

The Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 25, 2016
1 Timothy 6:6-16
The Desire to Get Rich is a Trap
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Dear Friends in Christ,

There are three words of warning hopefully do not come too late. One of the most recent and well known uses of those words was by Admiral Akbar in Return of the Jedi. When he realized the attack on the second death star was going too easily, he blurted those famous words, "It's a trap." Things are not always what they seem.

To Timothy, the young pastor in Ephesus, the apostle itemized several practical instructions and warnings to cover many areas of life. This list included the obscure dangers that come with the purpose in life to get rich. This desire presents temptations, and is a trap one will overlook and be overcome to spiritual destruction.

One of the most misquoted passages of the Bible occurs in this section. Money is the root of all evil, some incorrectly quote 1 Timothy 6:10. This is not true. Paul warns us "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." The love of money leads to the desire to get rich. **The Desire to Get Rich is a Trap.** Godliness with contentment avoids this trap. Jesus Christ's appearing will eliminate this trap.

What had led to Paul's warnings? Paul had contrasted Timothy's work of teaching pure doctrine and sound instruction with "anyone who teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of Jesus Christ, and to godly teaching." Paul then mentioned why some would turn away from Scripture and its teachings about Jesus Christ, "they think that godliness is a means to financial gain." We see the same attitude today in the theology of glory preachers who hold out piety as a means to the end of getting rich and being successful.

No, godliness is not the way to financial gain. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." You are really ahead when you live your life content in what God has given you through labor or savings or through what your parents supply you. I am ahead of all whose sole purpose in life is to get rich when I am content. The word content means to be good with the way things are. It is to be self-sufficient in the sense that I am not influenced, rattled, or controlled in my fulfillment by the vagaries of life.

The desire to get rich is a trap. Paul's words indicate that those who want to get rich always fall into a trap. This is normally what happens. Godliness with contentment is the way to avoid that trap. Godliness is the piety that lives freely and obediently under God's forgiveness of all our sins in Christ's sacrifice. Contentment is to have food and clothing, to be content with that. God gives us those things during life on earth. They are not things we bring in when we are born, or take out when we die. Paul may well have been thinking of Job's words when he added, "For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." Whether we eat steak or hamburger, shop at Sachs Fifth Ave. or Kohl's, live in a mansion or a nice house, it makes no matter.

The Lord our God distributes various amounts of wealth. Seeking, possessing and enjoying the wealth God gives no matter the amount are not sin. That is quite a different thing from wanting to get rich, loving money, having those as the love of your life, and your purpose in life. There are no temptations in piety with contentment. The desire to get rich has many temptations.

Those temptations do not appear dangerous or harmful. No trap looks like a trap. We disguise a trap to make it alluring. Satan continues to put temptation into our hearts like he put into Eve's heart. Sin looked good. The fruit no longer was to be avoided. Now, it was desirable for gaining wisdom. Like with Eve, those traps can lead us into "many foolish and harmful desires. Those sinful desires literally submerge us, drown us, "into ruin and destruction." That ruin is irretrievable loss that may include family, friends, reputation, and freedom. It is the destruction of all spiritual good.

When will those temptations end, and the trap no longer set? Jesus Christ's appearing will eliminate this trap.

The apostle gave Timothy a warning suitable for the "man of God," all ministers who watch over God's people. It is a good series of warnings for all the people of God as well. Our necessary actions come in the context of Jesus' return in his own time and in the light of his grace while we wait. Take these warnings to heart. "Flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

The Christian life in contrast to the desire to get rich and love money that leads to ruin and destruction is an active life, a busy life. Notice all the verbs are action verbs: flee, pursue, fight, take hold of, you were called, you made a good confession. God has called us by the Spirit through the word of Christ to be his own. We have made our good confession and continue to make it before men. Others are making their confession making today at the cost of their lives.

Paul charges us "to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time." Paul gives this command "in the light of Christ."

Here is the compelling reason we fight the good fight of the faith and lay hold of eternal life to which we were called. Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin. He is God with the Father and the Spirit who "lives in unapproachable light." He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." We cannot see him but he has revealed himself in his Word. "To him be honor and might forever." Paul adds his "Amen" to his doxology.

What a glorious charge to us people of God as we wait for the appearing of Jesus Christ. That return will remove not only the trap of the desire to get rich and to love money but all traps of sin. Think about the happiness and security of soldiers in the Middle East who can walk or drive on a road they know has had all booby traps removed from their path. You can bet they walk carefully and alertly on roads still filled with traps until then.

Our day is coming. Until then, walk alertly and carefully. Amen. <SDG>