

# Investing In Light of Eternity

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[ 0 : 00 ] But as I mentioned in the reading, today is the final part of our series in 1 Timothy, where we've been thinking about what it means to be a healthy gospel church.

This whole emphasis comes from the vision statement that was agreed by the Free Church General Assembly a year ago, that there should be a healthy gospel church for every community in Scotland.

And we want to be that for Carloway. And we want to do that shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand with our brothers and sisters beside us in the Church of Scotland. And so in terms of being a healthy church, there's loads of things that 1 Timothy has helped us to think about.

It's highlighted the fact that we are to always hold up and hold out the gospel as a pillar and a buttress of truth, so that as anyone looks at us they can see that we are absolutely committed to what God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

We've seen the danger of departing from that and of kind of falling into the trap of listening to false teaching, particularly in the context of this letter, the danger of getting caught up in pointless arguments, speculations and nonsense ideas.

[ 1 : 18 ] We've seen the importance of prayer, how that's crucial to our lives as individual Christians as a congregation together. We've seen the need for harmony, respect and order, so that everybody in the church, men and women together can serve and fulfil their role.

The letters helped us to think and talk about what healthy leadership looks like. And one of the great emphasis that it's given us is the fact that a leader's character is the most important thing, that their integrity as a follower of Jesus is far more important than any particular skills, talents or status that they might have.

Through it all we've seen how essential it is to keep focused on Jesus. We've seen that a healthy church is active and exciting and we've highlighted the importance of caring for the vulnerable and of respecting those who are in authority.

Last week Phil was helping us to see again how easy it is for us to be led astray by false teaching and particularly in this context in 1st Timothy you could see that the false leaders so much of what they were doing was motivated by money.

They wanted financial gain for themselves. So we've seen and learned so much in these past few weeks. All of that has been challenging because it does whenever we go to God's word it's going to highlight things that we need to think about, things that we need to work on and even things that we need to repent of.

[ 2 : 54 ] It's also comforting because when we see what Jesus wants for his church it reminds us that he is so wonderfully different from all the rubbish that we have to put up with Monday to Saturday in our lives, in the media and in the world around us and it's really motivating because it's all reminding us that being part of the Church of Jesus Christ is to be part of something absolutely amazing.

A final title is that a healthy gospel church invests in light of eternity and that's what we're going to think about today. We can read again verses 10 to 12.

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. 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.

We have seen over the past few weeks how relevant 1 Timothy is for life today, whether that's being surrounded by people who will confidently speak but who are actually talking rubbish or whether it's when we see people fall out over something that's absolutely tiny and minor, whether it's how leadership can be so easily misunderstood and misused.

[ 4 : 24 ] There are so many ways in which this letter is relevant for our lives today. But I think that this passage that we've come to today is maybe the most relevant of all.

It's definitely one of the most relevant of all. And that's because this passage, these verses in front of you, they are touching on something that shapes the lives of everyone here, the lives of everyone in our community.

It's touching on something that shapes our media, our economy, our communities, our routines, our plans, our self-esteem, everything. It's an issue that totally dominates society in Scotland and in Carlyway in 2022.

And it's revealed by a key word in verse 11. And that's the word pursue. And I think that's a bit of an anticlimax, Thomas, what on earth do you mean?

What do you want about? How is the word pursue related to something that dominates all of society today? Well, this is highlighting something crucial because it's talking about something that we don't think about much, don't talk about much, but something that dominates your life and mine.

[ 5 : 45 ] Because that word pursue basically means to run after something. Now, that can be with good intentions, it can be bad intentions. And the Greek word here is the same word that we translate persecute in the context of chasing after someone to oppress them.

But the basic idea of the word conveys the idea of chasing after something. And that's the key point because everybody in here, everybody in Carlyway, everybody in Scotland is chasing after something.

And the crucial question is what?

What is it that you're chasing? In other words, what's the thing that your life is directed towards getting?

What do you long for? What do you work for? What did you do everything that you did last week for?

[ 6 : 53 ] What are we chasing? For many people, that's wealth as is highlighted here. People work hard for a better salary. They put money aside for a healthy pension.

Sometimes people try to shortcut that. Because gambling is becoming a bigger and bigger issue in society today. Because people want a quick financial gain. For others, it's not necessarily money, it might be possessions. House, car, phone, clothes, whatever.

For some, it's a relationship. Husband, wife, a circle of friends, maybe even a kind of celebrity idol that your life is directed towards.

For some, it's an identity. Maybe in your job title, maybe in your role in life, maybe as a mother or something like that. But in politics, supporting a particular ideology, for many people today, that identity has become primarily focused on their sexuality or their gender.

For some people, it's pleasure, holidays, experiences, good laugh, company, attention, distraction, anything like that. For some, it's status.

[ 8 : 01 ] To be successful, to prove yourself that you're capable of doing something, whether that's in uni or in work or in school, whatever it may be.

For many of us, for all of us, it's going to be a mixture of some or all of these things. That makes sense from a biblical point of view. Because the image of God in humanity gives us enough self-awareness to know that we're made to worship something.

We're made to be worshippers. We're made to pursue something bigger than us. It gives us enough moral conscience. The image of God in us gives us enough moral conscience to know that life right now is not the way it should be.

So we know that there's something wrong with where we are. We know that there's something better, worth chasing. We get the diagnosis right, but so, so often, we choose the wrong treatment. We chase after something daft. It's an issue that we all have to think about, whether we're Christians, whether we're maybe not yet sure if we're Christians, we're all shaped by what we're chasing.

[ 9 : 08 ] It affects tomorrow. We're all going to get up tomorrow. We're all going to pour our energy into various different things. And so, what's that going to be? And what's that for?

It affects the next year of our lives. You think today is, what is it, the 19th of June, 2022? What do you want life to look like on the 19th of June, 2023? What's the goal?

What do we want it to achieve? That's what affects tomorrow. It affects next year. It also affects eternity. What are we going to have at the end of it all?

Everyone is chasing something. That's what this passage highlights. And it also highlights that for many, many people, that chase will come down to money or possessions or some kind of personal gain or wealth.

The Bible recognizes this. It also recognizes that that kind of chasing will leave you empty. You see that in verses 9 and 10.

[10:11] That desire to be rich brings us into temptation, a snare, many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Verse 10 then uses the language of craving. And that's such a brilliant description because that's exactly what it's like, that craving for more.

And yet so often it can pierce us with many pains and sorrows. And it's not hard to prove that that's true. You read verse 9. It's not hard to think of people whose lives correspond to what that verse is describing.

Ultimately, anybody who makes money or possessions or wealth, anyone who makes that their ultimate God, they are going to be ruined.

And if it doesn't happen in this life, it'll happen in the next. The amazing thing about the Bible is that it doesn't say stop chasing.

[11:14] Now that's really important because we're saying that everybody's chasing something. We could stand up and say, the Bible said, stop chasing. In other words, live this incredibly dull life where you're not moved by anything, you're not attracted to anything, you don't aim for anything.

Just be really boring, really plain. Stop chasing anything and just accept the way things are and just be content in a medium level of misery.

The Bible doesn't say that at all. The Bible says, stop chasing things that will leave you empty and start chasing something far, far better.

And verse 11 brings that out so clearly because it says we should flee one thing and pursue another. Stop chasing the stuff that is only going to leave us empty and start chasing something far, far better.

And that's what the Gospel is all about, turning round, following Jesus, living for him. And in particular, this verse is telling us to flee from the snares and pains of wealth and instead to chase after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness.

[12:43] Now I want to unpack all of that a little bit more. All of this is making us think about investment.

The thing that we are chasing is the thing that we're going to invest in. So if we want a particular job, we're going to invest in an education or a level of experience that will help us get it.

If we want a house, then we're going to invest a big part of our salary into covering the cost of that. If we want people to admire our appearance, we'll invest a lot in the way we look and there's lots of different ways in which we can do that.

And with any investment, there is a sacrifice and a reward. Now that's just basic economics, that there's something that you have to kind of give up at the beginning in the hope that there'll be something that you gain in the end.

There's a sacrifice and there's a reward. Now, what I want us to just suggest today and think about is the fact that when it comes to money and wealth, very, very often we get the sacrifice and the reward the wrong way round.

[13:49] Now, what do I mean by that? Well, basically what I'm saying is that we want the reward at the end of the day to be money. That's what we hope for, isn't it?

We hope that we'll be wealthy. We think, you know, let's do stuff today, let's sacrifice stuff today so that in the end, we are well off. And that sounds obvious and that's a key part of how our economy works.

And it's not all bad. I'm not saying that. But people invest in order to make a financial return. And the basic principle of that's okay. I mean, if somebody, if a guy who left school in his early 20s invested a lot of money in a fishing boat in order to have a long career in that industry in order to do well, that's good and sensible.

There's nothing wrong with that. And that's the goal. The mistake comes when we make that the ultimate investment of our lives.

When we make that the single most important thing that we live for. And yet so many people do it, including Christians. I've done it myself many times.

[14:58] We kind of think, we're kind of lured by that thinking that, you know, financial security, oh, that would just be so good. And we work really hard so that at the end of the day, there's going to be enough money for us, for our families.

And that's a big measure of success today, isn't it? You know, to be, if you hit 70 and you're sitting on two or three houses, you've got a nice pension, you can afford good holidays, you can buy teats for your family.

That's kind of, like, that's kind of the UK in 2022's definition of success. That's a success story in our culture.

It's not that big a deal to God. In fact, to God, it's not really that important at all.

And that's because in God's eyes, investment works the other way around. We've said, you know, that we've kind of made money the reward that we want to aim for in the end.

[15:57] In God's economy, it works the other way around. Money's not the reward we aim for in the end. Money is the resource that we will sacrifice just now, if need be, in order to gain something far more precious in the future.

And this raises one of the single most important lessons that we can ever learn. Money is not the treasure chest that we dig for.

Money is the spade that we use to help people find real treasure. If you look at verse 11 again, you'll see that it can often be the case that in our chase for money, we sacrifice the very things that are listed here.

Let me clean up the mess that is my scribbles. So in order to get money, people will sacrifice righteousness. So you think, you know, well, if I don't necessarily fill my tax return in, you know, with quite the accuracy that I need to, I'll do better off in the end, won't do any harm.

If I just, you know, if we could just maybe, you know, if we could just manipulate this or tweak this or compromise on that, we'll be better off in the long run.

[17:13] We fiddle a bill or two, whatever, if we take advantage of customers, it's the council, they've got loads of money, we can pay, we can charge more for that, whatever it might be. We can sacrifice righteousness for more money.

Same with godliness. We can think to yourself, well, this is just the game that the world plays.

Everybody's like this. So let's just live in the real world. The real world's corrupt. We've got to just go along with that ourselves.

You've got to be in it to win it. We sacrifice faith. We think to ourselves, you know, I've got to make it. We make sure that this is right. We rationalize everything. So it's like, I've got to make sure that I sort everything.

It depends on me. If we do this, then all will be well. We sacrifice love. We think to ourselves, well, you know, if I'm going to get that reward, if I'm going to be okay with me and my family, I'm going to be okay, then I can't be giving more away to other people.

Charity begins at home. I'm not going to, you know, I'm not going to kind of be that foolish. We sacrifice steadfastness. If things get difficult, then, you know, we're not willing to stick around with that.

[18:13] We're not willing to put up with something that's, you know, that's going to compromise our reward. We've got to protect ourselves and the investment. And perhaps more than anything, we sacrifice gentleness.

How many gentle bosses, bankers, stockbrokers do you know? There are some. I'm not, that's sort of like that bit of a swipe at poor bankers.

Many of them are wonderful, but you know what I'm trying to say? There's such hostility and aggression in that world of finance and wealth.

The culture around us values these things, but not enough to risk the great goal of financial reward.

If you've got the choice between all this stuff here versus money, sorry, I can't spell today, versus money so often that's what people are going to go for, isn't it?

[19:13] The Bible says that's the wrong way round. That's the wrong way round. Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness, these aren't the resources that we are to use up

and sacrifice along the way.

These are the treasures that we should be chasing after. And if we have it, our money is a resource that we can use along the way. Now, please, please don't misunderstand what I'm saying.

I am absolutely not saying that the way to get to heaven and the way to become a Christian is to use your money as though we kind of pay for our salvation in some kind of way. That is total heresy and it's absolutely not what I'm saying.

The point I'm trying to make is that instead of viewing money as the reward that we all really seek as Christians in our lives, instead of seeing it as the reward, we should see it as a tool, as a resource that we can use to invest in what really matters.

In other words, instead of sacrificing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness in order to get rich like the culture around us, we should be sacrificing our wealth in order to pursue these things.

[ 20 : 21 ] Okay, to many people, that will sound like a joke.

And maybe it sounds like a joke to you. You go to a game show, if you imagine, I don't know, when I think of a game show, I think of Bullseye, that was kind of what I watched when I was wee. But I'm sure there's lots more fancy game shows that you have now.

Imagine getting to the end of a game show and it's like, oh, what are you going to win? And it's like, oh, you've won gentleness. Everyone's going to be really gentle to you for the next year.

Nobody's chasing that, are they? They want loads of money, or a caravan as it was back in the days of Bullseye.

Even as Christians, we find it hard not to think, well, actually, money's probably got more to offer, righteousness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness, they're all important, you know, money, that would really help, you know, that would really help.

[ 21 : 21 ] That would be so good. To speak in the terms that I'm speaking, in the way that these verses are speaking, it seems at best naive, at worst, it seems deluded.

To so many people, to say, this stuff in verse 11 is worth more than money, they'd say, oh, that's nice, but that's actually a bit of a joke. Well, if you're tempted to think like that, then there's two things that we need to say in response.

One is that we need to actually think about what these words mean. So when we look at these words here, you know, it's easy to whiz through a list and not think about it, but think about what these words mean.

Righteousness, that means a standard of moral behavior that always and only ever does what is right. So when you think of that word, righteousness, I want you to just think of a standard, a line of behavior that is always, always doing the right thing, never, ever, ever doing something that is morally wrong.

Now, go to Ukraine and ask someone there what matters more, righteousness or money.

[ 22 : 36 ] Godliness, that means being devoted to God and turning away from everything that's impure and corrupt and horrible and damaging to people's lives, means being, it basically means being like Jesus.

And being like Jesus means being compassionate, fair, courageous, wise, generous, patient and kind. Isn't that what you would love on your gravestone? Or would you like it to say he was loaded? Faith, a life lived trusting God, relying on him, even when things are difficult, relying on him, not doubting, not cynical, not anxious, but trusting God every day.

Love, well, I don't think I need to even explain that one. Steadfastness, patiently persevering, keeping going, no matter how hard it gets when you get a bad diagnosis, when your bank balance isn't what you wanted to be, you know, your steadfastness, keeping going, keeping focused on what mattered is so crucial.

And gentleness, as we were saying, the pursuit of money is almost always harsh. In God's economy, money is worth very little.

[ 24 : 04 ] Gentleness is like gold. And ultimately, the key to finding all of these things is through trusting in Jesus and following him.

He's the source of all of these things. He's the model of all of these things. He's the giver of all of these things.

When you think about what these words actually mean, then we soon realize that these things are so precious that to chase money and to sacrifice that, that's the crazy option.

So thinking about what this actually means and what it actually refers to helps us to see that this is no joke. But the second thing we need to say, and even more so, is that everything that this verse describes, everything that this verse describes, this is the stuff that matters to God.

Now you might think to yourself, oh well, that's nice, God likes these things, doesn't that sound good? It's all kind of warm and cosy. It's still a bit naive and in the real world, money is actually far more important.

[ 25 : 27 ] Well if you think like that, if you are tempted to think like that, if you're tempted to think, look Thomas, those words are nice but they're actually not that important, even if it's what God likes. If you are tempted to think like that, well, I don't really have a better way of describing this so you'll forgive me for using this image.

But if you think like that, then God is about to punch you in the face. And He does it in verses 13 to 16.

He punches us between the eyes. As Paul writes to Timothy, 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 whom be honour and eternal dominion.

Amen. Now, these words are a wake-up call to all of us, the command to pursue righteousness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness, godliness, to fight the good fight of faith, to lay whole to eternal life.

[ 26 : 49 ] That command is from God. It's from the God who gives life to all things, the one on whom your existence is totally dependent.

The God whose Son Jesus Christ came and died and rose again and who is coming back, he's going to display the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole of existence of our lives and all the lives of our children and our descendants are between the first coming of Jesus and the last coming of Jesus, the second coming.

The God who is blessed, the source of everything that's good, everything that is good in your life and mine comes from God.

The God who is sovereign, King of kings, Lord of lords, sovereign over every square inch of the universe, over every second that you and I live our lives.

The God who alone has our mortality, the God who dwells in unapproachable light, the God whom no one has ever seen or can see, the one who deserves honour and the one to whom eternal dominion belongs.

[ 28 : 06 ] He says, stop chasing money or power or status or sex or pleasure or whatever it is that you are going after week to week, year to year, he says flee from all that and pursue me.

And in the name of that God, this is no joke. It's the single most important thing that we can ever think about and this is where our perspective has got to change.

We've got to stop living our lives as investments to achieve prosperity in this life and we've got to start living our lives as investments for his glory. Now that's a huge challenge for every one of us, for every one of us as Christians, for us as a church together because the rest of the world thinks differently.

The people you work with think differently. Everything you see on TV, you read in the media, it all thinks differently but we've got to be ready to be different.

Our perspective has got to be shaped by eternity. Now that does not mean giving away everything that you own and Paul gives a really wonderful reminder of that in verses 17 to 19.

[ 29 : 26 ] He's not telling the wealthy to sell everything. Get there to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous with what they have, to share and to make sure they don't set their hope on the uncertainty of riches.

The key thing is that God is telling us to invest for eternity. Our money is not the treasure chest that we're desperate to find.

Our money is a spade that we can use to help tell other people about Jesus. That we can use to help people who live their lives in poverty.

That we can use to help show generosity to people in our community. That we can use to have people for meals. That we can use to enjoy the blessings that God has given us. And the same is true of all our other resources as well. Our time, our skills, our homes, our friendships. All of these can be invested for eternity.

[ 30 : 25 ] I want to close with this because time has disappeared. We said earlier on that all of this is relevant for tomorrow, next year and eternity.

The thing that we're chasing is going to shape how you live tomorrow. It's going to shape what we aim for next year and it has implications for all eternity. What I want to ask everyone here is, do these three correspond to each other?

Do they connect together? The reason I'm asking that is because it's incredibly easy for these to be isolated from one another. It's so easy to think, yeah, I know what I want for eternity.

I do believe in God and I do want to live for him. I want to be with God and with all other Christians in glory forever.

I want that. And next year I would really love it if I was a Christian, if I really was actually doing that and living for that. I would really like that to happen next year.

[ 31 : 37 ] So tomorrow I'm going to put it out in my mind. Tomorrow I'm just going to go on Facebook or pour my energy into work and I'm just not going to think about it.

It's so easy for these things to become disjointed. What do you want eternity to look like?

What do you want to be able to hold onto on the day you die? What do you want eternity to look like?

I know that everybody in here has got the same answer. Everybody in here has got the same answer to that question. We all want to be safe with Jesus. And what do you want next year to look like?

What do we want next year to kind of correspond to that? So yeah, I do actually get disordered. So yes, I don't have this question hanging over me anymore and yet I'm actually living by faith. I do want to do that. So if I want that in eternity, if I want that next year, then what are you going to do tomorrow?

[ 32 : 42 ] Forget about it? What are you going to invest in what really matters?

You're going to seek God while He holds out His arms to you and says, please pursue me, come and follow me.

It applies to everyone here who's maybe not yet sure about where you stand as a Christian, but it also applies to us as a church and this is crucial as well.

Everyone here is a Christian. Think of somebody you know who's not yet a Christian. What do you want for them? Someone in your family, someone you work with, someone who's such a good friend. What do you want for them for eternity?

You want them. You want them to come to faith. What do we want them to be like next year? We want them here with us. We want them in our church family.

[ 33 : 40 ] We want that so much. So what are we going to do tomorrow? Are we going to just carry on with the busyness of life, making sure that I'm working well and that the salary is okay and that everything's fine and I'll just focus on that.

Are we going to do that? No, we are not going to do that. We are going to pray and we're going to think about how we can connect with people and we're going to invite them to church and we're going to invite them into our homes and we're going to think I can invest this week of my life for eternity.

I can use the resources that God has given me now so that he can do an amazing work in someone's life so that the rewards will last forever.

The whole world is telling you to chase after rubbish. God is telling you, he's not saying stop chasing, he's saying stop chasing that rubbish and start chasing something that better.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we acknowledge that so often we just chase after nonsense but we thank you so much that you've not abandoned us but you've given us something far better to put our lives into and we pray, Father, that for tomorrow, for next week, for eternity, all of us would just that we would pursue you and that you'd give us the wisdom that hears your voice calling all of us to follow you today and forever.

[ 35 : 30 ] Please bless us and help us all. Thank you so much for your word. Help us to be a healthy gospel church for the community that you've placed us in. Amen.