

God's Household, Part 18: "Eternal Investment"

1 Timothy 6:17-19

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[SERMON MANUSCRIPT]

Introduction

Hello church! Now it's time for the ministry of God's Word, when we listen actively to the Scriptures and the Spirit. Today's sermon is called "Eternal Investment" from 1 Timothy 6:17-19- this is part of our series that we called *God's Household*, in which we've studied through the book of 1 Timothy.

What comes to mind when you hear the word "invest"? Most likely, ideas like a pension or retirement fund; stocks or bonds; and buying real estate pop up in our heads. Investments typically involve money: you put in a specific amount of money at a moment of time in order to grow or generate more money after a period of time passes. For investing, there is always some level of risk: usually the higher the risk, the greater the returns.

But what if I told you that there are some things that we can invest our money into that will promise *eternal* returns without any risk of loss at all? Does it sound too good to be true? In this case, it's true! And the only *real* cost to this is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith that is exercised in how we live and where we allocate our money in our lives here on earth.

This is what Paul actually talks about here in today's passage of Scripture.

Scripture Reading

We are in the concluding section in the letter of 1 Timothy. This was a letter written by Paul back in the first century to help his beloved disciple, Timothy, to lead the church in the city of Ephesus. In this section, Paul already shared with Timothy a stern warning about the dangers of loving money (in 6:3-10) and a stiff charge to keep fighting the good fight of upholding the Gospel and sound doctrine and living it out (in 6:11-16). Now he goes back to address the issue of how wealthy Christians were to handle their money in light of this warning and charge. Let me go ahead and read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 now.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV):

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Amen. This is God's Word.

Proposition

Here's the "one thing" from 1 Timothy 6:17-19- the main message for all of us to take to heart today:

***Invest into your hope in God
and the works of God.***

Organizational Statement

So we'll dig deeply into these two ways to invest: first, invest into your hope in God; and second, invest in the works of God. I'll highlight two lessons in each of these two main parts.

1. Invest into your hope in God.
2. Invest into the works of God.

Sermon Outline

I. See verse 17: Invest into your hope in God.

- A. Here in this part of the passage, Timothy was to charge Christians that were rich to keep their hopes set on God.**

1. **Lesson #1:** Riches tempt people to be haughty and to set their hopes on riches (17a).

1 Timothy 6:17a: *As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches...*

- a) Paul's second to last message for Timothy and the church in Ephesus was directed to the *rich in the present age*. If verses 3-10 were a warning about the sinful desire of getting rich, then verses 17-19 here are words for those in the church who were already rich. There were people during the first century in Roman Empire who were wealthy because they owned land; they were able to rent out their lands to others who farmed them. Perhaps some of these people were the "masters" for whom slaves worked (he had already addressed Christian slaves in verses 1-2). There was also a growing merchant class in that time- they were a lower social class than landowners but they were still rich.
- b) Paul wanted Timothy to *charge them*- these rich Christians- in some specific ways. This sounds very stern- as he was to command or order them regarding this- because the love of money was dangerous! As the apostle explained previously, those who desire to be rich get ensnared in a trap that would lead them to ruin, destruction, and abandonment of their faith in Christ. So let's make sure we understand the gravity of this warning- the stakes were very high!
- c) The first specific way that the rich Christians in Ephesus were to be charged was *not to be haughty*. "Haughty" (H-A-U-G-H-T-Y) is sort of an old-fashioned word that simply means to think of yourself as better than others. Often times, when people have a lot of money, they start to think of themselves as better than other people around them: they think they are smarter than others; they think their time is more valuable than others' time; they think they are entitled to privileges and advantages over others; they think their problems are bigger than others' problems- this is haughtiness. Haughtiness is a very real temptation for people who are rich.
- d) Context: Why is this bad? Money is a very human way to establish a pecking order in our society. "Pecking order" describes the social organization of chickens; it is a hierarchy where the most important chickens at the top of the pecking order can bully the chickens below them without fear of retaliation; the least important chickens at the bottom of the pecking order get bullied by everyone else. We can see this pecking order so clearly in our society, don't we? But the pecking order goes against the very heart of Jesus and the Gospel. Jesus' harshest words were for the religious leaders of the day, who lived by this pecking order and oozed this kind of haughtiness. In contrast, Jesus humbled himself and served (Mark 10:45, Philippians 2:8); haughtiness isn't just bad, it goes against everything that Jesus is about!

- e) The second specific way that the rich Christians in Ephesus were to be charged was *not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches*. This is ironic here, isn't it? Usually people tend to think of riches as giving greater certainty and security in life. This was certainly what was ingrained in me growing up. My parents were immigrants who moved from South Korea to the United States and for our family, the key to life is security and security comes from having enough money. Now there's a bit of truth in this- having money does create some stability and certainty in life; not having money does create some instability and uncertainty in life. But Paul very clearly says that hedging all of our bets on money to give us certainty in life is a terrible bet.
- f) Context: Why is this bad? Money is unreliable! Money is not the right thing to put our greatest hope in- as Paul wrote earlier in verse 7: *for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world*. Remember, we can't take it with us after we die! This would be a bad investment of our hope! Jesus shared a parable about a rich fool in Luke 12:13-21: This rich man owned land and it produced a lot of crops. He decided that he would tear down his barns and build bigger barns to store all his grain. He thought to himself that now he could relax and party with friends because he had ample riches saved up. But God looked at this rich man and called him a FOOL because at any time his life could end and his riches would be left unused! They might be *rich in this present age*, but that doesn't mean anything in terms of our standing before God. Brothers and sisters, I'm afraid that many of us have this same mindset as this rich fool! Let's heed this warning and look at the mirror carefully here! Haughtiness is so ugly before God; the idolatry of money is a dead end that leads to ruin and destruction.

→ **Transition:** So this is lesson #1- *riches tempt people to be haughty and to set their hopes on riches*- from verse 17a. Now here's...

2. Lesson #2: Enjoy all that God provides, which reinforces setting our hopes on him (17b).

1 Timothy 6:17b: *...but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy*.

- a) In the second half of this verse, Paul explained that the only one that people could set their hopes on properly is God himself. He is worthy to set our hopes on! If riches only lead us down a path of haughtiness and misplaced hope, then God leads us to a completely different path- that of true humility and well-placed hope. The reason? Paul said it is because he *richly provides us with everything to enjoy*. Let's meditate on this to let it soak into our hearts and minds.
- b) First, God *richly provides us*. God is generous towards his children; God provides what we need- not in a stingy, minimal sort of way, but by knowing exactly what we need to make us truly content. This is the heart of a parent towards their children, isn't it? Listen to what I mean: My children are still young (ages 12, 10, and 8) and dependent on us as parents. They can't yet *buy or make food for themselves*, so they still rely on Nickey and me 100% for *all* the food they eat. We are not stingy and don't let them starve- there's a lot of great food to eat in our house! We keep our fruit drawer packed, the fridge full of meat and milk, and the pantry full of snacks. We make healthy and tasty meals with plenty of proteins and veggies three times a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. You see, as parents, we *richly provide* food for our kids. If we, as sinful people, do this for our kids, how much more our Heavenly Father richly provides for us!
- c) Second, God *provides us with everything to enjoy*. Timothy was dealing with false teachers who were not allowing people to get married or to eat certain foods (this was back in 4:1-5). Somehow, this was leading people to depart from true faith in Christ alone for salvation. Paul taught instead that *everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving*. As they searched the Scriptures to inform them and as they prayed and received guidance and conviction from the Spirit, they could receive the gifts of marriage and good food with clean

consciences. Paul seems to revisit this here when he wrote that God *richly provides* what we need in life and he gives his children *everything to enjoy*.

- d) Going back to the illustration of parenting children, not only do we want to *richly* provide for our kids, our hearts as parents is that we also want them to *enjoy* everything we give them. They might *want* some stuff that we refuse to give them regularly and in large quantities- candy, sweets, or other junk food. It is very rewarding to see them not only grow to understand that junk food is not good for them, but also to see them really enjoy the nutritious food that we do provide for them.
- e) Remember that just before this, Paul warned them sternly not to be haughty about what they had or put their hopes in what they had. But we also need not go to the other extreme- we can thankfully recognize that what we have in our lives are all provided for by the Lord and we can enjoy them! Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *whether we eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*. We can enjoy all things in life- apart from sin- recognizing that the Lord provides them and using them all to the glory of God! When we see things this way, it actually reinforces that our Heavenly Father cares for us and grows our conviction that he is the only one to set our hopes upon!
- f) Context: I think the Netflix show “*Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*,” can really highlight this. While I think that Marie Kondo’s worldview is a bit on the Zen-mystical side, it can be redeemed for Christ. I thought it was so profound to see how much stuff we actually have and that most of it doesn’t make us happy at all- actually, it’s plain to see how hoarding can actually make our lives miserable. I think it’s a really healthy idea to sit in the rooms of my house and *thank God* for what I have and for the life that happens in each room. I think it’s a really healthy idea to put my hands on my possessions, thanking God for the pieces that “spark joy” and giving away the ones that don’t to those who actually need it. Through these kind-of-awkward exercises, we can remember that our hope is not ultimately in our possessions, but in God himself. This is the “godliness with contentment” that Paul talked about!
- g) Context: This is the purpose of regular times to rest in the Lord, right? The fourth commandment in the Law was to observe the Sabbath- the purpose of this was to create a rhythm of work and rest that set aside a day to do no work, remember how the Lord created the world perfectly in six days, appreciate how he provided for his people, and cultivate dependence and trust in the Lord. Having regular rhythms of work and rest- daily, weekly, and yearly- do our souls good to enjoy what God provides for us and to set our hopes on him properly. This is what our daily times with the Lord in worship, the Word, and prayer are for; this is what weekly times to gather together in LIFE group and Sunday Celebration are for; this is what yearly holidays are for (like we celebrated last week with Easter).

→ **Transition:** So this is lesson #2- *enjoy all that God provides, which reinforces setting our hopes on him*- from verse 17b. Let me include the “life application” for this first part here as well.

→ **Life Application:** *Plan rhythms of rest to enjoy and appreciate the Lord’s providence in your life.*

- Try it: just sit and be with the Lord in your home thinking about what he has allowed you to enjoy in life and how he has taken care of you. During these times, also ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the haughtiness and misplaced hopes in your life. May these times with the Lord fuel present and future hope in him as you do this daily and weekly and yearly!
- So we’ve seen the importance of *investing into our hope in God*. Now let’s look at the second main point for today’s sermon...

II. See verses 18-19: Invest into the works of God.

A. Here in this part of the passage, Timothy was to charge Christians that were rich to invest in what God valued.

1. Lesson #3: Christians are to invest themselves into good works, especially generosity (18).

1 Timothy 6:18 (ESV): *18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share...*

- a) Paul continued by instructing Timothy in his charge to rich Christians here in verse 18: *They are to do good*- they were to be characterized by “doing good,” this godliness that has been a running theme throughout this letter. This is a faith in the biblical Gospel that is synchronized with life- the ways a person behaves, makes decisions, and treats people. As Martin Luther put it, it is by this faith alone that a person experiences God’s salvation; but this faith is never alone- real faith always produces the fruit of “doing good.”
- b) Let me connect this with the previous verse. Paul warned the church about the temptations of haughtiness and setting their hopes in their riches. Their hope in God were reinforced as they enjoyed all that God had richly provided for them as their perfect Heavenly Father. In light of this, Paul specified what Christians who were “rich” were to aspire for: they were *to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share*.
- c) So related to this, when I think about effects of God’s salvation- new spiritual birth and faith in the Gospel- I can’t help but think about the first church in Acts 2. The church was birthed after the Peter preached the Gospel and three thousand people believed in Jesus. Then in Acts 2:42-47, it described the church: these disciples of Jesus devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship; they experienced many signs and wonders. I think that the most extraordinary miracle- actually the only supernatural thing mentioned specifically here- was the generosity that was expressed among the disciples, notably those who had money! They were together and shared everything in common; those with extra sold what they had and gave it those who needed it; they shared meals and life together- regardless of the different social statuses of these brothers and sisters in Christ.
- d) Those who were *rich in this present age* knew that their money was actually not theirs, but the Lord’s. As citizens of God’s kingdom, they were to know that they were to steward it faithfully. When the Holy Spirit gave them new spiritual birth and faith in this biblical Gospel, they were set free from such haughtiness and false dependence on money for hope and certainty. This biblical Gospel can be summarized this way:
 - o 2 Corinthians 8:9 (ESV): *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

It’s actually no coincidence that this Scripture was written also within the context of generous giving! In sum, what I just read says that Jesus Christ forsook his rights as King of the universe, came to earth as a human being, and was accursed and crucified as a criminal. But it was through Jesus losing everything- including his very life- that he redeemed his people. He suffered the penalty for their sins; he reconciled us with God; he paid our way to be children of God and heirs of his kingdom.

- e) Context: All religions in the world recognize the value of “good works”- but there are two major differences between the biblical Gospel and all other religions. First, there is understanding of *ability*: in all other religions, people have expectations and standards set upon them to fulfill; but in the biblical Gospel we are confronted by our moral bankruptcy and inability to do good or to do good enough to match God’s

righteousness. We can only receive grace from God, and that grace changes us to now be able to do good works. Second, there is the difference of *motivation*: in all other religions, doing good works are to gain merit before God; but in the biblical Gospel, doing good works- like generosity- are motivated by the overflowing riches of grace we have *received* from God. Thus, we now do good works as a response of gratitude for the grace we receive.

→ **Transition:** So this is lesson #3- *Christians are to invest themselves into good works, especially generosity-* from verse 18. Now here's the last one...

2. **Lesson #4:** Investing in good works helps us stay focused on that which is truly life (19).

1 Timothy 6:19 (ESV): *...thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.*

- a) We have a Heavenly Father who richly provides us with everything we need in life on earth and in heaven. In light of this biblical Gospel, we are able to see money for what it is: not as an indicator of personal value or as an idol; not as a way of gaining security in life. The Gospel frees us from these temptations and we are able to *be generous and ready to share* what we have (by the way, I love this: it's intentional and thought out)- this was Paul's point to those rich Christians in the church in Ephesus and to us now!
- b) This kind of generosity and readiness to share has a very important effect according to Paul. When people are doing good like this, they are *storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future*. Paul is undoubtedly referring to the Lord's teaching in Matthew 6:19-20 when Jesus said this:
 - o Matthew 6:19-20 (ESV): 19 *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..."*

Jesus said not to store up treasures on earth- things that will perish and be taken away. Instead, they were to store up *treasures in heaven*. In other words, they were to invest themselves into the stuff that matters in God's eyes- things that will be impactful for eternity.

- c) What kind of things are *treasures in heaven*? As it's been said before, the Bible presents the truth that God doesn't value everything the same: that wisdom is more valuable than rubies (Proverbs 8:10-11); fear of the Lord is more valuable than great wealth (Proverbs 15:16); righteousness is more valuable than money (Proverbs 15:6, 16:8); a good reputation is more valuable than great riches (Proverbs 22:1); faith in God is more valuable than gold (1 Peter 1:7); and salvation is more valuable than gaining the whole world (Mark 8:36). These are the things that matter to God and that are valuable in heaven.
- d) This is why- as Paul has been writing about in this letter- sound, biblical doctrine is needed. We need to understand how God views and values things in our world. In our preaching and teaching, we try to talk a lot about the biblical theology of topics like worship, friendship, work, singlehood, marriage, and missions. And there's a lot of other worthwhile areas of doctrine to form biblically. But since Paul was talking about rich Christians here, let's talk briefly about what the Bible says about money.
- e) Context: God owns everything in this universe, so that includes also our money, possessions, time- and our entire lives (Psalm 24:1)! God gives human beings the responsibility to handle his resources faithfully for his glory and towards his Kingdom (Matthew 25:14-30). He has entrusted us with money to take care of our own needs and the needs of our families, earning enough to cover daily needs (1 Thessalonians 2:9). He also entrusted us with money to give to the local church- to take care of those who take care of the church and to take care of those in need in the church. Lastly God entrusted us with money to give to other worthy causes: those in need,

other ministries, and missions work are a necessity (Matthew 25:31-46)! He wants his people to be strategic- “putting to work” God’s money for his causes (as the Lord himself taught in the parable of the talents). Strategic use of God’s money means being generous at times (like if there is a natural disaster and emergency relief is needed) and sacrificial at times (like not upgrading to the latest tech gadget)- all for the cause of Christ. This is how we can be generous and ready to share.

- f) Listen carefully to this part: Investing like this is so good for our souls as Paul says, these endeavors are *a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life*. In other words, the people of God are strengthened in their convictions and hope regarding heaven, their final destination. In their current lives on earth, when God’s people are generous and ready to share, storing up treasures into what God values, the benefit is that all this helps to keep fresh in their hearts and minds what is really important.
- g) Context: Let me explain what I mean. This photo was viral because it shows the great social divides in our city that we often simply ignore. But there are many in our church who are involved in missional initiatives to fight for justice and mercy by volunteering time, energy, and money to demonstrate and declare the Gospel to people in need. I really believe investing in these endeavors are a blessing to us because it keeps fresh that there are real people- precious in God’s sight- who live in desperate situations. It keeps fresh the gratitude for what God has provided for us and the reality that maybe that extra stuff that we want isn’t really what we something think we need. It keeps fresh that we are to be faithfully prepared for the day that Jesus will return and make all these injustices right. Amen? As Paul said it in verse 19, this is a *good foundation for the future*! This *storing up* of Kingdom treasures may create some stresses in our lives, but it also makes us long for the Lord to come and take us home, just as generations of Christians have cried throughout history, “Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!”

→ **Transition**: So this is lesson #4- *investing in good works helps us stay focused on that which is truly life*- from verse 19. Let me conclude with the “life application” for this second part.

→ **Life Application**: Ask the Spirit to convict you about good works- especially generosity- to invest in.

- I am so often encouraged by how people in our church demonstrate the Gospel at work in their lives by giving generously to our church, benevolence fund, individuals in need, and ministries and missions work. My intention is not to “guilt” people to give more, but to charge us to continue to invest into the works of God because we love Jesus and want to glorify him in our world. Also because we know it is just good medicine for our souls to keep fresh what is truly valuable in life during our days on earth.
- So we’ve seen the importance of *investing in the works of God* as well as *investing into your hope in God*. We’ll go back to our live Zoom service now to wrap things up together as a church. God bless you all!