

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

DATE: November 22, 2020

SPEAKER: Frank/Chad

SERIES: Stewardship

PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 6:17-19

“ADDRESSING THOSE WHO HAVE MORE THAN THEY NEED”

For individual study or discussion

We have been learning a great deal about the early church and the apostle Paul through our study of the book of Acts in the last several months. This week, like last week, we have the opportunity to look more closely at one of the letters Paul wrote to Timothy, a convert through Paul’s ministry, who became like a son to him (see 1 Tim. 1:2).

As we know from our study of Acts, the early church attracted people from every level of society and every walk of life: in Berea, for example, we’re told that many of the Jews believed, “as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.” (Acts 17:12) Lydia, whose story is related in Acts 16, was undoubtedly wealthy as a “dealer in purple cloth,” while the Philippian jailer could be considered “blue-collar” or middle class. Ephesus, where Timothy was living, was one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman Empire, a place where people were used to religion being extremely profitable financially (thus the riot when people believed that the booming trade in silver shrines of Artemis was going to go bust because of Paul and his preaching).

- 1) Two scholars of early church women have explained the reasons why several wealthy widows like Marcella and Paula gave the bulk, even the entirety, of their estates to the church: the teaching of the early Christian fathers emphasized “the corruption, indulgence and violence associated with wealthy Romans as fundamentally antithetical to Christianity — that is, as bondage to a false lord and savior.” Many of these women became ascetics because the temptations and problems of wealth seemed too great to justify holding on to their gold.
 - What are the problems of wealth as Paul explained them to Timothy? And are those problems so great that wealth should always be disposed of, if at all possible? See Deuteronomy 8:1-20, particularly verses 17-18, as you consider your answer.
 - What teaching in 1 Tim. 6:17 actually discourages a life of complete asceticism or austerity?
 - How do we rightly enjoy what God provides—without becoming haughty or finding our security in material things?
- 2) Last week we looked at how Paul urged Timothy to “take hold of the eternal life” to which he was called. (See 1 Tim. 6:12) Paul echoes that teaching here in verse 19, when he talks about “laying up treasure” and “taking hold of the life that is truly life.”
 - If we are rich in good deeds and generous and willing to share, what is our treasure? And what does it mean to lay it up? If time, see Luke 12:33-34, Luke 18:22, Matt. 19:29, and 2 Tim. 4:8
 - What do we fear about being generous? How can we be both wise and unfearful when we make decisions about money?

Family Dinner Table

Have you ever read the story of the rich young ruler? It’s told in three of the four gospels. A young ruler came to Jesus and wanted to know what else he had to do in order to get eternal life. He told Jesus he was already keeping all of the commandments: he didn’t murder, lie, steal, dishonor his parents, or do anything else forbidden by the commandments.

Jesus responded to this ruler’s account of his perfect life by telling him to “go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (Matt. 19:21)

A missionary in Afghanistan told this story around a lunch table one day. Her Muslim friends delighted in the story until the end. They applauded the fact that Jesus told the rich man to sell all he had and give to the poor. But they were aghast when they heard what the young man did. The rich ruler walked away because he had “great wealth” and was “sad” hearing Jesus’ words. The Afghans were shocked that Jesus didn’t punish the young man for disobeying.²

What’s your reaction to this story? What does it teach us about Jesus, and what does it teach us about our possessions?

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¹Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes, *Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second through Fifth Centuries* (2017), 190. And yes, this book is available in our church library! ²Kate McCord, *In the Land of the Blue Burqas* (2012), 80-82. Also in our library.