

Faithfulness ... In Your Youth

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (I Timothy 4:12)

Thursday, August 11, 2022 5:00 p.m.

Lesson: I Timothy 6:11-21;

Time of Action: 62 A.D.;

Place of Action: The place from which Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy is unknown

I. INTRODUCTION. In this life we have choices. One of those choices is to chase after fame and fortune, or to follow spiritual principles. Of course, the wise choice is clear, but the decision is ours. Unfortunately, humans tend to follow the doctrines of the culture and seek the things that satisfy the ego. We need to diligently fight the good fight of faith and trust our all-powerful Lord and King.

II. LESSON BACKGROUND. Timothy was ministering in the church at Ephesus when the Apostle Paul wrote him this first letter. Paul was Timothy’s mentor and spiritual father (see I Timothy 1:2, 18). He said he was writing this first letter to Timothy so *“that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (see I Timothy 3:14-15). Paul’s intention was to instruct Timothy, “his own son in the faith,” (see I Timothy 1:2) on establishing and maintaining a biblically based church. Paul also addressed some specific concerns Timothy had regarding his personal ability to manage such an undertaking. Timothy may have had concerns about his age causing Paul to write “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (see I Timothy 4:12). Timothy may have also felt unworthy of his position as the leader of the Ephesian church. Therefore, Paul encouraged him not to neglect the Holy Spirit’s anointing on his life and the importance of sound teaching (see I Timothy 4:13-16). As Paul moved to the end of his letter, he advised Timothy of what was included in doing the work of a good minister (see I Timothy 5:1-23). Then he warned him about riches and how false teachers are often motivated by the desire for financial gain which can lead to their destruction (see I Timothy 6:1-10).

III. PAUL GIVES TIMOTHY SOME HELPFUL INSTRUCTIONS (I Timothy 6:11-16)

A. What the good servant is to pursue (I Timothy 6:11). *“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”* In verses 9-10, which precede our printed text, Paul described men who were slaves to money. The words “But thou” in this verse, abruptly breaks away from Paul’s word about money hungry people, to advising Timothy that he was to be different from them. Paul addressed Timothy as “O man of God” indicating that he was expected to be different from those who pursued great wealth. Living the Christian life involves protecting one’s spiritual image, running from evil, and seeking helpful things. At every step, the believer must make choices. Paul urged Timothy to choose to “flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” The phrase “flee these things” refers primarily back to the excessive love for money and the resulting sins (see I Timothy 6:9-10).

However, “these things” probably also included other evil influences mentioned by Paul here (see I Timothy 6:3-5) and in Ephesians 4:25-5:12). In addition, for a younger man like Timothy, sexual temptation was always present (see II Timothy 2:22). Therefore, Paul commanded him to “flee these things.” The Greek word translated “flee” means “to run away.” In other words Timothy was to avoid any dangerous attitudes and behaviors. The word “flee” may remind us of Joseph’s flight or running away from sin (see Genesis 39:12). A wise person will physically run from or leave things or people that can cause spiritual damage. Being a “man of God” (or a woman of God), means to pursue the good lifestyle that enhances a person’s testimony for God. Before the corrupt Ephesians trusted Timothy’s God, they had to be attracted to Him by observing the kind of life Timothy lived before them. So, Paul listed some ethical qualities that Timothy was to “follow after” which means “to pursue a goal,” or “to run as fast as one can after it.” It is also the exact opposite of “flee.”

1. **The first quality** Timothy was to “follow after” or go after is “righteousness.” In the context of our lesson, “righteousness” means dealing right or fairly with others, and it is the pure standard of good conduct that conforms to God’s nature. This is not the same thing as the believer’s positional righteousness or being declared righteous by God (I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21). The Christian does not have to keep on pursuing positional righteousness because it is received as a gift from God at the very moment we are saved.

The “righteousness” that Paul says we are to pursue or “follow after” is right living which is a practical “righteousness” that’s shown by dealing fairly with people every day. Putting “righteousness” or right living into action in everyday life depends on our constant submission to God (see Romans 10:3). By God’s grace the Christian does righteously because he or she has been made righteous (see Romans 3:23; I John 2:29; 3:7, 10).

2. **The second quality** we are to “follow after” is “godliness.” This means always showing a reverential awe toward God, expressing itself in obedience to Him. “Godliness” should reveal a devout and worshipful reverence for the sovereign God of Scripture. Flippant descriptions of God like “the man upstairs” or “the big guy” are never appropriate for anyone to use, especially Christians.

3. **The third quality** we are to pursue is “faith.” But first, let’s consider two things that the “faith” mentioned here is not. The “faith” in this verse, is not faithfulness, even though faithfulness to the Lord should be a lifelong pursuit of the child of God. Neither is it saving “faith” in the gospel, which identifies the believer with Jesus Christ as a child of God. The “faith” in this verse is the confidence or belief which enables believers to trust God in everything (see II Corinthians 5:7). When we demonstrate “faith” we are showing great confidence in Who God is and what He can do.

4. **The fourth quality** we are to “follow after” is “love.” This is a supernatural quality that God gives to believers to enable us to “love” as God loves (I Corinthians 13:13). This kind of “love” is not natural to human beings, but it has been shed abroad in the Christian’s heart by the Holy Spirit (see Romans 5:5), who can also express it in the Christian’s life (see Galatians 5:22). The “love” that God gives to us is patient and kind; it is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. “Love” is not rude, it is not selfish, and it cannot be made angry easily. “Love” does not remember wrongs done against it. “Love” is never happy when others do wrong, but it is always happy with the truth. “Love” never gives up on people; it never stops trusting, never loses hope, and never quits (see I Corinthians 13:4-7).

5. **The fifth quality** we are to pursue is “patience.” This means endurance or steadfastness. It has the idea of enduring under difficult circumstances. “Patience” is the result of trials and difficult circumstances that are experienced by the Christian (see James 1:3). “Patience” produces spiritual maturity (see James 1:4).

6. **The sixth quality** that Paul said Timothy was to “follow after” was “meekness” which refers to being tender and gentle to others. A person does not have to be a doormat to be gentle. Contrary to what some may believe, “meekness” is not weakness, but it is a gentleness of spirit that submits to God in everything. Those who think that “meekness” is weakness ought to try to be meek for a week!

B. How the good servant must live (I Timothy 6:12). *“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”* Living the kind of life that demonstrates the qualities Paul had just listed is reachable. Therefore, Paul urged Timothy to “Fight the good fight of faith.” The use of the term “fight” seems to be a military illustration, but it’s actually an athletic illustration. The Greek word translated “fight” is *agonizomai* which means “to struggle.” Our English word “agonize” comes from it. The Greek word has the idea of suffering extreme anguish or putting forth great effort in a struggle. The Greek word for “fight” was often used to describe the effort an athlete put forth in trying to win an athletic event. Therefore, Paul compares Timothy’s life of faith to competing in the Greek athletic games. The exhortation for Timothy to “Fight the good fight of faith” does not refer to defending the gospel. Paul meant that Timothy should put all his energy into his ministry (see I Corinthians 9:24-27) striving to uphold the whole doctrine of our “faith.” It’s interesting that in the Greek, the definite article “the” comes before the word “faith” indicating that “faith” here refers to the whole body of Christian truth and doctrine that we believe (see Jude 1:3). As Timothy and every believer fight “the good fight of faith” we must “lay hold on eternal life.” This does not in any way mean that a person can be saved through human effort. Neither was Paul telling Timothy to receive “eternal life” for the first time since he had already called him a “man of God” (see I Timothy 6:11). With the words “lay hold on eternal life” Paul was instructing Timothy to live his life in light of the “eternal life” he already had. In other words, Timothy was to give full attention to living the Christian life as if he was already in heaven. The phrase “whereunto thou art also called” goes along with “lay hold on eternal life.” Timothy had been “called” or chosen by God to “eternal life.” The apostle added that Timothy also “hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” This means that Timothy had made a confession of his salvation and “eternal life” before many witnesses. No doubt Timothy “professed a good profession before many witnesses” when he was converted, at his baptism and ordination. However, this statement may also refer to Timothy’s evangelical ministry. Even while Paul was writing to him, Timothy was still giving a good confession of Christ and salvation.

C. How the good servant remains blameless (I Timothy 6:13-14).

1. (vs. 13). *“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.”* Now Paul was about to give Timothy a very special message, or “charge.” This message was so special that Paul said “I give thee charge in the sight of God...and before Christ Jesus.” The apostle was reminding Timothy that his ministry and life were being watched, first by “God, who quickeneth all things.” The word “quickeneth” means to give life to something. Timothy was being watched

by the God who gives life to “all things.” By describing God this way, Paul wanted to impress upon Timothy God’s power.

It would also remind him that his own life came from God and therefore, was to be used to glorify Him (see I Corinthians 6:20; 10:31). Timothy was also being watched by “Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.” Timothy had confessed Jesus Christ before many witnesses (see I Timothy 6:12), and now Paul urged him to remain steadfast in his confession. Timothy’s example of steadfastness was Jesus Christ. Jesus had given witness “before Pontius Pilate” that He was the King of the Jews (see Matthew 27:11), that His kingdom was not of this world (see John 18:36), and that He ruled over the realm of truth (see John 18:37). Jesus also had strengthened His verbal testimony with a faultless life. Eventually, the steadfastness of Jesus’ witness led to the cross. Now, Timothy also was being asked to remain true to his confession even if it meant persecution and death.

2. (vs. 14). *“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* With both the Father and the Son looking on, the message or charge that Paul had for Timothy was “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable.” Although the word “commandment” is singular, it could refer back to what he was told to pursue in verse 11, but it could also refer to all of God’s teachings (see I Timothy 6:6-11, 17-19; I John 3:23-24). “Without spot” refers to moral purity (see I Timothy 5:22), and “unrebukable” means without reproach or disgrace. Both of these terms “without spot” and “unrebukable” describe how God’s people, especially the spiritual leaders, should live while keeping “this commandment” meaning being obedient to all of God’s teachings. Timothy’s lifestyle was to be without stain or disgrace, or he would bring shame on the character of God. Timothy was to devote himself to remaining pure and blameless and faithful to God’s teachings “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This statement seems to indicate that Paul apparently believed that Jesus could return during Timothy’s lifetime. Whether this is true or not, we do know that the apostle believed that it could happen at any time. The fact that Jesus Christ could return at any time should give every believer reason to live a pure life (see I John 3:2-3).

D. Whom the good servant is to honor (I Timothy 6:15-16).

1. (vs. 15). *“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”* This verse begins Paul’s doxology, a declaration of praise to God expressing His power and glory. The word “Which” refers to the return of Jesus Christ mentioned in the previous verse. Paul was saying that Jesus will return “in his (God’s) times (that) he shall shew.” In other words, the timing of Jesus’ return is according to God’s plan and no one else’s (see Matthew 24:36-39; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6-7). In charging Timothy, Paul took a moment to praise God, first describing Him as “the blessed” or “the happy” because He is the source of all blessedness and happiness. The term “only Potentate” refers to God as Sovereign Ruler. The expressions “King of kings, and Lord of lords” also emphasize God’s greatness and dominion. This title is also given to Jesus (see Revelation 17:14; 19:16), another indication that the Father and Son are one (see John 10:30; I John 5:7).

2. (vs. 16). *“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”* Paul here continues to describe God as He “Who only hath immortality.” The Greek word translated “immortality” means being free from death. God cannot die, for He has “life in Himself” (see John 5:26; Psalms 36:9). Even though the Son died in His humanity, death could not permanently hold Him. Paul then referred metaphorically to God as “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.” Only when sinful men are clothed in Christ’s righteousness can they “approach” or enter the presence of God (see Philippians 3:9-10; Hebrews 10:19). Paul’s final description of God here is “whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” God has never been seen by man in the fullness of His glory (see Exodus 33:20; John 1:18). That would be more than our bodies could stand! In other words, God is the invisible One. Paul closed his doxology by declaring that God is the One “to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” The apostle was ascribing “honour and power” and eternal dominion to our unique God. Of course, Paul ended this doxology with the word “Amen” which confirms the truth of what has been said.

IV. PAUL GIVES TIMOTHY SOME IMPORTANT COMMANDS (I Timothy 6:17-21)

A. Trust the living God (II Timothy 6:17). *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* After giving Timothy some personal commands and instructions, Paul now gives Timothy instructions to pass on to those who were rich and under his teaching. He began by saying “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches.” Since giving to the needy is a spiritual gift (see Romans 12:8), merely being wealthy is not sinful. Since wealth often leads those who have money to boast and assume superiority over others, Timothy was to warn or “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded.” The word “highminded” means “haughty” or “arrogant.” Jesus also spoke of this danger (see Matthew 19:20-24). Wealth can also cause people to fix their hope on money to meet their every need and solve every problem. Therefore, Timothy was to warn the wealthy not to “trust in uncertain riches.” Money is a poor object of faith because it is “uncertain” meaning we can’t always depend on it. The Wall Street crash of 1929 showed that maintaining wealth is an “uncertain” object of trust. While warning the rich, Timothy was to redirect their trust from money to “the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” God is the source of all riches, and He bestows them generously (see James 1:17). Therefore, no one can take credit for having obtained wealth (see Deuteronomy 8:18; Proverbs 10:22). In addition, it makes more sense to trust the Giver of gifts rather than the gifts themselves.

B. Be willing to share (I Timothy 6:18-19).

1. (vs. 18). *“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.”* Instead of gloating over their riches, Christians who are rich are to “do good, that they be rich in good works.” In other words, rich believers are to use their money to do good things. They should be “rich in good works” or “good deeds” and should give happily to those who are in need. In addition, rich believers are to be “ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” The word “distribute” means “to be generous,” and “communicate” means “to share.” Timothy was to encourage wealthy believers to be generous and willing to share their wealth with others by doing good deeds.

2. (vs. 19). *“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, lay hold on eternal life.”* Timothy was to also advise those who share their wealth generously that they are “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.” This statement refers to spiritual stewardship in preparation for “the appearing of our Lord” (see I Timothy 6:14). The word “foundation” here refers to treasures. At the same time that rich believers share their earthly wealth, they are storing up future treasures (see Matthew 6:19-20). The age-old expression, “You can’t take it with you” is still true. But the believer can send it on ahead of him or her in the form of rewards. Generous believers set their eyes on the life to come and by sharing their goods, the rich believer becomes “rich toward God” (see Luke 12:18-21). By observing proper priorities, rich believers use their wealth as God has instructed and therefore “lay hold on eternal life.” Accumulating earthly goods and wealth lays hold of physical life only. But storing our treasures in heaven through our generosity demonstrates that we have “eternal life.”

C. Guard the important truths (I Timothy 6:20-21).

1. (vs. 20). *“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.”* Paul’s final challenge to good stewardship was directed to Timothy. He appealed to his son in the ministry saying, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust.” A literal translation of this statement is “O Timothy, Guard and keep the deposit of godly truth that has been entrusted to you.” The Greek word for “keep” is a military term meaning “to guard something.” Timothy was to guard what was put into his “trust,” or care, which was the body of Christian truth he had received from Paul (see II Timothy 1:13-14). In order to guard or “keep” the truth, Timothy had to avoid “profane and vain babblings.” This refers to the same empty, useless, and worldly chatter Paul had referred to throughout this letter. It included “fables and endless genealogies” (see I Timothy 1:4), “vain jangling” (see I Timothy 1:6), and “profane and old wives’ fables” (see I Timothy 4:7). If Timothy entertained these things as well as those who spoke this way, it would soon detract from God’s truth. Timothy also needed to avoid “oppositions of science falsely so called.” The word “science” here can be translated as “knowledge.” Thus Timothy was to avoid those who boast of their knowledge or wisdom which really isn’t knowledge or wisdom at all. This refers to any philosophy that claims to be superior to what the knowledge the ordinary Christian has (see I Timothy 1:5-7). God’s truth might come under attack by worldly people like those mentioned here, but Timothy was to be a faithful steward and not waver. He was not to be influenced by those who had embraced false “science” or knowledge which could cause him to wander from God’s truth.

2. (vs. 21). *“Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.”* The words “Which some professing” refers back to the worldly people mentioned in the previous verse who embraced false knowledge or wisdom. Being enticed by human wisdom has always been strong among those who think of themselves as intellectuals. As a result, Paul told Timothy that they “have erred concerning the faith.” In other words, they have despised God’s revealed message and the principle of “faith” which is the only basis on which God can receive man. When we replace fruitless debates and false knowledge (see I Timothy 6:20) or wisdom for the gospel, we are denying the Christian faith, and bringing disaster on the church. Church leaders in every age must embrace God’s priorities (see I Timothy 6:11-12) and stand for them firmly at all costs. Only as they do so will Paul’s last words in this letter have meaning: “Grace be with thee. Amen.” With this conclusion, Paul wished “grace” or favor on Timothy and all who would hear the words of this epistle.

V. Conclusion. We were put here to glorify God and further His kingdom. How we live our lives affects not only us but also those around us. If we are content to drift through life in a mediocre way, we are not fulfilling our calling as believers the way we should. In this life, there are many fights that could be fought, but not all of them are good ones. The fight to keep the faith is a good fight. So what about it? Are you fighting the good fight? Are you pursuing a righteous, godly, obedient lifestyle? Do you trust in God alone rather than in material possessions? May we all “fight the good fight” (see I Timothy 6:12) and “contend for the faith” (see Jude 1:3) in light of Jesus’ glorious, imminent return.

Questions:

1. Who was Timothy?
2. What were some of the things Paul instructed Timothy to do?
3. What were some of the challenge Timothy faced as a young Minister?
4. How can money and success be a hinderance to one’s walk with the Lord?
5. Is there a certain age a person must be to be a Pastor?