

13. Learning to Be Rich in Good Works

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be content with whatever the Lord chooses to supply for them. We saw that many people choose to be controlled by their greed for money. We also saw that the choice to be controlled by greed is very destructive. In fact, those who continue to follow that choice will experience eternal destruction. Instead of seeking worldly riches, we are going to see in our topic today that the Lord wants us to show our children how to be rich in good works in their lives.

Paul gave Timothy some encouragement for his personal life as he came to the conclusion of this letter. We need to give our children this same encouragement. In 1 Timothy 6:11-12, we read, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” These two verses give us a good outline for our own lives. We are to flee certain things, follow certain things and fight the good fight of faith.

First, we are to flee the desire to love money and the other related things mentioned in verses three through ten of this chapter. Second, we are to follow or pursue six things. The word translated “righteousness” means *to seek those things that are right whether we are talking about right with God or right with other people*. “Godliness” means that we have *a deep reverence for God that causes us to have a desire to please Him*. Third, faith speaks of the belief that we have in Christ that causes us to live to please Him. Philippians 2:12-13 says, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” True faith produces godly service.

Fourth, love speaks of our response to Christ because of His love that He has shown for us. Christ said in John 15:9-10, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” The thing that makes it possible for us to love is the fact that we are responding to His love for us. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” Fifth, patience speaks of our endurance when facing trials. James 1:4 says, “But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Here we see that patience helps us to continue to grow in spiritual maturity. Sixth, gentleness makes it possible for us to restore others. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” We want to continue to grow and pursue each of these six things in our lives.

To “fight the good fight of faith” means *to make an all-out effort like a runner in a race to fight against Satan and spiritual darkness*. To “lay hold” means *to seize* and has the thought that we look at this world from the viewpoint of heaven and not from this earth. We have been called to that eternal life and so as we look at this world from the viewpoint of heaven we realize that Christ has already won the battle. Since Christ has won the battle, we can pray knowing that Acts 4:31

says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Timothy had made a good confession and we can show our children how to do the same.

Paul gave another personal charge to Timothy when he said in 1 Timothy 5:13-16, “I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.” Paul gave this charge to Timothy in the sight of God and the Lord Jesus Christ and asked him to keep it.

Christ had modeled what it means to make a good confession when he stood before Pilate. John 18:36-37 says, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’” Pilate heard that message and made a choice. He said that he found no fault in Christ and then condemned him to death.

In the same way, we want to show our children how to keep the commandment of Christ so that our lives will also be without spot and blameless at His coming. Christ is the blessed and only Potentate (He has all authority). He is King of kings. He is Lord of lords. He is the One who has always existed and will always exist. He is the true Light that will provide eternal light. All honor and everlasting power belong to Him.

In the time of Timothy, there were some Christians in Ephesus who had riches just as there are some Christians who have riches today. As a result, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” Here, we see that Paul was to command these rich Christians to avoid two attitudes. First, they were not to be haughty. The word that is translated “haughty” means *to be proud or high-minded*. The only other place where this word is used in the New Testament is in Romans 11:20-21 where we read, “Well *said*. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.” Here we see that Christians with riches are not to be proud. Instead, they are to have a godly reverence or fear.

Second, they were not to trust in uncertain riches. Proverbs 23:4-5 says, “Do not overwork to be rich; Because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle *toward* heaven.” Riches are

very uncertain. Instead, Timothy was told to tell the rich to trust in the living God because He gives us richly all things to enjoy. God has given us His blessings because He wants us to enjoy those blessings instead of seeking earthly riches.

Timothy was told that God gives us His blessings so that we can do what is right in the sight of God and be rich in good works. Then, we see how rich Christians are to use the riches that the Lord has given them. They are to be ready to give. Here, we see that God has given riches to some Christians so that they can enjoy the privilege of distributing that money to meet needs that God brings to their attention. The word that is translated “willing to share” means *to share one’s possessions*. Here, we see that the Lord does give some Christians earthly riches but those riches are not for themselves. Instead, those riches are to share with those in need. Paul had concluded his last visit to the elders in Ephesus with the following words written in Acts 20:35, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Riches are not to hoard for self. Instead, God gives riches so we can have the joy of giving to the needy.

Paul said that when we give to others as a part of our ministry we enjoy the blessing of giving on this earth and we also are storing up for the time to come. Christ told the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’” Here, Christ told the rich young ruler that he would have eternal riches if he would follow Christ. At the same time, he would enjoy the privilege of sharing with the poor. Greed controlled this young man. As a result, he chose not to follow Christ and went away sorrowful and will have nothing in the future except judgment.

Paul gave one final charge to Timothy as he concluded this book. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 says, “Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace *be* with you. Amen.” The word that is translated “guard” means *to take care not to violate the trust that has been given to you*. Timothy had been given the Word of God by Paul. Now, he was to pass on to others the Word of God and not his own opinions, thoughts or ideas. He was to avoid the ungodly and empty discussions of people without Christ. He was to avoid those false teachings, which false teachers were trying to spread among the Christians in the region of Ephesus. These false teachings had caused those who were teaching them to miss the mark concerning the faith. 1 Timothy 1:5-6 says, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk.” In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be rich in good works and not stray from the faith. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be rich in good works.