The Gospel for the Haves and the Have-Nots

Family of Faith, 1 Tim. 6:1-2, 17-19

Introduction

- Most people are familiar with the story of the rich young ruler. It shows up in all 3 Synoptic Gs, but I'll read Luke's version because it's the shortest (Lk. 18:18-23)
  - The man has some level of power and authority because he is described as "ruler" – probably a Jewish ruler since he addresses Jesus as a teacher.
  - The man is also wealthy, as he is described in my translation as "extremely rich."
  - Why does Jesus ask him about "goodness?"
    - Jesus isn't denying His status as a religious leader.
    - He wants the man to think about the source of his own goodness.
    - The man believes that his goodness comes from inside himself, as he has kept the commandments from his youth.
  - Why does Jesus tell him to sell all of his possessions & give the money to the poor?
    - He's exposing 2 strongholds in the man's life.
      - The first is wealth – He has too much to be willing to give it away.
      - The second is power – He had too much to submit to someone else.
    - Both of these issues stood in the way of eternal life.
- Money and power – power and money– these subjects continue to disrupt our understanding and application of the gospel to every area of our lives.
- It shouldn't surprise that the aging Apostle addresses these topics in the closing ch.
  - In 1 Timothy 6:1-12, Paul addresses the issue of slavery.
  - After a brief aside, Paul addresses the issue of prosperity.
- When we take these groups of verses together, we see a unified principle: **The gospel should change the way you view power & wealth.**
  - "The glorious gospel of the blessed God" mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:11 is meant to change the way we view God – from Judgmental Deity to Gracious Deliverer, or from Irrelevant Fable to Majestic Creator.
  - It also changes the way we view ourselves – from separated sinners to saints
  - It also changes the way we view others – from strangers to siblings in Christ.
- As much as we emphasize the personal response every person must make to the gospel, the gospel is not just a decision to be made; it's a message to be believed.
- It's like when N. Copernicus discovered the Sun was at the center of the solar system.
  - It changed the way human beings saw themselves in relationship to the universe – no longer at the center.
  - It changed the way human beings think about their own abilities – able to prove scientific theories through testing and observation.
  - It changed the way human beings measure time – from local to standardized.
- The gospel message is particularly important for the "Haves" – those who have wealth - and the "Have-Nots" – those who don't have power.

Body

I. Those who don't have power should use their weakness to glorify God. (v.1-2)

A. Obviously, we have to talk about Paul's approach to slavery.

1. His lack of condemnation is not the same as an endorsement.
2. Slavery is clearly wrong from a Biblical perspective, as all people are created in God's image and have equal value.
3. Instead of overthrowing the social order, Paul urges people to transform the social order through the power of the gospel.
4. In Gal. 3:28, he declared there is no slave or free person, but all are 1 in Christ.

B. Back then, slaves had no power & there were lots of slaves in the church.

1. Instead of disrespecting their masters or striving to gain power, they were called to "serve them all the more."
2. They were called to work for the benefit of their master, especially if their master was also a believer.

C. This requires a different view of power than the world has.

1. The world says, "Strength is an asset & weakness is a liability."
2. The world says, "Grab as much power as you can, at the expense of anyone else who might get in your way."
3. The Gospel says that victory comes through Christ's suffering on our behalf.
4. The Gospel says, "In my weakness, He is strong." (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

II. Those who have wealth should use it to prepare for the life to come (v. 17-19)

A. In upcoming verses, Paul warns readers about the love of money (v. 9-10)

1. Apparently, there were some in the church who were motivated by greed.
2. But the love of money is not the same thing as having money.

B. There were wealthy people in the church then too & Paul gives them instruction.

1. Don't be conceited and don't set your hope in riches.
2. Do good and do good works.
3. Be generous and be ready to share.

C. The motivations for these actions are found at the beginning & end here.

1. Material wealth is tied to this present world – a world that is fleeting.
2. The way we use our wealth is an indication of what we think about it.
   - **a.** Is it a sign of our social status, value, or personal achievements?
   - **b.** Is it a gift from God for our benefit and for his purposes?

D. We have all kinds of diagnostic equipment to test the health & function of our physical heart. God's Word provides this diagnostic tool for the health & function of our spiritual heart – how do you use your wealth?

Conclusion

- The gospel message is assumed throughout 1 Timothy, & these verses point out what a big stumbling block wealth and power can be.
  - They can stand in the way of someone trusting Christ with their whole life.
  - They can keep a believer from living a transformed life.
- Like with the rich young ruler, they cut to the heart of the issue, and they expose what we really think about who God is and who we are, and what it is that we really need from Him to overcome our sin and alienation from eternal life.
- Don't know if u have a lot of power & influence or not, or a lot of material assets or not, but I do know that u have a choice in how you use what u have for God's glory.