

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Man of God**

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:11-14

Code: 54-47

It's fitting that we bring our Shepherds Conference to a climax by turning in our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6 and looking at verses 11 through 14. The subject of these verses is the man of God...the man of God. That in itself is one of my very favorite biblical descriptive phrases, man of God. It appears in verse 11 as a title the Apostle Paul gives to Timothy, a title that is simple yet immeasurably wonderful and rich.

What a privilege to be called man of God, or God's man. It is a possessive phrase indicating that Timothy belonged to God in a special and unique way. The fact is though this term "man of God" is a very common term in the Old Testament, it is a very uncommon term in the New Testament. Only one person on the pages of the New Testament is ever called man of God and it is Timothy and it is in this text. In a very special and unique way, Timothy was God's man. And Paul uses this title to increase the sense of responsibility that Timothy had to discharge his ministry. To be reminded that you are God's man, that you are the very possession of God is to be reminded of great responsibility. And that is precisely the sense in which the Apostle Paul uses the phrase in designating Timothy.

Though it is us uncommon in the New Testament, it is common in the Old Testament. It first appears in designation of Moses, the great prophet of God who wrote the Pentateuch. In Deuteronomy 33:1, Moses is first called the man of God. He is called the man of God again in 1 Chronicles 23:14 and Ezra 3:2. The term "man of God" one time in the Old Testament was used of an angelic messenger, one who came in the form of a man to bring a message from God to the wife of Manoah that she was to bring forth a child who came to be the man Samson. That occurs in Judges 13:6 and 7. In 1 Samuel 2:27 it was used to describe a prophet who spoke on behalf of God to the high priest Eli about the divine judgment soon to come on his sinful family. It was used again in 1 Samuel 9:6 and following to designate Samuel himself as the man of God who spoke divine truth.

Anyone who was the prophet of God was God's man. And the term "the man of God" was always used in reference to one who bore the Word of God, who represented God by speaking in God's behalf God's truth. It was used of the prophet Shemaiah who was sent from God to prophesy against Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12:22. It was used again for the prophet who spoke the Word of God to Jeroboam regarding his being replaced and then judged, 1 Kings 13. Elijah is called the man of God in 1 Kings 17:18 and following, and Elisha in 2 Kings 4 and following is called the man of God many times. David in Nehemiah 12 verses 24 and 36 is also called the man of God. The prophet who confronted Amaziah is called the man of God in 2 Chronicles 25:7 and a prophet by the name of

Igdaliah in Jeremiah chapter 35 verse 4 is also called the man of God.

All of the uses in the Old Testament reflect someone who uniquely represents God by speaking the Word of God. The sum of all those uses then tells us unequivocally that it is a reference to a messenger who is sent by God to speak for God. When Timothy then is called the "man of God," it is reflective of his call and his ordination and his responsibility to speak the truth of God.

There are two other uses of the term "man of God" in the New Testament. One of them reflects back to the Old Testament men of God, that is 2 Peter 1:21. It says, "The prophecy came not...that referring to the Old Testament...at any time by the will of man but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And there you want to see that as a technical term for the authors of Scripture who were the spokesmen of God, the holy men of God.

The one other use of it is a generic use in 2 Timothy chapter 3. Would you look at that for just a moment? Every use of the "man of God" is specific up to this point, referring to one or another prophet, referring as in 2 Peter 1:21 to a group of prophets, referring in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 11 to Timothy specifically, but here in verses 16 and 17 of 2 Timothy 3 it is broadened and used in a somewhat generic sense. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness in order that...and here's the phrase...the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. While Timothy is certainly the object in the context here since he is the recipient of the letter, and since his own conversion has been mentioned in verses 14 and 15, the term in use in verse 17 broadens beyond Timothy to include any man of God. The statement then in verses 16 and 17 is primarily for the benefit of those who are the articulators of the Word of God, the messengers of the Word of God, though it certainly extends beyond that at the widest point of interpretation to every believer.

But what Paul is saying here is that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God for the purpose of perfecting the man of God. That is particularly focusing on the spokesmen for God. Obviously the Word of God will perfect all believers, but his particular object in mind is the man of God.

Now it's interesting to me that the last usage of this phrase in Scripture is a generic use and therefore we do not feel reluctant to broaden the use of "the man of God" to encompass any today who are the spokesman for God in our generation or in any other generation. God has always had His spokesman, He has always had His prophets, He has always had His preachers. Men of God are those who uniquely speak His Word.

We can conclude then from 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 that the man of God can embrace anyone who having been perfected by the Word is called to proclaim the Word. So all of us who are called by God, set apart for the proclamation of His Word, to be preachers and teachers and proclaimers are to be men of God. And we should bear that title in some measure of consistency with the long line of

holy men who make up the elite company of those so designated men of God. We as men of God today take our place in the ranks of those who are the historic spokesman for the eternal God. What a tremendous calling. Paul's instruction to Timothy then, back in 1 Timothy 6, is heightened intensified and made even greater when he calls Timothy man of God because in so doing he identifies Timothy with that long line of historic spokesmen for God and intensifies his own need to be committed to the task at hand.

We are, as Pilgrim's Progress put it, the King's champions. What a marvelous thought. Men of God are men who have been lifted above worldly aims and who have been devoted to divine service. Men belonging to a spiritual order with which things temporal, transitory and passing have no permanent relationship. We are men who are not the world's men. We are not our own men. We are God's men. We have been raised above earthly things, we have been raised to the heavenlies, we have become the unique possession of God, His property, we stand in His stead to speak His Word.

It's important that Paul use the term here because of the weighty ministry at the feet of Timothy. You remember that Timothy had been left in Ephesus to put things right in the church, to bring order to a church that had lost its way. False doctrine had crept in. False leadership was there. People unworthy of pastoral roles and serving as elders were in those roles. Sinful leaders, heresy, ungodliness, tolerance of sin, all of that was in the church and Timothy was given the task of making it right. In order to lay upon him the weight of that responsibility he calls him God's man. You are there as the representative of the living God. That adds tremendous sense of responsibility. In fact, this is such a strategic letter for such a strategic church that Paul three times in the letter points out false teachers and how Timothy is to respond to them. And each time he does it by reminding Timothy of the sacredness of his calling.

Let me show you that. Go back to chapter 1. Three times Paul speaks of false teachers. Starting in verse 3 he talks about those who teach another doctrine. Verse 4, who teach fables and endless genealogies, who serve up questions rather than answers, and do not provide things that godly edify. These turn others aside, verse 6, and their motive is they want to be teachers but they have no idea what they're talking about, according to verse 7.

The second reference to false teachers comes in chapter 4. The first four verses, starting in verse 1, speak about the fact that some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, doctrines of demons, propagated by lie speaking hypocrites whose consciences have been seared with a hot iron.

The third reference to false teachers comes in chapter 6 verse 3, those who teach otherwise, who do not consent to wholesome or healthy words, who do not consent to the doctrine that is according to godliness, who are proud, who don't know anything, who are morbidly sick about questions and disputes and debates producing only envy, strife, railing and evil suspicion, who propagate nothing but the twisted corrupt perverted disputings of men, destitute of the truth who imagine that the real

gain that they're after is money, not godliness. And he goes on to speak about their love of money down through verse 10.

So, chapter 1, chapter 4, chapter 6, Paul introduces the problem of false teachers. They were high powered, they were strong and they were in positions of authority in the church. Each time, however, he speaks of them he follows up by telling Timothy he has to resist them. Back in chapter 1 verse 18, he says to Timothy, "This charge...or command...I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies pointing to you that you might war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience in the midst of battle." Once he mentions the false teachers, he immediately then charges Timothy to resist them.

Chapter 4, he mentioned the false teachers, as I said in the first four verses, and then immediately in verse 14 having discussed all the way from verse 6 Timothy's responsibility, I mean 6 through 16, he flows through that whole passage and tells Timothy how to resist them. Verse 6, "Put the brethren in remembrance of these things, be a good minister of Jesus Christ nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine unto which you've attained and refuse their profane and old wives fables and exercise yourself unto godliness."

Down in verse 16 he sums it up, "Take heed to yourself and unto the doctrine, continue in them. In doing this you'll save yourself and the ones who listen to you." Again false teachers and then Timothy's responsibility.

Chapter 6, we find the same thing. Three to ten, the false teachers and then in 11 through 14, Timothy's responsibility. "But you, O man of God, flee these things and follow after," and so forth. Each time he mentions false teachers which are the heart of the problem, he mentions Timothy's responsibility to resist them.

Now here's the real key point. In each case Timothy's responsibility to resist them is heightened by a reference to Timothy's call to the ministry. Chapter 1 verse 18, "Timothy, do this, I charge you, according to the prophecies which pointed to you." That is, the Word of God that came through means of prophecy to point to Timothy as God's anointed servant. Chapter 4 verse 14, the second portion about false teachers, Timothy's responsibility is again heightened by a reference to his spiritual beginnings, his call and ordination, "Neglect not the gift that is in you which was given you in prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the elders." And again he goes back to spiritual responsibility based upon his call of God, his ordination, his spiritual beginnings. Chapter 6, he does the same thing. Verse 12, "You are to fight the good fight, you are to hold on to eternal life because this is what you were called to and this is what you have confessed in your confession before many witnesses."

In other words, Timothy's responsibility to stand against error and to fight for the truth and to be God's man in setting the church right is based upon that original call of God that so designated him as the man of God. God's representative. Beloved, the responsibility of the ministry revolves around a man's call from God. That's basic. We are called by God to be His man. We are uniquely His. He owns us. He possesses us. We represent Him.

In verse 11 it begins, "But thou, O man of God,..". "But thou" is set in contrast to the false teachers. The false teachers are into everything mentioned from verse 3 through 10, "But you," he says in contrast, "You are God's man, they are money's man, they are materialism's man, they are the world's man, they are their own man, they are sin's man, Satan's man, hell's man, but you, O man of God..." Contrast. The word "O" is a personal appeal, it's an emotional appeal. It's very rare, by the way, in personal greetings in the Greek that word would be used and it shows the pleading in the heart of Paul...but you, O man of God, remember your spiritual beginnings, your spiritual calling, don't lose sight of your identity. As a man of God, you have a unique calling. As a man of God, you are to be uniquely identifiable. As a man of God, you are to have characteristics that can be seen and measured.

How is a man of God known? What is Paul going to say to Timothy as to the character of a man of God? Four things...Timothy, you man of God, hear are four things that should mark you. One, a man of God is marked by what he flees from. Two, a man of God is marked by what he follows after. Three, a man of God is marked by what he fights for. And four, a man of God is marked by what he is faithful to. A tremendous practical outline for every man of God who stands to speak in the place of divine truth.

Number one, a man of God is known by what he flees from. Verse 11, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things." That's a present imperative, keep on continually fleeing. It's a continual running from. It's the word pheugo, from which we get fugitive. Someone who is running to escape a pursurer. It pictures one running from a plague, running from a serpent that's poisonous, running from an attacking enemy. The man of God is a runner. The man of God does not stand still, he runs and he runs from things. He is known by what he flees from. First Corinthians 6:18 the Apostle Paul says, "Flee sexual sin." First Corinthians 10:14, "Flee idolatry." Second Timothy 2:22 Paul writes to Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts." We are fleeing. The man of God is fleeing at all times those kinds of corrupting things.

Here he says flee these things. What does he mean? The things he has just talked about. What has he just talked about? The evils attached to the love of money. Verse 9, "They that would be rich, desiring to be rich, fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, for the love of money is all kinds of evil which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and literally skewered themselves through with many griefs. Flee these things, the love of money and all its attendant griefs, lusts, temptations, hurtful things, errors in

the faith, sorrows, griefs...flee these things.

The man of God is not attached to the love of money. He does not have affection for material things. Paul has been telling Timothy to avoid a lot of things. He's told him several times in this epistle to avoid endless genealogies, vain repetition, fables, science falsely so called as its mentioned in verse 20 of chapter 6. And here he says flee the love of money which is the root of all kinds of evil. Flee greed with all its vices. It is the sin of false teachers. It is the sin of lying hypocrites who pervert the truth for personal gain, who make merchandise of people, who really pursue filthy lucre and people are only a means to that end, who preach for money. From Baalam, the prophet who was bought by the highest bidder, to Judas, the apostle who sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver...from the false prophets of Israel who were greedy dogs that never had enough and were concerned every one for his own gain, Isaiah says, and the covetous prophets and priests of Jeremiah's time and the prophets of Ezekiel's time who could be bought by handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, and the prophets who divined for money of which Micah speaks, all the way to the false teachers who spoke good words and fair speeches to the Romans to deceive the innocent for the satisfaction of their own bellies and the unruly and empty talkers and deceivers of Crete who subverted whole households teaching things they ought not for filthy lucre's sake, the characteristic of false teachers is greed. From the first to the last. But it has no place for the man of God. The love of money has twisted and perverted many.

Paul was so careful to avoid this, he says to the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20, "I have coveted no man's silver, no man's gold and no man's clothing and I have labored with my own hands to provide my own living and the living of everybody with me so you wouldn't have to be charged with that. I've gone the second mile so as not to be accused of grasping for money." To the Corinthians he writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, "I have a right to be supported, I have a right as an Apostle to lead about a sister as a wife...that is have marriage...I have a right to be receiving a living from my ministry, they that preach the gospel should eat of the gospel, or live of the gospel, but I wave that right so as not to get you in any way, shape, or form thinking that I might be in it for the money."

In Philippians he says, "I would love to send someone to you but I don't have anybody to send because everybody does what he does for himself, not for Jesus Christ. The only person I can send you who is not like that is Timothy." Paul must have experienced people in his own ministry who were in it for what they could get, like Demas who having loved the present world departed from the Apostle.

In 1 Thessalonians he says to the Thessalonians, "We were gentle among you like a nursing mother cherishing her children and we did not charge you for anything," and he goes on to explain his own labor night and day in toil in order that he might provide ministry to them at no cost.

Let me tell you something. You may call yourself a preacher, but if you're in it for the money you are not a man of God...you are not God's man. You cannot be God's man and money's man. You have prostituted the call of God into personal gain. We see it all around us. And when do we awaken to the reality of it? Never put a price on your calling, never put a price on your ministry, never charge a certain amount for bringing the Word of God, for whatever you charge will have the net effect of devaluing you to zero.

A man of God is known by what he flees from. He flees from sexual sin. He flees from having other gods in his heart. He flees from youthful lust. And here in this text he flees from the love of money.

Secondly, the man of God is also known by what he follows after. Verse 11 says, "Follow after..." and six virtues are mentioned, "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and meekness." The man of God while continually running from is also continually running to. Something behind him he wants to avoid, something ahead of him he wants to catch. And it's present imperative again, continually be pursuing, keep on running after. We are always fleeing, that's the negative, and we are always following after, that's the positive. Like that wonderful widow mentioned in chapter 5 verse 10 who has diligently pursued every good work, so the man of God has a life pursuit of that which is right.

The Christian life is not just running from what's wrong, it's running toward what's right. And there's a sense in which as long as we're in this body, in this flesh, on this earth and victims of our own fallenness, we can never stop running because if we stop running from what is evil it will catch us, and if we stop pursuing what is righteous, it will elude us. We'll never ever be at the point where we have finally outdistanced what is wrong, nor will we ever be at the point where we have fully captured what is right. So our whole life is in a pursuit of what is right and a fleeing from what is wrong.

In 2 Timothy 2 where Paul said, "Flee youthful lust," he added, "and follow righteousness, faith..." and so forth. Proverbs 15:9 says, "The Lord loves the one who pursues righteousness." What a great thought. Ask yourself what you pursue. What are you after in this life? What are you living for? What are you directing your goals and energies at? What occupies your mind? What goals do you want to attain...success, fame, esteem, promotion, money, possessions, house, car, whatever? What are you really after? That's the mark of a man of God. He's after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, meekness. A man of God is known by what he runs from, he's also known by what he runs after.

Let's look at these. The first two are overarching general virtues, one having to do with the external behavior, the other having to do with the internal attitude and motive. The first is righteousness...the beautiful word righteousness. And I don't want to beg the issue and you all know what this means, that rich word dikaiosune basically means to do right, do right before man, do right before God; do right to man, do right to God.

The remnant of faithful Israel were called by Isaiah in chapter 51 verse 1, "You that follow after righteousness." The writer of Hebrews says, "The only people who see the Lord are those who follow after holiness," Hebrews 12:14.

And the righteousness Paul has in mind here is not imputed righteousness, it's not sort of that declared righteousness that you receive positionally in Christ in salvation, it's practical righteousness. The man of God is known by doing right. He does right in his life. He lives according to the standard of God. He obeys God. His conduct is right, his behavior is right, his life is right, he does what's right.

And how tragic it is when as we have seen this week in the terrible scandal that's hit the television evangelists, living ungodly lascivious sexually disoriented lives apart from the truth of God and all the time mouthing the gospel of Jesus Christ is a total sham on everything the gospel stands for. And I was interested to read in the paper yesterday that 99 percent of the letters that came into that program have been affirming and positive. Ninety-nine percent, which tells me that the truth was probably never given out through those years on that program to those constituents or they would have seen sin for sin and dealt with it as sin ought to be dealt with. And so a man can maintain his credibility when his life would make a black mark on a piece of coal. How can that be? A man may be a preacher, I say it again, but he's not a man of God who lives like that. Obeying God's standard is characteristic of the man of God. The man of God follows after righteous behavior. He pursues righteous behavior. He does not pursue sexual gratification, material gratification, ego gratification, he pursues righteousness. He lives to do what's right. He lives to do what's good. He lives to do what's obedient to God's commands.

And the partner to that spiritual virtue is the next one, godliness. That has to do with the inside. Righteousness has to do with the behavior, godliness has to do with the attitude and the motive. This moves inside to direct our thought to the spirit of reverence, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of piety that's in the heart. Eusebeia, that beautiful word used nine times in the pastoral epistles, a very rich theme throughout all these letters, right behavior flows out of right attitude, right action flows out of right motive, reverence for God is what eusebeia means, godliness, it means a worshiping heart. This is a person who not only does right but thinks right, who not only behaves properly but is properly motivated. This is one, who in the words of Hebrew 12:28, serves God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. This is one who lives life in the conscious presence of the holiness of God.

Godliness...what a beautiful term. Godlikeness, this is the one who standing before the Lord some day, according to 1 Corinthians 4:1 to 5, when the time of the revealing of the secret things of the heart, the motives of the heart will receive a reward for godliness. Those are the two overarching virtues the man of God should be known by, they are the things he pursues. They are at the core of his usefulness. They are at the core of his power. They are at the core of his character. Watch your heart. Watch your motives. Watch your desires. Watch your conduct. Watch your behavior. Don't



be an unsanctified preacher.

Richard Baxter said in The Reformed Pastor back in the seventeenth century, "Many a tailor goes in rags that makes costly clothes for others and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers when he has dressed for others the most costly dishes," end quote. Don't be a tailor in rags, don't be a starving cook, don't be preparing things for others that you don't have yourself. Paul was so concerned with these matters of godliness that in Acts 20 he said to the Ephesian elders, "Take heed to yourselves," start there. And back in the fourth chapter we saw what he said to Timothy in verse 16, "Take heed to yourself."

Paul knew himself. In Romans 7 he said, "I know that in me that is in my flesh dwells no good thing. And I know what I want to do I don't do, and what I don't want to do I do, and I'm a wretched man because of that presence of the flesh." He called himself in 1 Timothy 1 the chief of sinners. He didn't say I was, he said I am. He knew his sinful tendencies and he knew that he had to use all the means of grace to allow the Spirit of God to conquer those tendencies. And that's why to the Corinthians he said, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." That's why he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 that if you want to be a vessel fit for the Master's use, you must purge yourself, sanctify yourself. The sad reality, beloved, is that we have very few men of God whose lives are marked by great power because we have few men of God who fit the standard.

John Flavel, the Puritan writer, said, "It is easier to cry against a thousand sins in others than to mortify one sin in ourselves." Is that not so? And it is the duty of the preacher to cry against the thousand sins in the lives of others. It is also his duty to deal with the one sin in himself.

John Owen wrote, "A minister may fill his pews, his communion role, the ears of the public, but what he is on his knees in secret before almighty God, that he is and no more," end quote. Unholiness, sin in the heart and life of God's servant disgraces the ministry and the Savior's glorious name. The man of God, the real man of God pursues righteousness and godliness. And he employs all the means necessary to that, the Word and prayer and selfdenial and discipline and accountability and worship and communion and all those spiritual graces in order that he may capture his own heart and bring it captive to Christ. It comes down for us to making sure in the ministry that we aren't doing what we're doing for others and not for ourselves, like the ragged tailor.

Charles Bridges wrote in The Christian Ministry and I think it's so direct, "If we should study the Bible more as ministers than as Christians, more to find matter for the instruction of our people than food for the nourishment of our own souls, we neglect then to place ourselves at the feet of our divine teacher, our communion with Him is cut off, and we become mere formalists in sacred profession. We cannot live by feeding others or heal ourselves by the mere employment of healing our people. And therefore, by this course of official service, our familiarity with the awful realities of death and

eternity may be rather like that of the grave digger, the physician and the soldier than of the man of God, viewing eternity with deep seriousness and concern and bringing to his people the profitable fruit of his contemplations. It has well been remarked that when once a man begins to view religion not as of personal but merely of professional importance, he has an obstacle in his course with which a private Christian is unacquainted. It is indeed difficult to determine whether our familiar intercourse with the things of God is more to our temptation or to our advantage," end quote.

It's true. If we do not use the means of grace for our own righteousness and godliness, we will not be a man of God. Stalker(?) in his book on the Yale series on preaching says, "Brethren, study God's Word diligently for your own edification and when it has become more to you than your necessary food, sweeter than honey or the honeycomb, it will be impossible for you to speak of it to others without a glow passing into your words which will betray the delight with which it has inspired your own heart."

So, the man of God pursues these two general virtues and others correspond. The dominant internal virtues are then named: faith and love...faith and love. What does faith mean? Confident trust in God for everything, loyalty to the Lord, unwavering confidence in God's power, unwavering confidence in God's purpose, unwavering confidence in God's plan, unwavering confidence in God's provision, unwavering confidence in God's promise. We live believing God. The man of God lives by faith. He trusts the sovereign God to keep His Word and meet his needs and provide everything. There's no frustration. There's no forcing. There's no manipulation. He lives in what I call a relaxed desperation. He is desperate because of the tremendous ramifications of the ministry, but he is relaxed because of his confidence in the sovereignty of God.

He lives in faith. The dominant internal attitude is faith. He trusts God. He lives in that confidence. He believes God for everything. He is loyal to God in everything. Unwavering.

And coupled with it is love. That beautiful volitional love, the love of choice, agapan(?), unrestricted and unrestrained. You say, "What does this mean? Love to whom here?" Love to everybody...love to God, love to men, love to Christians, love to nonChristians. It's unrestricted, it's unrestrained, it's just love. His internal virtue is predominantly that of faith in the sovereign God and love to the sovereign God and love to all men. He understands the great commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength," and he also understands how essential it is to love your neighbor as yourself, Matthew 22:37 to 39. The man of God is a lover of God. He longs for God. He understands what Paul means when he says, "O that I may know Him." He understands the significance of a spiritual Father in 1 John 2 who knows Him who is from the beginning. He is a lover of God more than a lover of self. And because he is a lover of God he loves whom God loves and God loves men and so he loves men. The man of God is known as one who pursues after a life of confident trust in the sovereignty of God and love to God and love to men. He seeks to let the love of God shed abroad in his heart, as Romans 5:5 says, out that it may touch the world. He is a lover.

And in the sense, please, that he loves enough to confront with the truth, do not pretend to love someone whose sins you will not confront.

And then the outward virtues are designated as endurance and meekness. Endurance or patience is hupomone, it means to remain under. It refers not to a passive resignation but a victorious triumphant endurance, an unswerving loyalty to the Lord in the middle of trials...that's what it means...going through severe troubles, severe anguish, severe difficulty, never wavering, never compromising, always trusting, always believing whatever the circumstance. This is the endurance of the martyr who will give his life if need be for the cause, the shepherd who if need be will lay down his life for his own flock as his master did. This is the person who under the worst of circumstances makes no issue out of his own rights and his own needs and his own demands. This is the noble virtue, the ability to endure injustice, to endure deprivation, pain, battle, grief, whatever it is with spiritual staying power, to endure even to death. This is the spirit that takes what comes in victory.

George Mathison was blind. He fell in love. He lost the woman he loved with all his heart. He wrote a prayer in which he pleaded that he might be able to accept that loss as God's will. He said, quote: "Not with dumb resignation but with holy joy, not only with the absence of murmur but with a song of praise," end quote. Only hupomone does that. It is the man of God who faces the inevitable and the constant trials of ministry that must have that virtue of endurance because the stuff keeps coming and coming and coming on the outside. Read 2 Corinthians 11 and all the things that Paul endured and maintained his victorious triumphant spirit.

And then that second outward attitude is one of meekness, or humility. He projects a selflessness. He projects a meekness, the sweet gentleness of one who though consumed with a great cause recognizes that he makes no contribution to its success. Meekness.

The man of God is known because he follows those things, he follows righteousness. That is he pursues right behavior. He follows godliness, that is he pursues right motives and thoughts. And in his heart he pursues a life of total confidence in God and love toward God and men. And on the outside he pursues a life that no matter what the circumstances manifest triumphant endurance and humility. Those are the marks of the man of God. And again I say you may be a preacher but if these are not the things that you pursue, you're not the man of God.

Thirdly, the man of God is known not only by what he flees from and what he follows after but by what he fights for. This is just a brief and direct point in verse 12. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life unto which thou art also called and has professed, or confessed, a good confession before many witnesses."

Let me say this very directly to you. I am convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that the literature of the New Testament supports the fact that a man of God who speaks for God is to see himself as a

fighter...as a fighter. We are polemicists. We are usually on the attack. We are fighters, contenders, battlers, soldiers and protagonists. We must understand that ministry is war and we are warring with the truth against error. We are called to be soldiers. In fact, in chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, we are soldiers who must endure hardness, who cannot entangle ourselves with civilian life and who do everything we do to please the one who called us to be a soldier. When Paul came to the end of his pilgrimage and ministry he said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight." It was a battle. It was a warfare. And to perceive it as anything less is to lose. We battle the world. We battle the flesh. We battle the devil. We battle sin. We battle heresy. We battle error. We battle apathy and lethargy in the church. We battle the kingdom of darkness that yields to us reluctantly. And so it is a severe and never ending battle.

Sadly, some people don't even know there's a battle. And some people feel that if things don't go exactly the way they want them, they better quit. That if it isn't the way you think it ought to be you ought to leave. And they may be doing nothing but going AWOL. This is a battle. We expect a battle. All that live godly in this present age, 2 Timothy 3:12 says, will suffer persecution. There's no way around it. We were made for war. We were made for battle. And it is a battle. And first of all, we have to admit to the battle. And Jesus said if you're not willing to lose your life to find it, you lose it. And if you're not willing to take up your cross and follow Me, which means to the death if need be, you're not even worthy to be My disciple. This is a warfare.

And so he says fight. And it's again present imperative, as the first two verbs were, keep on continually fighting, be always battling. The term is used in military context as well as athletic ones to describe the concentration and the great effort coupled with discipline and conviction required to win. It's used repeatedly in the New Testament, it's the word agonizomai, from which we get agonize. And the word "fight" is the same root, agon, agonize the agon, agonize through the battle, spiritual conflict with sin, with unrighteousness with the kingdom of Satan. Play your part as a man of God with a noble commitment to the contest for the truth.

I'm thrilled to be a soldier. People say to me all the time, "You always seem to be in some kind of a battle on some front." I seem to be in battles on all kinds of fronts and that's the way it ought to be. It isn't just that I have an ugly personality and make enemies. I know that's not true because there are people on the outside who don't know me. Now people here might think differently but on the outside they don't know. It's the battle over truth. And I am greatly distressed that we live in a time when the idea is that you don't want to be a battler for truth, you want to do all you can to set aside any theology that might make someone else disagree with you. It's frightening to me. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, in spite of the intensity and the danger in the fight, beloved, it's a good fight. Fight the good fight. The word "good", kallosis best translated, I think, excellent or noble. Fight the excellent fight, fight the noble fight, battle for truth, battle for the faith. He says fight the good fight of the faith.

What is the faith? The faith once for all delivered to the saints is the contents of the Word of God, the truth. Fight for it, it's the highest cause in the world. Don't compromise. Fight effectively. If you say, "Oh I might get in trouble in this world, they might not like me and I might have to suffer," so forth and so on. All right, then go to the next phrase in verse 12, "Lay hold on eternal life unto which you were also called and have confessed a good confession before many witnesses." What does he mean by that? Does he mean get saved? No. Timothy's already saved. Does he mean go to heaven? No, he doesn't mean go to heaven when he says lay hold on eternal life. What he means, and it's very simple, get a grip on eternal life.

In other words, you won't mind giving yourself up in this world if you've got a grip on eternal life. In other words, live in the light of eternity. Isn't that great? Hey, if you're ministering here just for what you can gain here, you've got the wrong perspective. That's not the perspective of a man of God. Lay hold on eternal life. To put it in the terms of Colossians 3, "Set your affections on things...what?...above and not on things on the earth." "Recognize your citizenship...Philippians 3:20...as not on the earth but it's in heaven." Live and minister in the light of eternity, that keeps your focus in the battle.

And then he says, after all, you were called to eternal life and you confessed a noble confession before many witnesses of that eternal life, now live in the light of it. You were called to it. That's, by the way, every time you see the word "called" used, the reference to calling used in the epistles, it is always the effectual call of a sovereign God to salvation. You were called to salvation which is eternal life. You confessed your confession, publicly confessing Jesus as Lord with your mouth, you affirmed your salvation unto eternal life, you confessed that Christ was your Lord, you confessed it before many witnesses, he may have in mind Timothy's baptism, he may have in mind his ordination, he probably has in mind everything from his conversion on through every confession he ever made. He says you have confessed to being a possessor of eternal life, now live in the light of it. See that?

I mean, what are you going to believe about a man who says, "I live for eternity, I have received eternal life," and you watch this guy and he spends everything he's got and all his energy to amass things here and now. Does he live in the light of eternity? Jesus said, "Where your treasure is...what?...that's where your heart is." To live in the light of eternity. The man of God who has been called to eternal life, who has confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has entered into a battle with the forces of sin and a battle with the forces of hell, a battle with lies, a fight for the faith which demands every thing he has. And the only way he's going to be able to give himself to that battle is if he can divorce himself from this world and live in the light of eternity.

Paul ministered because he knew some day he'd stand before Jesus Christ, right? He lived in the light of eternity. In Acts 1 it's...Jesus went away, the angels came down and they said this same Jesus will so come in like manner as you've seen Him go, which was saying to them, in effect, get

about it, He'll be back soon. Back in chapter 4 verse 8 of 1 Timothy, bodily exercise profits little, godliness is profitable to all things...why? Because it has promise for the life that now is and for the life which...what?...which is to come. So where you going to spend yourself on time or eternity? On temporal things or eternal things? The man of God, beloved, rises above the pitiful struggles for things perishable and things useless. He fights for things that are eternal...the truth of God.

So, the man of God is known what he flees from, what he follows after, what he fights for and lastly, and very briefly, our time is gone, what he's faithful to...by what he's faithful to. Listen very carefully for five minutes to me. Verse 13, "I command you." He's been commanding him on several occasions through this epistle, this isn't the first time. "I command you in the sight of God who makes all things alive and before Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession that you keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The main thrust here comes in verse 14, "That you keep the commandment," te entolen. What does it mean? The commandment, what is that? Some people say, "Well, it's the gospel." Others say it's the teaching in this epistle. Others say it's the whole of the new covenant. Folks, simply it is the complete revealed Word of God, the commandment, this is the commandment of God summed up in a singular word. It could be translated the Word, the revealed truth. He says to Timothy in verse 14, "Keep it," what does that mean? Guard it. Guard it with your life.

How do you guard it? Not only by speaking it, speaking it, speaking it, but by also living it, living it, living it. What good does it do to speak the truth and live a lie? It just undercuts the truth, destroys, devastates. It's so tragic when someone who keeps the Word with their mouth does not keep the Word with their life. Guard it, he says, Timothy. Guard the commandment from God, guard the truth, guard the sound doctrine, keep that which was committed to you.

Verse 13 of 2 Timothy 1, "Hold fast the form of sound words, keep that good thing committed to you, keep it by the Holy Spirit who dwells in you." Use the Holy Spirit's power to hold on to truth. How do you keep it? By preaching it, preaching it, preaching, by living it, living it, living it. Be faithful to it, that's what he is saying. The man of God is known by what he is faithful to. He's faithful to declare the truth. He's faithful to live the truth.

Even if the cost is high. Notice how he covers this, back to verse 13, "I command you to do it in the sight of God." God's watching. But it's not negative, it's not because God's looking over your shoulder and He'll clobber you if you don't. It's in the sight of God who makes all things alive, and that verb is most generally used of resurrection. Get this. In the sight of God who raises the dead. What's the point? The point is this. You keep the truth and you don't waver on the truth and you have the courage of your convictions and you live it and you keep it and even if they kill you for it, God is watching and God is able to...what?...to raise the dead. That's the point.

What can they do to you? Ultimately all they can do at the worst is escort you into eternity. So you don't compromise. In the sight of God, the allseeing omniscient God who makes all things alive, He is not only creator of life, He is sustainer of life, He is provider for life and more than that, the general usage of this term, He is the one who restores life through resurrection power. And so we are to be faithful without fear, faithful with courage knowing that God is watching who is in charge of our life, that is protective power. At worst the world can kill us and He raises us from the dead. And there are perhaps millions of martyrs through the history of the church who are living testimony to the fact that the God who is able to raise the dead was watching them when they took their courageous stand. Amen?

And not only is God watching but he calls another witness. "I command you in the sight of God who is making all things alive and before Christ Jesus who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession," which is exactly what he wants Timothy to do. Hold fast to his confession. He said Christ did it. Christ went before Pilate, Matthew 27:11, Luke 23:2 and 3, John 18:36 and 37, Pilate said to Him, "They accuse You of being a King. Are You a King?" If Jesus says, "Yes, I'm a King," what does it cost Him? His life. Pilate said, "Are You a King?" And in contemporary language Jesus said, "You said it...you better believe it. I am a King and if I wanted I could call an army. I am a King but My Kingdom isn't of this world." They killed Him. That was courageous. That was fearless. Jesus Christ is a living example and model and perfect illustration of courage to be true and faithful to the Word of God at any cost. So he says, "Timothy, I command you to stand for the truth and hold it and preserve it in your message and in your living in the sight of the God who will make you alive if it cost you your life and in sight of Christ who is your example, who stood and it cost Him His life. And God made Him alive." Tremendous...tremendous...faithful because you trust in the God who makes alive and because you want to be like the Christ who took His stand and willingly gave His life for the truth. Jesus told the truth about who He was and why He had come, it cost Him His life.

The man of God tells the truth at any cost. He is faithful to the truth no matter what the price...no matter what the price.

Verse 14, "Timothy, be faithful at any cost," and then he says, "totally faithful, without spot and unrebukable." No blemish and no accusation. I want you to be totally faithful to the truth. You know what the truth is, don't waver.

Not only totally faithful but permanently faithful...until the shining forth, the epiphainos, the appearing, the glorious Second Coming display of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, until it's over, until Jesus comes, Timothy, should He come in your life time, until He comes, be faithful...be faithful. Totally faithful, permanently faithful, living in the light of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

What a picture of the man of God. He's known by what he flees from. He's known by what he follows after. He knows...he's known by what he fights for. He's known by what he is faithful to. I thank God to be called into His service. I thank Him that He in His grace saw fit to make me His man, to preach His truth. But there's a down side risk, and let me close with that. First Kings 13...1 Kings 13 introduces us to a man of God. It just says in verse 1, "Behold, there came a man of God, a messenger from God, a prophet. He came by the Word of the Lord and he was to speak to Jeroboam a prophecy. And he did. And God had said to the man of God, When you have spoken the prophecy leave, and do not eat in that place and do not drink water in that place, do that prophecy and leave."

And after some pleading and some deceit, the man of God was coddled into disobeying. And so he sat down to eat...it says in verse 19...and drink water. He disobeyed God. Small thing. God said give your prophecy and get out of there, don't eat and drink. Eating and drinking is not a moral issue, disobeying God is. "It came to pass," verse 20, "as they sat at the table, the Word of the Lord came to the prophet who brought him back, he cried to the man of God, who came from Judah, the man of God had just used in a mighty way to give a prophecy to a king. Thus says the Lord, For as much as you have disobeyed the mouth of the Lord and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you but came back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the Lord did say to you, Eat no bread and drink no water, your carcass shall not come to the sepulcher of your fathers." They went out of there and got shredded by a lion.

It's a wonderful privilege to be a man of God. It's a fearful responsibility. Potential for great blessing, potential for great danger. Let's bow together in prayer.

Thank You, Father, again this morning for meeting us here in Your presence, for we know that You inhabit the praise of Your people. We bless You for Your Word to us, we want to be the men of God that You want us to be. I pray especially for every man here for this conference, the men who are here in our own church. I pray, too, that all of us might be men and women of God in the general sense who also flee from evil and pursue what is right and fight for the truth and are faithful to it. Father, apply these things in our hearts. Work Your work. Glorify Your name. Exalt Your Son in every life. We pray in His name. Amen.

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