

SOUL FOOD

APRIL 17, 2017

I TIMOTHY 6:9-16 TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE

There are many different temptations that can sidetrack us from walking the path of holiness and life. One of the most potent temptations is that of the love of money. Money itself is not the problem. It is the LOVE of money which is the problem. How can anyone actually love money? Well, this is the language of addiction. Whenever one hears someone describe the nature of his addiction it often sounds like he is describing a spouse or great friend. While there is no real power in money except economic power, our hearts can easily become ensnared by what we can trust it to do for us. It can become a person's ultimate source of protection, security, and even worship. This is why Paul refers to the love of money as a "snare," a trap. Sadly, the love of money left unchecked can easily lead to personal ruin and destruction. It can also lead people to stray from the faith as their loyalties become greatly divided.

Scripture teaches us that our hearts are only big enough for one master. We cannot serve God and mammon, or material things, because we will end up hating one of the masters. So, how should we handle dealing with this temptation?

Paul says that we should FLEE these things. This reminds me of the incident in Joseph's life when he literally ran from the temptation to be intimate with Potiphar's wife. To run is not cowardice; it is wisdom and faithfulness and spiritual courage. While we must run away from temptation Paul also points to some powerful truths toward which we must run. We must intentionally pursue some vital truths and fight. We must pursue **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness**. The pursuit of money as a life goal leaves little time and room for the worship of God and pursuing love for Him and our neighbor. Rather than gentleness, the love of money leads us to be self-centered, selfish, and harsh.

While pursuing these aspects of godliness we must also FIGHT. We must fight the good fight of faith and intentionally take hold of the eternal life to which we have been called in keeping with the faith that we confess. This is the picture of putting our hands to the plow and never looking back. We must fix our eyes upon Christ and run the race which He ran. We must remove every entanglement that inhibits us from running the race effectively. We must actively lay aside every sin that hinders us, including the temptation to love material things.

Lastly, Paul speaks of this call to holiness in the light of the return of Christ. Paul wants us to understand that everything matters because of the presence and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Also, this reality should lead us to put off those behaviors that could lead us to shame in the face of the imminent return of Christ. So, we must flee, pursue, and fight the GOOD fight. May God's grace grant us the desire and strength to run His race.