

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy  
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October 3, 2007  
1 Timothy 6:11-21

*11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses. 13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 15 For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.*

*17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.*

*20 Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge. 21 Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness. May God's grace be with you all.*

A few of us are “into” games. Not computer games, but board games, and they’re not the ones you find at Wal-Mart. Look at Boardgamegeek.com and then you’ll see what I’m talking about. We tried the number-three-ranked game – Tigris and Euphrates – this past weekend. One of the interesting parts of the game is how you win. Each person is attempting to get four different colors of victory points throughout the game. But the winner is the one who has the most of the least of his victory points. So if you have 20 red, 20 blue, 20 black and 1 green, you score 1 for your green.

That makes things interesting and also counter-intuitive. Instead of piling it on in whatever aspect of the game you’re excelling in, you have to concentrate on your weakest area and shore it up, since that’s how you win. Greed loses. Humility and hard work in your weakness wins. Hmm, sounds like the gospel.

Paul hits us again with money. He does so in contrasting the previous paragraph about the woes of loving money with this one as he transitions with “But you, Timothy.” And he also fires another shot against the love for money in the second paragraph in this text. We’re going to look at that paragraph first.

### **Money Matters**

Paul closes his letter to Timothy with another warning to the rich. *17 Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.*

Paul is concerned that the rich walk with God, which he has already told us is impossible if they love money. But he doesn’t tell them to divest themselves of the money. He tells them to use it for the good. He doesn’t say the best policy is to go from materialism to asceticism, for money isn’t wrong, nor is being rich. But it’s your attitude about it that matters. Do not be proud and don’t trust in the money.

It’s easy to become proud when you have money. We look around at those who have less than we do and we become arrogant, deluding ourselves into thinking we are better than “they” are. Boris Pasternak, in Dr. Zhivago, writes that wealth “could itself create the illusion of genuine character and originality.” There is an inclination for the well-off to overestimate their own wisdom, and to take themselves too seriously. That was true in Ephesus, and is certainly still so true today.

If you are rich, be rich and humble.

And don’t trust in your money. It is unreliable. I picked up an interesting book last weekend, but I haven’t finished it yet. It’s called: *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*, by Barbara Ehrenreich (she previously wrote

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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.

Nickel and Dimed, which is about blue-collar working and not being able to pay the bills). In the first few pages I noticed this paragraph:

“Stories of white-collar downward mobility cannot be brushed off as easily as accounts of blue-economic woes, which the hard-hearted traditionally blame on ‘bad choices’: failing to get a college degree, for example, failing to postpone childbearing until acquiring a nest egg, or failing to choose affluent parents in the first place. But distressed white-collar people cannot be accused of fecklessness of any kind; they are the ones who ‘did everything right.’ They earned higher degrees, often setting aside their youthful passion for philosophy or music to suffer through dull practical majors like management or finance. In some cases, they were high achievers who ran into trouble precisely because they had risen far enough in the company for their salaries to look like a tempting cost cut. They were losers, in other words, in a classic game of bait and switch. And while blue-collar poverty has become numbingly routine, white-collar unemployment – and the poverty that often results – remains a rude finger in the face of the American dream.”<sup>2</sup>

One woman commented on the furious pace and toll her white-collar job exacts: “If you make the choice to have a home life, you will be ranked and rated at the bottom. I was willing to work the endless hours, come in on weekends, travel to the ends of the earth. I had no hobbies, no outside interests. If I wasn’t involved with the company, I wasn’t anything.”<sup>3</sup>

This is what people in the university are going for. You all want good, white-collar jobs. But don’t seek after them. Don’t idolize them. Don’t trust in them.

Christians should actually pursue downward mobility and live within their means. We don’t trust in our riches, but in God alone to make us right. So we can live on less. We’re giving money away and resisting the American Dream already.

Patty Griffin sings a haunting song<sup>4</sup> about Christina Onassis, the daughter of one of the richest men in the world (and who Jackie Kennedy married after John F. died). When her dad died, she inherited what amounted to one million dollars a week. She would run out of Diet Coke and send a plane to America to pick up a few cases. She would pay for her friends to be around, giving them salaries. And she led a miserable life. Four husbands, and none of them loved her. She died when she was only 37, probably from drugs she had taken almost all her life for dieting. Her only daughter, Athina, inherited all the money and was for a long time considered the richest teenager alive. Her fortune was estimated to be upwards of \$2 billion. She had recently married, and has said she would burn all of the Onassis money if she could.

Put your hope and trust in God, not in riches. God gives us all we need. He is our enjoyment and our contentment. A conscious move away from arrogance to humility, and from hoping in wealth to hoping in God alone, will liberate God’s people to live out the command to be generous.<sup>5</sup>

How can we do this? *18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.*

Trust in God. Use your money to do good, substantive actions. Be rich in good deeds that involve giving. Be generous and willing to share from the hand as well as the heart. Cultivate a kind heart and a generous hand. Paul teaches that wealth is not a sin, but it is a responsibility. Calvin wrote, “A man’s opportunities to do good to others increase with the abundance of his riches.”

We do this because we know that true riches lay ahead and everything else we will leave behind. A billionaire died and two people spoke in hushed tones beside him. “How much did he leave behind?” the first asked, anxious to hear the dollar total. “All of it!” the second said. Experiencing true life means we give our lives, our time and our money away.

Can you do this? Will you seek this? Paul is serious about it. The ethic of money in the Bible runs counter to our American Dream. Will you live according to the Biblical Dream? If so, give, give, give.

### ***Man of God, People of God***

*11 But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses. 13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 15 For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He*

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<sup>2</sup> 2

<sup>3</sup> Fraser, *White Collar Sweatshop*, 158, found in Ehrenreich, 5-6

<sup>4</sup> If you had the real thing how would you tell Liars can say it all just as well Every single word you've heard in vain Baubles of gold, stars in your hair Reflections that told that they were not there And the diamonds on your cheeks have turned to flames And up in the air they would write your name there But love would fall to pieces in the rain Who would know better than you A hundred love letters and none of them true Christina, Christina It's a wondrous world of ridiculous things With nothing so rare as the love that it brings In the silence of a smile that understands A piece of the action, pieces of gold Everyone's paid well and does what they're told For the simple daughter of a simple man And up in the air they would write your name there Their love will fall to pieces in the rain Who would know better than you A hundred love letters and none of them true Christina, Christina Christina, Christina

<sup>5</sup> Hughes, 162

*alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.*

Here at the end of the book, Paul calls Timothy a man of God. This is a high title, and something that we all as leaders should seek. How can we be called a man or a woman of God? Paul tells us here, and gives us ethical, doctrinal and experiential ways to seek and find God in this way. Ethically, we are to flee from evil and pursue goodness. Doctrinally, we are to turn from error and fight for the truth. Experientially, we are to lay hold of the life we already have. There is a balance here for us. We are to pursue all three of these. Truth, goodness and life are set before us as absolute goals.

Some of us fight for truth but neglect holiness. Our lives become passionate wrecks. Others pursue holiness but have no concern for truth. We become legalistic and shallow. Or we can disregard doctrine and ethics in search for religious experience. We become passionate waifs with no substance. The man or woman of God combines all three in a life of faith.

Let's look at Paul's instructions to flee, follow, fight and fasten onto.

### *Flee*

Paul's first instruction is to run away or to flee. We must run away for there are dangers to avoid. When Paul puts it like this: *But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things* he is being serious and showing the absolute contrast between the true and the false ministry of the gospel.<sup>6</sup> Flight is a spiritual strategy

We must flee false teaching, flee controversies, flee divisive talk, flee prosperity gospel. We have to run away from the love of money. This isn't escapism, because we are also going to be told to fight. The difference is we need to know when to run and when to fight.

We have to run away from evil and not away from good things. Don't run away from community, from church, from the gospel, from the Bible. When I someone stops coming around, you should start to wonder. It's often hard to go towards church and community when we aren't doing well, but it's what we need.

We have to run after the right thing and not the wrong things – pleasure, promotion, fame, wealth, power. Flee. This is a powerful and dramatic word. Don't jog away. Don't lollygag away. Don't be casual about it. Run, sprint, take off, flee from evil.

I used to hate running, but I like it now. I get into the groove and knock out a few miles. But I can really slow down in the middle and start to barely shuffle. This is in contrast to my friend Collin Barnes, who motors around the track for 6 miles at a crazy pace. He is running. I am just keeping it going. He is fleeing something, and he might get away. I would get caught. Train for fleeing evil, not for barely making it.

There are no techniques, no secrets and no formulas here. Flee evil. Run from all evil things. What comes to mind for you? What are some things you need to flee from? How might you flee next time? What is your exit strategy?

### *Follow*

*Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.* So we run away. But we also run towards. We don't just activate our flight, but we begin following spiritual virtues. If we don't understand this, we'll run away from one bad thing and into the arms of another bad thing. Instead we need to be replacing the don'ts with the dos. Vice for virtue. This is how we develop a complete Christian character.

Paul gives Timothy three couplets to run towards.

Righteousness and godliness – this means right conduct before God and men and is observable conduct. You can see righteousness and godliness, the second of which is Paul's favorite word. Can people see and tell you're a Christian by the way you talk and live your life? Are you right with God?

Faith and love – these are just what they sound like and are the foundation of Christian virtue. Faithfulness and love for others should be what we follow after. Do you pursue faith? Do you follow love?

Endurance and gentleness – Endurance is a "won't quit" determination in the face of opposition, and gentleness is a tender, patient, self-control in dealing with people in the midst of difficulties. Gentleness is strength under control.

Think of the scariest animal you can. What do you have a phobia about? Snakes? Spiders? What if you turned the corner into your dorm hall and found a rabid, angry rhinoceros up there (never mind how it got there)? How fast would your run away?

Now think if you're on campus and from the distance you saw your favorite friend who goes to another school but was visiting for the weekend, and you saw him coming up the way. How fast would you run toward him?

We run away. We run toward. That is a part of the Christian life (and we traditionally call it the mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit). Or: Q. 35. What is sanctification? A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

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<sup>6</sup> Ryken, 265c

## *Fight*

We run away from. We run toward. Earlier in the book, we were told not to fight useless fights. Now we are told to fight the good fight. *12 Fight the good fight for the true faith.*

There is good and there is evil. There is truth and there is error. Truth is precious, even sacred. Timothy is to fight for the essential apostolic faith that is described as “the truth”, orthodox Christianity. We’ve been talking about this in the book, this theme of truth and doctrine. Doctrine and life go together. Life and doctrine are intimately connected.

This year at OU the theme for homecoming is dynamic duos. All the groups, fraternities and sororities make banners and floats. I saw some for Luigi and Mario in Mario Brothers. I saw Maverick and Goose from Top Gun.

Too bad we didn’t make a float for Doctrine and life. Something tells me that would have been quite a dud on campus though. “Doctrine without life is dead orthodoxy; life without doctrine is reckless faith. But put life together with doctrine – add the ethical to the theological – and you get the light and the heat of authentic Christianity.”<sup>7</sup>

So not only are we to be running, we are to be fighting. This is a military metaphor, but it could also be training. Keep on training and fighting. Jake Spates, the wrestling coach at OU, likes to talk about “battling.” In the third period, you have to want it, you have to fight for it.

Doctrine must be defended, for it is under assault in all ways. It is from the university, from the liberal professors, from our culture and even from our own hearts as we barely understand and believe it.

It is so true that we are to love peace, but if we won’t fight we won’t have peace. This has always been true. If you lack the courage to fight, you will either surrender or be defeated.

What are things worth fighting for?

The Bible – The Bible’s inerrancy, infallibility, and sufficiency as the Word of God.

Deity of Jesus Christ – Jesus of Nazareth was and is fully God and fully human.

Depravity of humanity – All people are born in sin and misery. We are not basically good.

Holiness of God – God will judge the world in righteousness.

Efficacy of substitutionary atonement – Christ died in the place of sinners and there is no other way.

Bodily resurrection – Jesus Christ is the risen Lord. This really happened.

Sovereignty of God’s grace – Salvation is the choice and gift of God, to his praise and glory.

I recently watched the movie “300.” (which has sex and tons and tons of violence, but it is about war so that’s a part of it). The movie centers around the Spartans and the Persians. 300 Spartans took on the million man army of King Xerxes in 480 BC in the Battle of Thermopylae.

Here are the questions the movie asks: When is it time to stand up and fight? When are the forces telling you not to fight doing it from bribes and out of greed? When do soldiers go to war so they’re loved ones can live in peace? How do you have honor, courage and nobility in battle?

We all stand for something. We all need to battle. We all have to live and die for things. What are yours? Do you believe that deeply about Jesus?

Can you stand and say?:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

You must stand and fight. Let’s stand together and confess to the world that we stand for something worth fighting for.

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<sup>7</sup> Ryken, 269

*Fasten onto*

*Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.*

So we flee, follow, fight and we also fasten onto eternal life, take hold of, grasp, he already has it, but he's to grab it for all its worth. We have eternal life, and we hold onto it. This means, in the midst of the fight, you have to remember there will be an end to the war. War can last a long, long time, but it will come to an end and there will be peace.

Timothy confessed this at his ordination and baptism, and so do we. Some of you need to get baptized for the first time. You will stand before the church and do something very important. You will tell the world that you believe the gospel and submit to its claims on your life. You do this when you join a church, when you stand before the world and take vows. That's not something you do often in life (marriage comes to mind), and it means something.

Then, when things get rough, you remember. You hold onto. A friend of mine is having a hard time right now and she has gotten to the point where she has realized that she only has Jesus to hold onto. "But what when you can't hold onto him?" she asked. Of course he is holding onto her, but that's what she isn't seeing. I told her she needs to hold onto people who are holding onto Jesus.

You fasten yourself to the ship and ride out the storm. You cling to your faith, your vows, your church, your baptism and you don't let go.

Paul finishes this action-packed paragraph with this: *13 And I charge you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, 14 that you obey this command without wavering. Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. 15 For at just the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. 16 He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No human eye has ever seen him, nor ever will. All honor and power to him forever! Amen.*

As Timothy leads this active life of a leader, he has several things to keep in mind. He can remember the awesome witnesses of God and Jesus, both of whom encourage him to stand strong and give his testimony. Jesus' presence and his example of word and deed are to embolden Timothy.

Timothy has an awesome charge to keep pressing on until our Lord Jesus comes again, which will be at just the right time. No one but God knows when this will be, but it is definite. I think it will happen when the last person whose name is written on the Book of Life becomes a Christian. But hey, I don't know when that is. I just know Jesus is coming back and it will be amazing.

Timothy also has an awesome benediction. That is a blessing from Paul. The blessing reminds Timothy that behind him is God's absolute sovereignty, his creator power, his holiness and purity and his power. That packs a punch.

These are subversive claims especially against the Roman world. The Romans were experts at organizing great royal displays. And since the emperor was considered a god, these events would also be considered moments of divine revelation. A spectacular moment of divine revelation is called an epiphany. Paul robs the Romans of this and says that someday the ultimate epiphany will happen. Jesus will be revealed by God and called the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords.

Not Xerxes. Not Zeus. Not Julius Caesar. Not money. Jesus Christ of Nazareth. "When you follow King Jesus you are enlisting in the service of the One True God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the ultimate sovereign. The appearing of his son is the only royal appearing that will ultimately count."<sup>8</sup>

There it is. 1 Timothy.

*20 Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge. 21 Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness.*

*May God's grace be with you all.*

Paul finishes by telling leader Timothy to guard the deposit that God has entrusted to him. People will fall away. People will want him to get into godless, foolish discussions. But he is to guard the life and doctrine of faith.

Timothy isn't to come up with new theology. He isn't to teach new and novel approaches. He is to hold fast to the truth, the ancient ways of the faith. You should care about old things. New things are cool, but old things have a certain mystery about them. Walk into an ancient cathedral and it will take your breath away in a way a modern skyscraper just can't.

Too often we seek to be culturally relevant. We want to connect with the people. And, if we cater too much to that, we wander from the truth. There might be some truth in there. But not much. We stray from the Bible, or use it for our own devices. Leaders should cast and hold the vision. Christian leaders walk in the ways of the leaders before them.

You can be a Christian leader. You are a Christian leader.

People of God, may God's grace be with you all.

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<sup>8</sup> Wright, 74

