

“Charge Them That Are Rich ...”

“... in this present world, that they be not highminded nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come” (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

A casual review of these verses reveal that the word “rich” is found twice; the words “riches” and “richly” found once respectively. The word “rich” is a relative word. One who has \$50,000 in the bank is rich in the eyes of one who has no savings and whose debt is \$50,000. On the other hand, he who has \$50,000,000 would dismiss the notion that one who had \$50,000 was rich. But the instructions to those “*who are rich in this present world*” would apply equally to him who only had \$50,000 compared to him whose assets amounted to \$50,000,000. Both of these could need the instructions not to be “*highminded.*”

“*Highmindedness*” is an attitude of egotistical pride and may exist in other matters than just one who is proud of the wealth he holds. Gentiles were warned that although they had been “*grafted into*” the olive tree from whence natural branches (Jews) had been broken off; they were not to be “*highminded, but fear.*” The same God who broke off the “*natural branches*” (because of their unbelief), would also “*break off the unnatural branches,*” which were the Gentiles, if the occasion so warranted it (Rom. 11:20f).

Still, an abundant possession of this world’s goods often lulls to insensitivity those who have such possessions. The rich “fool” is a prime example of this. While his riches did not take wings like an eagle and fly away, he did not factor in the uncertainty of life; that he had no promise of a morrow (Pro. 23:5; 27:1).

In this day of financial uncertainty; when the stock markets runs to dizzying heights, then plunges to terrifying depths, the phrase “*uncertainty of riches*” certainly rings a sobering tone. Millions have lost life savings; even their prospect of any future retirement has disappeared and some have had to sacrifice some of their good assets at “fire sale” prices because they have had “margin calls” on loans they made. Truly riches are uncertain and it is time we remember our Savior’s words that a man’s life “*consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Lk. 12:16). Rather than trusting in fleeting riches, man’s hope should be in God, who “*giveth us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Tim. 6:17).

Our God is rich: rich in power. Rich in love. Rich in mercy (Eph. 2:8). There is no source of wealth upon which we may call that is equal to our God. He bids us to trust Him. Material riches may fail; but our God, who made our world, has assured us that if we "*seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, all these things shall be added to you*" (Mt. 6:33). The psalmist's statement still says volumes: "*I was once young, but now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed beg bread*" (Psa. 37:25).

Thus all, whether they have or have not possession, should be "*rich in good works.*" Every man, whether he has a dime in his pocket or not, must be rich in this respect. Not all good works cost money. It does not cost a penny to help an ailing or aging neighbor by running errands for him. It doesn't cost a penny to mow a lawn, make a phone call, or inquire of other needs that person might have.

God's people, including those who are "*rich in this world,*" are to do good, to be rich in good works. The important thing for each of us is that at the end of this life we are "*rich toward God.*" We cannot be rich toward God without being rich in faith (Jam. 2:5). Let each of us plan our lives so that at the end of life's day, when our wealth has been counted and those things that matter are all summed up, the balance will reveal us to have been "*rich toward God*"!

Jim McDonald