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Devotion for September 24th, 2021

"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. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 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. O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge,' for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you."

- 1st Timothy 6:17-21

St Paul wrote this to Timothy to guide him in his ministry. The main element here is the attitude of some of the people in Timothy's congregation, namely those who were financially rich and had "earthly knowledge." St. Paul was guiding Timothy to help those same people into true treasure and true knowledge. St. Paul recognized that people who have earthly treasure and earthly knowledge, knowledge they have likely used to obtain their wealth, could easily become haughty toward others in the congregation. This could cause division within his church.

Before I go further, though, I must admit that I was unsure exactly what was meant by the word "haughty." So, I looked it up and here it is:

"Someone who is haughty is arrogant, and full of pride. When you are haughty, you have a big attitude and act like you are better than other people. A haughty person acts superior and looks down on others. Haughty people are disdainful, overbearing, prideful."

swaggering, and obnoxious."

So, what was St. Paul's advice to Timothy so that those blessed with wealth and intellect didn't fall into this haughtiness? He advised that Timothy guide them to do good works and to share what they have been blessed with, their treasure, and use their intellect for good. St. Paul suggests this would put them on a path to true treasure and to live a true life.

I personally see an increased responsibility for those who have been blessed with wealth and intellect. There is a reason that they have been blessed in this way and that is to love their neighbors with these blessings. Anyone living their lives in this way will avoid falling into the haughty category of pride and disdain for others. There is a real danger in thinking that what we have been blessed with is the result of our own work. All blessings are from God. God provides for the whole world according to His will. He loves everyone, believer and unbeliever.

But there is certainly a different theme in the letter than just doing good works. We know that good works are not our salvation, but rather, it is by faith in the promises of God. While our intellect can be useful in obtaining the resources we use to take care of our families and show love to those around us, it is useless toward obtaining salvation. So, what is the true treasure and what is the true life St. Paul wrote about here?

The true treasure is the salvation given to us as a gift when Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. Knowledge of this is beyond any earthly knowledge, because it leads to eternal life in Jesus Christ: true life. When we believe in Jesus and trust in Him for our life, we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This faith that is worked in us by the Holy Spirit results in good works and love to those around us. So, St. Paul's advice to Timothy was to guide those believers who have faith into good works so that they would not start down the path to haughtiness.

*In Christ Jesus,
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