferior and the people with much were superior. Frankly riches and pride are twins, and the more you have the more likely you will battle pride and the exaltation of yourself. High minded, just two compound words out of the Greek meaning to think lofty...to think in a haughty way, to be exalted in your own mind about your ownself. And rich people are constantly faced with the temptation to put on airs of superiority...to dress to flaunt their riches, to decorate themselves to flaunt their riches, to drive cars that tell everybody on the street that they're going down how wealthy they are, to live in a certain way, a certain life style to convey that they're better, wiser, sharper, more successful, more effective, higher intelligence belongs to them, etc., etc. You know all of that.

Riches and pride are twins. And mark it down somewhere that because you have much is not necessarily, as I said earlier, the blessing of God. In Psalm 73 verse 12, I think a very insightful point where the psalmist lays it out as simply as it could be laid out, "Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches." The Psalm of Asaph says, "Don't look at prosperity as if it's the mark of righteousness." And there are many godly people who have very little.

I get letters from pastors around the world. I get letters almost every week saying, "I'm preaching the Word of God, I don't have enough money to buy books, sometimes I don't have enough money to buy a new Bible, mine is falling apart, could you help me get a Bible?" There is no correlation between righteousness and bank accounts. The idea that you have in your mind some justification, or I have in my mind some justification to think I'm better than somebody else because I happen to be in a situation where God providentially has given me more worldly goods is tragic. Many righteous people suffer and are poor while many wicked people prosper.

But it's very difficult to be wealthy and have a humble spirit. The temptation is when you get enough money you don't do anything for yourself...I mean absolutely nothing. Everybody in your little world is there to do things for you. You know the feeling. You don't clean your house, you don't mow your lawn, you don't wash your car, you don't even clean the windows at home. The more money you have the less you do and you begin to see the whole world as servants. And everybody in the whole world is to serve you and you're on top of the pile and you just dictate what everybody will do and dole out the bucks and buy their time. And if they don't do it the way you want, you talk to them like you were talking to an animal. This is the tendency we wealth. And you get the illusion that you're there because of your manmade powers and the truth is, that's not the case. You get to the point where you're independent of needing anyone really on a personal level, you just need servants. And so your whole approach to life is to get everybody to do what you want when you want the way you want. And that's why Proverbs 28:11 says, "The rich man is wise in his own conceit." And Proverbs 18:23 says, "He talks roughly...he talks roughly."

Why? Because people aren't people to care about, they're just people to use. And so on the other hand, Philippians 2:3 says that we're to be lowly minded, let each of us look not on our own things but the things of other, be lowly minded, not high minded, Philippians 2:3. By the way, this is real news in the Ephesian culture because, of course, the Greeks looked down on humility, they mocked humility. And they exalted pride, just like our society today. This society today exalts pride, flaunt it, baby, flaunt it. That's the mindset of today and humility is no longer a virtue.

So Paul warns the rich because the inevitability is that when you accumulate wealth, you begin to make distinctions in your mind in the basic intrinsic value difference between rich people and poor people which are artificial differences, cultivated only in your own proud mind. In Ezekiel I was reading this week in chapter 28 of Ezekiel the first five verses and very pertinent to what we're saying, "The Word of the Lord came to me again saying, Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord God because your heart is lifted up and you've said I am a God, I sit in the seat of God in the midst of the seas, yea thou art a man and not God though thou set thine heart as the heart of God. Behold thou art wiser than Daniel, there is no secret that they can hide from Thee with thy wisdom and with thine understanding. Thou hast gotten thee riches and gotten gold and silver into thy treasuries. By thy great wisdom and by thy merchandise thou hast increased thy riches, thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches." And so forth. This is a soliloquy of a guy who is telling himself how great he is. Of course, that chapter transitions as you know into discussion of Satan, starting in verse 11, who is very much behind the prince of Tyre in that proud egotistical affirmation of who he is. And it was Satan's pride that cast him out of heaven, says Ezekiel there.

But that's typical of a person who is wealthy. He begins to think of himself as the one who gained it because of his great ability and people are only people to be used and abused for his own purposes. The tendency of the rich, to look down on the poor. In the church it's the same thing. James writing

in chapter 2 of James says, "How dare you let somebody come into your church with a gold ring, sit him in the front and have a man come in with disheveled clothes and stick him under your feet somewhere. Don't you realize that God is no respecter of persons and you have violated the royal law, the law of love?"

So the first danger to avoid when you have money is the tremendous danger of pride...pride. That haughty indulgent attitude of the rich is a curse. The second danger to be avoided, he mentions in verse 17, is in the words "nor trust in the uncertainty of riches." Actually, the word "trust" could better be translated, it's the Greek verb elpizo, to have hope in, or to fix one's hope on the uncertainty of riches.

In other words, the constant temptation for the rich is not only to have a wrong attitude toward people, but a wrong attitude toward money or possessions and to put their hope in them. Proverbs 11:28, "He that trusts in his riches shall surely fall." And you remember the rich man, the rich fool as he is called in Luke 12? He was making it. Boy, he was making it and it was rolling in, money was rolling in. He had so much crop that he never had to work another day in his life, so he tore down all his barns, built bigger barns and bigger barns, just storing it and storing it and said that's it, no more work, from now on till I die eat drink and...what?...and be merry. I'm set...I'm set for life. And the Word of the Lord comes to him, You fool, tonight your soul will be required of you and then whose will all this stuff be? So are those who rich in this age and not rich toward God, is the commentary.

So the tendency is when you have a lot, you trust in a lot. When you have a little, you trust in God. I mean, one of the benefits of just having enough to live on is that you're totally dependent on God to make a provision, and when He provides it you rejoice in thankfulness. I think the reason so many Christians in America and so many Christians even in this church among us are so smug and so apathetic and so cold about their Christianity is simply because they really don't need God that much. I mean, God has been replaced by their estate planner, by their retirement plan. We've got it wired.

Now I'm not saying that we should deny all of those things and be unwise with what we do, but what I'm saying is we want to be sure that we do not shut off the voice of the Spirit of God in regard to the stewardship of our money in order to build our confidence in that treasure which we're amassing. Frankly it's hard for me to imagine that anybody would trust more in a bank than they would in the eternal God. Earthly riches quickly disappear. Proverbs 23:5 says they fly away.

So, Paul says, "Look, you better put your hope in God," that's the implication here. They trust in the uncertainty of riches, you want to trust in God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Don't ever get to the point in your life where you have totally eliminated the need for God, you've got it all covered. Now that's a balance that you have to work on on a daily basis. I'm sure there are times when you sense in your heart, "You know I ought to give some money to this family, they have some need....I ought to give to the Lord's work over here, buy, boy, I don't want to take anything out of there, that will

cut my interest down and that will mess up my plan," and so what you're basically saying is that when the Spirit of God prompts your heart you're not interested in listening because your confidence is not in the fact that God's going to care for you, but in the fact that you're going to care for you and you don't want God invading your program and messing it up. So you hope in the uncertainty of riches. And, of course, in the ancient times it was so uncertain because war was happening all the time and people would be conquered and all the money situations would change when those kind of things happened. And how in the world can it ever be sane to say you trust more in the riches that God provides so generously than in the God Himself who is the provider. Foolish. James 1:17, He's the father of lights from whom every good and perfect gift comes down.

So Paul says, "Look, stop the sin of pride and stop the sin of confidence in money and put your confidence in God," or literally "but on God." The word "living" isn't in the original manuscripts. "On the God who possesses all things, who owns the cattle on the hills," and so forth as it says in Psalm 50 verses 10 to 12. And it is God, not just God but God who gives us plousiosbountifully all things...get this, to what?...to enjoy, for enjoyment. God gives us all things for enjoyment. God is so good. He's so gracious. And everything He gave you and everything He gave me was for the purpose of enjoyment, pleasure. That's the same word translated in Hebrews 11:25 pleasure in the phrase "the pleasures of sin." It has to do with real pleasure, not a sensual ungodly pleasure in this context, but a real pleasure, a true joy, a true satisfaction.

In Ecclesiastes, for example, 5:18, "Behold that which I have seen, it is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, enjoy the good of all his labor he takes under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him, for it's his portion. Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth and has given him power to eat thereof and take his portion and rejoice in his labor, this is the gift of God. He shall not much remember the days of his life because God answers him in the joy of his heart." He's not sitting around pining over the past, he's enjoying the present because God has been so gracious. God gives us things for our enjoyment.

Now many people have used that verse as a sort of a justification of self indulgence. That's not the idea. What is the highest form of enjoyment? What's the highest form of pleasure for a Christian? I wouldn't think it's luxurious self indulgence, would you? Is that the highest form? Fleshly gratification, is that the highest form? The Lord wants us blessed, the Lord wants us happy, the Lord wants us to enjoy but does He want us to enjoy sensual pleasure, earthly pleasure, fleshly gratification, selfindulgence? I don't think so. I think the highest form of joy in the life of a believer is the joy that comes to one who knows that what he is doing is bringing glory to His Lord. So God gives us richly all things for the highest kind of enjoyment. Spiritual delight comes in the right use of wealth, seeing it as a gift of God. You're not...you don't own your money, you don't own your possessions, your home and all you have. You manage it for God. He gave it to you and said this is a test...this is a test to see where your heart is. And Jesus said, "Where your treasure is that's where your heart is." So if you lay up treasure on earth, that's where your heart is. If you lay up treasure in

heaven, that's where your heart is, Matthew 6:19 to 21.

So God desires us to enjoy the gifts He's given us and the best way to enjoy them is to know that they've been turned right around and put into things that are going to glorify His name and honor His name and fill your heart with the purest truest highest kind of joy.

How in the world we could imagine that God gave us everything just to indulge our flesh? The highest joy for a believer ought to be to invest in the eternal advance of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, the dangers to avoid are pretty clear. Riches can destroy relationships through pride, set people off as aloof, uncaring, unsympathetic, selfish, indifferent. And they can become the hope of a man's security and then nullify his responses to God. And so he settles for a cheap thrill rather than the pure joy of taking what God's giving him, turning it right around giving it back to God, investing it in eternity, putting it into the Kingdom and knowing the joy supreme of that kind of investment in the anticipation of the eternity of rejoicing that will be his when he sees the fruit of that investment in the presence of God in heaven.

So the danger to avoid...secondly, the duty to fulfill. Given the negative let's go to the positive. We know what we're not to do, we're not to have the attitude of pride and the attitude of security in our money, what's our duty? This is so simple, verse 18, "Command them that are rich...we pick up the main verb from verse 17...that they do good, that they be rich in good works, generous," and then that last one I'll explain to you in a minute. It's translated "willing to share," but it's a very rich word. Here are four aspects of our duty, really one duty but there are four features of it. And it takes us sort of down a funnel. It's a marvelous marvelous methodology that Paul has.

First of all, take your money, you rich people, and the first thing is you are to do what? Good...do good, that's one word, one Greek verb, agathourgeomeans to work that which is inherently, intrinsically and qualitatively good. Do good things with it, really good things, not superficially good things, not shallowly good things, not pretty things on the outside but good things. That is noble things, excellent things, things with quality and obviously that would be determined by God, things that God would honor, things that would honor God. Very general then. Take your wealth and use it to do good...noble things, to work that which is intrinsically valuable.

If you look at 1 Timothy back in 5:8 certainly you're to use it to provide for your own house. In verse 3 you're to use it to provide for widows and bereft women who have no support. Down in verse 16, if a woman has widows they are to be relieved and cared for within the church, that would be outside the family but in the church. Chapter 5 verse 17, you're to do it to support the elders and pastors who lead you. In other words, there are a lot of good things. You're to give to the needs of others as in the early church, Acts 2 and Acts 4, when they found someone with need, they sold what they had, took the money, gave it to the person in need. That's a good thing.

In other words, get it in your mind that you're going to take your money and do things that are inherently noble, good, valuable, worthy.  That's general.  Let's narrow the funnel a little bit.

The second thing he says is here are the good things, they be rich in good works.  In other words, instead of being rich in dollars, be rich in good works.  The fourth time now that some form of the word "rich" is used in this passage.  Riches do not belong in the bank, endlessly compounding interest to provide security and a guarantee that if everybody around me is miserable, I'm not going to be.  Or to be stockpiled until our children can fight each other for it who have less discretion as to what it ought to be used for than we did.  But it's to be used to do good.  What kind of good?  Good works...good works.

The true riches, dear friends, are the accumulation of noble generous deeds, that's the true riches. The widow who is to be supported, verse 10 of chapter 5, is to be one well reported of for good works, whose life is marked by having done noble deeds.  And the implication is on behalf of others...on behalf of others.  Titus 3:8 says the same thing, be careful to maintain good deeds, that's on the behalf of others.  So do good.  Do good on the behalf of others, that's what he's saying. Take your money and do good with it.  What kind of good?  Good on the behalf of others.

Let me tell you something.  Your money won't follow you to heaven but something will.  Revelation 14:13, "Their works do follow them."  You leave your money here, you take your spiritual good deeds there, they do follow you.  Every time we could have given and didn't give lessens the wealth that is laid up for us in heaven.  Every time we give of what we had increases the riches laid up for us when this life comes to an end.  So Paul says do good and that means do noble deeds on behalf of others.

Look at the third thing as the funnel narrows even more.  It says in the Authorized simply "ready to distribute," literally means to be generous.  The verb to be and then the word eumetadotoswhich means generous, liberal, bountiful.  Do good.  What kind of good?  Noble deeds for others.  What kind of noble deeds?  Distributing or being generous which means giving your money to people who need it, ready to meet any need, acting toward others in the same generous way God acted toward you.  Like the Macedonians who out of their deep poverty gave abundantly and were really following the example of Christ who was rich but for your sakes became poor that you through His poverty might become rich, 2 Corinthians 8:9.  Give, said our Lord Jesus, and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together and running over shall men give into your bosom.

In other words, you're rich, fine.  Take what you have and do good. What kind of good?  Noble deeds toward others.  What kind of noble deeds?  Giving..giving, distributing to the work of God to the needs of people.

Back to 1 Chronicles.  I can't resist this passage because it's so powerful.  David had called for the people to give to the temple.  And his responding thanksgiving and prayer to what they gave is just overwhelming.  In the first place, David set the example and he gave.  I mean, he just gave so generously.  He said, "I have prepared...verse 2...with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, the silver for things of silver, the bronze for things of bronze, the iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones various colors, manners of precious stones, marble stones in abundance."  God gave David much, gave..David gave back much.  That's the idea...that's the stewardship.  "Three thousand talents of gold, the gold of Ophir, seven thousand talents of refined silver," and so forth and so on.  And gold for the things of gold.

And then he called on the people.  And who is willing to concecrate their service to the Lord this day.  And then all the people came in verses 6 to 9.  The people started giving, and giving and giving because with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord.  And David rejoiced with great joy.  Talk about enjoyment, the enjoyment comes when God gives to you and you give back to God.  There's the joy.  And so David in verse 10 blessed the Lord before all the congregation.  And David said, "Blessed be Thou Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever.  Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all."

In other words, "God, it's all Yours, it's all Yours.  Both riches and honor come from You and You reign over all.  And in Your hand is power and might and in Your hand is to make great to give strength to all.  Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name...listen to this...but who am I and what are my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?"  This isn't any big deal for us to do this because all things come from Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee.  We can't take any credit.  You gave it to us, we're just giving it back.  "For we are strangers before You and sojourners as were all our fathers, our days on the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding.  O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build a house for Thine holy name comes from Thy hand, it is all Thine.  I know also, my God, that You test the heart."

Boy, there it is, folks.  The reason He gave it was to see what they would do with it which was a test of where their heart was, just what Jesus said in Matthew 6, where your treasure is your heart will be also.  You're rich, fine, if that's what God's providence has brought to pass in your life.  First of all, do good with it, do noble things with it, don't waste it, don't squander it, do noble things.  What kind of noble things?  Good works toward others.  What kind of good works?  Being generous to give to the work of God and the needs of others.

And then the fourth and the funnel finally narrows, he says, "willing to share."  That's one word in the Greek, koinonekos(?).  You know what that word means?  It's a form of fellowship.  Fellowshipping,

fellowshipping, that takes away the remoteness, that's far different than writing a check and sticking it in an envelope and shipping it off someplace. That's nearness, brotherhood, common life, mutual care, communion. That epitomizes it, get in an assembly of believers and share with those that are there. If like in David's time, share with God's people to build God's house. Like in the early church, share with those in your fellowship who have need. Share with all those whose resources are limited. Share in the advance of the Kingdom. It's community, it's fellowship, it's koinonia.

And what is the duty then of those that are wealthy? To do good. And their goodness is manifest in specific noble deeds of kindness to others reflected in generous giving as an expression of loving fellowship. That's the sum of it.

Sadly, I'll be very honest with you, sadly Christian people just don't do this. I mean, we're really in to the world in so many ways. For one thing, I'll be honest with you and say this, there are a lot of you people who come to Grace Church and give absolutely nothing...you give nothing. You just come and you give nothing. You keep whatever you've got, assuming that it's yours when it's God's and cheating yourself of the true joy and true enjoyment that comes to those who do good by giving generously in a fellowship of caring about what God is doing. But some of you give nothing. And you expect everything to be provided for you but you give nothing.

Others of you give nearly everything, sacrificially, generously from the heart, willingly, lovingly and you know that joy that comes to those who do that. But I really believe that most of you are somewhere in the middle throwing tokens at God, a pittance here and there as long as it doesn't adjust your life style and sort of buying off your conscience for a little bit longer. And you know little of sacrifice. I hate to think of that because you cheat yourself of the true joy and I sure hate to think of the poor folks who will give sacrificially. You know, this country is full of people who gave sacrificially to people promising them health, wealth and prosperity. They gave millions to that, they do...to those guys that get on television and say, "Jesus wants you wealthy, Jesus wants you rich, Jesus will heal you, He'll give it all back to you, this is your seed faith, or whatever it is, and you give it here and you'll get it back," and people will send in millions. But just tell people who know the Word of God and name the name of Christ that they're to give sheer out of sheer love and gratitude to God and may never receive anything in this life in return, and they won't let it go. Why is it that people for wrong motives will give millions and people for right motives will give so little? I guess that's partly why some preachers feel they have to descend to the level of the thinking of people.

The danger then to avoid, very clear. Wrong attitudes toward money, wrong attitudes toward people. The duty, very clear. Use your money to do good toward others with generosity in a loving fellowship. That's a church. Finally, listen very carefully. He goes to the development to consider. The end result must be considered. Verse 19, here's the result, think on this, this is what develops as you do your duty, "Laying up," literally the Greek term is to amass a treasure, "amassing a treasure for themselves," the next is a good foundation, it could be translated, themeliosscould be translated

fund, a fund.  And then that little phrase "against the time to come" means for the future.

So let me give it to you.  Amassing for themselves a good sound fund for the future.  Now you could sell that.  You know what people want?  They don't want it in the future, they want it when?  Now.  I read the other day where somebody is suing Oral Roberts because he sent in all of his thousands of dollars and it's been a year or two years and he hasn't gotten it back yet.  He's suing.  Well he ought to sue if that's what they told him was going to happen because that was false advertising.  But the point is we're not concerned with getting it now.  If we lay up treasure in heaven, we're going to wait to receive the dividend when we get to heaven.  Now if you live like that, he says, you have laid hold on the real life, that's what that last phrase means.

In other words, you have come to grips with real living, you're living in the light of eternity, not time. That's the issue.  If you want to put your money in a fund, a good sound fund, a quality fund, if you want to amass a treasure in a quality fund for the future, then invest in eternity and you will lay hold of real life in the here and now. That's really living.  Really living is not storing up your barns full of stuff and sitting back and saying eat, drink and be merry, go for it, that's not real living.  First Timothy 5, do you remember it in verse 6?  "The one who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives."

If you want to lay hold of real life...what is real life?  Eternal life.  That is the life of eternity.  You've got to get out of time, you've got to live for eternity, that's really living.  Most people don't understand. Most people even Christian people are living for the here and now, how foreign that is.  By storing up heavenly treasure through giving earthly treasure you gain heavenly treasure.  That's the wonder of it.  You live it up in this life and indulge your wealth on yourself and there's a certain sense in which you're poor for eternity.  But if you invest in eternity now, you make yourself rich for eternity and you grasp the reality of real life here and now.

The only thing that matters in this life is living for eternity, isn't that right? That's why in Luke 16:9 Jesus said, "Take your money, that unrighteous stuff and purchase with it friends for eternity."  What does that mean?  Invest your money in winning souls to Christ who will be standing on heaven's shore to greet you when you arrive with thankful hearts because your investment resulted in their salvation.

So as you do the noble deeds and as you give your money away generously, you're storing up a treasure in a fund that pays the highest interest and it pays eternal interest, and there's never a default and it doesn't need to be insured or guaranteed because God is in charge of it. And you'll enjoy its fruits forever and knowing that you're doing that and anticipating that allows you to live life to its fullest here and now.

It's a great responsibility to handle riches.  It's a daily responsibility.  We need to pray for each other to be wise and obedient to the command that is given to us in this text.  May God help us.  Let's bow

together in prayer.

Lord, we have been given so much and we understand that it comes from You. And it comes not so much as a reward but as a test. It comes not because of anything we deserve but it comes to test the quality of our faith, it comes to really reveal where our heart is. Help us to do a little inventory and see if we've really laid our treasure in heaven. God, it grieves my own heart that charlatans and frauds and false teachers and people who lie about the Scripture and motivate people wrongly can amass millions and millions and millions to build their own foolish empires and the true work of God in His church just stumbles along because people never are committed to things that they don't feel there's some value for that will accrue to them in this life. How can it be that people will only give to You thinking they're giving to You when in fact they're trying to get more, putting You in a spot where You owe them money rather than just giving out of love? Lord, it's such a grief to my heart that people cannot give sacrificially, generously it seems unless they have illconceived motive for it. Help us, Lord, to be different and to believe that You have called us together as a community of believing people to care for each other, to supply needs, to meet needs not that we may gain in time but that we may gain in eternity. Help us to live the real life, the eternal life, not the worldly one.

We have many needs, You know that, in this church. Many needs that are unmet. And many many folks who don't understand this command or are not obedient to it. Lord God, pull them into obedience, pull us all into it, that we may know blessing that Your work may go forward and that we may prosper throughout eternity because we have put our treasure there. Thank You for loving us and for forgiving us for the woeful stewardship we have so often offered You.

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