



### Liberty Commentary March 3, 2008

In September of 2006, former WorldCom Chief Executive Officer, Bernard Ebbers, reported to the Oakdale Federal Corrections Institution to begin serving a twenty five year prison sentence for fraud and conspiracy as a result of his falsifying financial reports that led to \$11-billion in losses to investors in the largest accounting scandal in U.S. history.

Mr. Ebbers was known for his “overt Christian faith”. He would regularly teach Sunday school, attended the morning worship service with his family and even opened corporate meetings with prayer.

What would cause this man to defraud investors and put at risk his testimony, his reputation and his business?

The Apostle Paul addressed this issue in I Timothy chapter six. Paul tells us, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred

from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”.

There is nothing inherently evil with being wealthy as long as ones wealth was gained and is used to bring honor to Christ, but Paul is warning Christians that an insatiable lusting and craving for material wealth instead of a hungering and thirsting for righteousness will sink men in destruction and leave us grieving. Paul offers a three fold solution to this problem and outlines the method by which we can live a victorious Christian life as a champion for Christ. Paul tells us in I Timothy chapter six that the believer is to flee, follow and fight.

The Champion for Christ must flee from the material and sensual enticements of the world otherwise we will fall into temptation (a continual yielding to the desires of the sin nature), fall into a snare (entrapped and ensnared and rendered ineffective), fall into senseless and harmful lusts (one sin leads to another until our reputation is irrevocably damaged), sink into destruction (as an overloaded boat would sink under the weight of its excessive load), wander from the faith leaving us sorrowful and grieving (the consequences for failing to flee). Paul says the Champion for Christ must not only flee, but he or she must be willing to follow. Paul gives six things that we must follow if we are to live the Christian life the way that God intended. The Christian must follow righteousness (produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer who is totally yielded to His control), Godliness (daily and continual life of piety and reverence to God), faith (faith that enables the believer to trust God for everything in life), love (love others as Christ loved us), patience (perseverance) and meekness (knowing that of ourselves we are nothing, but in God we are spiritual giants and champions for Christ).

Paul then adds a third element. In addition to fleeing and following, the champion for Christ must also fight. The believer is to contend in the good contest of faith. Each believer entered the contest of faith when we repented of our sins and received Christ as our Savior by faith and we are to keep fighting the fight of faith, keep running the race, keep persevering by laying hold of the greatest possession the believer has-our eternal life. Bernard Ebbers as well as multitudes of others have pierced themselves through with many sorrows and grief's because they failed to flee, follow and fight.

God intends for us to live out our faith in a real and practical way that is pertinent and spiritually relevant to our daily living and not get caught up in the oldest hustle and trick of the devil-the pursuit of the temporal in lieu of the eternal.

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