

The Great Goal of Godly Determination - contending for eternal life

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[0 : 00] So we come now to our Bible reading, and you will find that in the New Testament in Paul's letter to Timothy. 1 Timothy, chapter 6, page 993 of our church Bibles.

And we will begin reading at verse 9. Hear the word of the Lord.

But to those who desire to be rich, fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

[1 : 19] Fight the good fight of 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.

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 to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.

He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 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. As 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.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future.

[2 : 46] So that they may take hold of that which is truly life. O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

For by professing it, some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you. Well, amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Well, we turn one last time to 1 Timothy and chapter 6, the passage that Phil read for us a little earlier.

In this last chapter, which is all about guarding the gospel of hope, in verse 12 here of chapter 6, Paul tells Timothy to take hold of the eternal life to which you are called.

And of course, that is the goal of our full salvation. But that is a salvation that is still to be fully realized in the future, when the Lord Jesus appears, as Paul says here.

[3 : 56] And so there will always be a battle until then, raging all around and even within our human hearts, a battle for the true love of our hearts. To love this world, or to truly love the world to come.

Friends, that's at the root of every single battle, every single struggle that you and I face as believers, that the church faces as the Christian church. Because this world wants our love.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ tells us very plainly, doesn't it? That you cannot have, you cannot cling to this world and have eternal life in the world to come.

You can't do it. We don't believe that, of course. Our sinful natures, our flesh, the world, the devil himself, constantly want us to think that we can cling to this world.

That we can still have all that the Lord Jesus promises us. But that's a lie. And that's a lie that in the end, Paul says, will lead you to swerve into hell.

[5 : 06] Listen to just a few clear statements from Christ's other apostles. Here's James. Friendship with the world is enmity with God. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

James 4, verse 4. Here's John. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1

John 2, verse 15. So the Lord Jesus himself was so very clear.

You cannot serve God and mammon, the material things of this world. So therefore, if any of you do not renounce all that he has, and he's talking there in that passage about all earthly relationships, even our own life.

If you don't reliance all of these things, you cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Read Luke 14 later. Now, people might think they can. But the reality is, if you think that way, Paul says here to Timothy, you've swerved away from the truth.

[6 : 12] You've made shipwreck of the true faith. And that's a nub of what this first letter to Timothy is all about. The church in Ephesus was living in a very affluent society.

And it had become an example of exactly what Jesus warned us of in the parable of the sore. The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Like Demas, who Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 4. Many of them here in Ephesus had fallen in love with this present world. So they deserted Paul's gospel.

And as chapter 6 verse 3 said, and we saw last time, that means they have deserted also the sound and healthy teaching of the Lord Jesus himself. And hence this letter with such a strong warning.

Look at the last two verses of chapter 6 here. We noted this last time, but just notice how abruptly, how sharply this letter ends. There's no lists of greetings for all Paul's friends as there so often are.

[7 : 12] Just this stark warning. Oh, Timothy, guard the deposit. Guard the true gospel entrusted to you. Avoid all this false nonsense, the dangerous contradictions that is sweeping people to ruin.

And may all of you have the grace you so desperately need to rescue the church back to true health and to the road to heaven, away from this slippery slope that leads to destruction.

We saw last time, didn't we, that these last words, they sum up the whole letter, but they sum up especially the two-sided message of this last chapter, to avoid the false and to guard the true.

For the sake of the whole church, don't live like fools. Embracing falsehood, looking sideways at this world, coveting mere passing things. No, live now with godly detachment, with contentment about what is ephemeral and passing.

That was the message, wasn't it, of verses 1 to 10. Don't live like fools, but, verse 11, as for you, live the true faith, embracing gospel truth, looking forwards at what is still to come.

[8 : 23] Live now with godly determination. Be contending always for what is eternal, for what is permanent. Take hold of eternal life. Take hold of what is truly life.

And that's the message here in verses 11 to 19. And Paul lays out what it means for Timothy, and therefore for every other Christian leader in the church, and also for those rich people of Ephesus, which is also very relevant for all Christians living in an affluent society like we do.

Don't capitulate to this world. But rather, he says, all of us, whether we're shepherds of the church or whether we're those of substance within the church, all of us are to live contending for the world to come.

Living for and longing for the appearance of the Lord Jesus, which is the real treasure, and the crown of righteousness, which he will give, says Paul in 2 Timothy 4, to all who love, not the world, but love his appearing.

And live for that, not for this passing world. So what better passage could we have on the first Sunday of Advent than a passage that points us to the coming of the eternal kingdom of Christ?

[9 : 37] Let's look a little more closely. First of all, at verses 11 to 16. Well, Paul's focus here is on contending for eternal life for the shepherds of the church. Godly determination for the pastor, he says, means a ministry of determined guarding of the true gospel.

He's to take hold, verse 12, of eternal life. How? By fighting to be a man of God and not a man of the world. And that involves, says Paul, contending to guard both his own life and his service, his ministry.

By shunning a worldly life and ministry and by striving for a godly life and a service that guards the true gospel. So verses 11 and 12, they call Timothy, don't they, to determined guarding of himself.

He's to live the truth that he has confessed. He's not to be corrupted by the allure of this world and all the things that crowded on his life. The Christian leader, he is saying, must be a real Christian living for eternity.

Verse 12, 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 when he professed faith before the members of the church.

[10:52] Just as so many professed faith here publicly last Sunday evening. The pastor must be a real Christian and he must live as a real Christian. That sounds pretty obvious, you would have thought.

But Paul obviously reckons that Timothy is at risk. Timothy's in danger. Why else would he give such an urgent warning? As for you, man of God, flee from these things. The man of God is the familiar Old Testament term for the prophet Elijah, Moses and so on.

Those who spoke the word of God to the people. They bore God's full authority. But of course, they were still in frail human flesh, weren't they? They weren't immune from all the sinful desires, the lures of this world.

And neither is Timothy. Again, verse 20. Oh, Timothy, guard what is entrusted to you. Paul reckons that even a trusted and tested leader like Timothy needs an injection of gospel adrenaline.

As you know, adrenaline is what your body produces, doesn't it? In dangerous situations, it produces the fight and flight response. Well, it's exactly what Timothy urges, Paul urges Timothy here, isn't it?

[12:04] Flee. Look, pursue, fight. The old authorized verse in there has flee, follow and fight. Made for a great talk with three points. But actually, it's just one key command if you look carefully.

Verse 12. Take hold of eternal life. And you do that by fighting the good fight of the faith. Notice the faith, the one true eternal gospel, no other gospel.

And to fight means these two things, a negative and a positive, as verse 11 tells us. You see, flee these worldly things and follow these eternal things.

Flee and follow. Shun and strive for. Or you could say, repent of these and have faith in these. Deny this and take up your cross and follow me.

It's just the very basics of Christian faith, isn't it? Paul's saying the Christian leader like Timothy, the shepherd. That means for you, deserting, rejecting all these doctrines and desires of worldly ministry, counting all of these things as loss for the real game in the hope of eternal life.

[13:19] Friends, don't ever think that your Christian leaders, your group leaders, your Bible class leaders, your church leaders, your pastors, don't ever think that they're somehow immune from the lures of this world that you were prey to.

I could keep you here until lunchtime with the things I've battled through in my own life and still battle through with. It wouldn't edify you, I can tell you. It wouldn't help me either. But don't be naive. Christian leaders, that's why they need your encouragement. That's why they need your prayers constantly. They're at risk, says Paul. Don't be naive. Think of the poor pastor in the developing world who has very little.

Think of the great lure that worldly wealth must be to him. Especially when he looks down the road and he sees the prosperity gospel church. Well, it's not making any of the people prosperous, but it's certainly making the pastors prosperous.

What a lure that is. Or just a discouraged pastor in the West who knows that he could have much more popularity and probably many more people in his church if he just focused a bit less on the challenge of the truly biblical gospel and preached a truncated gospel which didn't offend anybody.

[14:33] Or just any pastor anywhere who, just like everybody else, wants people to like him, wants people to praise him, wants people to speak well of him. And so he faces a constant temptation, doesn't he?

Never to say no to anybody, only ever to agree with everyone. Or only ever to be willing to go and speak at this thing or that thing or be involved in that thing or the other thing all over the place, keeping everybody happy all the time and neglecting the work that God has really given to do because he doesn't want people to say, oh, he never gets involved with anyone.

He'll never work with anyone. There are so many temptations to anybody in Christian leadership. Paul is not naive about some of these temptations.

So he says he has to fight to be a true disciple himself and fight for the ministry he's truly called for. And that means shunning all false spirituality, whatever kind, and striving, verse 11, for true spirituality, pursue, strive for righteousness and godliness.

That's the observable, proper Christian conduct that Paul's been speaking about all through this letter, observable to the outside world that adorns the gospel and doesn't turn people off the gospel. [15:51] And he's to strive for faith and for love. That's the core qualities that makes a true child of God. In other words, he's not just to be a religious professional. Paul knows that's a danger for the real full-time Christian worker that you can be detached from real Christian living yourself, that your ministry just becomes a job, just becomes one compartment of your life.

Now Paul's saying, no, first and foremost, every Christian leader must be a Christian disciple with faith and love in their hearts for the Lord. And he's to strive, he says, for steadfastness and gentleness in his relationship with those in the church that he serves.

We've seen that several times already, haven't we? The opposite, the opposite of these worldly leaders. What do they cause? Quarrel, strife, controversies. No, says Paul, do you remember back in chapter 4, he says to Timothy, you have to be an example.

Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. The very opposite of these worldly leaders. The true Christian leader is to take hold of the true life of eternity, to show the marks of that heavenly life in this world now.

The true life of God that's seen in being above reproach in the world, in being authentically real in your faith and in your heart, and in attracting respect in the church because of the way you conduct yourself.

[17:20] Now friends, I'm giving you Paul's words here, but I can add my own experience to that. Let me tell you, that's a fight. That's a struggle. It's hard. The word fight here is agonize.

It's not so much a military metaphor, it's an athletic one. It's Paul, Paul says of himself in 2 Timothy 4, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

And so henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness that the Lord will give, not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing and loved his appearing. Not like Demas who have loved this world.

But it's an arduous race, an agonizing race. It's not a sprint, it's a marathon to not swerve from the path of truth.

And it means persevering with godly determination. You confess to faith, he says in verse 12, before many witnesses. But you must keep contending, keep fighting for that true faith right till the very end of the race.

[18:22] That's why trite slogans like once saved, always saved are so dangerous. Of course, the Bible teaches that salvation is a sovereign call of God.

Of course, it teaches God purpose these things before the foundation of the earth from God's perspective, from his secret counsel. But friends, our earthly life is not lived with God's all-knowing eyes, is it?

And the same Jesus who said, I give them eternal life, none shall pluck them out of my hand. The same Jesus said just as plainly to his own disciples, the one who endures to the end will be saved. The whole New Testament teaches us that real faith, true faith, is enduring faith, it's persevering faith. Yes, God is sovereign, but we are responsible, says Paul.

You must take hold of eternal life to which you're called. And for the Christian leader, Paul is extremely clear. He says it's a fight.

[19:25] It's a fight in the sense of warfare. We saw that in chapter 1. And so there'll be wounds. There'll be costs to that. But it's a race. It's a contest, as he says here in verse 12.

And it will need exertion, stamina, perseverance to the end. He needs to be determined in guarding himself. And, as verses 13 to 16 tell us, he needs to be determined in guarding his service just the same way.

He's not just to live as a true Christian himself, he's to lead others in the true gospel. His life must point to eternity, but his lips must point to eternity. He must preach a gospel of eternal life.

Remember what Paul said in chapter 4, verse 16. He said, watch closely yourself, that is your life, and your teaching and persist, persevere in that as your own road to salvation and also as the salvation of your heroes.

In verse 13 here, he says it's a solemn charge to guard, to keep the gospel focus true right until Christ's return. And Paul reminds him just how important his ministry is.

[20 : 36] He reminds him that his whole life is in God's hand. God who gives life, God who preserves all life. So don't waste your life, Timothy. Your whole purpose in life.

And he reminds him he serves Christ. Christ was true to his mission right to the end. He made the good confession before Pontius Pilate. He swerved not from his own death to be faithful.

So don't you deny Jesus by denying his gospel. No, you keep the commandment free from reproach until the appearing of our Savior.

By the commandment there, he just means the truth, the faith, the gospel, the deposit, the thing he's been talking about all the way through the chapter. It's the gospel of the blessed God.

Remember where Paul says, God entrusted me with that in chapter 1 and now I'm entrusting it to you, Timothy.

Keep this one and only true gospel clear until Jesus returns. And that's what contending for the faith means for Timothy and therefore for every leader of the church until Jesus comes.

[21 : 43] We must do that because that alone is the gospel of the eternal God. Look at verse 15. He is the only sovereign, the King of kings, the Lord of lords.

He alone has immortality to give. He alone dwells in unapproachable light. He's inaccessible as yet to man. He's invisible. No one has ever seen him or can see him but he will appear, verse 15.

Look, do you see? At the proper time, the immortal, the invisible, the inaccessible, invincible God, he will appear in the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ when he returns and every eye will see him then.

But until then, what is Paul's point? He has been making himself known and is making himself known in saving power in this world. How is he doing that?

Where is he doing that? I remember the central verse in this whole letter, chapter 3, verse 15. He's doing this through his true gospel and through his true church which is a pillar and a buttress of this saving truth for the whole world.

[22 : 54] That's how God is making his appearance to save in this world. You see? And that's why Timothy's charge is to keep the church's message unstained and free from reproach so that the immortal, invisible God, the only sovereign, the only saviour will be made known, will be proclaimed in the world until he comes.

The people of this world will not be saved. They won't come to a knowledge of God's saving truth if the true gospel and if true churches are not guarded by a ministry like that, will they? If instead they're just left to false Christianity, myths, fables, to a gospel that's focusing only on this passing world and the things of this world.

Why do you think so many churches in our western world today are so empty and dying? It's because the shepherds have not guarded the flock from error, have not kept the gospel from corruption.

And so the gospel has become stained and fallen into reproach. What do you hear when you see somebody on the television or on the radio a Christian leader? What are they speaking about today? Most of the time it's politics.

And so people are turned off. They tune out. Or they see the church as just being like another branch of social work, improving people's lives here on earth. So they say, well that's fine if the church is your thing, but my thing is Oxfam.

[24 : 16] My thing's Amnesty International. My thing's Greenpeace or whatever it is. It's all the same, isn't it? It's all just social work for this world. And they hear nothing of the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings, the Lord of lords who alone has immortality, who alone can give eternal life, give real life, the life of the world to come, the only life that will never pass away.

They hear nothing of that. But no, says Paul to Timothy, the shepherds of Christ's church must contend for an eternal gospel, declaring the gospel of eternal life.

The only answers to life that this life will ever have are eternal answers in the gospel of Christ.

Declaring it and so the church demonstrating to the world that true eternal life by living now in the light of this eternal reality, striving for righteousness and godliness, full of faith and love, full of steadfastness and gentleness, all the characteristics of the eternal world seen now in the church which is the outcrop of the eternal world, the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth in this world to point people, to lead people to the world to come.

And so friends, we as the church, we have to ask ourselves, don't we, which world and which gospel are we really living for and sharing the world? What are we telling people really is important by what we say and by what we do?

This world or the world that is to come? If our gospel is all about giving answers to this world's problems now, quite apart from the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it's health or healing or whether it's prosperity, whether it's economic gain, whether it's social justice, all of these things, then we are not guarding the good deposit that is entrusted to us.

[26 : 16] We need to ask ourselves, don't we, what is it that really makes our hearts burn within us and our lips burst into praise?

Is it? Is it when we find blessings from God in this world? Well, God richly gives us many blessings as we'll see in verse 17 and of course it's right to be thankful and praise Him.

But here at the end of verse 16, Paul bursts into praise, doesn't he, to Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. And it's rejoicing in this eternal gospel of the eternal God that He's been talking about.

The God who alone has immortality. The God who alone gives eternal life. It's talking about this God and this gospel that makes Him praise. and that's a mark, isn't it, of real gospel ministry that what excites you the most and what makes you rejoice the most is in people being saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth, the truth of the eternal life that is in Jesus Christ.

that the miracles that really excite you, that really make you sing are not the so-called signs and wonders of charlatan ministries of health and healing.

[27 : 38] Nor the bizarre so-called manifestations of the Spirit that make people fall over and quiver, do all sorts of ridiculous things. or even when God does answer prayer and someone is miraculously healed in an astonishing way which God does do sometimes.

Not these things but rather our rejoicing is in the great miracle of salvation from sin, of eternal life in Jesus Christ, of one lost sheep being found and brought home to the fold.

Very striking that in this letter all three of Paul's doxologies and hymns that he breaks out into are about that very thing, the eternal life of Christ coming to this earth.

Here in chapter 16, in chapter 6 rather and then in chapter 3 verse 16 in the hymn remember where he talks about Christ being manifest in the flesh, proclaimed and believed on in this world.

And way back in chapter 1 verse 17 so like verse 15 here where Paul bursts into praise. Why?

Because of the personal gospel that has come to him. God's grace and mercy that saved me and will do the same for all who have believed in him for eternal life.

[28 : 57] And that's Paul's charge to Timothy and to every Christian leader of every shape after him. Flee a gospel that is simply focused on what is ephemeral and passing and fight for the eternal gospel.

for the truth that leads to everlasting life. Only that will keep the church from turning in upon itself and lapsing into escapism or into elitist spirituality, self-absorbed religion or from looking sideways at the world and getting lost in the pursuit of the ephemeral gain of this world, all that is just passing. And Paul says to Timothy and to every Christian leader, yes, you are determinedly guarding yourself and your service.

And you must strive to live as a real Christian. Focus on that eternal life, not on this passing world. And you must strive to lead others in that path. Preaching a gospel that focuses not on the things of this world but on the things of the world to come.

And for every Christian minister, what he's saying is your life and your teaching, your service are inseparable. You've got to be a real gospel Christian if you're going to be a real gospel minister.

[30 : 17] But you've got to keep your real gospel ministry focus if you're going to preserve yourself as a real Christian to the end and receive that eternal life. That's why verses 20 and 21 at the end are so solemn.

He's saying to Timothy, if you don't guard your ministry, even you, Timothy, can swear from the truth. No, persist in true life and true ministry and you'll save yourself and your hearers as he says in chapter 4 verse 16.

That's a warning, friends, isn't it? Both to church leaders and to all churches. You can't separate life and service. If the one is wandering away into stain and into reproach, then the other will surely follow even though it may not be evident to others yet.

So those who are called to be leaders must go on fighting, striving to be men and women of God and not of this world.

And we must all go on praying for them to do that and encouraging them to do that. But if Christian leaders can't separate having godly service from being godly themselves, then neither can any of us and that's what verses 17 to 19 are all about.

[31 : 30] Paul turns here to talking about contending for eternal life for those of substance in the church. If godly determination for the pastor means determined guarding of the true gospel, then godly determination for prosperous Christians, says Paul, means determined giving for the true gospel.

And they too, verse 19, do you see, are to take hold of that which is truly life. How? By fighting to be people of God and not people of the world. What does that mean? It means showing contentment contentment, as we saw last time, by showing true generosity, by shunning worldly status and security, and by striving for godly service, a godly service of giving to the true gospel.

And that's how all Christians in a prosperous society are to prepare themselves for Christ's appearing. That's how we are to build for eternity, says Paul. So verse 17, the rich in this present age, they've got great responsibilities.

Like Timothy, they too are to determinedly guard themselves by living out the real faith of hearts that have been truly humbled by the grace of God in the gospel.

Not haughty, says Paul, not thinking that their wealth or the riches gives them status with God or with anybody else, nor hoping in uncertain riches.

[32 : 55] Their riches don't give them security either, he says. Not trusting in their earthly gains, but solely trusting in God's heavenly grace.

The true gospel always humbles people, doesn't it? It doesn't matter who you are because the real Christian with real humble faith knows, as Jesus said, that only the poor in spirit can inherit the kingdom of God.

Only those who hunger and thirst for what they don't have, the righteousness of God. So they're humble receivers, aren't they? All true Christians. They receive from God's grace the pearl of great price, which is more valuable than anything in the whole world, which they're willing to give up and put behind them just to possess.

And only if that is true of somebody will they be able to safely handle all God's present material gifts so as to enjoy them. And God says in verse 17 that we receive them to be enjoyed.

But only if your heart is truly humbled and liberated like that can you be liberated to enjoy goods, gifts, and not be enslaved by the good things of this world.

[34 : 06] Not be overcome by desire for them because they are truly overcome by their desire for God. But it's so easy, isn't it, to be overcome by desire for material things.

It's what Peter says in 2 Peter 2, to be enslaved by them. That was why Paul warned in verses 9 to 11 here as we read. That's why Jesus warns constantly, be on your guard against all form, all forms of covetousness.

For one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions but rather in being rich towards God. And so, just as for the pastor, God gives every prosperous Christian a sphere of service. which is to determinedly keep themselves in the path of eternal life through a ministry of generous giving.

Verses 18 and 19 describe it, don't they? Here's how the prosperous are to show that determined guarding of their own gospel service through love that issues from real Christian faith.

[35 : 16] Where the hearts of the prosperous are humbled truly by grace in the gospel of Christ and their hands will be opened with the generosity of the gospel of Christ for the gospel of Christ. That's all he's saying.

Verse 18, they're to do good, they're to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, so that, notice, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Generosity is not just a responsibility, although it is, he's saying it's an opportunity for them to be truly rich by investing in what will last forever.

This is their road to salvation, Paul says, by generous giving to the gospel. So what are you saying, preacher? Are you saying they're saved by their works?

Precisely that, says Paul here. Verse 19, look, that is how they store up treasure for themselves, a good foundation for the future. That is how they take hold of eternal life.

[36 : 19] That can't be right, I'm sure, I'm sure the gospel teaches us you can only be saved by faith. Well, of course it does, but the question is what is real faith?

What is real saving faith? And Jesus says, doesn't he, it's certainly not just saying, Lord, Lord, and saying, yes, I'm a Christian. I can lead you to hell, says Jesus.

What is it? It's doing the will of my Father in heaven. It's hearing my words and doing them, says Jesus, and building your life on the rock of eternal life, not on the sands of this world.

Faith without works is dead. Not real faith at all, is it, says James, it's just a fraud. No real saving faith, as we've already seen, is a faith that endures to the end.

And, Paul is saying here, it is a faith that shows evidence that it is real, even now. He's saying real faith is visible, real faith is tangible. Look back to chapter 1, verse 5, it's such an important verse.

[37 : 24] What does Paul say the aim of our charge is the aim of real gospel ministry? The aim of our charge is love. That is what issues out of a sincere faith, a truly saving faith.

The generous love of God, visible, he says here, in the generous giving of the Christian believer. Rich in good works for the gospel.

Rich in serving the gospel and the people of the gospel. Rich in investing in the eternal, lasting kingdom of Christ. That's what Jesus himself said repeatedly.

That's what shows faith is real. It's where you invest for eternity. It's where you store up treasures in heaven. That's what tells you, says Jesus, where your heart is. Where your investments are.

That shows that your convictions for the future really do lie in the world to come and not in this present world. If you're an investment manager investing vast amounts of money, of other people's money, if you have your investments all invested in the United States of America, like the famous investor Warren Buffett does, that tells you where his hope is, where his faith is.

[38 : 36] It's in the good old US of A. Now he might be right, he might be wrong, but that is where he is staking his whole future. And Paul's just saying it's just the same for the professing Christian.

If he's really trusting the gospel, then he'll invest his life where he knows true and lasting returns are going to be. He won't be greedy with his earthly wealth, he'll be grateful because he knows it's all from God and he'll be generous with it because he knows it's all for God and for that eternal kingdom.

And that generosity blesses others, no doubt, as they share and all the benefits of his prosperity. But Paul is saying here that generosity blesses the giver as well.

You see, that's gospel arithmetic, friends. Paul taught the Ephesians that himself before he left their church in Acts chapter 20. He said, Jesus taught us, didn't he, it's better to give away than to receive.

We don't believe that, of course, do we? That's why Jesus says it again and again and again. Give and it will be given to you. But with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

[39 : 51] That's authentic arithmetic of grace. There's nothing at all to do with merit, it's everything to do with faith. It's about seeking above all other things the life that is truly life.

It's about being willing to lose everything in this passing world to gain what you can't lose for eternity. And Jesus says it repeatedly. All of those who give up things, people, homes, loved ones, family, everything in this world for my sake and the gospel, they receive a hundred times more, he says, even in this world in terms of his own kingdom riches and in the world to come eternal life.

The writer C.S. Lewis put it so well, you know, as he so often does where he says, aim at the next world and you'll have this one thrown in. Aim at this one and you'll miss them both.

That's the truth of the gospel because you're building a firm foundation for the future through real gospel generosity, says Paul, building on rock, not on sand, building with gold and silver and precious stones, not wood and straw and stubble, it'll all be washed away.

Lay up for yourselves, says Jesus, treasure in heaven that cannot be destroyed. Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous money and earthly riches so that when it fails, they may welcome you into eternal dwellings.

[41 : 20] Live the true faith, says Paul, means loving with true gospel love, investing in what is truly life, even now. and the reward will be everlasting because it'll be the fruit, it'll be the fulfillment of your investment in that eternal kingdom which can never spoil.

Every precious life that shares in the eternal kingdom of Christ with you thanks to your investment in the mission of the kingdom here in this world, every single life like that will bless you for eternity.

of course. What better way could there be for us to use our worldly wealth that God has given us than that? One or two of us last week were at a meeting all about this encouraging people to see the blessing of a ministry of generous giving to the gospel and it was an inspiring evening. You see, all of you know, don't you, about people like William Tyndale who printed the English Bible for the first time in our language and through whom the reformation in this country was made possible. You all know about George Whitefield who preached all over this country and all over America and brought great revival in the 18th century. You all know about John Newton whose ministry was so remarkable in the same century who raised up people like Wilberforce and the Clapham sect and so many others and all the hymns that we sing today.

[42 : 46] But I bet hardly one in ten of us knows the names of the wealthy gospel patrons who financed all those ministries who made them possible. Humphrey Monmouth who funded Tyndale's ministry.

The Countess of Huntingdon who funded all of George Whitefield's enormous ministries. John Thornton who got behind John Newton in his early days and funded that man throughout his whole influential ministry.

Just as when you actually turn to the New Testament you read, for example, in Luke's Gospel chapter 8 of the women whose names you probably hardly know. Joanna, Susanna and some of the others who funded the ministry, the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

The Son of God's ministry on earth humanly speaking only happened because of those generous givers to the work of the kingdom. Just like about 50 years ago there were two unmarried American ladies who came across the ministry of William Still and my father were so taken by their unique teaching ministries that in days when all these things were so expensive they paid for printing presses and for tape recording machines so that their teaching could be recorded and disseminated widely all around the country and all around the world.

Without whom, humanly speaking, huge numbers of people in gospel ministry in the generations since would never have been there. And just like not so long ago somebody like that backed our ministry here and enabled us to get Cornhill Scotland off the ground and begin teaching generations of gospel ministers who paid for this whole building that we're living in today himself.

[44 : 27] Someone who's never been part of this congregation. So that when we were put out of our building six years ago this week we weren't homeless and on the streets and so that everything that we've been able to do since has been able to happen.

There'll be people here today friends who owe their eternal life in Christ to the generosity of that one person. Who took hold of that which is truly life instead of instead of as he could have done investing more in his own material gain.

Won't you be praising him in the eternal kingdom? Of course for most of us here we don't have these vast resources but here's the truth.

Every one of us probably in this building this morning is vastly prosperous beyond the wildest dreams of most of the people in this world. And it's a simple truth isn't it that what we have done with our time with our talents with our money it will have eternal consequences on that great day. Whether we've been investing in that lasting kingdom of eternal gain or or just in more luxuries for our own consumption. And friends a church that will win the world for Christ.

[45 : 46] It can only do that can't it if all of us are really contending for eternal life with real godly determination. And that's the abiding challenge of this letter we've been studying 1st Timothy.

For all of us who are leaders for all of us in the whole church in this affluent society. These churches in Ephesus had a lack of desire for evangelism because ultimately they had a lack of desire for eternity.

They became inward looking because instead of being forward looking they become sideways looking loving this present world like Demas not loving and not living for and longing for the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They lost the true gospel of hope and they very nearly lost absolutely everything because of that. And this letter is in our Bible friends and we've been studying it for that one reason.

It says to us something very simple we must not do that. We must not do that. But we will only be a church living for evangelism if we really are a people living for eternity.

[47 : 06] A people taking hold of that which is truly life. Led by the teaching of our leaders yes and the lives but lived in the whole testimony of our church life together as a pillar and buttress of that

eternal truth in this world.

So will you join me and will you help me as I try and help you to guard the church's healthy message and its manner and its ministry for that great mission.

Can we do that together? Amen. Well let's pray. Lord will you grant us your grace to play our part and to truly lay hold on the eternal life to which we're all called and to contend for it together.

Come what may that in guarding the true gospel and in giving for the true gospel we may be granted the joy of sharing in your great salvation and see many brought to a knowledge of the truth in Jesus.

Keep us Lord from swerving. Guard our hearts in the grace of your son and keep us loving not this world but loving him and longing for his appearing until at last we do see him the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings, the lord of lords, until we fall at his feet lost in wonder, love and praise.

[48 : 44] For it is in his name and for his glory that we pray. Amen.