

## 1-2 Timothy – 1 Timothy 6:11-21

### Review

Last time, we saw that Paul – having completed his detailed instructions for Timothy’s pastoral ministry at Ephesus – began summarizing some general exhortation for Timothy. He began with yet another warning about false teaching – particularly concerning those who were preaching false gospels as a means of earthly gain. In this we saw that this “fleecing of the flock” that’s so common today was already present in the early Church. We then discussed the idea that true contentment isn’t a prize to be sought, but is found along our journey through life in our personal relationship with our Lord. Finally, we talked about the trap and the danger of coveting earthly possessions.

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Let’s continue our study of 1 Timothy now, looking at Paul’s final, general instruction and encouragement for his protégé.

***<sup>11</sup>But as for you, O man of God, flee these things*** [false teaching & lust for money].

***Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.***

***<sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*** 1 Timothy 6:11-12 (ESV)

Of course, this general admonition is valid not just for Timothy, but for all of us who call ourselves Christians. We must not consider our salvation in Christ with an attitude of “I’ve got mine, so I’m good.” Most certainly, our salvation was sealed in Christ the moment we believed Jesus’ Gospel and determined to submit ourselves to His lordship over our hearts and lives. But our justification in Christ was just the beginning of His work of sanctification within us. With Timothy, we are called to seize the eternal life He has given us not for the purpose of just holding it to ourselves, but to honor Him through our service for others and our proclamation of His Gospel to any who will hear.

I must admit I am a little envious of Paul and those witnesses he mentions who were present to hear Timothy’s confession of faith unto salvation and his further testimony during his travels with Paul. What a glorious work God does in those moments.

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***<sup>13</sup>I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, <sup>14</sup>to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup>who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*** 1 Timothy 6:13-16 (ESV)

Jesus’ very purpose in coming to our world in the flesh of a man was to demonstrate for us how God desires for us to live. He calls us by His Spirit to come to Him with open hearts of belief in His Gospel, but then we are to follow Him, not just rest assured in our redemption out of death. He Himself demonstrated the commitment He desires from us – to boldly proclaim His Gospel to all who will hear – in His confession before Pilate that Paul speaks of here.

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***33So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” 35Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” 36Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” 37Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”*** John 18:33-37 (ESV)

Sadly, Pilate didn't take Jesus' message to heart insofar as we know from God's Word. Like far too many to whom the Gospel is preached, Pilate couldn't face up to the stark choice Jesus laid before him. Instead, he feebly attempted to divert attention away from the real issue by mumbling a question to which even he didn't really want to hear an honest answer – “***What is truth?***” Nevertheless, Jesus persisted in preaching the Gospel to the very person God used to condemn Him to the cross. Even with the full knowledge that He would be required on that very afternoon to give up His life for the sake of His Gospel, Jesus continued to remain true to the “***good confession***” of faith in His Gospel, continuing to proclaim His testimony to the criminals crucified beside Him right up to the very moment of His death.

This is the faithful proclamation of our Gospel belief in the face of imminent danger that Paul calls on Timothy to continue with here in 1 Timothy 6:14. Most Christians alive in America and Europe today will likely never be called upon to die for the sake of our Gospel confession, although some of us certainly will, just like our brothers and sisters in places like Pakistan and North Korea. Perhaps, if we survive long enough and Jesus doesn't return to call His Church to Himself in the meantime, we too will be called upon to give “***the last full measure of devotion***” to our confession of faith. Paul encourages us here in this passage to harden our resolve to remain true to our calling even if it means giving our own lives in the process. Jesus offered us both a warning and His encouragement about this when He sent His apostles out to proclaim His Gospel.

***17Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, 18and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. 19When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, 22and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved*** [σῶζω sōzō]. Matthew 10:17-22 (ESV)

We've looked at the Greek word σῶζω sōzō which is translated “saved” in Matthew 10:22 before. Remember that it can mean rescue out of earthly travails, not just eternal salvation in Christ as we normally think of when we encounter the English translation of the Greek word – “saved” – in our study of God's Word. So here in the context of this passage, Jesus isn't implying we need to endure to the end of various tribulations in order to be rescued out of death in our sins. Jesus has already

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ensured our eternal rescue and glorification through His own shed blood on the cross. But as He also warned us, although our eternal salvation is secure, we will still experience tribulation in this world. In the particular context of Matthew 10:17-22, He was warning His apostles about the persecution they would face during the missions on which He was about to send them. In Matthew 10:22 He assured them that they would be rescued out of those troubles when they returned from the journey.

In the beginning of 1 Timothy 6:15, Paul reminds us that God's timing in fulfilling His promises is His own – ordained by Him before the foundation of the world. It is up to us to be ready and eager for His reappearance whenever that might be. Many Bible passages reiterate this Truth. In the first century church of Paul and Timothy, anticipation of Jesus' imminent return was fervent. Yet as time passed even up to today, many have lost that fervor. Peter wrote of this loss of zeal right around the same time that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. We tend to focus on just a few verses of Peter's admonition, but it is worthy of broader consideration.

***<sup>1</sup>This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, <sup>2</sup>that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, <sup>3</sup>knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." <sup>5</sup>For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, <sup>6</sup>and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. <sup>7</sup>But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.***

***<sup>8</sup>But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.***

**<sup>2</sup> Peter 3:1-10 (ESV)**

Peter's point is the same as Paul's – While God's appointed time for Jesus' return is uncertain, He will without any doubt fulfill this promise at the time He has ordained since before even time itself ever existed. In the meantime, we must "***keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach.***"

In the latter part of verse 15 and in verse 16, we find a straightforward declaration of the deity of Jesus – God the Son. I find Paul's statement in verse 16 that no man has seen or can see Jesus in His unapproachable glory very intriguing. In Exodus 33, when Moses asked God to show him His glory, God made this same point very clear saying, "...man shall not see me and live." Knowing this, when Isaiah saw the Lord seated on His throne, he cried out in despair, saying...

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**5...“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”** Isaiah 6:5b (ESV)

Recall that Paul himself (then known as Saul of Tarsus) was blinded by the glory of Jesus on the Damascus road the day He called Paul into ministry.

**3As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” 5And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”** Acts 9:3-5 (NKJV)

In this case, Saul heard the voice of Jesus, but did not see His glorified body. Yet even the glory surrounding Jesus manifested to Saul as a light from heaven was enough to blind him for several days.

In our present human bodies, we cannot look on the glory of God. This is because God cannot allow our sinfulness in His presence. God must eliminate our sinful nature through the death of our mortal bodies before we may enter into His presence and behold Him at last in His full glory. Nevertheless, there are some examples in His Word, where we find God allowing selected people to experience a glimpse of His glory. For example, God shielded Moses’ face from His glory, and then allowed Moses to look on the place where His glory had passed by. Afterward, Moses’ face was visibly aglow so all the Israelites knew that Moses had been in the presence of God. In Isaiah’s case, God sent an angel to touch his lips with a coal from Heaven’s altar so that Isaiah’s unclean lips would be purged of their uncleanness, and he would then be able to look on God’s glory without dying.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus allowed Peter, John, and James to see a very briefly glimpse His glory. Despite their own sinfulness, He chose to show them His glory temporarily, but they did not die. Later when John was exiled on the island of Patmos, he was shown a vision of God on His Heavenly throne and the Lamb who appeared as if He had been slain. John’s vision is strikingly similar to Isaiah’s and the vision reported by Ezekiel in chapter 1 of his prophecy. In revealing Himself to selected people at selected times, God sometimes changes us to allow it as when the angel cleansed Isaiah’s lips. Most often though, God subdues His own glory to allow us to experience Him. The primary example of course is Jesus – God the Son’s incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth born in human flesh to the virgin Mary. Paul tells us that He “humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death” (Philippians 2:8) so that in His humility, we might partake of His full glory for all eternity because He has purged our sin that prevented us from entering into His glory by taking our rightful death upon Himself on the cross.

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**17As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.** 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV)

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In these last few verses of the letter, I get the sense that Paul was in a hurry to get it written and sent out. He seems to jump back and forth with things he wants to tell his beloved spiritual son as if saying between the lines, “Oh yeah. I almost forgot.”

Last time, we saw in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 Paul’s dire warning about the temptation to lust after earthly wealth. Remember he said that this “*love of money is the root of all kinds of evil*” and a trap which can draw us away from faith.

**NOTE** – Before we move on, we need to make very clear that even the love of money can’t cause us to lose our salvation which is sealed by God’s Spirit dwelling within us until He raises us up at the last day. This pearl of immeasurable price has been purchased for us by the very blood of God the Son. There is no power except His that can break that seal, and He will never do it. Nevertheless, greed can render us useless to Him in the service of His kingdom. Even worse, it can cause those who do not yet know Him as their Lord and Savior to be disgusted by our hypocrisy and turn a deaf ear to the preaching of Jesus Gospel. Thus, our sinful lust for earthly gain can endanger the mortal souls of our lost fellow creatures.

Now here in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul remembers to tell Timothy what he didn’t say in that earlier passage. It is not earthly wealth that is the problem, but our lust for it that brings about these great evils. Indeed, money and other earthly blessings can be powerful forces for good – particularly in sending forth the good news of Jesus’ Gospel into a lost and dying world. Earlier in this letter, Paul mentioned that Gospel ministers should be allowed to make a modest living from the preaching of God’s word saying, “*the laborer deserves his wages.*” Of course, that immediately raises the question – where do those wages come from? Paul tells us here in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

The first and most important thing to note regarding earthly riches is that they are gifts from God. If we are blessed with riches, it is because we have been given them by God for His specific purposes. In fact, God has merely entrusted us with stewardship of *His* riches. They are not our own. James put this concept very simply.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

James 1:17 (NKJV)

Thus, Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 6:17 that we are not to be prideful about the gifts God has given to us – deceiving ourselves into thinking we are somehow deserving of them due to our own efforts and skills. Even those very skills are gifts from God, and nothing of ourselves. Nor are we to rely upon God’s worldly blessings and set our hopes on them. After all, the Lord has given them to us, and He can just as easily take them away in service of His good and unknowable purposes. Paul wrote earlier in the letter that “*godliness with contentment is great gain.*” We must rejoice in the things that God has given us – most importantly of course our eternal salvation in Christ Jesus. It is our relationship with the living God and the eternal life in His glorious presence that we should pursue while we may, not the fleeting blessings of this earthly life.

**ASIDE** – The great folly of the so-called “Prosperity Gospel,” foisted upon the ignorant, greedy, and gullible by even greedier ravenous wolves coming in sheep’s clothing, is the false premise that God’s blessings are given to us because He wants to bless us and “make us happy” in response to our faith and the sowing of our wealth into the “ministry” of these heartless and godless charlatans. God does not bless us with worldly goods to “make us happy.” Far from it. Worldly riches most often bring

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sorrow and stress – not godly contentment. Furthermore, God’s purposes in bestowing earthly blessings are His own – totally unknowable. They are not for our benefit, but for the benefit of those in need, and for the sake of His Name and His Gospel.



**WARNING** – The primary reason the prosperity gospel preachers become fabulously wealthy is the greed and willful ignorance of their followers, not their own greed alone. In the immortal words of Pogo – ***“We have met the enemy and he is us.”***

Paul tells us here in 1 Timothy 6:18 that we are to use the blessings God gives us to serve God by serving other people in need. The specific context here speaks of our monetary blessings, but of course the same principle applies to the spiritual gifts that

God bestows upon us. He has given us these blessings for His own purposes. We are not to hoard them for ourselves, but rather generously share them with those around us. If we deny this calling, God can certainly withdraw the blessings from us and give them to others to accomplish His purposes. Jesus spoke of this in His Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

In 1 Timothy 6:19 Paul writes that by richly blessing others in sharing the earthly blessings God has given to us, we lay up eternal heavenly treasure for ourselves – reminding us of what Jesus Himself taught in His Sermon on the Mount.

***19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)***

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***20O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” 21for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. 1 Timothy 6:20-21a (ESV)***

The deposit to which Paul refers here is two-fold. First God had entrusted Timothy with leadership of the young church at Ephesus that he and Paul had established about a decade prior. But more importantly, God had entrusted Timothy as He does us with the knowledge of the Truth of Jesus Gospel – given to us by the conviction of God’s Spirit speaking to us and sealed by God’s Spirit dwelling within us.

In closing, Paul warns one last time about the false teaching that had sprung up throughout all the ancient churches including the church at Ephesus. Specifically, I believe Paul is warning here about Gnosticism that emphasizes special “personal” knowledge and spiritual experience of God over objective truth given by God to everyone in His Word.

**CAUTION** – Despite this warning, we must not discount personal mystical experience altogether. Instead, we must strive to ***“test the spirits to see whether they are from God”*** as John urged in 1 John 4:1. How do we do that? We must compare our personal spiritual experience with God’s written word just as the Bereans did with the preaching of Paul and Silas. If they do not agree, our

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personal spiritual “enlightenment” must be rejected in favor of what we find in God’s Word. Be very wary of anyone coming to you with a “new” way of understanding the Holy Scripture. They are quite likely wolves in sheep’s clothing seeking only to kill, steal, and devour.

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*21...Grace be with you.* 1 Timothy 6: 21b (ESV)

There is something quite interesting about this simple farewell. The Greek word translated as “*you*” here at the end of this letter is in the plural form grammatically. It is an unfortunate shortcoming of the English language that our grammar doesn’t distinguish between the plural and singular forms of the second person pronouns. Perhaps we need a “Southern Version” of the Bible which would render the “*you*” in this verse as “y’all.”

All kidding aside, though. This is an important tidbit in the text. Paul clearly intended for Timothy to share this letter – with his own flock at the very least, and possibly with the entire world as he did.

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### Looking Ahead

With that we have concluded our study of 1 Timothy. Hopefully, we can continue with a study of 2 Timothy some time but not immediately. Instead, we’ll take a short time to relax in fellowship before taking up our studies again.