

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Instructions to Timothy
Fight, Keep Fighting, Finish!

Wanderers!



***MEMBERSHIP CLASS** soon – If you are interested, contact me. Either that, or I will probably contact you



*** SIGN UP FOR VALENTINE'S BANQUET** ❤️ 😍 ❤️ – look for someone with a clipboard 📋 in the foyer/gathering room after church

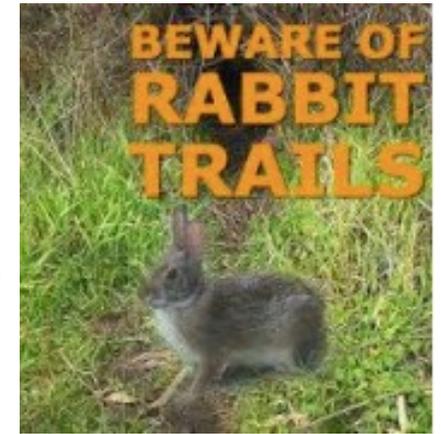
The text is, at its core, not necessarily about an obsession with money, although it seems to be at first glance. Its underlying intent, I believe, is to shine the spotlight on a loss of focus – or, as I have labeled this phenomenon before, our tendency to go off on “rabbit trails” when they present themselves to us. I have spoken of this before – and we refer to it in our ACES group on a regular basis, because it is a constant temptation to the fallen part of our fallen human natures. We all have personal stories of being tempted and carried away on a spiritual wild goose chase for a time, or we know relatives and/or friends that have been carried away from the apostles teachings, and even from the faith - and and every time we deviate from the core apostle’s teachings, memories are usually traumatic or at the very least unpleasant memories! That is because there is little satisfaction in losing focus and going off on a spiritual rabbit trail! Oh, sure, in the beginning we think we have some special form of enlightenment. But it usually, and I think, *always* in the end, brings unrest and often **internal** mental/emotional, and **external**/relational turmoil/division! Rabbit trails will usually make us a stench in other people’s/Christian’s nostrils! I’ve seen Christians with an obsession with tongues speaking and signs and wonders, with an obsession with Calvinism, with an obsession with the issue of eternal security, with eschatology - theories regarding the end times, with Saturday worship rather than Sunday, etc., etc.



Like I said, this comes from not maintaining focus. If we are well-versed in what is important, and what is not, then this is not nearly as much of a problem. I have spoken of the gift from the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual antennae to sniff these schemes of Satan out. If we have even a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the scriptures, the Holy Spirit uses what we know to give us the ability to put things to the smell test! We hear someone touting their particular doctrinal rabbit trail, and our spiritual antennae go up, and although *they* seem to know their stuff and maybe we don’t even know enough to be able to argue against it, still, our spiritual “spidey sense” starts tingling, and we get a strange feeling in our mind of *“Maybe I can’t put my finger on it right now, but this is not right! Something is off here! I’ve got a bad feeling about this!”*!

[Eph. 5:14; Jas 1:5-8]

These are “rabbit trails”. Something is off focus. I think that the fact that Paul uses money here, is simply a “for instance”. Money seemed to be something that the false teachers were very concerned about getting more of! Paul thinks that is notable – a major “tell”, as they say, that someone is false, or on the wrong path! If a person has a proclivity, a tendency, to be drawn into doctrines/theologies that were off base and not of the apostle’s teaching which were taken from Christ’s teaching, then they also will be drawn into virtually any type of distraction from Christ and His purposes! You see, it is because because their major focus is *themselves* – their growing reputation, whether or not people identify them with success, with being a big deal – with whether their church is growing into a mega-church, or whether their books are selling, or whether people are sending money, lots of money, in to their TV or radio program. These are all warning signs. I also wonder about big city churches that are continually focused on money – money raising campaigns because of every time they expand their facilities, and then they are on to the next expansion, and a NEW money-raising campaign! I really wonder if the focus on money is necessary. Maybe just laying out the vision, and if the vision catches on with the people, they will give. If not, they won’t, and then maybe it shouldn’t happen.



Sometimes a church needs some teaching on money and tithing, but that, by rights, should be a focus on the individual’s basic obligations to Christ in the support of one’s own church. Worship through generous giving is a basic part of our relationship with Christ. It’s putting our money where our mouth is! So, talk of money in the church should originate out of a pastoral concern for a individual’s faithfulness to Christ and the purposes of God to which the church is called - which require money, resources, and willing, joyful servanthood. It should not come out of concern for the next building project – the next material goal. Something good gets distorted in this manner! If people give as they are called to do by God, then the next project *will* be paid for in good time. So money is a thing, but it is not to be an obsession. If it becomes our focus, then we are *out of* focus! To make it a major focus is to endanger the mission!

*One time my parents were invited to something that was advertised as an ‘Evangelistic campaign’. I think a friend invited them! Some guy claimed that he had died and spent 48 hours in hell before somehow, miraculously, being sent back into his body. He described at great length the horrors and the heat of this terrible place that he claimed to have seen and experienced personally! He put on quite the show up there on the stage too! Yelling, gesticulating wildly, striding back and forth across the front, even down the isles, scaring us with his harrowing tales. But then before he was done, he spent the next 30-40 minutes or more hawking his book which carried even more salacious details of his time in hell. Then he took **THREE** separate “love offerings” culminating in the last one where he shamed and cajoled everyone to empty their pockets and purses of **coins**. It ended up being a shakedown! I watched parents leave there deeply disturbed and wishing they had never gone! It was embarrassing to even have been a part of it! By the way – if I remember right, my dad did not give the guy a dime! He had wanted to walk out, but was just too polite to do it! He should have!



Paul says here that Christ-followers should be **content** with what they have, even if it is just food, clothing, and shelter. Thus, his message to the Christian slaves of Ephesus – serve your masters well! For Christ-followers, life is primarily about godliness – becoming Christ-like! Life is about following Jesus! Following Jesus breaks down into two parts – 1st - becoming more like Him, and 2nd – serving His purpose in some way - accepting and accomplishing whatever mission He will assign me. He is at the center, and His purposes for me have become my purposes for myself! As He becomes more to me, I become less – and I become less that He might become *even more*! It is a spiritual, mental, and emotional joy ride – frightening and exhilarating at the same time because at every curve in the ride you think you might die!

Jesus said that to “**follow me**” a person must take up their cross. This statement, made a number of times just in the record of the gospels themselves, was certainly made **before** He Himself was hung on a cross and finished His mission - dying there on the cross as a Divine sacrifice for the sins of the world! But before Jesus went to the cross, He still referenced the cross. The disciples knew the cross was a symbol of death! He was telling them that they had to die to themselves – to their own will – so that they might serve Him! It had to become about following, obeying, and serving the purposes of Jesus, and to do that meant that one had to die to their own agenda for themselves. It has to be one or the other – mine, or His. Both do not work well together inside one person - not at all! One will surely grow weaker as the other gains strength! Jesus will consistently win, and I will lose. Or I will consistently win, and Jesus will lose. That is the way it works! Now - which one is the Christ-follower, and which one is not?

People who are distracted by other things, cannot be counted on to stay on course. If all our attention begins being focused on our business, our paycheck, our advancement, on bigger/better stuff and more of it, well,.. Pau warns of it becoming a snare, a trap. It leads us back to self-worship – me and mine at the center. That is a disastrous philosophy – as it is the world’s philosophy. I live for me! I will live for Christ when it does not interfere significantly with my life! When I live for me, I run the risk of compromising everything I have claimed about my connection to Jesus. Paul obviously knows people who, after having been a part of the church, got distracted by money (in particular) and who got sucked back into the world system which inherently opposes God and His will! From there they made ruinous decisions that Paul says inevitably have terrible repercussions. It is certainly faith-killing. It also runs the potential of trading this brief life for eternity. Jesus addressed this in **[Luke 8:11-15] (Matt. - “*the deceitfulness of wealth*”)**.



I want to go back to “***Godliness with contentment is much gain***”. It forces us to confront ourselves. Is Jesus enough? If everything we’ve accomplished or accumulated was gone tomorrow, would Jesus be enough? I have to think about that! It actually happens all the time, you know, especially at the end of life, and everyone has that end-of-life experience - quick, relatively quick, longer, or looong and drawn out. When the once strong body and/or sharp mind has failed and is going downhill and you must go into a nursing home. Once there, the facility basically can lay claim to your bank account and assets. You are monitored constantly, dressed or undressed, helped to the bathroom – even helped *in* the bathroom. I have seen this scenario sooo many times – usually with Christians - because that’s who I primarily work with! Some react with angst and bitterness, hopelessness. They’ve been stripped of what mattered to them! Others have been stripped of everything, but not of anything that really mattered to them! You see, you can’t take Jesus away from anyone! If He is central, then He remains! He is the one thing you take with you into the next life – the real life! It makes a big difference in how we react to the changes/losses of life that are inevitably coming and way sooner than you might think! So you made a decision at some point in your past to give your heart to Jesus. But you have to make a decision every day to invest in Him. It’s called perseverance! Without perseverance we cannot please God! Listen. If you have Jesus you have everything! Keep investing in your relationship with Him! Don’t waste your life off focus on something else. Guard your heart – know the apostle’s teachings – and stand your ground!