

# The Final Words of First Timothy – Part 1

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Paul exhorts Timothy to charge the church regarding both riches and knowledge
2. aim – to cause us to seek the true riches of the knowledge and grace of Christ Jesus in all things
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:17-21

### b. outline

1. The Charge to Warn the Rich (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
2. The Charge to Guard the Deposit (1 Timothy 6:20-21a)
3. The Final Salutation (1 Timothy 6:21b)

### c. opening

1. the **end** of the letter
  - a. previously, **9** distinct divisions in **33** sermons – a number of sermons covering only a *part* of each of the distinct divisions of the letter (not including the Intro)
  - b. (**so now**) as we approach the end, it seems appropriate to *summarize* what we have learned
    1. **repeated twice** – once in fine detail (in anticipation of the first pericope of the epilogue), then in lesser detail (to introduce the final pericope of the letter)
2. the **main point** of the letter (**as given in sermon #1**):
  - a. **1 Timothy is a letter to the church at Ephesus, through Timothy, in which Paul commands believers to pursue a life of godliness – a life dedicated to the real purpose of the Gospel**
    1. false teachers are the primary occasion for the letter – their “infiltration” of the church has the potential to lead the sheep away from the central message of the Gospel
    2. these false teachers use their position and power to “hold sway” over weaker members of the church – they are described variously as “liars” or blasphemers or “haughty”
    3. thus, Paul focuses his attention on sound doctrine, teaching, and knowledge throughout the letter because **false teaching leads away from godliness, but sound doctrine builds up a right understanding of the nature of God and a commitment to be like him**
    4. the **pivot** verse of the letter (**read 3:14-15**)
3. the **summary** of the letter – **that Timothy was to ...**
  - a. the charge to Timothy (**1:1-20**) – **confront** those teaching false doctrine in the church in order to produce a *Christocentric* orthodoxy and orthopraxy – **the church of Jesus Christ is defined by her doctrinal boundaries (indicative)**
  - b. the need for prayer (**2:1-15**) – lead the people back to the elemental activity of *prayer* as the means by which the church would survive heterodox influence – **the church must exhibit a submissive attitude in every area of life as it prays for opportunity to preach the true gospel to every social class in every situation (imperative #1)**
  - c. the qualifications of leadership (**3:1-13**) – establish proper *leadership* in the face of the threat of heterodoxy – **the church is to be led by men who are properly qualified and utterly committed to the on-going health and mission of the church (imperative #2)**
  - d. the mystery of godliness (**3:14-16**) – teach why the church *exists* and its central intention – **the church is to be a repository of the truth of what God is actually doing in his world through Jesus Christ, inculcating that truth in the minds and hearts of his people so they “behave” as those entrusted with the message (indicative recapitulated)**
  - e. the good servant of Christ (**4:1-16**) – **do his job** of teaching and toiling towards holiness even though there would be apostates – **the church is to be devoted to the discipline of sound doctrine in order to prevent its people from being “taken in” by heterodoxy (imperative #3)**
  - f. the family of faith (**5:1-16**) – address *conflict* in the church that would naturally arise as the people are being led forward to godliness – **the church is a living organism representing on earth the eternal family of God, and it is to address conflict in its midst by honoring all as his children in the application of doctrine to everyday life (imperative #4)**
  - g. honor those who rule well (**5:17-25**) – honor those who *rule well* and properly address matters of sin within the ranks of leadership – **the church is to operate under a symbiotic relationship between the elders and the congregation, applying the right judicial methods to matters of sin, in order to maintain the highest possible standard of leadership (imperative #5)**

- h. godliness with contentment (6:1-10) – teach that contentment is a *vital characteristic* of a godliness flowing out of truth – **the church is to be characterized by sound doctrine which leads to a contentment in our eternal state regardless of momentary circumstances or material matters (imperative #6)**
- i. fight the good fight of the faith (6:11-16) – flee the dangers of wealth, pursue true righteousness, and set these same *expectations* upon the people – **the church is to continue to confess what it confessed to begin with, holding fast to the immutable truths of the gospel as we “stumble” forward in obedience, keeping our eyes fixed upon Christ (imperative #7)**
- 4. the *conclusion* of the letter
  - a. **IMO:** the epilogue of the letter begins at 6:17
    - 1. the section clearly *picks up* where Paul “left off” in 6:2-10
    - 2. but, the section seems to *repeat* a number of the above themes, as though Paul is “concluding”

## I. The Charge to Warn the Rich (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

### Content

#### a. the (final) charge to Timothy (v. 17)

- 1. Paul again references the issue of *material wealth* (see 6:9ff)
  - a. “*rich in this present age*” = material or financial wealth or well-being; a “present day” sense of material possession that offers a sense of “comfort” or “assurance” in the physical world
    - 1. certainly: financial wealth; riches of money or other valuable possessions (*i.e.* of this “world”)
    - 2. but also: anything that might produce in us a sense of “self-satisfaction” or “lack of worry”
      - a. *i.e.* it’s possible to be “rich” in ways *other than money*
      - b. *e.g.* age, physical health (“I’m never sick”), family, employment (“they’d never fire me”), friendships, status (“I’m important”), religiosity or spirituality (“I go to church”)
      - c. **LOW:** anything that we might “lean on” as our emotional or spiritual comfort *other than our eternal hope in Christ* – the sense that *in this world* we are doing “just fine,” which can negate in us an *eternal focus*
        - 1. it is now estimated that in America the “nones” exceed the number of Catholics
        - 2. meaning: two or three generations have assumed such a *prosperous* economic condition that they have lost all sense of eternal perspective – *i.e.* who needs God when you are comfortable and entitled to everything
  - b. **note:** it is highly likely that there is a *connection* between the “*rich*” and the “*false teachers*”
    - 1. as theorized before: much of the heterodox teachings of the church were probably along the lines of *physical prosperity connected to spirituality*, or the wealthy using their “clout” to intimidate and control people in the church into embracing their “teachings”
    - 2. *i.e.* the mixture of warnings regarding the “*rich*” amongst the passages re: false teaching *seems* to indicate that Paul saw them as *intertwined* in the church (*e.g.* 6:3 cf. 6:8)
    - 3. **question:** is it possible that the reason why there is so much heterodoxy in the church today (particularly re: money) is because the church is “wealthy” (as above)?
- 2. Paul again places a “*charge*” upon Timothy – like three (3) times before – see 1:3 [5, 18]; 5:21; 6:13
  - a. to not be “*haughty*” = to hold a *prideful attitude*; relying on these things as the core of contentment or *using these things inappropriately* (*e.g.* as power over others)
  - b. to not to “*set their hopes on uncertainty*” = not to consider any of the above as immutable – all forms of contentment *other than Christ* will eventually fade (*e.g.* Alex Trebek: “surges of deep, deep sadness” after treatment for pancreatic cancer)
  - c. but, to set their hope “*on God*” = to keep the truly permanent things of God (*i.e.* truth) central – the only *truly immutable* thing is God, who is faithful to keep his promises to those who *humbly* come before him and seek mercy
  - d. **Timothy (again) is charged to teach the wealthy (of all stripes) that their true contentment lies not in the things of this world, but in the eternal hope we have in Christ**

#### b. the (final) charge to the wealthy (vv. 18-19)

- 1. **note:** certainly these words apply specifically to the *materially* wealthy, but it seems reasonable to assume that Paul is (in fact) speaking to *the whole church* (*i.e.* because *in Christ* we are *all* wealthy)
- 2. the charge is to each of the following (v. 18):
  - a. “*do good, be rich in good works*” = demonstrate a “wealth” of godness towards others
    - 1. *i.e.* the *very essence* of what it means to be *justified* – to act consistently with one’s *new nature* in Christ; a desire to “*do good*” because one *is* good in the sight of God
    - 2. **LOW:** to “expend” the capital reserves of having been born again and made righteous

- b. “be generous and ready to share” = to use the **common grace** of wealth appropriately
  - 1. **i.e.** to know that what you have is not yours alone, but yours *by the grace of God*, meaning it is to be shared with others in ways that glorify *him*
  - 2. **IOW:** to imitate the nature of God in his grace by being gracious to others
- 3. the rewards are each of the following (**v. 19**):
  - a. “storing up treasure” = an eternal “cache” of value in the sight of God (godliness)
    - 1. a recapitulation of Jesus’ words in **Matthew 6:19-21**  
*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
    - 2. **caution:** not building a *self-righteousness* of good works – rather, building a sense of *goodwill* with Christ such that he is able to say “*well done, good and faithful servant*”
  - b. building a “good foundation” = a *solid foundation* in anticipation of the judgment to come
    - 1. a recapitulation of Jesus’ words in **Luke 6:45-48**  
*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”*
    - 2. **caution:** not building a *self-justification* in anticipation of answering for yourself – rather, building a solid foundation of *truth* that permeates every aspect of your life (**see below**)
  - c. taking hold of what is “*truly life*” = the knowledge of *true life* and living it out
    - 1. a recapitulation of Jesus’ words in **John 5:24**  
*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”*
    - 2. **caution:** not just “going to heaven when we die” – rather, the fullest sense of what it means to *truly live*; to *know* true joy and contentment over against the fleeting things of this world
- 4. **application: the point of 1 Timothy is to convince the church, both its leadership and its membership, that the *true* nature of the faith is one of *godliness* flowing out of a *deepening understanding* of the sound revelation of Christ in Scripture**
  - a. not running around pursuing some sort of “mirage” of happiness or prosperity
  - b. **rather, the pursuit of godliness and holiness because we are *understanding more and more about this Christ every day!***