

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

Do You Trust God?

Before we start our study of God's Word this morning in 1 Timothy chapter 6, I want to ask each of you, "Do you trust God? Really, do you completely trust God?" If your answer is, "Yes" then this means a few of a number of important truths. First, you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior because you believe His words, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** (John 14:6) Secondly, this means you have placed your life into the hands of God. You no longer own your life **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."** (Romans 8:28) If these statements are true of you then this election should not be troubling to you. As Pamela told me before the election, "Pastor Bill, people need to read the 13th chapter of Romans" which begins, **"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."** (Romans 13:1) I know Pamela trusts and I trust God with what He is doing and He has a reason for all things under the sun. So, we need to be purveyors of grace and love. Please do not get caught up in the ugliness of the media, Facebook and the world. We need to pray for unity in our country and for people to come to know Christ as their Savior. God inspired Isaiah to write, **"my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."** (Isaiah 56:7) Our church is to be a house of prayer for Republicans and Democrats and the Green Party and all the others. Let us now take time to pray to God for the healing of our country and for the leaders to trust God and for Him to guide these leaders, and for us to keep our focus on Christ and the sharing of His gospel. This trust of

God and His Word has a profound impact on our lives and our teaching this morning.

Let's PRAY

O Man of God

Now we turn our focus to 1st Timothy, chapter 6, where the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy passing the mantle of leadership to him to take over the work he had begun in Ephesus. Paul identified Timothy and raised him up in the teaching of God's Word to not only preach and teach as a pastor of a local congregation but to also be a pastor of pastors. Because of his influence over many others under his teaching and preaching Timothy would raise up new leaders. Timothy was, no doubt, used by God to raise up many leaders, those under his teaching, as he was himself raised up under the teaching of Paul. By his writings, inspired by God, Paul is raising up and training men to carry on the work of proclaiming the gospel. Men to preach the Word of God and men to pastor and shepherd people with love to help them grow in maturity in the Word of God and live as witnesses for Christ.

Paul had just instructed that as children of God we are to live “godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.” (1 Timothy 6:6–7) We are to avoid the temptations of the world that is corrupt; the love of money, fame and power. We certainly are not to use Christ as a means of gain as some of the rich who claim Christ and run ministries that have made them rich, have done. Leaders in Christ's ministry are to live in service as modeled by Christ. Jesus said, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you

must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42–45) Paul now turns from the concept of fleeing the world’s enticements to fighting the good fight of faith. Even though these instructions and principles are to Timothy they apply to all pastors and in truth they apply to all believers.

These guiding principles from verses 11 to 16 grip my heart for this was my role in ministry for a number of years; helping pastors and leaders to be what God would have them to be for the sake of His beloved church, to plant churches among the unreached and for the sake of His own eternal glory and joy. I have a deep desire to help prepare men share the gospel, disciples others and to plant churches fulfilling the great commission. Jesus commanded, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20) It is my hope that as the Lord has given me focus for this specific congregation that I will have the privilege to raise up men to fulfill the Great Commission and to raise up a “Timothy” that will lead this church in the future.

Now, look at verse 11, “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.” Let me key in on the phrase “...you, O man of God ... O man of God”, here the Apostle Paul calls Timothy a “man of God.” The term applies to Timothy specially, however, in a more general sense we find this phrase in 2nd Timothy, “the man of God” and it is referring to all who are called to preach the Word of God. A “man of God” knows “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17) Twice this expression is used in the New Testament. Once, “man of God” refers to Timothy

and once to refer to all those who are equipped to preach and lead as a “**man of God**” by the Scripture. It can also be extended out to all believers as they share the gospel of Christ and disciples others.

Now just exactly what does this phrase mean? Let me take a simple approach and change the wording slightly to, “**God's man.**” That is to say, “God’s man” is a man who belongs personally to God, a man whom God in the truest and highest sense owns. If God owns this man, then he certainly does not belong to the world. This is not a man who belongs to the any culture. Paul wrote of himself, “**To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.**”²³ **I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.**” (1 Corinthians 9:22–23) The gospel gives one the ability to transcend all cultures. God’s man is not a man who belongs even to the church. This is not a man who belongs to the board of the church. This is not a man who belongs to the denomination or those who ordained him. This is God's man, fully owned by God to serve Him. This is a very distinctive title, “**man of God**” or God’s man. This is a very specialized title drawn out of the Old Testament. While it only appears twice in the New Testament, “**man of God**” appears in 363 verses in the Old Testament. This term is used to identify a man who belongs to God, who is God’s man or as the scripture says, “**the man of God.**” It is said of Moses that he was “**the man of God.**” It is said of an angelic messenger sent down with a message from God to the wife of Manoah (**maw·no·akh**), the mother of Samson. Manoah believed the messenger was “the man of God” sent to his wife. It is said of the prophet who spoke for God to Eli, the high priest, predicting judgment on his family. Samuel is called “**the man of God.**” Many of the prophets are called “**the man of God**” including Elijah and Elisha (**el·ee·shaw**). David is called God’s man. It is a specific term or phrase and we see that in the usage of this phrase it applies to someone who spoke the Word of God or someone

who was a spokesman for God. The phrase “**man of God**” means someone uniquely called to proclaim the Word of God. The “**man of God**” referred to in 1 Timothy 6:11-16 is Timothy. In the broader sense, it is any man of God who is equipped to preach and lead by all Scripture. Paul wrote to Timothy, “**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,** ¹⁷ **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**” (2 Timothy 3:16–17) In the broad sense this refers to all believers, both men and women, for believers are to be completed by the Scripture and equipped for every good work by faith in Christ and trust in the truth of Scripture.

How can you speak for God unless you know the message of God? You cannot know the message of God apart from the Scripture. All Scripture is given to us as “men” of God, that we may be perfected, made adequate to proclaim the Word. It is this calling that conveys the meaning of being a “**man of God.**” Paul labels Timothy as “**You man of God.**” He places Timothy in a long line of the elite company of prophets, angels and kings. It is pretty amazing to think about being a “**man of God**”, actually it is astounding and it is awe-inspiring. I think of Paul, once he was saved he spent the rest of his life overwhelmed with this realization; God had plucked him up out of horrible sin and iniquity and hatred of the gospel. God purged him and cleansed him, a blasphemer and a murderer, and turned him into a “**man of God.**” I am certainly no Paul, but this is what God did for me and I am amazed he saved such a wretch as me. There was for Paul and there is for me an overwhelming sense of transformation and gratitude of God’s amazing grace. Timothy is a part of that long line of selected men and so is everyone who is owned by and in service of God as a spokesman speaking the Word of God. These are historic designations that belong uniquely to all who speak for God. From the very beginning of my salvation, this fastened me to the Scripture, to understand that I am

not my own, I am bought with a price. I know this is true of every believer and it is true of each of you. But, to preach the Word of God means that I cannot speak my own opinions, I cannot speak my own ideas; for the Word of God never changes. Praise be to God! The Apostle Paul makes that so wonderfully clear to the Corinthians saying. **“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”** (1 Corinthians 2:2) Paul knew only what God inspired.

Paul did not speak of things that related to worldly wisdom. He knew nothing but the foolishness of God as it is written, **“For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”** (1 Corinthians 1:25) Paul knew one thing and one thing only - he was God’s man and given God’s message to preach until he died. Paul was focused on and is instructing Timothy to focus on and he is calling each of us to focus on **“Pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.** And to ¹²**Fight the good fight of the faith.”** (v.11-12) So, as we live in this fallen world and in the post-election, for example, we are to do so in a way that honors God by living out **“righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”** For it is this life style that will attract people to the gospel of Christ.

Fight of Faith

Being the spokesman of God always calls one into battle. For Paul, Timothy, all pastors, and for each of you, there is the battle against the flesh, the devil and resisting to not be of the world. Paul tells Timothy, **“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”** (v.12) Paul is wanting Timothy and by his writing all pastors and all believers to stand strong for the gospel. A pastor or Christian or church that is lethargic is ineffective. Jesus told John concerning the church at Laodicea, **“I know your works: you are neither**

cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.” Now listen to how Jesus ends this scripture passage, ¹⁹ “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:14–19) I ask myself and I am asking each of you, “Do you and I need to be reproved and disciplined? Do we lack zealousness for the gospel of Christ? Do we lack repentance for our sins and think we are above those who are unsaved? Paul says we need to “[fight the good fight of faith.](#)” Here the word “[faith](#)” implies the whole Word of God, the complete Bible. We cannot have faith in Christ, in the truest sense if we do not believe, embrace and live out the Word as God has revealed it. So, Paul says we are to live out our faith in Christ found in the Bible. Christ says we are to be zealous for Him and to take the gospel to the lost. Does this describe me? Does it describe you? If not, you and I need to repent.

If we do not live in such a manner we will not be able to “[Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called](#)” written of in verse 12. “[Take hold of the eternal life.](#)” Paul wrote his own epitaph, one of eternal, which reads, “[I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.](#)” (2 Timothy 4:7) I desire this as my epitaph, may it be craved on my tombstone. What will your tombstone say? Earthly riches have no place in heaven. What will be your legacy, your eternal legacy, be to your children? I am not speaking of just your biological children for I hope and desire for each of you to have spiritual children also, just as Timothy was Paul’s.

Even though this passage of Scripture was written to Timothy as a pastor, elder and leader it applies to all of us. Paul says if we fight the good fight of faith and keep the faith it will result in “[you making the good confession in the presence of many witnesses](#)” at the end of verse 12. Jesus is calling us and Paul is charging us to be good and faithful witnesses. God will use our witness for His purposes and for the salvation of others. That is God’s job, not ours. We are called to the lesser but important job of living as good and faithful witnesses to Christ and thus bringing honor to God.

Faithfulness

Paul continues with his charge to Timothy, “[I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession,](#) ¹⁴ [to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.](#)” (1 Timothy 6:13-14)

This charge is not just for Timothy, but also for all of us. So how are we to understand this charge from Paul for our lives? First, let us understand that “[to keep the commandment](#)” in verse 14 is not limited to a specific command of God, but it is the entire revealed Word of God. “[To keep the commandment](#)” is to protect its original meaning and guard it in its entirety. The Word of God does not change and woe to those who change the Word of God. Paul’s writing to the Galatians was clear for anyone who changes the Word of God. “[But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.](#)” (Galatians 1:8) “Accursed” here means to be damned to hell. Paul encouraged Timothy and all Christians in many of his writings to be careful to guard the truth so that false teachers could not change it. We must realize that it is only by the power of God the Holy Spirit that lives within us that we can understand the truth of the Scripture and faithfully hold to its truth in

order to proclaim it in our lives and to those who need to hear the gospel of salvation.

Paul was a faithful witness of Christ, but even a more true and faithful witness of God was Christ himself. As the human man-God, God incarnate, “his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.” Jesus, our Lord, is the perfect earthly example of One who held fast to His confession unto death. Christ was faithful because He trusted God the Father to deliver Him both in life and in death. The Apostle Peter wrote, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him (*God the Father*) who judges justly.” (1 Peter 2:21–23) We are not to fear persecution. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, as recorded in Matthew’s gospel account, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus boldly replied, “You have said so.” (Matthew 27:11–12) Jesus stood His ground, He spoke the truth in the face of persecution and entrusted His life to God the Father. As those who invoke the name of Christ as our Lord, as those who call themselves Christian we are to do no less.

Paul instructed that Timothy and that you and me are to be faithful until the end. Paul continued in verse 14 saying to Timothy and in reality all believers are “to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul, Timothy, you and me are to remain faithful permanently, everyday until we die or until Jesus returns. “The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” refers to His glorious return. A man of God is motivated by the expectant and imminent return of Jesus. John heard the Lord say, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.” (Revelation 22:12) We are to live with the possibility of Christ’s return at any time.

For every man of God, but especially for a preacher, to proclaim God's Word is an immeasurable privilege. Do you see the privilege of being able to share the gospel with the people God has placed in your life? It is a serious privilege for a preacher and one that must be fulfilled. This why God warned James to write, "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." (James 3:1) Teachers have a great responsibility to teach God's Word rightly. Luke understood that those who God has called He has great expectations, "from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." (Luke 12:48) This is not only for preachers, but also for all believers for as His child God has entrusted much to you. You have the great privilege of His salvation. You must live it and share it.

Motivations of A Man of God

Paul commanded Timothy in verse 14, "to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are to live in such a way that the gospel of Christ remains "unstained and free from reproach." This is the theme of his letter. Paul's letter to Timothy begins and ends with a doxology to God. In the first chapter, "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17) Ending of the last chapter, "... Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ ... who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen." This is the greatest motivation for true Christians, they are in awe of the God they serve – just let these attributes of God listed sink in to your heart and mind. These words say much and yet they do not even begin to capture all of who God is. A. W. Tozer said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Just like Paul's command to Timothy we also are called to fulfill our duty to God based

upon who God is. Luke cited Paul saying to King Agrippa, “... I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” (Acts 26:19) Paul understood God’s vision for the redemption of man and was committed to share the gospel of redemption with everyone who would listen. Just as Paul pressed on, he is commanding Timothy and us to press on, to proclaim the truth of God revealed in the Scripture. Leland last week made the statement of how positive Joyce and I are in the face of all sorts of challenges; this is the reason why, we serve a great God. When Jesus was tempted by Satan He said to the devil, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.’ ” (Luke 4:8) This is the model Paul followed and Timothy and this the model for us.

Sovereignty of God

Paul’s ends this amazing paragraph of commands by giving the reasons for our loyalty and surrender to Christ. Paul says Jesus is the “only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.” When Paul says God is the, “only Sovereign” it because there is only one God. Our God is the only God in complete control of every molecule in this vast universe. Paul wants to make sure there is no question of who God is and he follows up his title of “only Sovereign” with saying God is “the King of kings and Lord of lords.” Paul is echoing the title given to God alone in Deuteronomy, Psalms and Daniel. Here Paul too is speaking of God the Father as he has clarified in verse 16, “whom no one has ever seen or can see.” These titles are also given to Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation demonstrating there is One God - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Paul is writing from Rome where they believed their emperors were immortal, even though they died on a regular basis. Paul is emphasizing the God alone possesses

immortality. God has been immortal from eternity past to eternity future. Angels and humans owe their immortality to God. The Psalmist wrote of God, “For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.” (Psalm 36:9) Angels and humans will exist forever, but owe their immortality to God. We have a defined beginning and future immortality because of God. Paul says in verse 16, God “alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light.” God’s blazing light is a sign of His holiness. Forty times in the New Testament, Christ is referred to as Light, as John wrote, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12) Paul began by saying nothing motivates a “man of God” like a true understanding of the greatness of God. Paul then lays out the greatness of God in the next verses. To God “be honor and eternal dominion. Amen!” (v.16)

Let us close in prayer, please stand and read along with me Psalm 23, a prayer written by David. Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 23.

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Believe and live!