

Lesson Two

Free From Greed, Free to Share 1 Timothy 6:2b-19

Free From Greed

There are those who love money so much that they think “godliness is a means to financial gain,” but “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Greed distorts what is really important; it perverts the pursuit of godliness into a financial adventure. The love of money corrupts everything it touches.

The love of money—the idolatry of money—is expressed in a desire to “get rich” which is the flip side of a lack of contentment. “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income” (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

The pursuit of wealth without contentment results in “many griefs” because that agenda is a “trap” that leads to “ruin and destruction.” It blinds and ensnares us. Wealth without contentment is sinking sand whereas generosity is a “firm foundation.”

Free to Share

The freedom to share is nurtured by the development of a character that pursues “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” Formed by these virtues disciples are “generous and willing to share.”

The pursuit of wealth without sharing is arrogance and trusts wealth rather than God. Stinginess, the inability to share, indicates stunted spiritual growth; it ungodliness—to be unlike God himself.

The wealthy are commanded “to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” To “do good” is a Jewish expression for benevolence as in, for example, James 4:17: “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” The heart of the wealthy is tested by whether it shares or not, whether it can be generous like God.

Godliness the Key

Godliness—living as God’s partner in the present age—frees us from greed so that we are free to share. This freedom is the “treasure” that offers a “firm foundation for the coming age.” This “treasure” enables us to “take hold of the life that is truly life.”

Contentment, character and charitableness are intimately woven together in the freedom of godliness. Dissatisfaction, arrogance and miserliness are intimately woven together in the snare of greed.

Greed enslaves but godliness liberates, and when godliness liberates, we become generous people just as God himself is generous with us in providing “us with everything for our enjoyment.”

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some of the characteristics of those who use godliness for “financial gain”? What are some of the characteristics of a godly person?
2. Given 1 Timothy 6:17-19, what “sermon” would you share with the “rich”? Do you sense a measure of discomfort with that sermon? Why?
3. Why is the pursuit of wealth a snare? What makes it a snare? Is there a pursuit of wealth that is not a snare? Why do you think so?
4. How do we know whether we are “loving money” or not? What “tests” or “questions” can we apply to ourselves to discern this in our character?
5. What does contentment mean? What does it look like in our lives?
6. As wealthy Americans, do we find ourselves defensive when it comes to how we use our wealth? If so, why?