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Wealth and Riche\$

By Bryan Hodge

There is no doubt about it. It takes money to live in society. There is no free lunch (someone must pay for it). However, here are some things we should keep in mind:

1. True gain is found in godliness and contentment (1 Timothy 6:6).

“Godliness” (eusebia) literally means to be well devout “(It) denotes that piety which, characterized by a Godward attitude, does that which is pleasing to Him” (Vine’s). It is used in context of religion (1 Timothy 6:6 cf. 6:5).

“Contentment” means “to be satisfied” (Vine’s). Paul wrote, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound... I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me” (Philippians 4:11-13). The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have” (Hebrews 13:5 cf. 10:34). God is worthy of praise with, or without physical comforts in this life (Job 1:21).

“Gain” brings to mind Paul’s words, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). There is gain, eternal gain, in Christian living.

2. Material possessions are temporary and short-lived (1 Timothy 6:7).

It has been said “shrouds have no pockets.” Hearses do not pull U-Haul trailers.” One cannot take his material possessions with him to the other side.

Consider the following passages: (1) The Psalmist wrote, “When he dies he carries nothing away” (Psalm 49:17). (2) Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses. Then He spoke this parable to them... This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided” (Luke 12:15-21). (3) Paul wrote, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7).

3. Do not confuse wants and needs (1 Timothy 6:8).

Needs include such things as: (1) Food, and (2) Covering (NASB), that is clothing and shelter. God has promised to provide these things if we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:31, 33). Patrick Morley has suggested, “Contentment is not getting what you want, but redefining what you need” (The Man in the Mirror, p. 100).

4. Those who seek to be rich face temptations, and risk their souls (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

It is not money itself, but “the desire to be rich” (1 Timothy 6:9) and “the love of money” (1 Timothy 6:10), that is the problem. An unhealthy obsession with money and possessions endangers the soul, and hinders spiritual growth and productivity (cf. Luke 8:14).

5. Obsession with the material brings sorrow (1 Timothy 6:10).

In this life materialism rarely brings lasting satisfaction. “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase” (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Ahab was miserable because of his material desires (1 Kings 21:5-6).

Material riches will not satisfy in the hereafter. “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death” (Proverbs 11:4).

6. Do not be haughty or trust in riches (1 Timothy 6:17).

Remain humble (cf. 1 Peter 5:5) and put your trust in God (1 Timothy 6:17), for it can all be taken away in a moment. “Let the... rich (glory) in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away for no sooner has the sun risen with burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits” (James 1:9-10).

7. If you are rich, use such for good (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

“Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold an eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:18-19).