**For the Love of Money?**

**1 Timothy 6:6-19**

Online Sermon: <http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567>

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines money as a “medium of exchange”[[1]](#footnote-1) for goods and/or services. While one could barter to obtain the necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing for most people it is more efficient to use money. Even though God commands us to not worry about obtaining necessities (Matthew 6:25) we are still to work to obtain them (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Considering this truth then why does Apostle Paul say, “for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”? While we know that Paul was not against material possessions like the Gnostics were in his day, he was very concerned that money and the accumulation of wealth would be sought and as such would intoxicate believers to place their hope in their own abilities and the present age rather than in a sovereign God who held their eternal future in His hands! This sermon is going to begin by describing how the love of money can pull a Christians “down into ruin and destruction” (verse 9). The second part of this sermon is going to focus on how our true “wealth” is to be found in obedience to Christ and the “pursuit of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (verse 11). And the final part of this sermon is going to answer the age-old question: is it ok in God’s sight to be materially wealthy?

**Being Dragged Down (verses 6-10)**

 In writing his letter to Timothy Paul warned him that false teachers were so intoxicated with money[[2]](#footnote-2) that they were “selling” untruths concerning Christ to “cash in on the upsurge of evangelicalism in Ephesus.”[[3]](#footnote-3) While they were not as bold as Simon who tried to buy and sell the Holy Spirit’s power (Acts 8:18), they had no problem trying to sell a form of “godliness” [[4]](#footnote-4) (2 Timothy 3:5) to those who merely wanted to hear what their “itching ears wanted to hear” (4:3)! While those who give sacrificially to the kingdom of God are arguably worthy of a wage (1 Timothy 5:17-19), Paul warned Timothy how easily Christians can become intoxicated with the money these types of services can bring. The godliness market which is “hot for booksellers and music makers and dispensers of silver crosses,”[[5]](#footnote-5) tempts just as many charlatans’ to join as it does good Christian leaders to make money their god! The motives of some Christian leaders are so tainted with a love of money that ecclesiastical crime or embezzlement has been estimated to be about 37 billion dollars per year, worldwide![[6]](#footnote-6)

A picture containing person

Description automatically generated In verse six Paul reminded Timothy that godliness is a great gift only when accompanied by contentment. Unlike the Stoic and Cynic philosophers of his day “contentment” for Paul did not “mean self-sufficiency or the ability to rely on one’s own inner resources” but being pleased with whatever gifts that God has given you![[7]](#footnote-7) Hording wealth out of covetousness or out of fear of going without is a sin because being content in life is not to be dependent on material circumstances[[8]](#footnote-8) but on faith that a risen Savior will do good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28)! The love of money is also foolish because it is transient in nature.[[9]](#footnote-9) Every time we see a baby born or bury a loved one we are reminded the truth of Job’s statement “naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked will I depart” (1:21).[[10]](#footnote-10) In one of his sermons John Piper gave the following story to accentuate this point:

Suppose someone passes empty-handed through the turnstiles at a big city art museum and begins to take the pictures off the wall and carry them importantly under his arm. You come up to him and say, “What are you doing?” He answers, “I’m becoming an art collector.” “But they’re not really yours,” you say, “and besides they won’t let you out with those. You’ll have to go out just like you came in.” But he answers again, “Sure they’re mine. I’ve got them under my arm. People look at me as an important dealer in the halls. And I don’t bother myself with thoughts about leaving. Don’t be a kill joy.” We would call this man a fool—out of touch with reality. So is the person who spends himself to get rich in this life. We will go out just the way we came in.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Paul is not saying that it is a sin to be good Stuarts of the material things God has given or to provide for one’s family[[12]](#footnote-12) but that seeking material gain is irrelevant and greed is irrational.[[13]](#footnote-13) The only riches one can take beyond the grave are those that one has stored up in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21) through faithfully obeying God’s command to love Him and one another (Matthew 22:36-40)!

A close up of a device

Description automatically generated Not only is it foolish to hoard wealth that is here today and gone tomorrow but Paul warned Timothy that s is dangerous for the love of money plunges a Christian into ruin and destruction.[[14]](#footnote-14) Those who have made “becoming rich” their overall motive in life not only break God’s command to love Him alone but tend to be more open to other sins due to their moral sensibilities becoming blurred by their overmastering passion to gratify self.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Devil knows we have “evil desires” in our hearts that we wrestle against from one day to the next (James 1:14). He uses these desires as bait to get us to sin against God.[[16]](#footnote-16) Once a Christian experiences the perceived security or temporal pleasure of those things’ money can buy it intoxicates and consumes his/her motivations because “whoever loves money never has money enough.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Valerian described this trap or worm of avarice as follows:

Therefore, dearly beloved, the rust is that worm which alone possesses the recesses of the human heart: the worm of envy and of avarice. But the thief is the devil. Believe this. To lay his plots against good deeds, he flatters us with the pomp of the world. To keep a man from sharing in the heavenly kingdom, he puts gold in his hands, silver before his eyes, gems about his neck. In this way he nourishes pride and by the goad of covetousness enkindles the desires of the flesh. Homilies 7.3.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and as such invites God’s wrath to rightly correct one’s sinful attitudes and behaviors.[[19]](#footnote-19) One simply cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24) for what does light have to do with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14)?

**True Wealth is Found in Christ (verses 11-16)**

 Storing up treasures in heaven is accomplished by bowing one’s knee to Jesus. Paul implored Timothy not only to “flee” from Satan’s trap of money but to pursue godliness based on righteousness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. For those who have been bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) salvation is not to be seen simply an escape from hell but as a life changing and transformative event[[20]](#footnote-20) in which the “old” self became born again and made new by the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 5:17)! God poured His love into our hearts (Romans 5:5) so that His own children might rightly live out what union with Christ through faith has been imparted to the believer (Philippians 1:11).[[21]](#footnote-21) Through Christ’s atoning sacrifice (John 3:16) the believer has been saved from the entanglement of sin (Hebrews 12:1) not to do as one pleases but to fight and run the race to obtain crowns of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). Paul told Timothy that by allowing Christ to reign supreme and guide his motivations while on earth he would be taking hold of the eternity placed in his heart (verse 12; Ecclesiastes 3:11) when he became born again![[22]](#footnote-22) Believers store treasures up in heaven whenever they embrace the object of their faith and atonement, Jesus Christ.

Those who are “called upon to stand before the life-preserving God,” [[23]](#footnote-23) are to strive to imitate Christ’s confession before this world! Jesus emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7) and did not call upon a league of angels to save Him from being crucified did so due to His love and desire to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 26:53, 20:28). Like this sinless, Lamb of God (1 Peter 1:9) we as His children are to strive to imitate to obey and please God the Father in heaven (John 6:38) for in doing so we will store eternal treasures up in heaven! In verse 13 when Paul told Timothy “I charge you” it is like he was “rhetorically grabbing Timothy by the shoulders and giving him a heartfelt bracing shake”[[24]](#footnote-24) to “either pursue God, His Son and the cross and the gospel and all the virtues that come from it, or be an idolater.”[[25]](#footnote-25) More than ever this world needs to hear the Gospel witness from those who have denied themselves, taken up their crosses (Matthew 16:24) to serve the “only Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord or lords” (verse15). Those perishing in their sins are not going to be saved through the witness of superficial, powerless words of the “snake oil” pretenders of the faith but through genuine witnesses of those who continually bow their knees to the One who saved and continues to transform their very lives (Romans 12:1)! Paul finished this section by reminding Timothy that eternal wealth in life is only attainable by being found blameless on the day of the Lord’s coming![[26]](#footnote-26)

**Can the Materially Rich be Right in God’s Sight (17-19)?**

A close up of a persons eye

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Before I review Paul’s final words on money matters, I first want to define who is rich. I live in North America. I have three square meals, clothes, two cars and a home full of “stuff” that I will never use. In comparison to countries such as Mali, Rwanda and Zambia[[27]](#footnote-27) whom make a mere 5% of North American salaries, whom amongst us could ever say that we are not rich? To the approximately 10% of the world living on less than a $1.90 a day[[28]](#footnote-28) surely even our beat-up cars and worst of homes must appear to be limousines and mansions to them? And what must they think when they learn that the average Canadian throws out 170 kilograms of food per year![[29]](#footnote-29) Would they not rightly think we are so rich that providing for the necessities of life represent but mere coinage to us? Please take some time right now and compare your “stuff” or riches not with your neighbor who has more than you but to the poorest of the poor of this world. I don’t know about you, but I feel rich beyond anything that I deserve. With the thought that most North Americas are rich in comparison to many of this world please read the final paragraph of this sermon knowing that Paul is addressing you as well as Timothy!

A picture containing person, man

Description automatically generatedIn the last section Paul addressed a group in the church whom are already rich. Considering Paul’s above teaching was he implying that their material wealth was a sin? Since God gave and approved of the riches of Abraham, Job, David and so many others in the Bible obviously material wealth is far from a sin! Paul did not preach about “ethical negativity or denigration of God’s good gifts but rather productive and redemptive application of them.[[30]](#footnote-30) To keep money and the accumulation of wealth from becoming a trap that plunges one into ruin and destruction, Paul finished this section by recommending ways that the rich might redeem the wealth they have received. To keep wealth from “blotting out the consciousness of God”[[31]](#footnote-31) and tempted to gratify one’s evil desires, one must constantly remember to not place one’s hope in wealth but in the “One who richly provides” [[32]](#footnote-32) for more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)! With their hope firmly set on God the rich are to use “His” money to do good deeds in a way that is liberal and extremely generous![[33]](#footnote-33) This does not imply that one can earn or purchase his/her salvation but that one has obediently learned that storing up the only treasures that last comes from obeying God and giving it away to those in need! I want to finish this sermon with one final quote from D. A. Carson to think about:

It’s the very paradox of the gospel, isn’t it? Under the gospel you learn by dying you live, by losing your life you find it, by denying yourself you discover yourself, by going to the cross daily you enjoy resurrection life, and by giving you receive[[34]](#footnote-34)

1. Taken from the following online dictionary site: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/money> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=2743&ctx=+On+the+other+hand%2c+~one+begins+to+see+ho) in *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016), 1 Ti 6:3–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John Piper, [*Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)*](https://ref.ly/logosres/srmpiper1980?art=sermon.408&off=1019&ctx=Marketing+Godliness%0a~Paul+writes+to+Timot) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Robert W. Yarbrough, [*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntc75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.2b-21&off=1447&ctx=occurs+in+a+vacuum%3a+~Timothy+will+fulfill), ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Piper, [*Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)*](https://ref.ly/logosres/srmpiper1980?art=sermon.408&off=1783&ctx=ofits+in+godliness.+~The+godliness+market) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Taken from a Forbes article on the following website: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/walterpavlo/2013/11/18/fraud-thriving-in-u-s-churches-but-you-wouldnt-know-it/#7ef8793ed9d4> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Gordon D. Fee, [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nibcnt75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.6&off=371&ctx=seek+material+gain.%0a~The+word+autarkeia+(), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=13186&ctx=rewith+to+be+content~.%E2%80%9D+He+has+learned%2c+h) in *D. A. Carson Sermon Library* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2016), 1 Ti 6:3–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Robert W. Yarbrough, [*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntc75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.7&off=243&ctx=he+false+teaching.%0a%E2%80%9C~We+brought+nothing+i), ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. John Piper, [*Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)*](https://ref.ly/logosres/srmpiper1980?art=sermon.408&off=5000&ctx=uls+behind+hearses.+~Suppose+someone+pass) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=17210&ctx=f+you+live+in+Nome%2c+~Alaska%2c+you%E2%80%99re+going) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Gordon D. Fee, [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nibcnt75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.7-8&off=125&ctx=has+%E2%80%9Cgreat+profit.%E2%80%9D+~The+first+reason+(v.), 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. J. N. D. Kelly, [*The Pastoral Epistles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/blackpastep?ref=Bible.1Ti6.9&off=654&ctx=tation+and+a+snare.+~Presumably+their+mor), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1963), 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Donald Guthrie, [*Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*](https://ref.ly/logosres/tntcpasus?ref=Bible.1Ti6.9&off=547&ctx=on+with+temptation.+~Three+clear+steps+of), vol. 14, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus75ti1?ref=Bible.1Ti6.9-10&off=618&ctx=lth+behind+them.23%EF%BB%BF+~It+is+also+explicitl), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Peter Gorday, ed., [*Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/accsrevnt09?ref=Bible.1Ti6.9b), Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus75ti1?ref=Bible.1Ti6.9-10&off=2389&ctx=er+one+becomes%E2%80%99.30%EF%BB%BF%0a~As+the+third+and+fin), 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=22610&ctx=ome+evil+with+good.%0a~Salvation%2c+in+other+) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Robert W. Yarbrough, [*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntc75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.11&off=2969&ctx=he+same+priorities.+~Righteousness+can+be), 322. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ralph Earle, [“1 Timothy,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/ebc11?ref=Bible.1Ti6.12&off=767&ctx=n+in+2+Timothy+4%3a7.%0a~Timothy+is+told+to+t) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Gordon D. Fee, [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nibcnt75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.13-14&off=1166&ctx=%E2%80%9D%5d+Pontius+Pilate.%E2%80%9D+~If+it+means+before+P), 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Robert W. Yarbrough, [*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntc75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.13&off=726&ctx=ves+in+the+epistle%2c+~Paul%E2%80%99s+%E2%80%9CI+charge+you), ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 326. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=24332&ctx=ursuit+of+idolatry.+~You+either+pursue+Go) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. J. N. D. Kelly, [*The Pastoral Epistles*](https://ref.ly/logosres/blackpastep?ref=Bible.1Ti6.14&off=1871&ctx=+vain+speculations.%0a~The+words+until+the+), Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1963), 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Taken from the following website: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/166211/worldwide-median-household-income-000.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Taken from the following website: <https://www.worldvision.org/sponsorship-news-stories/global-poverty-facts> [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Taken from the following website: <https://business.financialpost.com/commodities/agriculture/report-finds-canadians-waste-a-lot-of-food-calls-for-action-2> [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Robert W. Yarbrough, [*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntc75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.17&off=1521&ctx=ary+on+6%3a11+above).+~The+gospel+message+i), 334. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., 335. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Walter L. Liefeld, [*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nivac75ti?ref=Bible.1Ti6.17-19&off=780&ctx=+is+%E2%80%9Cso+uncertain.%E2%80%9D%0a~This+warning+is+foll), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. John Piper, [*Sermons from John Piper (1980–1989)*](https://ref.ly/logosres/srmpiper1980?art=sermon.408&off=14061&ctx=enjoy+for+his+sake.%0a~Finally+(v.+18)%2c+the) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. D. A. Carson, [“How to Think about Money,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/carsonsrmnrchv?ref=Bible.1Ti6.3-19&off=27004&ctx=transformed+living.%0a~It%E2%80%99s+the+very+parado) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)