

1 TIMOTHY 6:11-14 (23)

INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the warning given to those who pursue riches, Paul turns his attention to Timothy. He pays him a real complement by calling him a 'man of God' (v 11). The title basically means a man who belongs to God or a man who is God's possession. It was a phrase that was commonly used in the Old Testament. It was used of people like Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Elisha and of course David as well as many others. But it is used only of Timothy in the New Testament and of the Christian Minister in 2 Timothy 3:17. I think Paul used this title to stress to young Timothy his responsibility to discharge his ministry. A man of God according to the Old Testament was a man who represented God in proclaiming his word.

What a privilege for Timothy to be linked to the great saints of the Old Testament but what a responsibility to be a man sent by God to proclaim his word in this world. Although the term is used in its narrowest sense to refer to a man who is in proclamation ministry the term can refer to every believer since every believer has a proclamation ministry to perform in some shape or form.

Paul now tells young Timothy how a man of God must live. It was not an easy task to proclaim God's message to the churches at Ephesus with all the false teachers around. That's why young Timothy must live like a man of God so that there will be nothing about his life that will contradict his message. What was true of Timothy in his world is true of every Christian in our world, so let us observe that:

1. A MAN OF GOD IS KNOWN BY WHAT HE FLEES FROM.

Paul instructs Timothy to flee from all that he has said. The only way to avoid the temptation of pursuing riches is not to walk as close to the temptation as possible without falling but to flee from it. To run in the opposite direction from the temptation. Paul's word to flee may not just be referring to the temptation that he has just been dealing with but Paul may have been thinking about all the temptations and sins that he has mentioned in this letter so far.

However the more appropriate application is to refer back to what he has just said about the pursuit of wealth. The temptation was there for Timothy to make a lot of money if he only changed his doctrine and joined with the false teachers. The temptation was great so Paul urges him to flee; to run from it to become a fugitive if necessary in order not to fall in the same way as some elders at Ephesus have fallen.

But fleeing from such temptations is not a one off thing that must be done for the tense of the verb indicates that it is a constant thing, every day this temptation presents itself and everyday Timothy must flee from it within his own heart. What was true of Timothy is true of us as well. We must daily flee from these temptations. Our whole world system is based on gaining more and more wealth; people are sucked into it that's why more people do the national lottery on rollover weeks. We are bombarded from our media to think in terms of money and materialism.

We need to daily read our Bibles in order to keep our lives in check. Church activities are a very important part of keeping everything in balance; we can so easily get out of balance and therefore we need to hear his word preached regularly in order to keep our thinking straight.

Are there temptations in our lives that we are playing, temptations that we like to walk close too, it may not be the temptation of materialism but it may simply be a host of other things, you have weaknesses in areas that others don't and vice versa; so your temptations may be different from mine but the advice is the same, don't play with it, don't get close to it, flee from it.

2. A MAN OF GOD IS KNOWN BY WHAT HE FOLLOWS (v 11)

If you flee from something you must have something to flee too. You need to replace the temptation with something positive otherwise you will eventually succumb. So Young Timothy is urged to pursue certain spiritual qualities. The qualities listed are qualities that simply lead to holiness. The first two qualities are very general ones; one is horizontal (righteousness) and other is vertical godliness. Righteousness is doing what is right, God's man is known as a man whose lifestyle is marked by obedience to God's word. Godliness has to do with God likeness and mainly refers to internal qualities like motives and attitudes that stem from a reverence for God. Of course anyone who has right motives and right attitudes will in fact display right living so it is difficult to separate righteousness and godliness.

The man of God is to pursue faith and love. Faith is simply a confident trust in God for everything, and certainly you can see how pursuing this, will in fact help us in resisting the temptation to pursue materialism. When we have confidence that God is committed to us and that He is all-powerful and able to keep his word then we will be able to flee from the temptation to love money.

Love is that unconditional and self-sacrificing love that is particularly Christian. It is the love a believer is to have for God, other believers and non-Christians. It is the love that was displayed by Jesus Christ when he walked this earth and there is no greater example of his love than the cross of Christ. A believer is a lover of God and therefore loves those that he loves. God's love has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit and therefore it flows out of us to others (Romans 5:5). The secret of loving others with this type of love is first and foremost loving God. We need to cultivate our love for the Lord by pondering his character and his ways in our lives.

The last two qualities mentioned are external; perseverance is an unswerving loyalty to God in spite of opposition. It is a loyalty that will lay down its life rather than give up one's belief in Christ. Such a person sticks with the task no matter what the cost. Gentleness could also mean kindness or meekness. It is the way a man of God thinks of himself as well as the way he treats others. A gentle person will be humble and gracious in his dealings with others.

3. A MAN OF GOD IS KNOWN FOR WHAT HE FIGHTS FOR (v 12)

Being a man of God means that you are a spokesman for God and therefore you are automatically involved in warfare or in a contest. Paul calls upon Timothy to fight the good fight of the faith. The word "fight" is a Greek word from which we get our English 'agonise' it was used in both military and athletic contexts to describe the concentration; discipline conviction and effort needed to win (like boxing). The faith that Paul is talking about is the body of Christian truth believed by the church, it is the doctrine loved and accepted by believers. The false teachers were prepared to distort the true doctrine for their own convenience, but the true man of God will fight for it, he will agonise over any erosion of doctrine. This is a fight worth fighting, for Paul describes it as good or excellent fight; it certainly is a spiritual fight; for us to maintain sound doctrine will mean resisting Satan and all his cohorts.

In order to encourage Timothy in this spiritual contest he is encouraged to take hold of the eternal life to which he was called. He obviously does not mean that Timothy needed salvation but he is telling him to get a grip of the reality of eternal life, so that he would live and minister in the light of eternity. If he sees things through the eyes of eternity then he will be prepared to fight for the faith; for he will have a true perspective of the importance of maintaining true doctrine and the spiritual consequences of failing to do so. Timothy was called to eternal life when he was called by God to salvation; he was called to eternal glory, now Timothy must start living in the light of that eternal reality to which he has been called.

He confirmed his call when he made his good confession in the presence of many witnesses; this was probably at his baptism and then at what we might call his induction to the ministry. Paul is simply reminding Timothy to keep an eternal perspective, remember what you have been called to and remember the confession of that call that many witnesses heard. Now Timothy this is why you ought to fight the good fight, eternal issues are at stake. The fight is just as real today as in Timothy's day; we must live with an eternal perspective and see the importance of maintaining the truth. To allow the erosion of just one doctrine has eternal consequences.

Therefore we must remember that we were called to salvation and confessed our belief in the core doctrines at our baptism and church membership, therefore do not allow those doctrines to be eroded. There are plenty of false teachers around today who delight in leading solid reformed churches astray from the great doctrine of grace. So beware and do not think it could not happen to us. If we think like that then we are in danger, for we are off guard and becoming complacent.

4. A MAN OF GOD IS KNOWN BY WHAT HE IS FAITHFUL TOO (vs. 13-14)

Paul urges Timothy to keep the command without spot or blame (v 14) which simply means that there should be no obvious flaws in his life so that his confession of Christ will not be marred in any shape or form. Now there is much debate in the commentaries concerning the meaning of this word 'command' (v 14). Does he mean the word of God generally, or the commands given to Timothy and the church in this letter or was there a specific command made to Timothy that we do not know about or was it a command given to him at his baptism or ordination to the ministry or is it thinking more specifically about the commands in these immediate verses? I don't know but in my view it probably should be taken in its widest terms to mean all of God's word or if you want to narrow it down we should do so to this letter or this passage.

Whatever the meaning; Paul is calling upon Timothy to be faithful in keeping God's commands. To keep the command will obviously involve defending it from the error of the false teachers as well as promoting it in the life of the church and by preaching it. To encourage Timothy to be faithful to his task no matter what the cost he is reminded that he is accountable to God and to Jesus Christ. Paul does this by reminding Timothy that God (the Father) is all seeing and is the giver of life to all things (v 13). He is all-powerful and completely sovereign. Therefore Timothy must remember that as he seeks to keep God's commands he must do so knowing that God is watching and therefore he must be a God pleaser and not a man pleaser.

The fact that God is sovereign and all-powerful ought to motivate the man of God to be faithful. Timothy should not be worried about the price that he might have to pay to remain faithful by keeping God's word in the midst of the opposition, for God is in charge, he will sustain Timothy until his task is complete in God's sight.

The second encouragement to Timothy to remain faithful no matter what the cost is Jesus Christ. Jesus is Timothy's example, He held fast and kept His Father's commands and remained faithful even before Pontius Pilate, he testified and made a good confession. Before the man who had it in his power to put Jesus to death, Jesus did not shrink from his commitment to His Father or to His word. He spoke the truth, and trusted his Father with his life. Timothy or any man of God is to do likewise.

Timothy must remain faithful until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was not a short-term mission for Timothy; he was to remain faithful all his life until death or until his Lord returned. That is our task to. Being a Christian is not a job that you do from 9 to 5 and then you cease from it until the next morning. Every moment of every day we are to remain faithful, we are to proclaim His word at every opportunity, and to remain faithful because God is sovereign and observes our testimony and Jesus Christ is our great example.

So let us continue on in this great work of being gospel proclaimers and let us be men and women of God. Let us keep on obeying these instructions until Jesus Christ returns, let us constantly flee from temptations, let us pursue the spiritual qualities listed, let us take up the fight for the faith and finally let us remain faithful so that when Jesus does return; we will hear those words coming from his lips 'well done good and faithful servant.'

Amen