

Run the Race! Fight the Fight!

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[0 : 00] So last Sunday we heard Jesus speaking to us through Paul about money and greed and contentment.

And he warned about how many false teachers are in it for the money. They see godliness being devoted to God as a means and not an end.

They see it as a way to make an easy buck. But no, says Jesus, being devoted to God with contentment is great gain.

Life is not about how much we have, whether money or possessions. And death will someday separate us from all our material things.

And so we should seek to be content with what we have, to be content with the basics like food and clothing. And we heard Jesus give us this very sober warning last Sunday about what greed and the love of money leads to in the lives of people.

[1 : 06] It leads to temptation. It leads to entrapment. It leads to us doing stupid and foolish things. It leads to harm. And if we continue to scratch that itch of greed, it eventually plunges us into ruin and destruction.

It ruins and destroys lives, marriages, families. Not only does it bring guilt upon us because it opens the door to all kinds of evil, but the eagerness for money and the eagerness to get more stuff has even led some people to wander away from their faith in Jesus.

It's the source of many problems and countless griefs. That was last Sunday. Now we pick up the words of Christ in verse 11 of chapter 6.

But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

[2 : 28] In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time.

God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and might forever.

Amen. Amen. So in this passage, Christ sets before us four contrasting commands. First, we are told to look at the damage and destruction that greed and the love of money has caused in people's lives.

And so flee, pursue, fight, and take hold of. We hear these four contrasting commands from Jesus through Paul in verses 11 and 12.

Then in verses 13 and 14, we again hear the Apostle Paul call both God and Jesus as witnesses to this charge, to these commands that he's giving to Timothy, which Timothy is to keep until the return of Christ.

[4 : 00] And then the third piece there in verses 15 and 16, we hear Paul revel in the holiness of God in comparison to all others and give God praise.

So let's begin by looking at these four commands that Christ gives, not just to Timothy, but to all of us. Verse 11, But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

So first, look at the damage and destruction that greed and the love of money has caused in people's lives. But you, Timothy, says Paul, don't follow that path.

Be the man of God that you are. Not like these false teachers who fake devotion to God. No. You, Timothy, be God's man and flee from all this.

Run away from greed and the love of money. This word flee is really strong. It's the word fugo from which we get our English word fugitive.

[5 : 18] It means to escape from potential danger or damage. And so the ruining effects of greed are not hypothetical. They're real.

Escape those damaging effects. Run away from those soul-shrinking seductions, Timothy. Wake up to the reality of the danger and run for your life from these things.

Flee from all this, says Jesus. How do we run from greed? How do we run from a desire that's in our hearts?

Well, we first need to acknowledge that it's there. We first need to confess it to God and seek His forgiveness. And then we need to vigorously shun and ignore that desire.

We need to make war on that desire. We need to kill that desire. The desire for more, more, more. So practically, what does that look like?

[6 : 28] I mean, unless we know we have need of something from that store, we need to chuck that flyer in the recycling bin. Why even read it? Skip that advertisement on the screen, if possible.

As you hear that sales pitch on the radio or on the screen, and you hear that little voice rising up saying, yes, wouldn't it be nice to have a new, a better fill-in-the-blank?

That will make you happy. We need to shout back. I have the Lord Jesus Christ, and being devoted to Him with contentment is great gain.

We need to shout back. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Now, I don't know what you guys do in your houses, but one of the things that we do in our house when we're watching TV, both as a family or just me and Jen, when the advertisement comes on, sometimes I just can't help myself, and I have to just start saying out loud the underlying message that's in the ad.

I'm going to give you a little example. I'm going to give you a little secret.

[7 : 56] Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Let's go. She's up.

Wow, wow. Jump it down and I'll pick it up. Wow, wow. Wow, wow. Jump it down and I'll pick it up. Wow, wow, wow. Are you bored?

The new iPhone 15 will put the wow back into your life. Are you still carrying one of those old phones around with less features? Then you're missing out.

Get the new iPhone 15 that comes with dynamic island, 48 megapixel camera, two times telephoto zoom lens, all day battery life. Because we've never had that before.

This phone is sure to please you. It'll make others go wow when they see that you have it. It'll bring wow to you in all that you do.

[9 : 03] Whether it's just sitting there on the table at home looking good. Or helping you listen to music as you go for a walk in the rain. Or helping you capture and relive your favorite moments.

It'll wow you with its ability to remind you of important deadlines. It'll wow you by how it enables you to connect. The iPhone 15 is your best traveling companion wherever you go.

Get some wow in your life. You know what else will make you go wow? The price tag. This phone is about \$1,200.

And another wow. \$1,200 only gets you this much storage on that thing. For all those high-res photos and videos. So you're going to be needing an upgrade in no time. Maybe I should get a little bit more storage right off the get-go.

And now we're talking \$1,300 or even \$1,600. And what else will make you go wow? If you get the 15 Pro or the Pro Max. You can spend up to \$2,500.

[10 : 09] Depending on how much storage you choose. And the ultimate wow. You might find out that your device has an issue with overheating. As these models have been prone to do.

Becoming too hot to handle. But it's not our fault says Apple. It's the fault of how people are writing the software that runs on these things. Wow indeed. \$1,200.

\$1,200. Is enough to sponsor a child. And provide the basics for them. And regular gospel opportunities for that child. Through Compassion Canada.

For two whole years. Maybe I can do with a little less wow. In my life. For that. Flee from all this.

Says Jesus. Don't just tolerate greed. Don't give it even a little place. In your life. Run away from it. One of the things I'll confess right now to all of you.

[11:08] That I was convicted. Reading through these words. These past two weeks. Because there's been a number of times in the past year. Where I've gone boredom shopping. Or escape shopping.

In a moment where I'm bored. Or just want to escape. I've scrolled on Amazon. I've made a trip to the store. Usually I needed at least one thing there.

But then I've lingered. And I've walked the aisles. What else can I buy? While I'm here. Ooh. That looks nice. And it's on sale.

I already have one of those. But this one's better. Now praise the Lord. Oftentimes when I've done that. Though I regret the time wasted. I've left the store.

I've left the website with nothing. I felt the battle in me. And I fought against it. But to my regret. Sometimes in the past year. I gave in. I bought things just to scratch the itch.

[12:14] I let greed fester in my heart. I'll give you an example. When the last fastening clip on my ratchet set case broke.

I found myself spending a lot of time looking at ratchet sets. It bothered me that that clip was broken. I gave in to greed.

I bought a brand new one. It was such a good sale. Hundreds of dollars off at Canadian Tire. And guess what? After using it quite a few times.

I realized that it was just a stupid waste of money. I realized why I had really done it. The new one is irritatingly difficult to open the case. And every socket inside is pinched in so tightly.

That it drives me crazy just trying to get them out. Turns out my old ratchet set was better. Even with the broken case. All of that was a waste of time.

[13:17] And a waste of money. And it could have been avoided altogether. If I had just been content with the good thing. That God had already given me. Praise God. That when we confess our sins.

He is faithful. And just. And will forgive us our sins. And cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so if the only reason we're going to the store.

Or to the Amazon website. Is to escape. Or because we're bored. We need to run away. Flee from all this. Go for a drive in the country instead.

Spend time praying for the desperate needs of others instead. There's Israeli hostages in Gaza. And here I am. Preoccupied with getting a slightly better whatever.

Flee from all this. And pursue righteousness. Godliness. Faith.

[14:17] Love. Endurance. And gentleness. So it's not just run away and avoid. It's run away from these things. Greed and the love of money.

And run after. Run toward these things. And the word there again is very strong. Pursue.

Just like the word flee. It implies running. Moving decisively. With intentionality toward these things. And. If you look closely at these things.

You realize. There's no in between. It's run from. Run to. There's no passive Christianity. There's no just. Put your feet up and coast.

And relax. It's. It's all running. Running away from these things. Running to. These things. Seeking these things. Go after them. And so if you think you're living the Christian life.

[15:20] Just because you're not doing the bad stuff. Think again. Christ. Commands us. To pursue. These things.

To pursue them. To go after them. So what are these things that we're to pursue? First of all. Pursue. Righteousness.

Now this word is used in a couple different ways in the New Testament. And we need to be careful to understand which way is meant. The first meaning of righteousness is a right standing with God. That God gives to us as a gift. By faith. And not by works. That's one meaning. But it's not the meaning used here.

The other meaning has to do with how we live. The resulting fruit of our faith in Jesus is a righteous life. Where we do good works.

[16:18] We do things that are right. Rather than things that are wrong. This is the meaning of Paul here. Pursue righteous living. Is what he means. Vigorously go after the right thing.

In any. In every situation. Set yourself to doing what's right. Go after it. We're to pursue godliness. We've already looked at this word a few times. It means being devoted to God. So don't just wait for that to happen. Go after it. Pursue that.

Run towards him. He says pursue faith. Faith is not just a thing that we have at the beginning. When we get saved. And then once we're saved we're kind of good to go. We don't need to worry about faith anymore. Faith is something we must maintain. It's a relational thing.

[17:17] It's about trust. An ongoing trust between us and Jesus. Between us and God. Don't let go of that. Don't let it diminish. Run after it.

Get more of it. And how do we get more? How do we deepen our faith? Romans 10.17 Faith comes by hearing the word of God.

And other passages tell us that faith comes as God's gift. So we need to pray. We need to ask God for more. As one man who the Lord Jesus spoke with said.

Lord. Lord. I believe. Help me. In my unbelief. Pursue faith. Pursue love.

Are you a loving person? Are you a loving person? Would your family say that you're a loving person? Or your friends?

[18:18] If not. That's a problem. Jesus said that everyone will know that we are his disciples. If we love one another. He said a new command I give you.

Love one another. As I have loved you. So you must love one another. This is to be one of the foremost fruits. Of our faith. The apostle John wrote in his letter.

That if you do not have love for your brother. Or your sister. Then you cannot love God. First John 4 verse 20. Anyone who loves God.

Must also love their brother. Or sister. Said John. And so love is commanded. Love is to be. A primary fruit in our lives.

It's a fruit that God's spirit produces in us. Galatians 5 verse 22. Without love our faith is worthless. Said Paul to the Corinthians.

[19:20] 1 Corinthians 13. And here from Paul to Timothy. We learn that love is not always automatic. Or easy. Or default.

We must pursue it. Go after it. We must choose it. Even though it may be exceedingly difficult at times. We're to pursue endurance.

Pursue endurance. Says Jesus. Don't give up. When things get difficult. And they do. And they will at times. And sometimes that difficulty doesn't seem to let up.

We must press on. Pursuing. Running after endurance. Or perseverance. Following Christ has the feels of a difficult marathon at times.

We feel the ache. We feel like we're in agony. We feel like we're out of breath. And we just can't go on. But run. Says Jesus.

[20:23] Don't stop. Chase after perseverance. And steadfastness. Steadfastness. And lastly. Pursue gentleness. I love this one.

Paul uses a vigorous verb like pursue. To describe how we're to be mild. Tender. Soft. This is beautiful.

This really does illustrate the true experience of the Christian life. There is a noble fight and struggle. But we're not fighting to be violent. We're not fighting to be violent.

Or harsh. Or argumentative. But to be self-controlled. To be loving. To be respectful. To be gentle. Gentleness is not just a personality trait that some have and others do not.

Every Christian. Every follower of Christ is called to pursue gentleness. For some who are timid or afraid of others or are people pleasers.

[21:27] Gentleness might seem to come easier. Maybe they have some other things that they need to work on. Like courage. Or boldness. But for most of us, gentleness doesn't come easily.

Especially when someone says something that gets under our skin. Or does something that irritates us. And especially in that hour right before supper.

When we're feeling hungry. We are called by Christ to pursue. To run after gentleness. A gentleness that characterizes everything.

Our actions. Our words. We're called to speak the truth. Yes, but to do so in love. This too is a fruit of the spirit.

Something that God must work in us. And at the same time. It's something that we must make every effort to do. And to be. So this is his first point here.

[22:30] Look at the damage and the destruction. That greed and the love of money has caused in people's lives. But you, Timothy. Run away from all these things. And run toward these things.

Pursue these things. Get these things. Righteousness. Devotion to God. Faith. Love. Perseverance. And gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Says Paul. These are precious words to me. Do you ever wonder. Why does following Jesus seem so difficult at times?

Why is there always this battle going on inside of me? I mean if I have God's spirit living in me. Shouldn't it all these things just flow out of me. Automatically.

Naturally. Easily. Without any effort. And so these words. Of Paul are a great comfort to me. He says fight the good fight of the faith. Faith. Following Jesus is not easy.

[23 : 35] Being a loving and gentle person is not automatic. Being fully devoted to God. And doing what's right are a struggle. But that's normal. Living as a follower of Jesus is a lifelong fight.

But it's the good fight. Fight the good fight. It's the noble fight. Again. There's not much room for passivity here.

If we're not fighting the good fight. What's happening to us? We're compromising. We're drifting away. We're losing the battle. Fight.

Says Paul. And take hold. Of the eternal life. To which you were called. When you made your good confession. In the presence of many witnesses. This is the gospel.

The good news of Jesus. He proclaimed. That God is giving sinners like you and me. A gracious. Undeserved gift. Eternal life.

[24 : 44] Life that lasts forever. Resurrection from the dead. And it's a free gift. And it's a free gift. To anyone. Who believes in his name.

Listen again to these words of Jesus. From John chapter 6. Verse 40. Jesus said. For my father's will. Is that everyone who looks to the son. And believes in him. Shall have eternal life. And I will raise them up. At the last day. So what is Paul doing here? He's reminding Timothy.

Of the end prize. The sure promise. Of Jesus. To his people. Why run a difficult marathon like this? Why fight a difficult fight like this? Why go to all this trouble? Why not just take it easy? Because at the end of it all. There is a sure. And great.

[25 : 39] Reward. And hope. There is a promised land. Flowing with milk and honey. Eternal life. In the kingdom. Of Christ Jesus. When he returns.

So don't shrink back Timothy. Don't take it easy. Don't just take the path of. Least resistance. Don't settle for the mirage. Of bare minimum Christianity. Take hold of that eternal life.

To which you were called. When you first made that good confession. Years ago. I think Paul is referring to the day. That Timothy first. Publicly professed. Faith in Jesus.

As his Messiah. And King. And Lord. And it's interesting. How Paul points him back to that day. That he began his race. And fight.

It's like he's saying. The good news of Jesus. Was so good. Back then. And it still is good today. Timothy. Don't give up. Don't stop running.

[26 : 36] Don't stop fighting. This good fight. Of the faith. Paul then adds. To the seriousness. Of all this. He says. Listen Timothy.

God is watching. He's watching. Even now. As I pen these words. On the parchment. He's watching. As you read these words. Off of the parchment.

He is my witness. The Lord Jesus. Is my witness. I give you this charge. Do these things. That I've commanded. Flee these things.

Pursue these things. Fight the good fight. I charge you. Do these things. And God is watching. To see that you do it. Do these things.

Keep this command. Without spot. Or blame. Until the appearing. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. How long do we have to run this race? How long do we have to fight.

[27 : 33] This fight. Until King Jesus. Appears. Which for Timothy. And for many. After. Means till the day that we die.

If he hasn't returned yet. Paul says. Keep these commands. Without spot. Or blame. And there's a couple ways. To take that. I mean. It could mean.

Strive to obey. Perfectly. But given the nature. Of these commands. Which implies. Struggle. And at least. Some sort of. Failing along the way. I think Paul means very simply.

Do your very best. With Jesus return in mind. Give it all you've got. Right to the end. This made me.

Reflect back to. When I was younger. I used to be a sprinter. When I was a teenager. I was in the Track and field club. In Regina. And I used to love running.

[28 : 28] At track meets. And God gifted me. With some quick reflexes. And some speed. Lead. Compared to many of my peers. I was able to get off. The start line first.

Many times. And get a significant lead. But in my early races. I had this tendency. Where if I was in the lead. I would begin to slow down. Before I got to the finish line.

Feeling like. I just needed to get. To the line. And I remember my coaches. Explaining to me. That you know. The track meets. Going to be a lot harder. There's going to be.

Some faster guys there. And you need to run. At your top most speed. Until after. You've crossed the line. You need to cross that line. At full speed. You need to run this race.

As if. The race goes beyond that line. Because if you ease off early. Some of those other guys. Who are slower off the blocks. But faster than you.

[29 : 22] Are going to catch you. And pass you. When it comes to the Christian life. Are we easing off. And just trying to get to the line.

Or have we got our sights. Set beyond. On the Lord Jesus Christ. And his return. None of us. Can or will.

Run this race. Or fight this fight. Perfectly. But give it. Your very best. Give it all you've got. Right to the very end. God is watching us right now.

Jesus is watching us right now. Paul. Gave this charge to Timothy. And I want to give this charge to you. In the sight of God.

And of Christ Jesus. Keep these commands. Give it all you've got. Right to the day. That he returns. Flee. Greed.

[30 : 21] And the love of money. Pursue. All these good things. Righteousness. Faith. Love. Gentleness. And do it until he comes. At this point.

Paul now. Goes down a bit of a rabbit trail. A Holy Spirit inspired rabbit trail. He gets thinking about that day himself. And Jesus returning.

And it leads him to reflect again. On who God is. And give him praise. He says. That Jesus. Will. Appear. His appearance will come.

God will bring that about. In his own time. And then he just goes into this. God. The blessed and only ruler. The king of kings. And lord of lords. I love this.

Paul reflects. On how. Whatever kings or rulers. Or lords. There may be here on earth. Jesus is one of a kind.

[31 : 22] Above them all. King over the kings. All of them. Lord over the lords. The only ruler. He's the only one who's immortal. Undying.

Not subject to death. He lives in unapproachable light. His radiance. His splendor. His glory. Is such that we can't even come near. Except by his grace.

And provision of a way to draw near. So high above us. So holy. Is this great God. That no man has ever seen. The fullness of his glory. Nor can we.

And he ends with this prayer. To him. Be honor. And might. Forever. May he continue to. Reign. In his great power. Forever.

Says Paul. May he receive. Honor. Forever. Amen. Truly. Says Paul. It's a prayer. As we come now.

[32 : 25] To the Lord's table. How do we relate all this. To the table. Where's the good news. In all this. We've received. A serious charge. Serious commands.

From Christ. To keep. And we're told. That it will be a struggle. And a fight. Till the very end. But at the end. The good news is here.

Our faith in Jesus. Will be rewarded. With eternal life. This is the good news. Of Christ. How can it be.

That a sinner like me. Can have this gift. This reward. This blessing.

This future hope. I know I don't deserve it. I know I've fallen so far short of this. All my life. And yet amazingly. God loves me.

[33 : 23] God loves you. So much. That he has made the way. For this gift. To be free. Forgiveness. Is offered. The punishment.

Of our sins. Which is death. Taken away. By what Jesus. Has done for us. How do we get this eternal life. Let me remind us quickly.

Of the words of Jesus. Jesus said. I am the living bread. That came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread. Will live forever. This bread.

Is my flesh. Which I will give. For the life of the world. Very truly. He said. I tell you. Unless you eat the flesh.

Of the son of man. And drink his blood. You have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh. And drinks my blood. Has eternal life. And I will raise them up.

[34 : 19] At the last day. So how do we get this eternal life. Not of good that we do. But because of Jesus. And what he.

Did for us. He gave his body. And his blood. For us. His sacrifice. His death. On the cross. Was a special provision. From heaven. Just like the manna was.

For the Israelites. In the wilderness. Jesus death. Was the thing. By which. We may receive. Eternal life. And Jesus was speaking.

Metaphorically here. Of course. About eating his flesh. And drinking his blood. And many did stumble. Over his words that day. But the meaning is clear enough. His death. For our life.

His body. And his blood. Broken. And shed. For our life. For our everlasting life. Life. Without the cross.

[35 : 17] There's nothing. To look forward to. But God's justice. For all the wrongs. That we have done. And so as we eat.

And drink. The bread. The cup. Again this morning. Let's remember. Let's remember. Our saviors. Great love. For us. Love which opened the way for us.

To eternal life. The elders are going to come. And. Or a few of the men. Are going to come. And pass out. The elements. And if you.

Believe. If you are holding fast. To this hope. And Jesus is your savior. And your lord. Please. Join with us. Partake with us. If that's not you today.

Please just. Signal discreetly. With your hand. And let the elements. Pass you by. In these moments. I invite you to reflect. I invite you to pray. Talk to God. We'll give thanks.

[36 : 14] And we'll eat. And drink. Together. All together. Once everybody. Has been served. Thank you. And thanks.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Lord Jesus, we thank you. We praise you for this awesome gift that you have given us. Your life, your body, your blood for our life.

[39 : 37] We could never repay you. And so we just say thank you. Thank you for all of the things that we've done.

That they truly are forgiven. As you hung there and died on the cross for us. I pray that you would press that love into our hearts again.

As we eat and drink now in remembrance of you. In your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.