

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy  
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1 Timothy 6:2b-10

*Teach these things, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them. 3 Some people may contradict our teaching, but these are the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. These teachings promote a godly life. 4 Anyone who teaches something different is arrogant and lacks understanding. Such a person has an unhealthy desire to quibble over the meaning of words. This stirs up arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions. 5 These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy.*

*6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.*

*9 But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

Hurley wasn't happy. Yes, he had won the lottery, but since then everything had gone wrong. Sure, hitting the numbers seemed at first to bring him tremendous blessing, but almost immediately after that he thought "the numbers" were a curse. It took getting lost on an island for him to start to sort out his life and begin to understand himself.

Do you wish you were rich? I'll bet you do. It's only natural, and our culture and society certainly promote it. A few of you are going into professions where you know you won't make any money. Some of you just want enough to be happy and support a family. And some of you picked your major because you knew it had the highest income generation.

What will you do with your money once you get it? What will it take to get it? What do you dream of spending your money on? Is it a new car or a month-long vacation or a new iPhone or a 1,000 pairs of shoes? When I was flipping around the television recently, I saw a woman who was selling \$5000+ dog four-poster doggie beds, and a few owners who had built their dogs their own mansions, with flat screen tvs, internet, sofas and chairs inside. Crazy.

The text before us tonight deals with money. Not only with money. What might God have to say to us from this today? What might he have to say to us as leaders and future leaders?

### ***Leaders – Wholesome Teaching***

Paul tells Timothy to teach and to urge. He is to preach and teach the gospel, the truths of the faith. But he isn't only to do that. He is also to encourage them, or urge them. That means he is to make application of these truths to their lives. He is to get into their lives so he knows what's going on. Preaching isn't only an informational session, designed to teach you things about God. Nor is it only an application session, to urge you to get off your seats and out there to do, do, do. It is both. The gospel spurs us on toward love and good deeds. Our actions and inactions remind us of our need for the gospel.

This is sound, wholesome teaching. This is healthy. It's right and good. We'll come back to exactly what that means.

Sadly, some contradicted this wholesome teaching. Paul uses these words to describe those who oppose the sound teaching – arrogant, ignorant, unhealthy, quibbler, argumentative, jealous, divisive, slanderer, evil, trouble, corrupt, turning their back on truth, showy, greedy. Not a good picture. This isn't where we want to be at all.

And it's all from bad theology. Bad theology brings about these sorts of fruits. If you think all we need to do is live right and nevermind the theology, Paul shows you that the two in fact go hand in hand together. How you think is what you are.

Wright says it's like a person who can't stop talking about the food. You have spent a lot of time cooking a healthy, wholesome good meal and your guest keeps going on about how hot or cold it is, how they had a better meal somewhere else, how their diet won't allow this or that in it, the course doesn't suit them, they'd prefer something a little greener or lighter... and they never will stop.

"The basic gospel teaching and the guidelines for the complex and delicate business of organizing a Christian community which is more than just a churchgoing club, are wholesome and good for people; but there will always be some who don't like it, and who become conceited and incapable of understanding what's going on. Things often end up in

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For this series, I used commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy from Hughes, Stott, Knight, MacArthur, Ryken, and Clinton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

wrangling and arguing about the meaning of particular words – something scholars have to do, of course, in order to understand ancient texts, but not something that ought to become the main element of Christian discourse. Where that kind of squabble becomes the norm, the community breaks down into factions, as people stop trusting one another and imagine that everyone else is stealing a march on them.”<sup>2</sup>

Orthodoxy is healthy. It consists of “sound words.” But heterodoxy is sick. It is the anti-elder, everything that the elders in the church shouldn’t be. Jealous, resentful, abusive, irritable, and depraved. Positively pathological.

What does this mean for us?

We must not major on the minors. We have to give grace to those who disagree with us, which means we sometimes have to know when not to fight. Alexander Whyte writes, “Eschew controversy, my brethren, as you would eschew the entrance to hell itself! Let them have it their own way. Let them talk, let them write, let them correct you, let them traduce you. Let them judge and condemn you, let them slay you. Rather let the truth of God itself suffer than that love suffer. You have not enough of the Divine nature in you to be a controversialist.”<sup>3</sup> I was asked a few years ago if I would be willing to do a public debate on infant vs. believer’s baptism. I quickly said no. I think it’s a valid discussion and one I’d love to have many times. But I don’t need to spend my time debating it, or being known for this or that doctrine only. We need to know not only when to fight for truth, but when not to fight for truth. If everything is of equal importance, then it can easily be true that we will lose our say because no one will listen to us anymore. And we will become the things Paul describes, which basically means unhappy, grumbling people.

On the other side, you need to know what is truly important. We don’t want to boil down the gospel into just a few words and then say that nothing else matters. Perhaps the essentials of the faith are a bit bigger and broader than you think. Perhaps you should devote some time, in a gracious and loving way, to exploring God’s sovereignty, the way the church should be structured and governed, predestination, faith and works, and many more topics. To see them rightly and hold your views graciously is a great thing. [I’d recommend the Westminster Confession and its catechisms as a great place to start.]

For if we use too few words, we can easily fall into error as well. If you say, I believe in Jesus, that is all right and good. But what did this Jesus do? What did he say? Who is he really? Many people believe in Jesus, in fact almost every religion believes in him. So that doesn’t tell us much. We need more words than just Jesus. Do you know what you believe? Do you pursue sound doctrine or are you quarrelsome, arrogant and ignorant? One of the worst things we can be is arrogant *and* ignorant.

We’re not talking about axe murderers here. The evil is never quite that obvious. These are people who are spiritually sick, jealous, malicious, have evil suspicions and persistent collisions. They have rotting minds for they have been robbed of the truth. Do you know anyone like this? Can you see a tendency in your own heart to be this way?

It makes me think of the professor in *A Beautiful Mind*. He was absolutely brilliant. But he caved in on himself, and became deluded. That process took time, but it was deeply rooted in him, destroying himself and his family. He stopped believing the truth, and instead believed his own construction of the truth.

The Bible is the truth. We must believe it and then set our courses from it. In this sense, we should all be spiritual pathologists, able to detect the disease and then combat it. There are diseases out there in the church. Thinking that salvation is by works. Believing we can be good enough for God to like us. Acting like we are sufficient and capable without God. Leaving God out of our decisions. Masking ourselves from hurt, pain and suffering. And many more. The truth shall set us free.

### ***Leaders Care About Money***

Paul makes a transition here: *5 These people always cause trouble. Their minds are corrupt, and they have turned their backs on the truth. To them, a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. 6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth.*

He connects the trouble-makers with money and then moves to talk about wealth, godliness and contentment. This is one of the best texts in the Bible to discuss greed or avarice. One of the seven deadly sins, and one that is actively promoted in America and in the West. Greed is a popular sin, and one we don’t often come down on very hard. Greed is also found in popularity, drive for success and achievement. It’s a wanting of more and more. It’s what we’ve been ingrained to think is successful. In a real way, it is America. You have a problem with this. You are surely greedy. You live in America in 2007. That means you have been bombarded with advertisements over and over again, all of which tap into a lack of contentment with what you have. Ads aren’t only informational. They are very much formational. You have been taught how to think.

Greed has always been a great danger for the church. Religion can be big business. It was in Ephesus in Paul and Timothy’s day. It was throughout the Middle Ages, particularly notable in the sale of indulgences, pieces of paper that would get you or your loved ones out of years of purgatory. The church acquired positions and property until it became rich beyond belief. Titles were bought and sold (simony). Bribes offered for religious “service.” These are some of the practices that needed reforming, and still do.

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<sup>2</sup> Wright, 68

<sup>3</sup> Found in Ryken, 253

If you go to the Christian bookstore, it's amazing at how marketable and profitable Jesus can be. On Christian television, there is money to be made.

It's so easy. We live in a society that loves this, that promotes it. We all want to make more money, and greed is rarely spoken of as a problem. We want to work hard, provide for our families, enjoy our vacations, own quality underwear, drive nice cars, keep up with the latest technologies. Sure. But it may be greed. What checks our greed? How would we see it? As we pursue self-sufficiency, we are moving away from Christ-sufficiency. That's one reason why it's so sneaky and slippery. When does making a living become a nice but greedy person? "The line between want and need or desire and necessity is thin."<sup>4</sup> Desires mimic needs. We need to learn to distinguish them, and to do that we need the Bible and a community.

What is really scary is when the church becomes just another place to get our needs met, instead of being the Biblical community where our needs and wants are challenged. "The church isn't about 'meeting my needs;' the church is also about judging my alleged 'need,' about giving me needs that I would not have had if I had not met Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

Rev. Ryken includes this in his commentary, and it's something I hear in my house from my young children almost every day:

*If I like it, it's mine.*

*If I can take it away from you, it's mine.*

*If I had it awhile ago, it's mine.*

*If I say it's mine, it's mine.*

*If it looks like mine, it's mine.*

*If I say I saw it first, it's mine.*

*If you're having fun with it, it's mine.*

*If you lay down your toy, it's mine.*

*If it is broken, it's yours.*

We want more and more. We never have enough. There is always something else to be gotten. It is a lack of contentment. Ryken also includes this one, which isn't as much about money, but the restlessness of our souls.

*It was Spring, but it was Summer I wanted: the warm days and the great outdoors.*

*It was Summer, but it was Fall I wanted: the colorful leaves and the cool, dry air.*

*It was Fall, but it was Winter I wanted: the beautiful snow and the joy of the holiday season.*

*It was Winter, but it was Spring I wanted: the warmth and the blossoming of nature.*

*I was a child, and it was adulthood I wanted: the freedom and the respect.*

*I was 20, but it was 30 I wanted: the be mature and sophisticated.*

*I was middle-aged, but it was 20 I wanted: the youth and the free spirit.*

*I was retired, but it was middle-aged I wanted: the presence of mind without the limitations.*

*My life was over, and I never got what I wanted.*

Here are some Biblical principles regarding money:<sup>6</sup>

Having money isn't wrong in itself. 2 Samuel 2:7 – The Lord makes poor and rich. Being wealthy is not a sin.

Money is a gift from God. Deut. 8:11-18, God's providence allows you to have money.

Believers must be willing to part with their money if God so requires. Matt 19:27, Job 1:21 – The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the world.

Those who have money must not be given preferential treatment. James 2:1-10

Those with money must not be proud, not seek security from it. 1 Tim 6:17, Proverbs 11:28 – He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.

Believers must never make the pursuit of money the highest goal of their lives. Matt 6:33 – Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

Money must be used for eternal purposes. Luke 16:9

Money must not be loved, selfishly hoarded or indulgently spent. Proverbs 11:24-25, Luke 6:38.

Sacrificial generosity should mark every believer, and the absence of such a perspective reveals that one loves money.

The dangers of loving money are many. Those who love money are more concerned with making it than with honesty or giving a quality effort. Those who love money never have enough. Those who love money tend to flaunt it. They love to wear, drive or live in what money buys. Those who love money resent giving it. They want to use it all for their own gratification. Those who love money will often sin to get it.

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<sup>4</sup> Willimon, *Sinning Like a Christian*, 99

<sup>5</sup> Willimon, 107

<sup>6</sup> From MacArthur's commentary

Paul talks about these things with the images of a snare, a plunge and a pierce. The love of money is a snare, or a trap. It is the sin of greed that makes us continually fall into temptation, looking in directions to make money that we would ordinarily forget about. We are quicker to turn a blind eye from ethical questions, and refuse to think things through. Money takes hold of our hearts and is never ever satiated. It always wants more. Rich people think this way: How much is enough? Just a little more than I have right now.

Not only does it ensnare us in a trap, but it plunges us into trouble. This sounds like drowning or dying in quicksand. We sink and are dragged into the bottom, sucked down to destruction. There is a force to longing to be rich that has a strong power that is irresistible. Like a riptide that sucks you down, you can't get out of it. Or it might be like trying to swim too far. You think you're strong enough, you think you can make it. But you can't. You plunge into darkness.

At Silver Dollar City, my kids especially like the American Plunge, which is a log floom with a pretty good drop that gets everyone wet at the end. That's enough plunging for me.

We aren't just trapped or plunged. We are pierced. This is the worst one and the most graphic. It's the word for impaled. This love for money, this quest for riches leads us away from the faith, which is tragic enough. Then it sets up on a stake and rams the life out of us. Yet we smile. We go for it. It won't happen to me. But it does, friends. It pierces us with many griefs. "Once eager Christians who were leaders in their churches but moved up and out of faith. Beautiful homes but cold hearts. They love money, but their children hate them. In some homes only their familial love for money keeps them together."<sup>7</sup>

Money itself isn't evil. It is neutral. Although it isn't a part of created order, it is like marriage, sex and food, which Paul talked about earlier. Money can be good, very good. It is useful, and we need to have it. But we can't take it with you. Contentment is what we need to pursue. "Contentment is knowing that if I am not satisfied with what I have, I will not be satisfied with what I want, either."<sup>8</sup> Discontentment always thinks about what it lacks. It never ends. And its unrelated with how much you actually have. "Desire – restless, seemingly unquenchable desire – leads us toward some of the best things that we do. It also leads us into some of our worst misery. We want more. The more we have, the more we want."<sup>9</sup>

What then can we say about money in summary?

Have a proper perspective on money. More money won't make you any happier. In fact, if you pursue money, it will destroy you, your life and your faith. It can be a slow killer, to be sure, but it is deadly. Christianity has more to offer – it offers Jesus as the lover of your very soul. The things that truly matter aren't things that money can buy. Forgiveness. Redemption. Love. Acceptance. Grace. The problem then isn't with our desire. It is with the fact that we desire the wrong things. "We attempt to assuage our restless hearts with that which can never fully satisfy. Buddhism hopes to extinguish some of this raging desire. Christianity hopes to enflame it and direct it towards its proper object."<sup>10</sup>

Understand this – what you desire, what you consume, makes you. Jesus said this, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." We say, "The clothes make the man." The things we buy are acquiring us, our hearts, our lives. We need the restraining, directing and channeling of our desires into the proper places or we will become – things. Better, faster, now. But we need to know when enough is enough. That's the way greed works. It makes us. "Greed turns love into lust, leisure into sloth, hunger into gluttony, honor into pride, righteous indignation into envy. If it weren't for greed, we would suffer fewer of the other vices."<sup>11</sup>

Realize that you are rich. We live on a seriously skewed scale. You are in the top 1% of the richest people who have ever lived. It's just that you hang out with the others that live in the top of the top 1% and you forget. You need to go to Peru and see the poverty. Go to Africa and walk around the slums. Then you will be thankful and perhaps stop complaining. See your riches! One of the best things you can do is say thank you. Often. "Meister Eckhart said that if the only prayer you ever pray is 'thank you' then you have prayed enough."<sup>12</sup>

You should live within your means. Don't keep spending and spending. Save up your money to buy what you want. Plan and buy cautiously, not recklessly. Don't rack up ANY credit card debt. Pay it off EVERY month. If you don't have enough in your account, don't buy it. Why are we giving so much money away to the credit card companies? Make a budget and live within its freedom.

Let's role play. We should become a people who can and will say things like this: "Thank you, but I'm now satisfied." And "Yes, we could afford it, but we are not going to buy it, because it does little to contribute to the basic goodness of our lives." Or "No thanks. I've already got more than I can possibly consume already." And "Yes, dear, we could afford it, but we love you so much we don't need to buy you that car." And "We live by a different story than the world, so we're making different choices with our money and time."

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<sup>7</sup> Hughes, 149-150

<sup>8</sup> Ryken

<sup>9</sup> Willimon, 100

<sup>10</sup> Willimon, 101

<sup>11</sup> Willimon, 104, quoting James Ogilvy

<sup>12</sup> Willimon, 105

Another way of saying this is to try to travel light. Some of you have and some of you will do some traveling. If you backpack through Europe, you'll see people weighted down and struggling underneath mammoth backpacks. Some will carry two, one in the front along with the one in back. They are miserable, but they have a ton of stuff with them, just in case. Travel lighter than that. You don't need as much as you think you do. Instead of giving over to upward mobility, seriously pursue downward mobility, for that is the way of the cross. You have to work out exactly what that means. It doesn't mean that you can't own anything. Or that you can't buy clothes that make you look attractive or beautiful. It means that you need to look at your heart and your desires and sort through what they are and where they come from.

One thing it means is that you absolutely must give. It is the thing that helps you the most. Don't wait until you have more to give more. Give now from what you have. Not just time, although time is great to give. You might be able to give more time right now. But still give money. That is the thing we are most greedy with. Giving helps us to get our paws off our money and the money out of our hearts.

William Willimon puts it this way: "Because the Seven, like Greed, tend to burrow down so deep in our everyday lives, tend to infect just about everything that we do, one must begin with seemingly small mundane, daily acts of defiance and resistance. A beginning ought to be made, and one way of attacking Greed where it is most vulnerable is in open-handed, gratuitous giving, practice in the arts of letting go.

In the worship of the church, when the offering plate is passed and we are asked to put our money where our hearts are, when we are asked to take a stand, publicly to say just where we are in regard to the things of this world, this may be one of the most radical, countercultural, defiant acts the church demands of us. Thanks be to God that the church does not expect us to engage the Seven [Deadly Sins] on our own, or we would never have any victories against sin, Greed or any other."<sup>13</sup>

Judas betrayed Jesus for money. Sure, sure, for other reasons too, although the Bible never directly mentions those reasons. We might infer some. But we do know he did it for 30 pieces of silver. Money drove the man to betray the Savior of the world. He plunged into ruin and destruction, and was pierced with man griefs. We are closer to Judas than we think.

Jesus talked to another man about money. We call him the rich young ruler, and he turned away from following Jesus. We don't know what happened to him. But after he left Jesus said something chilling: Luke 18: 24-25 "*How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*"

It's really hard for the wealthy to be Christians. Maybe that's why we see so few on campus. Maybe why that's why it's so hard for us. If you want to be even richer, if you love riches and are pursuing wealth as goal in your life, then you are going to find it hard to walk with God.

So what hope do we have? We are rich. We are wealthy. We are rich young rulers. Will we turn our back on Christ? Why wouldn't we?

The first thing that keeps us from turning away is wholesome teaching. Sound teaching comes from The Bible. Without the Bible we will be lost. We'll make up things. We'll ignore certain teachings and highlight others. We must have sound doctrine, wholesome teaching to live.

Jesus Christ came as man. He was born of a virgin. He came at just the right time. He lived a perfect life, fulfilling every aspect of the law. That is important. Just last night, Pastor Mike Biggs came over to my house to interview my son Drew (who is 8) to see if he could start taking the Lord's Supper in church. Drew did a great job in explaining how Jesus died for us, so that we could gain forgiveness for our sins of commission, the sins we do. But, like most of us, he didn't quite have a handle on what Jesus did for our sins of omission. He lived the perfect life. We don't only get his death as a payment for our sins. We also get his life for us.

That means he wasn't just an ordinary guy. He wasn't only a prophet or good teacher. He did miracles. He was the Son of God. God and man together at the same time. And yes he did die on a cross as a condemned criminal though he was innocent. And yes, he was resurrected – actually, bodily resurrected – to prove he was who he said he was.

And he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

There is a Holy Spirit, and the church matters more than you think.

These are the sound teachings, and we must stand and say we believe them. We have the Apostles Creed as our pledge of allegiance. You must not forget these things, for they are your life. Do not drift away from them, but confess them each and every day.

And what prevents you from the snaring, plunging and piercing? Radical giving. We as Christians should be stingy with our sex and promiscuous with our money instead of the other way around. Give, and ask God to change your heart.

But along with that you must believe the gospel promise that God can do anything, even miracles. That is what Jesus says right after his comment about how hard it is for rich people to be Christians. He says, But with God, all things are possible.

Are you a Christian? Do you believe the sound teachings of the Bible. Have you wandered from the faith? Are you chasing after money and career? Are you in danger?

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<sup>13</sup> Willimon, 112

Believe the gospel. Jesus, not money, is the lover of your soul. Repent and believe, for the kingdom is near. Learn to say this with Paul: Phil. 4:7 *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*