

1 Timothy 6:11:16 ; 20-21

Introduction

In this concluding section of the epistle, Timothy is given a tremendous challenge. Paul calls him a “man of God”. This was one of the great Old Testament titles, applied to Moses (Deuteronomy 33:1) and to the prophets and messengers of God, e.g. God’s messenger to Eli (1 Samuel 2:27), David (2 Chronicles 8:14), Saul (1 Kings 12:22), Elijah (1 Kings 17:24), Elisha (2 Kings 4:9). This title is a great honour. It would have reminded Timothy, not of his weaknesses and inadequacy and sin, which would have made him pessimistically despair, but it challenged and encouraged him to be a “man of God”. It would have made him square his shoulders, and act and live as one who had received a commission from the King.

This description is equally true of people in the New Testament era. Because of Christian’s redemption, in a very real sense he belongs to God and is His special messenger. Three great responsibilities are outlined by Paul – Flee, Follow and Fight – the man of God must flee from certain vices, follow certain virtues, and fight in certain warfare.

The man of God must flee

“Discretion is the better part of valour”, and in certain cases the Christian’s wisdom and safety is to run. “A clean pair of heels and the King’s highway” is the only safe procedure in face of certain sins. To dally or argue may bring disaster. Flee from the covetousness, greed, pride, envy, jealousy, evil scheming and love of money, which Paul had denounced in the previous verses. We can legitimately enlarge this counsel and urge that we turn our backs resolutely and run from anything which would spoil our Christian experience, hinder progress, lower Christian standards, anything that would cause an unwary Christian believer to be content with anything less than best. Surely the man of God must be concerned to be his best for God.

That will answer many of our questions about doubtful things. There is a note of urgency here. If we dally, temptation will soon overtake and overcome us. We must not be like Augustine who, before conversion, once said, “Make me holy, but not yet!”

The man of God must follow

Flee is negative; follow (or pursue) is positive. There are six things which must be followed - **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness** (1 Timothy 6:11).

- Righteousness. Firstly in relationship to our fellows, there needs to be righteousness. Within the family, things need to be right. Christian homes are sadly not always model homes. In relationship to our neighbours, how do we come across? Do they know we are Christians? Do we pray for them? How do we deal with people we meet out and about – are we demanding and

domineering, or courteous and considerate? Is everything all right between our fellow church members and us? Are those relationships free from criticism and backbiting? What about our place of work? What is our testimony there?

- Godliness. Our relationship to God is crucial. Is His word our guidebook? Is His will our aim? Is our chief ambition to please Him? Is our character “God-like”? Are we being transformed by the Holy Spirit into His image daily?
- Faith, or faithfulness. This concerns our relationship to our duty. Are we dependable in our Christian responsibility, promises, keeping our word, carrying out our undertakings, discharging our duties, keeping our obligations to our families, church members and work colleagues? Do we finish what we start?
- Love. This must be seen in relationship to all. **Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another** (Romans 13:8). This is the only debt we must owe to others. This is the virtue of the man who, even if he tried, could not forget God’s love to him and in turn he must show it to others. Love for the unknown, the unlovely, the unprofitable and the unfriendly - that is how God loves. So must His child.
- Endurance. This is about our relationship to our circumstances. We are not just to put up with things, but show victorious endurance, masculine constancy under trial. The conditions of life can be trying indeed. In the church we endure them as at any time in the church’s existence – slow advance of the Gospel, unbelieving opposition, weak and lukewarm members, perverseness of men, subtlety of temptation. All these and other problems make life difficult for Christians. But the man of God needs to show patience, endurance, stickability, and hold on whatever betide. In many churches there is only a core of people who have these qualities, and the rest blow hot or cold.
- Gentleness. In relationship to self. Gentleness, or meekness, is not weakness – try it for a week and see! Denying self, saying “no” to self, crossing one’s self out, is hard work. Self is a big problem. D.L.Moody said he had more trouble with self than with any other person. Meekness is the opposite. Submitting self to God. God first in everything – self last in everything.

So follow eagerly righteousness in relationship to others, Godliness in relationship to God, faithfulness in our duty, love towards all, patience with regard to circumstances, and gentleness in relationship to ourselves. This is the comprehensive, positive character of the man of God.

The man of God must fight

The Christian life is a fight, indeed a mighty conflict, with tremendous consequences. We are called to be soldiers, armed with the whole armour of God. Our fight is against the world – its opinions and outlooks and values. Our fight is against the flesh – the carnal nature within us, with its downward drag. Our fight is against the Devil who is always near, and whose main aim is to ruin a man’s soul. We have no breathing space or armistice in this war. Our enemy never takes a holiday, nor sleeps.

We are not called to a life of ease. The whole notion of warfare is strange to many professing Christians. Hence so much which passes as religion is not genuine Bible Christianity. How few know anything about spiritual warfare, exertion and conflict.

Some think the idea is fanaticism, taking the whole too far. And yet fighting is always the companion of genuine Christian holiness.

The good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) is not fought with carnal weapons. This warfare is based on principles of God's Word. The man of God relies on Christ's presence and help in this battle. **Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.** He needs to lay hold of eternal life, not like a sick man who only has a light hold of life, but like a strong healthy man who has a firm grip on life and draws supplies of strength for his soldiering. There is spiritual life within which a man must possess if he is going to face the foe. It is hopeless to struggle alone.

I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:14). As a man of God, Timothy must stand by his testimony, and stand up for God's law until Christ returns. Down through the centuries there have been men of this calibre, whose spirit could not be crushed, who stood by what they believed whatever the cost, and showed remarkable tenacity of purpose in the Lord's will and work. They faced opposition, ridicule and slander, often from professing Christians. They displayed the banner for Christ even in the most difficult circumstances. Yet they never flinched, and won the respect of their worst adversaries. By faith, they lived, walked, stood and overcame.

All men of God need faith and stability. Pray for each other, that we will abide in Christ, get closer to Christ, and tighten our hold on Christ every day. Remember that the time is short, and the Lord's return draws nigh. After a few more battles, the last trumpet will sound and the King will return. Fight to the last, and never surrender.

May we end like Mr Valiant-for-Truth in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. He called his friends and told them he was going to his father's house. "My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage. My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder." Then the day came for him to go home. Many accompanied him to the riverside. As he went down into the water, he said, "O grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

Conclusion

Men and women of God, let us flee from anything that would spoil our testimony and character. As God's men and women, let's pursue the qualities that will make us genuine Christians. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, witness a good confession, and be faithful to the trust committed to us.

*"The fight of faith our fight shall be.
Till faith shall end in sight, Lord,
As men of God, we'll fight for Thee
And flee and follow and fight, Lord."*