

THE RICH MAN AND THE MINISTER: THE FINAL CHARGE 1 TIMOTHY 06: 17–21

Introduction

This is the final lesson and study in the book of First Timothy. The lessons have been many and the studies very helpful and stirring. This last lesson and study is no exception. It is a strong charge both to the rich of this world and to the ministers of the gospel.

- I. The charge to the rich man (vv. 17-19).
- II. The charge to the minister (vv. 20-21).

I. 1 Timothy 06:17–19 Duty of the Rich: Share

The final charge to the rich man. The word “command” (*paraggelle*) is a strong word. It has the force of a military command, yet it has the tenderness of an appeal to it. It means to beg and beseech a person — strongly so — to the point that the person is commanded to act. In this command God is appealing and begging the rich person, but He is doing it so strongly that it is a command. The rich person is approached in love and tenderness and an appeal is made to him, but he is expected to do exactly what God says. Five strong charges are given to the rich.

1. The rich person is not to be high-minded, proud or arrogant. The world honours money. Practically everyone in the world wants more money, and most are actually seeking more money. Few persons would turn down money. Money — the thought of riches and wealth — is so interwoven in the fabric of this world that it is probably the most honoured thing in this world. The result is that the rich person is lifted up in the minds of most people. Most people want to be like the rich person. Most people put the rich person upon a pedestal. This makes it extremely difficult for a rich person to keep a proper perspective of himself.
=> There is great danger that the rich person will begin to think too highly of himself. There is the danger that he will become high-minded, prideful and arrogant; that he will begin to feel above other persons and to esteem himself better than others. There is the danger that he will begin to look down upon others and downplay others. The rich person — just because of his riches — must guard against feeling more important than other people. Riches and possessions do not make a person a *good person*: they do not make a person a *quality person*. Therefore, riches and possessions do not make a person *better, of more quality* than anyone else.

The charge is forceful: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant.” The temptation is there — always confronting the rich — because of the world’s attitude toward riches. But the charge of God is clear: “[The rich are] not to be arrogant.”

Luke 22:26 *“But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”*

Rom. 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Ph. 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Jas.4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

Mic. 6:8 *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

2. The rich person is not to trust in the *uncertainty of riches*. Riches are about the most uncertain thing in life. The world’s economy is never certain, fluctuating up and down every few years; crisis follows crisis in world affairs and the markets respond and react to each crisis. Even if a person can keep his wealth in this life, disease or accident can happen overnight, and the person’s wealth does him no good whatsoever. Riches — their value and benefit — may be here today, but they are just as easily gone tomorrow.

The charge is forceful: “Command those who are rich in this present world...[that they not] put their hope in wealth.”

Mk. 10:24 *The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!”*

Lk. 12:19-20 *And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.” “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.’ Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?”*

1 Tim. 6:17 *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*

Job 31:24-25, 28 *“If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, Then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.*

Psa. 52:7 *“Here now is the man who did not make God his stronghold but trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others!”*

3. The rich person is to *trust in God*. The word “hope” means to fix and set one’s heart and life upon God. God is — He actually exists. He is living and He is the only Person who possesses every good and perfect gift. Therefore, He alone can give us...

- the good and perfect gifts necessary for this life.
- the good and perfect gifts necessary for the next life.

In fact, every *good gift* that we receive now — including riches — has come from God. This fact is not to be missed; it bears repeating: every good gift that we now have has come from God. Therefore, if we want more and more of the good things of this life, we must put our hope in God.

Jas. 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Mt. 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Jn. 15:11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

Exo. 23:25 Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you.

Psa. 65:9 You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.

Psa. 68:19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.

4. The rich person is to do good and to be rich in good works or deeds. What deeds? The deeds of a rich man are clearly stated: he is to distribute his wealth and be generous in it. Too many rich people shut their ears when they hear this. They turn their attention elsewhere, for they do not want to think about giving large amounts of money. They reject the fact that God expects them to give — to give to the point of sacrifice just like God did when He gave His Son and just like God’s people do. But think about something — think honestly and realistically.

=> First, literally millions of people are hurting and dying every day from hunger, disease and lack of fresh water; from ignorance, sin, loneliness and emptiness. When God looks down upon earth and sees someone hurting and dying and He sees us — the rich of the earth — what do you think God expects us to do? The world is one community; God expects us to meet the needs of the earth — to sacrificially meet the needs.

=> Second, why do you think a person has wealth? To hoard it? To bank and store it up and just let it lie around and never be used? We know better — every one of us knows better.

God expects the rich to do good and be rich in good deeds. He expects the rich to distribute and to be generous and sacrificial in meeting the needs of the lost and poor and dying of this world.

Lk. 12:33 “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

Acts 20:35 “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Rom. 12:13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Gal. 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 Tim. 6:18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

Heb. 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

5. The rich person is to lay up wealth for the world to come. How does a rich person lay up wealth for the world to come?

⇒ By distributing and giving generously and sacrificially (v. 18).

⇒ “By giving it away” (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 596).

⇒ By using “their wealth to do good [and being]... ready to share...[remembering] that a Christian is essentially a man who is a member of a fellowship” (William Barclay. *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 159).

⇒ “By work of charity” (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 83).

Mt. 6:20 “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

Mt. 19:21 Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Lk. 12:33 “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

Ph. 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Again, think of all the desperate needs of the world and of our own communities and cities. Any example of any need could be taken, but consider a person who is starving to death. If a rich person does not reach out and save the starving person and give life to him, how can the rich person expect God to give life to him in the next world? The only way we — any of us who are rich — can lay hold of eternal life is to give life to those who are dying in the sins and deprivations of their world.

The charge is militarily strong: charge them that are rich in this world, that they lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation against the time to come.

II. *1 Timothy 06:20–21 Duty of the Minister*

The final charge to the minister. The charge is twofold.

1. Guard what has been entrusted to your care. What is it that has been entrusted to the minister? What is the trust committed to him?

“It is the deposit of truth delivered to him....It is the teaching which Paul imparted to Timothy, ‘the sound words’ [of the truth]” (Kenneth Wuest. *The Pastoral Epistles*, Vol. 2, p. 102f).

“The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these” (Mathew Henry. *Mathew Henry’s Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 831).

“Let nothing cause you to deviate from the Gospel message of the grace of God” (Oliver Greene. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus*, p. 241).

The great trust committed to the minister of God is...

- the faith.
- the glorious truth of God which God has revealed to men in His Word and in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- the wonderful gospel of God — the gospel that is revealed in the sending of God’s Son to earth in order to save men.

The picture here is that of a *deposit*, of a faithful and diligent banker who looks after the money *deposited* into his care. The minister of God is to guard and keep, look after and care for the faith and truth of God, the faith and truth of His Son and of His Word, of His Revelation and of His gospel. The minister must never forget that God has deposited — actually laid — the truth of God into his hands. The minister has been entrusted with the gospel of God, the glorious message of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pulpit Commentary has an excellent comment on this fact:

“Timothy here is to keep diligent and watchful guard over the faith committed to his trust; to preserve it unaltered and incorrupt, so as to hand it down to his successors exactly the same as he had received it. Oh that the successors of the apostles had always kept this precept” (A.C. Hervey. *First Timothy*. “The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 21, ed. by HDM Spence and Joseph S. Exell. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950, p. 124).

William Barclay’s comments are also worthy of quote:

“If in our day the Christian faith were to be twisted and distorted, it would not only be we who were the losers; those of generations still to come would be robbed of something infinitely precious. We are not only the possessors, we are also the trustees of the faith. That which we have received, we must also hand on “ (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 161).

1 Cor. 9:17 *If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.*

Col. 1:25 *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness.*

1 Th. 2:4-5 *On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.*

1 Th. 2:13 *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

1 Tim. 1:11-12 *That conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

Tit. 1:3 *And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.*

2. The minister is to turn away from false teaching. The description of false teaching is graphic.

a. False teaching is described as godless chatter.

⇒ The word “godless” (bebelos) means common, irreverent and irreligious talk.

⇒ The word “chatter” means empty and meaningless.

Therefore, the charge is to take all *empty talk* and turn away from it. Have absolutely nothing to do with common, irreverent, godless and *empty voices* — no matter who is sounding forth the words. This would, of course, include:

⇒ false claims to truth

⇒ worldly philosophy

⇒ suggestive talk

⇒ all forms of false teaching

⇒ novel ideas of religion

⇒ off-coloured jokes

⇒ cursing

⇒ criticism

⇒ gossip

b. False teaching is described as *opposing ideas* and false knowledge.

⇒ The phrase “opposing ideas” (antitheseis) means antithesis, that is, to stand against some thesis, truth or fact. What is being condemned is the false knowledge of men, the things that men teach that are contrary to God’s glorious revelation in Christ and in the Word of God. The minister of God — in fact, any person — is a fool to stand against truth and fact, whether of God or of true knowledge.

The charge is strong, very strong: turn away from men and their teachings when they stand against Christ and the teachings of God's Word. Have nothing to do with the false knowledge of men. The men and their false teachings may concern philosophy, psychology, education, sociology, religion — any area of knowledge — but turn away from them if they are false. How do you tell if it is false? By the Word of God, the revelation and record of Christ and of the truth of God. If knowledge stands in opposition to the Word of God, turn away from it.

Note that some professing church members had turned to false teaching. The seriousness of the situation is seen in that these are the last words of this letter. The very last thing that Paul says to Timothy is to turn away from false teaching. What a warning to us!

Mt. 24:12 *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”*

Lk. 8:13 *“Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.”*

Lk. 9:62 *Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

Lk. 11:24-26 *“When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.”*

Gal. 4:9 *But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

Heb. 10:38 *“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”*

Rev. 2:4 *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ■*