

Rom. 14:19
So then let us
follow after
things which
make for
peace, and
things
whereby we
may edify one
another.



John 8:32 And
ye shall
know the
truth and
the truth
shall make
you free.

July 15
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Earthly Riches

Michael Hickox

Many hold the distorted view that life revolves around money. Earthly possessions are seen as the “treasure” mankind is in pursuit of, and success is measured by how much or how little is acquired.

The Bible presents a different picture. Consider seven truths about earthly riches, each of which is taught by the Holy Spirit in **1 Timothy 6**.

1) “Gain” Does Not Equal Godliness: A characteristic of the sinner mentioned in **1 Timothy 6:3-5** is that he supposes *“that gain is godliness.”*

Some in the world of “Christendom” teach that living godly leads to earthly riches. This false teaching is not merely that God takes care of His children (cf. **Ps. 37:25**), that He helps the benevolent continue to give (cf. **2 Cor. 9:6-15**), or that being a Christian discourages carelessness with money (cf. **Rom. 13:8a**). Rather, the view is that Christianity is a blueprint for being wealthier than those around us. This is sometimes referred to as the “prosperity gospel.”

Such false teaching causes many to under-value the true riches available in Christ. Others are led to think that if they have more riches than someone else, it is a result of being more godly.

What is ironic about this misconception is that the One CHRISTianity is founded upon was relatively poor as He walked on earth (cf. **Luke 9:58**). Many of His obedient followers were likewise poor (cf. **2 Cor. 11:27**). Some of Christ’s disciples are materially rich, but not nearly all are. Nor is the Bible a pattern for gaining earthly riches.

2) Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain: After stating the error of those who suppose *“that gain is godliness,”* the inspired apostle “turned the tables” to show how “godliness” and “gain” are connected. **1 Timothy 6:6: But godliness with contentment is great gain.**

Those who are godly and content with however much or however little they have (cf. **Phil. 4:11-12**) gain

the true riches (spiritual riches) available through Christ. These riches far exceed any earthly prosperity.

This point is brought out to two churches Jesus addressed in Revelation. Speaking to the church at Smyrna, Jesus said He knew their *“poverty,”* yet He said they were *“rich”* (**Rev. 2:9**). By contrast, the church at Laodicea said they were *“rich, and increased with goods,”* yet Jesus said they were *“poor”* (**Rev. 3:17**). While those in Smyrna had little materially, they were strong spiritually. The opposite could be said of the lukewarm Laodiceans.

If we live godly lives and learn to be content, we will receive spiritual blessings that cannot be measured with dollar signs.

3) Beware of Covetousness: Following the description of *“great gain,”* the Holy Spirit stressed the need for contentment (**1 Tim. 6:7-8**) and the dangers associated with covetousness (**verses 9-10**).

Generally, when covetousness is addressed in Scripture, it involves an unrighteous desire for something. Covetousness is not limited to money or possessions, but often includes it. Covetous individuals include *“they that will be rich”* (**1 Tim. 6:9**). Coveting riches is in many ways the opposite of contentment. God’s warnings about covetousness bring to mind the common attitude of “I want my stuff and I want it now” (cf. **Luke 12:13**). Many see a possession they just “have to have” to be “satisfied,” though soon after it is acquired, the dissatisfaction sets back in (**Ecc. 5:10**). Such coveting demonstrates a distorted view of life. In **Luke 12**, Jesus said *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (**verse 15**).

Covetousness is a form of idolatry (**Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5**). Coveting earthly riches leads to *“many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition,”* (**1 Tim. 6:9**). It leads many to err *“from the faith”* (**verse 10**). This is the context for God’s statement

that *"the love of money is the root of all evil"* (verse 10). Money itself is not evil, but lusting after it is.

4) Do Not Be Highminded: After speaking about those who *"will be rich"* in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**, the Holy Spirit gave a charge for those who *"are rich in this world"* in **verses 17-19**. The first instruction given is to avoid being highminded.

The tendency for many who gain earthly riches is to view themselves as better than those who are poor. The thought is "I must be smarter or more diligent than those who have less than I do." Notice how harmful this mindset was for King Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was referred to as God's servant (**Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10**) because God used him to carry out a purpose. In carrying out that purpose, God allowed the king to be among the richest men of his time. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar credited himself for these riches. As he walked in the palace of Babylon in **Daniel 4:30**, *"the king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"* Nebuchadnezzar's high-mindedness led him to be punished severely by God (**Dan. 4:31-33**).

5) Trust in God (Not Things): Another charge given to those rich in this world is to not *"trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"* Riches can be here one day and gone the next. In the **Luke 12** account, Jesus spoke about a rich fool whose trust in uncertain riches proved to be foolish (**verses 16-21**). Riches are fleeting, and will not come with us when we leave this earth (**1 Tim. 6:7**). God is the One in whom we must put our trust.

6) Be "Rich in Good Works": Those who are rich in this world are not condemned for being such. In **1 Timothy 6:18**, though, they are commanded to be something more important: rich in good works. God exhorts *"that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;"* Good works includes a number of things, but the emphasis in **1 Timothy 6:18** is on using what possessions we have to help those who are in need. While being rich materially does not necessarily please God, being rich in good works does.

7) Lay Up Treasure in Heaven: The Holy Spirit finished his charge for the rich with the statement, *"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life"* (**1 Tim. 6:19**). This brings to mind Jesus' command in **Matthew 6:19-20**: *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,*

where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Material blessings can be enjoyed, and we should be thankful for them. Such should not be what our hope is built on though. Earthly riches should not be what we treasure. Possessions should not be our primary pursuit in life. Hope for the Christian should not lie in soon having more wealth while on earth, but in the eternal reward God promises to the faithful.

The Holy Spirit's message through all of this is not that we cannot smile when buying a new house, or that one should not seek a promotion to better his family's financial position. Rather, the message centers on priorities. Where our affection is, what attitude we have toward possessions, and whether or not we allow desire for riches to lead us to sin are keys. Material possessions in themselves are morally neutral, but man's uses of them often are not (cf. **Matt. 13:22**).

Regardless of whether we have a lot or a little, may we heed God's message in **1 Timothy 6**. May we have the right attitudes toward earthly riches.

Be thou faithful

Revelation 2:10 says: *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* What are your goals for day-to-day living? Is the Lord included in your plans? Do you actively seek spiritual growth? Are your dreams and aspirations concerned solely with "this life" and the things therein? **Revelation 2:10** speaks to Christians who were being persecuted because of their faith in the Lord. In a very real way, being faithful unto death meant *unto the point of death*. Even if they were asked to lay their lives on the line, they should do so willingly. Are we asked to serve the Lord to such an extreme degree? No, but what would be our reaction if that time came? Actually, you can determine your willingness to serve the Lord in difficult times by how you are serving the Lord now. When the times are favorable for spreading the gospel and worshiping the Father above, do you use every opportunity to put the Lord first? Why do you think that you would give up your life for the Lord when you will not even put him first now. Jesus plainly says to put him first (**Matt. 6:33**). Let us always be concerned about *"the good part"* that cannot be taken away (**Mk. 10:48**).

There are always disappointments in life. Family trouble, a financial crisis, or even trouble on the job will surely come to some. Will we continue to faithfully do the Lord's will in spite of these problems? Jesus was disappointed when his followers turned away (**John**

6:66-69). Paul experienced heartache as his once faithful co-workers turned away in his time of need. Christians are not immune from troubles (**Job 14:1**). Let us resolve not to let anything or anyone turn us away from the Lord. Satan will be seeking to gain an advantage over us. He seeks our spiritual destruction (**1 Pet. 5:8**). The Lord provides the way of escape; let us make sure we look for it and use it (**1 Cor. 10:13**).

We continue to be blessed beyond measure in the riches of this world. Are our possessions possessing us or do we possess them? "I have to work all the time." "I have to make ends meet." Is this really true? Is your soul worth all that you are working for? The things of this life have a way of choking out the true riches that should be in our hearts (**Luke. 8:14**). Are you working for a good retirement in this life or in the one to come (**Luke 12:15-21**)? Faithful stewardship means that we willingly give back to the Lord what is His already (**1 Cor. 4:2**). The rich fall into a trap that is hard to get out of (**1 Tim. 6:6-8**).

Let us resolve everyday that our reward in heaven is the *one goal* we will work for. Let everything else be secondary. Put the Lord first. Seek heaven. When we do that, we have blessings now and in the world to come, eternal life!

Randy Harshbarger

O, Yes, the Timeline Difficulty!

A Marine is proud of his Globe & Anchor because it is difficult to earn. The Washington Capitals appreciate the Stanley Cup because it was not easily won! And, to paraphrase Thomas Paine, 'It would be strange indeed if Freedom came with a small price tag for that which we obtain too easily we value too lightly. Heaven knows how to properly value its blessings.' It is in this vein we must approach difficulties in understanding the scriptures, such as the one here.

The problem, in a nutshell, is that none of the accepted chronologies seem to fit the beginning and end points of the prophecy. Is there a way around this difficulty? There seem to be several.

1. The period of the "70 Weeks" is not a literal time period but figurative. After all, Our Lord was not at all literal when He said "seventy times seven" in Matthew 18:22. However, Gabriel's words do not seem at all figurative but seem to scream for a specific beginning and end point with a specific time period between them.

2. I got the Beginning Point wrong. Many scholars choose the edict of 457BC. When you add the 483 years of verse twenty-five to 458BC you come to 26AD, the year of Jesus' baptism by John. But even this edict goes back to the edict of Cyrus for its authority.

3. Another possibility is that the secular timeline has mistakes in it. This is not impossible since the timeline we use today is off by six years and nobody blows a gasket about it. The problem is the number of years it needs to be off to fit with the chosen starting point seems excessively high.

There you have three possible explanations for the timeline difficulty.

Cleveland Reddinger

What's The Difference?

... Between the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord's church?

... Between the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?

... Between those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?

... Between the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord's church and the Christian who finds fault with others but does nothing himself?

... Between a man of the world and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?

... Between a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church building who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no difference until they are different.

Selected - Taken from the Beacon Electronic Edition

Practical Faithfulness

Don't waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.

F.B. Meyer

There is nothing so fatal to character as half-finished tasks.

David Lloyd George.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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7845 Cottonwood Dr.
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10