

Pick One: God or Cash

Special Message #73

1 Timothy 6:6-10; 17-19 10-4-2009

Summary: Do not settle for little gain (earthly treasures) – seek great gain (godliness and contentment). Money love is a reversal of ends and means (using godliness to get money rather than the other way around) and has horrible consequences. And if you have money, don't place your hope in it because its ability to bring you happiness is uncertain. But God's is not. Focus on His nature.

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1 Timothy 6:3-10 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

17-19 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. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Introduction

I have decided to take a couple weeks before launching into our next series to discuss the issue of money. I don't have time this morning for a long introduction this morning, so let me just give it to you in one sentence: your attitude toward money will determine whether you go to heaven or hell.

Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

And 1 Timothy 6 adds – nor can you love both God and money. So if you love and serve money, then you do not love and serve God. And if that is the case then you are going to hell. And on your way to hell, in this life you will pierce yourself with many griefs and be plunged into ruin and destruction.

This introduction is like waking someone up by throwing a bucket of ice water on his face. Normally it is better to just nudge him a little. But when someone's life is at stake, and time is of the essence – if you are asleep on the train tracks and the train is just seconds away – sometimes the gentle, subtle approach is not adequate. Especially when the person is in a deep sleep.

I cannot speak for you, but I can tell you that my attitude toward money and possessions is sometimes so relaxed, and the warnings in Scripture about the dangers of loving money are so extreme, that the only conclusion that a rational observer could draw, very often, would be that I don't take Jesus' words seriously. So if you don't need the bucket of ice water to wake you up, just bear with me because I need it. So for those of us in a coma here it is again – your attitude toward money will determine whether you will go to heaven or hell – forever.

Don't Love Money

A positive sermon

Now, at this point you may be thinking, *Uh Oh – a stewardship sermon. Honey – go hide the checkbook back in the cry room or something because here comes the guilt trip.* If you are bracing yourself for a painful, negative sermon, you can relax, because this is a sermon about hope. I don't ever preach on stewardship for the purpose of fundraising. I preach on stewardship for the sake of your joy in the Lord. This sermon is not mainly negative. The centerpiece of this sermon is right there in verse 6.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

My goal is not to take anything from you this morning. My purpose is for you to know the joy of great gain.

Don't settle for little gain

And if that sounds selfish, it's not. It is OK for you to seek great gain. Paul does not rebuke them for seeking gain. He doesn't say, "You should just do what is right out of sheer principle – just because it's right, without seeking any benefit for yourself." No, he says, "Your problem is you're settling for little gain when you shouldn't settle for anything less than great gain." Scripture is very clear that we should be out to get great gain.

2 Corinthians 9:11 You will be made rich in every way.

In Luke 12:21 Jesus taught that we are to seek to be rich toward God. Most of the Sermon on the Mount is about how to get great reward. I want all of you to be rich in every way and overflowing with super-abundance that brings deep and profound and exuberant joy in your life. I want you to have great gain, and this passage teaches us how to get it.

But that is not to say it will be painless, because step one in getting that great gain is letting go your grip on small gain. You cannot have the great gain and the small gain – you have to choose one or the other. Small gain will give you a few thrills on your way to hell, great gain will fill your life with joy on your way to eternal pleasures at God's right hand. So if at any point in this sermon you find your defenses up – afraid to accept what is being said because you might have to give up some treasured possession or pursuit, just remind yourself that only a fool refuses to exchange small gain for great gain.

Small Gain – love of money

So let's talk about that small gain that could deprive us of the great gain. Paul refers to it in three different ways:

9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap...

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

10 ...Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith...

Put those three together and you get the idea; wanting to get rich, loving money, being eager for money – that is the road that leads to small gain.

And notice please that none of those are actions. All three are feelings. Wanting to get rich – that is a desire. Loving money – that is an affection. Eagerness for money – that is a feeling. This is all about what is in your heart.

Means and Ends

Now, does that mean it is wrong to ever want money in any way? Jesus accepted financial support in Luke 8:3. Scripture teaches us to work hard to make a living, so obviously there is a kind of desire for money that is OK, and a desire for money that is sinful. But how do you discern between the two?

Is it OK as long as it is a small, tepid desire, but it becomes sinful and idolatrous once it grows to become a strong, intense desire? No. If a desire is righteous then it should be strong. And if a desire is sinful it is sinful whether it is strong or weak. The thing that makes desire for money sinful or righteous is not the strength of the desire – it is the purpose of the desire.

5 [those who love money] think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

They reverse the ends and the means. Their final goal is money, and the way to get there is godliness. That is backwards. It should be that we use money to advance the Kingdom of God. That is good desire for money. But these people use the Kingdom of God to get money. That is the love of money, and it is evil.

What does it look like in practical terms to want money for the purpose of the Kingdom? My plan is to explore that in depth next week. But for now let's think through Paul's equation. Godliness + contentment = great gain.

Contentment is Great Gain

Contentment is the opposite of loving money. Contentment says, "If I have the favor of God I have enough. I don't need any of this world's treasures." And when you can say that, that is great gain – and here is why:

7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 But people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction

The pursuit of money eventually leads into trouble. And there is no way to avoid that trouble if your happiness is tied to earthly treasures and pleasures. But if you have contentment you can be happy with or without earthly treasures. So when the pursuit of money starts to lead into trouble you are free to just stop your pursuit. But the person who loves money can't stop. If he stops the pursuit he gives up hope of ever being happy, and so he has to follow no matter where it goes. And Satan just uses it like a carrot to draw them into three horrible pits.

The Perils of money loving

9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires.

Temptation

The first thing you will fall into is temptation – enticement toward evil. When there is love for money in your heart, Satan can make temptation irresistible. All he has to do is take some sinful thing, attach it to the earthly thing you think you need to be happy, and he has got you. You will not be able to resist.

Trap

Secondly, you will fall into a trap. We live in such a wealthy culture that this happens to us constantly. Once you get a taste of a luxury, it is like wandering into a trap – you can never get out. Once you hit a certain standard of living you cannot ever live lower than that. You can go thirty years and be perfectly happy without a garage door opener, then one day you finally get one and a month later you can hardly imagine life without it. Now you have to have it.

And that same thing happens with just about every luxury that comes into your life when your hope is to get happiness from this world's treasures. So you keep accumulating more and more, and you cannot get rid of anything, and pretty soon you have got so many treasures that you cannot even remember where they all are.

For many years Tracy and I drove a car that cost around \$2000. Then, several years ago, we bought a Saturn Vue for \$9000. We have put over 100,000 miles on that thing and we figure it's probably only got a few years left on it. And when it dies, do you think we are going to be considering \$2000 cars when we go to replace it? No way. Two thousand dollar cars were fine all those years, but not after you have had a \$9000 car.

You take your family out to eat at a nice place, and that one meal costs enough money to feed a family on the mission field for three months but it is worth it for the family fellowship and special enjoyment of God's blessings. But then you start doing that every Friday night. And pretty soon you are trapped – so if you stayed home one night and had baloney sandwiches for dinner your family would panic. So now you have to go out to eat. And you eat out so much that you hardly even enjoy it anymore. Instead of a time of family fellowship and special enjoyment of God's blessings, you walk out annoyed because the waiter messed up your order and didn't keep your drink filled all the time. It is amazing – we go to a place, feast until our stomachs hurt, we sit there motionless while our meal is literally served to us on a platter, we are waited on hand and foot, people are scurrying to fulfill our every desire (through most of history it is only kings who are treated like that at a meal), and then we go away grumbling because there was some little problem. And yet we have to keep doing it because we are trapped by the love of luxury.

The world calls that addiction. God calls it bondage. The world thinks it is a disease. The Bible says it is a trap. Whether you call it what it is or come up with some other name for it, it is pretty clear even to the world that it is not a good thing to be trapped in a sin. That is why there are recovery groups for almost every imaginable addiction. There are 12-step groups for people who are in bondage to alcohol, drugs, sex, overeating, under-eating, gambling, smoking, everything you can imagine. There is even an international organization called Emotions Anonymous. There are over 1100 EA groups in the United States alone.

But in all the various addiction 12-step groups I looked up (hundreds of them for every addiction imaginable), I noticed that they do not have one for the most widespread addiction of all. The addiction in our culture that holds more people in bondage than alcohol, drugs, and nicotine combined has no 12-step recovery group. The greatest addiction in our world is the love of money.

And when Scripture speaks of money it is not just talking about currency. It is talking about all the things currency can get you – vacations, leisure, status, pleasures, possessions – all the treasures of this world. And just about everyone alive is addicted to the treasures of this world. But God tells us, **Do not love the world or anything in the world. 16 For everything in the world--the lusts of the flesh, the lust of they eyes and the boasting livelihood --comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17).**

Foolish and Harmful Desires

So if you love money you will fall into temptation and bondage. And then the third thing you will fall into is **many foolish and harmful desires**. I hope you understand that desires are not neutral. There is such a thing as a foolish desire. Foolish desires are desires that only exist where there is foolish thinking. That is why foolish thinking is so disastrous – it fouls up your desires. And when your desires are messed up it is next to impossible to do what is right consistently, because your desires are always pulling you the wrong way. That is why Paul calls them harmful. Foolish desires are harmful because they lead you the wrong way all the time.

Think of how many of our desires are just plain foolish. They are irrational. I have a choice between a sandwich at home that will fill me up, or an expensive meal that I won't even enjoy and I choose the expensive meal. That is irrational. The desires that arise when your heart loves earthy treasures are irrational – foolish.

The ultimate example of that is Judas. He loved money. It began with stealing out of the bag here and there, and ended with him trading the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver. Was that rational? Was that a shrewd business deal? Was that money satisfying to his soul? No – he ended up throwing it away and then committing suicide. That is where love of money will get you.

Ruin and Destruction

You love money and you will fall into those three pits – temptations that lead you into enslaving sins, and many foolish and harmful desires. And the outcome of falling into all that is at the end of verse 9. Those things will **plunge you into ruin and destruction**. It will shipwreck your whole life.

Love of Money is a Root

10 Because the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

It is a root. In this metaphor the evil deeds in your life are pictured as fruit on a tree. And you try to solve your sin problem by picking the fruit. You lose your temper, and you try to deal with it by just saying, "I'm going to try hard not to lose my temper." And you come up with all kinds of techniques for controlling your temper. But it doesn't work – time after time you fail. That bad fruit just keeps coming and coming – as fast as you strip it off the branches, more of it just keeps getting produced. You cannot stop an apple tree from producing apples just by picking all the apples off the branches. You have got to go down and sever the root.

Many Grievs

There are countless different sins in our lives that are all springing from that one root – the love of earthly treasure. And it is a very serious matter.

Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grievous wounds.

The word pierced was used for a skewer that they would run through an animal in order to roast it over a fire. It is a very graphic picture. These people who were eager for money stabbed themselves – ran a skewer right through the length of their whole body. But they didn't use a knife or a sword or a skewer – they used **many grievous wounds**.

Apostasy

And it ended in the ultimate disaster – they **wandered from the faith**. Surely we can all agree that it is got to be the worst thing that can happen to a person, right? What could possibly be worse than wandering from the faith? And if you believe in some doctrine that says you don't have to concern yourself with warnings like this; you are above this, and it could never possibly happen to you, that is a false doctrine. It could happen to you, it could happen to me – in the past it has happened to even the strongest believers.

And very often the cause of it boils down to the love of earthly treasure in some form or another. In Mark 4 Jesus told a parable about how the Word of God works in the human heart. And in verse 19 He explained that in some people the Word of God takes root for a while, but then gets choked out.

Mark 4:19 the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Don't Hope in Money

So the message of verses 6-10: Don't love money (earthly treasure). If you do you forfeit great gain in favor of a life of many griefs and bondage and ruin and destruction – with a few shallow thrills along the way. A life of grief ending in destruction punctuated with a few thrills is small gain. Do not be satisfied with small gain. Let go of that and run hard after great gain – godliness plus contentment.

Now let's skip down to verse 17 where we find another warning about money.

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

So verses 6-10 – Don't love money. Verses 17-19 – Don't hope in money. Verses 6-10 are directed those who are not rich, and verses 17-19 are directed toward those who are rich. Those who do not have much money tend to be especially tempted with love for money, and those who are wealthy tend to be especially tempted to put their hope in their money.

And that is also a very serious matter, so Paul uses some strong language.

17 Command those who are rich in this present world...

These are not suggestions, this is not counsel, these are mandates that are absolutely required for God's people. Money can be deadly to your soul, and when you have money it is crucial that you take the utmost precautions to guard yourself from spiritual catastrophe. So there is this series of five commands to the rich. And the structure of this passage is such that the whole discussion revolves around hope in God. If you look at the passage you will see that everything before it is negative and everything after it is positive. Everything that appears before that phrase hope in God is the wrong way to respond to having money, and everything that appears after it is the right way to deal with having money. And so I don't think it is a stretch to say that the determining factor for which direction things go is where your hope is.

Command #1: Don't be Arrogant

So he starts with the negative side.

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant

Do not assume your wealth is a mark of God's special favor that elevates you above the poor. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus the rich man goes to hell and the poor man goes to heaven. Wealth is not necessarily a sign of God's favor. There are poor people who are richly blessed by God and who are full of joy..., and there are rich people who have been abandoned by God and are in abject misery.

But it is very rare that someone gets wealthy without also becoming prideful. That is why Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven. Usually people with a lot of money have worked hard, been shrewd, and made some good decisions. That is usually the way rich people get rich. So if that is you, and you see the good sense and hard work and self-restraint that you have exercised, and you look at others who don't work hard or who are wasteful spenders, it is easy to begin to look down on them.

And on top of that, the world gauges importance largely on wealth, so it is easy to fall into that. The people with money are regarded and treated as being more important, and if you have money it does not take long before your flesh buys into that. Wealth gives you power, which makes you feel important. You just hire everything done, and use your money so that everyone becomes your servant. And if they don't do it the way you want you talk to those lowly hired servants like animals.

Proverbs 18:23 A rich man answers harshly.

When you get a puffed up sense of your own importance you become harsh with everyone around you.

And that arrogant attitude is not something that develops overnight. I have seen people go from relative poverty to being wealthy over a period of time and bit by bit their attitude changes. It might start with little insensitive slips of the tongue in remarks about money. And it can be so gradual that the people do not even realize it is happening. But what is happening is a subtle, quiet transfer of hope from God to money.

Command #2: Hope in God, not riches

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but in God

The Uncertainty of Riches

The command is not, "Don't put your hope in riches." The command is, "Don't put your hope in the uncertainty." That is a striking way to say it because hope is dependent on certainty. Hope is an emotion – it is when you feel good today because of what is coming tomorrow. Some really terrific thing is happening tomorrow, and you know for sure it is going to happen and you are really going to like it; that makes you feel good today.

The less certain it is that that good thing is going to happen, the less hope you have. You do not feel all that happy about things that might happen tomorrow. Nor do you feel especially happy about things that will for sure happen, but you might not like them. Hope comes when there is certainty that the event will happen and that you will like it. When you are sure of both of those things, then it makes you happy in advance – and that is hope. And so what could be more ridiculous than hoping in uncertainty?

Riches are uncertain for three reasons

Riches are uncertain for at least three reasons. First they are uncertain because they might be taken from you. You could lose it all through theft or a scam or through some catastrophe that happens in your life, or economic collapse, etc.

Secondly, you could be taken from your money. You could have millions stashed away in a safe investment, and you could get sick and die. The money is still there but you are not. So one way or another you and your money could be separated at any time.

And not only that, but there is a third kind of uncertainty. You might keep all your riches and live a long time, but lose the ability to enjoy those riches.

Ecclesiastes 5:19 When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift of God.

The ability to enjoy riches is not automatic. Christina Onassis was the heiress of the Greek shipping tycoon and daughter of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. She inherited an income of one million dollars a week. But all that money could not satisfy her soul. She died in her thirties from heart failure caused by barbiturates. Money, as a source of happiness, is not reliable.

Future is certain with God

So do not put your hope in this world's treasures – hope in God instead. Why? Because your financial future is uncertain. What does that imply about your future with God? It is certain. That is an amazing reality. Do you realize that is the only time you can ever talk about the future being certain? When it comes to your job, your money, your health, your relationships – none of that has any guarantees. No matter what your situation is right now, one year from now you could be penniless. You could be paralyzed, you could be widowed, you could be divorced, you could be a vegetable, you could be dead. There are no guarantees in life – except with God. He gives guarantees.

Certain goodness

You can be absolutely certain that He will be there tomorrow, and not only be there, but be there doing good things. And that is really what our hearts long for when we talk about certainty or uncertainty, right? When someone says, "I'm stressed because my future is so uncertain right now," what are they really saying? I think what they are usually saying is "I'm stressed because the thing I have my hope in appears shaky right now." The issue is not whether your future is certain or uncertain – it is a matter of whether the thing you have your hope in is certain or uncertain. The criminal who is sentenced to life without the possibility of parole has a future that is certain. His situation will be the same until the day he dies. But that is no encouragement. What we long for is not just certainty; it is the certainty of the thing our hope is in.

So if your hope is in money you will be disappointed. But if your hope is in God you won't be disappointed, because He will always be there and He will always be doing you good. Can you see the blessedness of that? The person who has his hope in worldly treasures gets laid off and he is all upset and worried. Why? Because he thinks perhaps he is cut off from the source of wellbeing and happiness. But the Christian gets laid off and he does not worry or fret because he still has the same access to the Supplier of his wellbeing and joy that he had before. The person who has his hope in other things gets upset and worried all the time, because there is always the question – what if I won't have access to happiness in the future? The Christian never has to worry about that – no matter what happens. No matter how great a loss you suffer – lose your job, your money, your spouse, your children, your health – still you can sit back and say, "Well at least I still have full access to the God who can supply me with joy and fulfill all the longings of my soul." All fear is essentially fear of unhappiness – fear that your sorrow will be greater than your joy. But the Christian never has to worry about that, because we will always have access to joy that is greater than any sorrow.

The Logic of verse 7 – God takes care of you

Look back for a moment at verse 7.

1 Timothy 6:6-7 godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

How does verse 7 prove verse 6? Everyone agrees that we brought nothing into this world and can take nothing out. Nobody came out of the womb with a wad of cash and you never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul. But how does that prove that we don't need a lot of money in the years we are alive? I was not born with money and I can't take any with me when I die, but in the years in between I live in a world where there is a price tag on everything.

I think the logic is this: I entered into this world naked and penniless. I had zero resources. And yet ... I survived!

And when I enter the next life it will be the same way. I won't be able to take a dime with me. No clothes, no cash, no supplies, no food, no water, no air – nothing. And yet, somehow, I will be OK then too. How can that be? I didn't need anything when I entered this world and I won't need anything when I enter the next – why? Is it because I am not a very needy person? No – I am practically a black hole of need. Huge books could (and have) been written on all the different things we need just to stay alive. So if I am so needy, how is it that I can be OK arriving into both this life and the next with no supplies and still be OK? What is the explanation? How is it that I am still alive?

Answer: God somehow managed to take care of me. Somehow, some way, He dug down deep and scraped together enough resources to supply me with what I needed – even though I had nothing to contribute. He has done that every day of my life for forty-one years, and He will do it every day in the next life for all eternity. You see, the fact that I came into this world with nothing and will leave with nothing proves that I have a Supplier in heaven. So as long as I have Him I don't need anything else.

That destroys the illogic of the money-lovers (people who think they have to have money to survive and to be happy). If you had to have money to survive then you never would have made it past your birth. And no one would ever make it in eternity.

This is exactly the same principle that enabled Job to have such a good reaction when he lost everything. Remember what he said?

Job 1:21 Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD

Job knew he did not have to panic because even though he lost all his money and his family and his health, he still had the Lord, who was the One who supplied all that he has ever had since he was born.

The God who Richly Supplies

So back to verse 17. Your future with money is uncertain, but your future with God is certain. But Paul is saying a lot more than just that. So you might expect him to say that: "Don't put your hope in the uncertainty of riches, but put your hope in the certainty of God, who is utterly reliable." But he does not say that. He wants to go beyond that. He wants to tell us a little something about this God who is so reliable. Watch how he describes God in verse 17.

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, but in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Wow – that is quite a statement, isn't it? That is one of those statements that if I didn't know it was in the Bible, and I heard someone say that, I would probably rebuke him.

God richly provides. This is what is known as a gnomic verb – a verb that describes the normal, customary actions of something. For example – "Accidents happen," or "Grass grows" – those are gnomic verbs. It is not past tense, it is not future tense, it is not present tense – it is just a statement of what happens as a general rule. Grass grows, birds fly, rain falls, lightning strikes, rivers flow... and God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. That is His nature.

Man-centered?

Now, does that strike you as a little bit man-centered? I recently heard a preacher talking about the creation and he was making the point that since there are so many amazing things in the creation that man never sees, it must be that God made this creation for His own glory and man's enjoyment of it is just kind of incidental. He kept saying, "It's not for us – it's for His glory."

And at first that sounds good, because we want to be God-centered and not man-centered in everything. And it is certainly true that God created this world for His glory. But how does the creation glorify God, exactly?

Let me ask you this: Is God's glory dependent upon the creation? Was God less glorious in eternity past before He created the world? No – God was just as glorious before the creation as after. So if that is true, then in what sense does the creation glorify Him? It glorifies Him in our sight. It puts His glory on display for us to see and marvel at. That is the purpose of the creation. God does not need the creation to know how great He is – we do.

God is glorified in our hearts when we see the wonders of the creation. And so it is not a man-centered thing for Paul to say that God gives us all things for our enjoyment. All of creation is for our enjoyment – but not for our enjoyment as an end in itself. It is for our enjoyment of God.

So much for asceticism

That is why asceticism is wrong. Asceticism is the practice of denying yourself pleasure for no good reason. The monks who used to live in uncomfortable conditions, and make vows imposing all kinds of hard restrictions on themselves – just because they felt God was somehow pleased when they made themselves miserable – that is asceticism. It is when you deny yourself pleasure just because you don't deserve to have pleasure. Those people think God provided us with good things just to see if we would have the strength to say no to them. But Paul says, "No, He gave us those things for the purpose of pleasure." God expects us to enjoy His gifts. That is the nature of love – it delights God when we enjoy His gestures of love.

And it is very important that you understand that about God because otherwise you won't be able to hope in Him. This God we place our hope in – this God who is always going to be accessible to you no matter what earthly treasure you lose – that God is the type who richly provides His people with all things for their enjoyment. So if you want riches, do not settle for earthly riches – go for the richness of having access to a God who richly supplies us with all things for our enjoyment. Who is richer, the guy who owns a cabin on a lake, or the guy whose Father owns all cabins and all lakes? The guy who has some cash or the guy whose God supplies all the cash that ever gets supplied to anybody?

Conclusion

So don't love money – use money to increase your love for God. And don't put your hope in money – put your hope in the God who supplies everything for our enjoyment. Money is a powerful tool. Use it for selfish indulgence and it becomes an idol. Use it to honor God and it is a treasure of treasures. But what does it look like, exactly, when you use it to honor God? What does verse 18 mean when it says use it to do good? That is where we will pick it up next time.

But for this morning let's close by asking ourselves this: *Where is my love, and where is my hope?* The next time you find yourself depressed, worried, discouraged, or afraid; remind yourself that you feel that way because you are afraid what is coming in the future is a situation where you think you won't be happy. That is ultimately the only thing we really fear – unhappiness. Nobody is afraid or depressed or worried about a situation where they will be happy. So what do you do when you are afraid you won't be able to be happy tomorrow? The next time you feel that way, fix your thoughts on the nature of God. Look around at the creation and ask yourself – *How many good things is God capable of giving?* And what sort of God is He? He is the God who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. And remind your soul that when the future becomes the present, and that dark time you have been dreading arrives, He will be there. Put your hope in Him.

Benediction: Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.