



The Christian View of Wealth

Take time to quiet your thoughts and concerns. Break open the Holy Scriptures and read **1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19** and **Matthew 6:19-24**. Open your heart and mind to discover the place and purpose of material possessions in the Christian's sense of priorities. Online Catholic Bible link: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>

We live according to our priorities more than our professions. Regardless of what we say, our actions and our conduct (what we do and how we live) spell out for the world to see what our real priorities are in life. And when it comes to money, how we use it and what it takes to turn loose of it reveals our priorities.

Contrast of Financial Priorities

1 Timothy 6:6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 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. 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."

In his letter to Timothy, St. Paul reduces the complexities of life to a very simple principle, that nothing we acquire here in this life can be kept forever – just as we entered life without anything, so we must release every earthly possession when we leave it. Paul seems to be saying that if we must release it before we depart this earth, even if by force, then it is much better not to grasp it too tightly along the way. Corrie ten Boom talked about how the harder we grasp something, the more the hurt when God must pry our fingers and our hearts away from it. After all, it is supreme folly to jeopardize the soul in acquiring earthly things that must be left behind.

The Christian ideal is to be so content with God and God's ways that the "love of money" doesn't get a hearing in our souls. Money is seen in the light of providing for our daily and family needs, and we can be satisfied with that. Anything more than that is to be distributed to wherever the need might be, as God would direct.

God intends that we accomplish His purpose with whatever resources He has placed at our disposal.

How can we tell what our financial priorities are? We need look only as far as how we spend it, and what it takes for us to turn loose of it. If, for example, we purchase nice things for our home and family, while neglecting the support of God's work, then we can easily see the low level of priority God has in our lives. Think of what it means about priorities when Americans spend more money on pet food every year than they give to its churches. Our checkbooks can quickly reveal our priorities. As Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

The Perils and Possibilities of the Rich

The people of God must have a higher set of priorities than the "love of money". To accomplish this takes both a negative and positive action – to flee evil and to pursue good. Left to our own whims and wishes, we will naturally drift into the trap of the "love of money," just as the world has. It will take action – strong and purposeful action on our part – to avoid the dangers of uncontrolled financial desires. So we must actively flee all this, finding ways to avoid and escape the entrapments of money all around us. And the best way to avoid those entrapments is to fortify our souls by pursuing "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."

"To be good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" – this sounds like those who consider themselves to be stewards, not owners. The true spirit of stewardship is seen in: 1) being rich in good deeds; 2) generous; and 3) willing to open their hands and share with others. This is how God intended life to be – that we enjoy the benefits of each other's generosity.

Making Your Riches Last

Since we can take nothing out of this world, it appears that our riches can only be useful in this present age. We must give them to be used for His purposes while they are still in our hands. They won't do us any good while we hoard them for ourselves, for it is only in giving them that they become meaningful and eternally precious to us.

Matthew 6:19-21 – "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Where is your heart?