

**I TIMOTHY 6:3-16**  
**EXHORTATION TO GODLINESS!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Timothy chapter 6 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's first letter to Timothy.

This first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy was to be a letter of encouragement and exhortation.

Now I know, some of you are thinking, *“What in the world is he talking about. Paul speaks of false teachers who bring into the church doctrines of demons, how is that encouraging?”*

You need to know what the problem is before you can fix it and Paul reminds Timothy of the problems and then the solution.

What was the solution to these false teachings and false leadership that was going on there in the church in Ephesus?

We have gone over this many times in our study, but it is important to repeat it and understand it.

In I Timothy 3:14-15 Paul told Timothy, and us, **“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”**

In other words, Paul is reminding Timothy, ***“Son, I want you to understand, to remember how we are to conduct ourselves in the house of God, in the church. Remember, the church is to be the pillar or the proclaimer of the truths of God found in the Word of God. It is to present the Gospel message. Not only that, but Timothy, the church is to be the foundation of the truth and the only truth that we need, spiritually speaking, is the Word of God taught to the people! Stay focused and proclaim the truth and stand upon the truth and you will not be taken in by all the doctrines of demons that are flooding in!”***

And what an important lesson for us to learn and apply to our lives today!

I have called our study this morning – ***EXHORTATION TO GODLINESS!***

And in these verses we will see some comparisons to what true and false godliness is all about.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into several main points. They are,

***FALSE TEACHING – 1 TIMOTHY 6:3***

***FALSE GODLINESS – 1 TIMOTHY 6:4-5***

***TRUE GODLINESS – 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8***

***A TRAP – 1 TIMOTHY 6:9-10***

***FLEE AND PURSUE – 1 TIMOTHY 6:11***

***FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH – 1 TIMOTHY 6:12-16***

Before we get to our text this morning, let me share this with you because it will lead us to that first point – ***FALSE TEACHING!***

We are told,

Throughout history, deadly epidemics have ravaged mankind. In the fourteenth century, the infamous “***Black Death***” (an outbreak of bubonic plague) killed millions in Europe. Cholera, diphtheria, malaria, and other sicknesses have ravaged towns and cities.

Our generation has witnessed the rapid spread of the fatal disease Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

More deadly than any of those diseases, however, is the plague of false teaching that has afflicted the church throughout its history. While illness may kill the body, false teaching damns the soul.

Like AIDS and the plague, false teaching has a definite, observable pathology. (Pathology is the study of the elements of abnormality that characterize a disease.)

Scientists study the pathology of a disease to better equip themselves to recognize it and to combat it.

Every leader in the church should be a spiritual pathologist, able to discern deviations from spiritual health. Only then will he be equipped to diagnose the deadly disease of false teaching, and to do what is necessary to check its spread among his people.

Paul warned of the subtle danger of satanic lies, describing their purveyors [spreaders] as ***false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds. (2 Cor 11:13-15)***

It takes careful discernment to see that the light is really darkness.

Paul writes these verses to teach Timothy how to diagnose satanic darkness masquerading as divine light. He gives seven symptoms that identify those infected with the spiritual disease of false teaching: their mark, attitude, mentality, effects, cause, condition, and motive.

- John McArthur, I Timothy 6

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Timothy chapter 6, beginning in verse 3 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

***EXHORTATION TO GODLINESS!***

### **I TIMOTHY 6**

#### **VERSE 3**

As Paul is working on bringing this first letter to Timothy to a close, he goes back to what he focused on in the first chapter.

The focus there was that Timothy, the spiritual leader there in the church in Ephesus, has to be on guard against those who would misuse the Word of God for their own gain.

Remember what he said, **“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia - remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”** I Timothy 1:3-7.

In other words, *“Timothy, you are going to have to deal with some problems that have arisen in the church. You are going to have to confront some of these men who are bringing in damming heresies that get them off on things that are of no profit for them or anyone. It will not make them godlier. It will not build them up in the faith. They have no idea what they are talking about and yet, when they speak, they do so like they are scholars! Deal with it Timothy, don’t let them continue on!”*

And that same idea Paul is speaking about here as he says, **“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.”** I Timothy 6:3.

It is amazing how some can take the plain text and make it into something that it is not!

Let me show you what I mean because those in the prosperity movement, bringing forth a prosperity Gospel love to take the Scriptures and manipulate them to say what they want them to say and to tickle your ears!

For example. Paul, in II Corinthians 8:9 wrote, **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

This is one of the verses they love to use to prove their point that God wants us to be rich, He wants us to prosper!

And in their reality, if you have enough faith, if you put enough money into the money box you will be rich! They say it is God’s will for your life!

And really, as you read it, that is what it seems to be saying!

Jesus became poor for what reason?

Paul said that Jesus became poor so that we ***MIGHT BECOME RICH!***

Again, it sounds so right and yet, that is so wrong!

What have I told you when you read and study the Bible what you need to take into consideration?

***CONTEXT, CONTEXT AND CONTEXT!***

What is the focus of this chapter?

The focus is about giving, about generosity.

It is not a focus on what we can get, but on what we can give!

God gave up heaven for a time to save us and thus, He became poor so that we can become rich, have that eternal life with Him and there is no monetary amount that trumps that!

That has nothing to do with getting rich or using God like a genie to gain all kinds of money!

Let me show you what I mean regarding what this chapter is about.

***8:1 - we make known to you the grace of God.***

***8:2 - the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.***

***8:4 - imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.***

***8:6 - he would also complete this grace in you as well.***

***8:7 - But as you abound in everything . . . see that you abound in this grace also.***

***8:9 - For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

And my point is this. This verse is not a verse to support a “***get rich***” strategy, but a call for sacrificial generosity.

Using Jesus as the original model for sacrifice, this passage calls for us to remember how generous God has been with us, and to do likewise.

Poole warns us that anyone can teach like this, not just pastors. He wrote, ***“If there be any person who either more publicly or more privately shall take upon him to instruct people otherwise.”***

Some of the most dangerous teaching in the church isn’t done from a pulpit, but in informal, private conversations. And yes, what is coming from the pulpit is dangerous today, and I guess many times they are repeating what they have heard from pulpits across America and not for the good!

How is this manifested in their lives?

Paul goes on to tell us by speaking about a – ***FALSE GODLINESS!***

#### VERSES 4-5

Paul has warned Timothy about these false teachers, and He wants Timothy to be on guard against those in the church who would like to replace the teaching of sound doctrine with **“useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.”**

In other words, those who want to focus on strange spiritual experiences or taking the simple ideas of the Scripture and making them into some kind of bizarre doctrine or focus on words to make them say what they want them to say.

He is telling Timothy that they have no truth in their teachings!

We also need to understand that there are different ways that people do not consent to wholesome words or the truth of God’s Word!

What are some of those ways?

Listen carefully.

- Some *deny* God's Word.
- Some *ignore* God's Word.
- Some *explain away* God's Word.
- Some *twist* God's Word using it as a toy to be played with in debates and disputes.

And keep in mind that you can surround yourself with God's truth, you can even memorize the Bible and not have it affect your life for eternity. If you refuse to submit to God's Word, then you are in grave danger!

Let me also say this, false teachers or those who bring in false doctrine end up causing, what Paul said here, that they are, **“obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strive, reviling, evil suspicions.”**

It is as one writer put it, ***“One thing about false teachers who slip into churches is that their doctrine always raises questions, creates confusion and leads to arguing and division instead of building up believers in the faith.”*** (Source Unknown)

And the key to exposing false teachers with their false doctrine is to be students of the Word of God and ask the Spirit of God to show you truth from error. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word of God, that is an easy one.

The hard one is that these people who teach in error don't have signs saying they are false prophets – but if you listen to what they are saying, if you see the confusion, the division, the chaos that comes when they are trying to promote these lies, then that should be a red flag that something is wrong.



Sound doctrine or healthy doctrine are words that build up, edify, exhort, comfort and correct people.

On the other hand, on the other end of the spectrum, unsound doctrine or unhealthy words weaken the spiritual lives of people like any disease would.

Like I have said. False teaching brings into the church all kinds of confusion in people's lives, division amongst the brethren, chaos and thus, it has to be removed!

And here is a point we should remember. Truth produces godliness, while error tends to lead a person towards immorality!

False doctrine is not healthy and what is manifested in our lives will not be healthy then.

It is as Paul said in II Timothy 2:15-19, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”**

We are to *rightly divide the word of truth*, cut it straight, not alter to make it say what we want it to say!

Now, here in Ephesus, and we even see this many times today, why were they departing from the faith and promoting this false doctrine?

Pride and greed are the most motivating factors.

What makes us think we are right, and they are wrong?

Isn't that prideful on our part?

Folks, it is not that I am right, and you are right, and they are wrong, but God is right and what He says in His Word is truth. We don't have to guess what Words of God are really of God and which ones are not! I will make this easy, they all are! From Genesis through Revelation God, by His Spirit, is speaking to us!

Also, like I have said, greed is a big motivation, making a profit off of God, but that is not how they would speak of it.

They may say something like this. ***"Hey, I'm the Kings kid and the Father doesn't want me to be poor, to drive around in an old car or have an old house. If you sow your seed faith offering to me, then God will bless you a hundred-fold!"***

And the only one who gets rich is the one promoting these false doctrines. If a person is in the ministry for the money, they are in for the wrong reason and they truly need to get out.

It is as Calvin said, ***"For these men all Christianity is to be measured by the gains it brings . . . Paul forbids the servants of Christ to have any dealings with such men."***

And I want you to see what Paul admonishes Timothy to do about this. He tells Timothy, ***"From such withdraw yourself."***

In other words, ***"Don't go to their churches, don't listen to their corrupt teaching or even have anything to do with them!"***

May we do that if they refuse to turn back to God and His Word.

Keep in mind that we have seen what ***FALSE TEACHING*** and ***FALSE GODLINESS*** look like. And it is not good. It is greedy, which brings us to what we will look at next – ***TRUE GODLINESS!***

VERSES 6-8

We have seen Paul warning Timothy that those who misuse God's Word wrongly think godliness is a means of material gain.

Now look at this comparison. Paul tells Timothy that true godliness is seen in contentment!

And this is important for us to understand. You see, it is not just living a godly life but being content with the life that God has given you.

Paul not only taught that, but he lived it!

Paul, in Philippians 4:11-13 tells us, **“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

You see, there is great gain in a life lived that way because your life is not dominated by bigger, better, newer things. Whatever God has given to you, you are content and thankful because God has given it to you. You are content and thankful because the reality is, we don't deserve anything and yet God blesses us exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think!

Barclay comments on this word **“contentment”** and says, *“The word used here for contentment is autarkeia . . . by it they meant a complete self-sufficiency. They meant a frame of mind which was completely independent of all outward things, and which carried the secret of happiness within itself. Contentment never comes from the possession of external things.”*

Now, as you turn on the television and watch some of these televangelists you see they are not content but want more and they want you to pay for it! That is what we are not to do, we are to be content in what God has given to us.

I like what Paul said in II Corinthians 9:8, “**And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**”

God will give to us all that we need to accomplish the work He has called us to do – we are sufficient in Him, and we need to be content in Him!

And think about it, how many of you were carrying smartphones when you were being born?

None of us were and no one will. You brought nothing into this world and in the end, you will bring nothing out of this world. You can't take it with you!

So what are you living for?

Where is your treasure?

May it be in the Lord and with the blessings He has given to you in this life, may you use them for His glory and send those treasures on ahead!

In our society there are many people who are not content with their life and Paul's point is that if you have food and clothing what more do you need?

And think about this for a minute. The poorest person in this congregation here in Manitowoc is wealthier than 90 percent of the world's population- and we are not content!

One commentator put it like this. He wrote,

In the mountains of Mexico lie two adjacent springs. One sends forth hot water, the other cold.

***“Your people must thank Mother Nature for hot and cold water right next to each other,”*** said a travel guide to an Indian as he washed his clothes in the springs.

The Indian wisely answered, ***“No, we grumble because she didn’t supply soap.”***

- Jon Courson

You see, there is always something to complain about if you are not satisfied in the Lord and what He has provided!

But you might be thinking, ***“If I only had more money I could . . .”***

And that is a big driving force for people today in America as evidenced by the huge increase in gambling, Lotto, storage units to store all the stuff we have and don’t have room in our home to store it, and so on.

Think about it. Does money bring happiness?

Listen to what some who have money have said about it:

John D. Rockefeller once said, ***“I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness.”***

Cornelius Vanderbilt added, ***“The care of millions is too great a load . . . there is no pleasure in it.”***

Millionaire John Jacob Aster described himself as ***“the most miserable man on earth.”***

Despite his wealth, Henry Ford once remarked, ***“I was happier doing mechanic’s work.”***

These are people who have had money and they saw it as emptiness and yet, look at the people who are trying to get rich, if they only see their treasure is in the Lord!

Folks, this is not a suggestion or a principle, it is truly a command. And we all probably need to deal with this at some level in our life, give it to God and be satisfied in what He has given to us, because, as I have said, our treasure is truly in Him and if we have the Lord, there truly is nothing that we need. He will supply us with what we need to accomplish the work He has called us to do!

Now Paul is going to give a warning about those who are not content and what can happen to them. In other words – ***THE TRAP!***

#### VERSES 9-10

Paul tells us about the problem with money. He says that people are greedy and they **“fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.”**

The Greek word for **“fall”** is ***EMPIPTO***, (em-pip’-to) and it is in the present tense, which speaks of a continual falling into temptations and traps so they can be rich.

Think about it, all the scams that are out there to make you rich, and as foolish as they sound, people go after them with the hope of making themselves rich.

Beware, it is – ***A TRAP!***

Some of you have seen the Star Wars movies that are out there. In Return of the Jedi, during the battle of Endor, Admiral Ackbar’s words of warning as they are entering into this battle were – ***“IT’S A TRAP!”***

How many people have been caught in scams, taken advantage of all in the pursuit of making more and more money and in the end, they lost a lot and sometimes everything!

The tragedy for the Christian is it ruins their spiritual life as they take this plunge into greediness, the love of money. You see, the pursuit of riches drowns people and Paul wants Timothy to not only understand this, but to warn others of it!

*“Howard Hughes was, at one time, the richest man in the world at one time owned oil wells, refineries, tankers, and pipelines; also hotels, a life insurance company, a finance company, and aircraft companies. But he surrounded his 700-acre estate with bodyguards, vicious dogs, steel bars, searchlights, bells, and sirens. In addition to being afraid of planes, ships, and crackpots, he feared disease, old age, helplessness, and death. He was lonely and gloomy and admitted that money could not buy happiness.”*

Make no mistake about it, this is what the Bible calls **“the deceitfulness of riches.”**

Now please understand this. Money is not evil, not at all. It is paper or metal, but it is not evil, that is not what Paul is saying here.

But ***THE LOVE OF MONEY*** is!

Why is that?

Because who are you going to serve, who are you going to love, the Lord or money because you can't serve two masters!

And when you think about it, the love of money and contentment are mutually exclusive!

Maybe you heard of the old Roman Proverb that says, ***“Money is like sea water, the more you drink the thirstier you get.”***

How true that is.

And the danger that is seen when money is the focus of our life is seen in this story.

There was this gambling boat in New Orleans. And one day this boat started to take on water and it began to sink!

And before long the passengers dove from the deck and swam to shore.

But there was one man who dove into the water and never surfaced.

What happened to this man?

It was later discovered that before jumping, the greedy guy ran back into the casino and filled his pockets with gold coins.

He was drowned by a love for money!

I think Solomon, the richest man in the world, summed it up correctly when he said in Ecclesiastes 5:10, **“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver, nor he who loves abundance with gain. This also is vanity (emptiness, falsity, and futility)!”**

And listen to how The Living Bible puts Ecclesiastes 5:10-12, **“He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness! The more you have, the more you spend, right up to the limits of your income. So what is the advantage of wealth-except perhaps to watch it as it runs through your fingers! The man who works hard sleeps well whether he eats little or much, but the rich must worry and suffer insomnia.”**



Listen to how Bishop J. C. Ryle summarizes this for us. He wrote, *“Money, in truth, is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It takes away some cares, no doubt; but it brings with it quite as many cares as it takes away. There is trouble in the getting of it. There is anxiety in the keeping of it. There are temptations in the use of it. There is guilt in the abuse of it. There is sorrow in the losing of it. There is perplexity in the disposing of it. Two-thirds of all the strife’s, quarrels, and lawsuits in the world arise from one simple cause – money.”*

I think that sums it up for us very nicely. There is nothing wrong with having money unless money controls your life. There is the danger!

James tells us in James 5:1-5, **“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.”**

And folks, the reality is, **“Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD’s wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.”**

Zephaniah 1:18.

Why do we go after that which does not satisfy, that will be no good in the end, instead of what does satisfy, the Lord!

In fact, if you had all the gold in the world and in death you could take it with you, someone will ask you when you get to heaven, *“Why did you bring all that asphalt up here?”*

You see, the streets of heaven are made of gold! (Revelation 21:21)

As we read on Paul is going to show us what a man of God is to be in comparison to a man who seeks after money or is controlled by anything other than the Lord.

In fact, Paul will tell us that we are to – ***FLEE AND PURSUE!***

### VERSE 11

The idea here is to ***FLEE*** these ungodly, worldly things and ***FOLLOW*** after godly things, after the Lord.

A man of God is not only known for what he flees from but also for what he runs after or what he pursues!

First of all, notice what we are to flee from!

And keep in mind that this word “**flee**” is in the present tense, which tells us that the man of God is to constantly flee from these things.

What are we to flee?

***We are to flee the love of money!***

***We are to flee pride!***

***We are to flee disputes!***

***We are to flee arguments!***

***We are to flee envy!***

***We are to flee strife!***

***We are to flee reviling!***

***We are to flee evil suspicions!***

Those are just a few, there are many more. But we are to flee these things and we are to pursue after the things of God.

*We are to pursue righteousness!*

*We are to pursue godliness!*

*We are to pursue faith!*

*We are to pursue love!*

*We are to pursue patience!*

*We are to pursue gentleness!*

You see, it is hard to be greedy when you are seeking to be righteous, seeking after godliness, trusting in the Lord by faith, loving people unconditionally, patient and having a gentle spirit!

Let me share this with you to show you how this life is to be lived out, not only fleeing, but pursuing the things of God!

We are told,

Imagine a basketball team that only played defense. They guard the basket to the best of their ability. They aggressively mark every man that crosses to their side of the court and block any attempts to score on their side. But they never go on the offensive.

They would lose every game.

Well, maybe they could perfectly protect their basket for an entire season. In this case they would never lose, but they'd never win either.

Like this team, too many Christians live their lives always on defense. They avoid sin (at least the *really bad* ones). They aren't necessarily bad people, but they aren't all that good, either.

But lukewarm Christianity, the Bible tells us, isn't Christianity at all (Rev. 3:15, 16). The Christian life is not meant to be lived in the passive avoidance of sins; rather, it is intended to be an abundant life of love, obedience and righteousness. Both the Bible and Christian history are populated with people who lived life to the fullest. Christ desires this proactive, victorious mode of living for all of His disciples (John 10:10). He modeled this kind of living and we are called to imitate Him like a child mimics his father (1 Corinthians 11:1).

What does it look like to live the kind of abundant, holy life that the New Testament describes? . . .

In your daily life this means *don't make room for sin*. Romans 13:14 says, "***But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.***" You must order your schedule, home relationships and life to make no opportunity for temptation to present itself. Of course, you can never make your life completely temptation-proof. Yet to flee sin, you must take advantage of whatever is within your power to influence.

Does browsing social media open the door for temptation? Delete the apps. Does Netflix increase your intimacy with Christ or absorb precious time that could be spent with Him? Cancel your account.

You may be in a relationship that is a source of overwhelming temptation. You may have friendships that habitually pull you away from holiness and compromise your integrity. The workplace you're in may be a bad environment for your growth in discipleship. In whatever manner or place it might be, if there is an opportunity for sin to manifest itself in your life, do not allow it to linger. Rather, flee!

The Puritan John Owen famously wrote, "***Be killing sin or it will be killing you.***"

Pursuing holiness means to aim at God and draw near to Him. Righteousness is not a spiritual token that we build up through good acts. Instead, righteousness is a quality of character developed in us through our relationship with God.

I'm not a talented artist. The only sketching that I ever enjoyed was tracing. You take a blank sheet of paper and lay it over an image. Then you carefully trace a new copy of the image over the lines showing through from the picture underneath. Pursuing righteousness kind of looks like tracing. When our life is laid over the model of Jesus' life the lines do not match up. However, the gospel empowers us to be transformed so that our character will begin to match His over time.

This happens in two stages.

First, righteousness is something *given* to us in Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9). We do not achieve it in our own good works.

Rather, Jesus' self-sacrifice on the cross purchased our salvation by trading His righteousness for our sin; therefore, we are given His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Second, as a new creation in Jesus, we are empowered to pursue good works (Ephesians 2:10). Paul instructed the Ephesians to put off the old self - the image that doesn't match Jesus - and to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

We forget that the New Testament calls us to a double duty of fleeing and pursuing.

Consider a few samplings:

***"Therefore, put [sin] to death . . . put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience . . . Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity"*** (Colossians 3:5, 12-14).

*“See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all”* (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

*“But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith”* (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

If we do not practice both fleeing sin and pursuing righteousness, then we are in danger of following what Dallas Willard called *“gospels of sin management.”*

Following a gospel of sin management means to accept the redemption of Christ without the transformation. It’s an assumption that Christianity is essentially about forgiveness and that Jesus’ death was only meant to remove sin. We accept the gospel like a trinket to wear but not a reality to change our lives.

On the one hand, it creates people who want the blood of Jesus but not the person of Jesus in their lives. On the other, it creates Pharisees who view the world through the lenses of social change in the name of Jesus.

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Yes, we are to flee sin, but we are also to pursue godliness! Never forget that.

And Paul sums it up here for us as he tells us to – ***FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH!***

VERSES 12-16

Like it or not, we are in a battle, and we are fighting for the truth.

But we are not only fighting for the truth, but we are also fighting for those souls who have been taken captive by Satan to do his will and the verb that is used here means we are to ***“keep on fighting!”*** Don’t give up!

From this word we get our English word ***agonize*** from. And this applies to not only soldiers but also athletes. It is a picture of someone giving their all, doing their best to win the battle or to win the prize!

Listen to how Paul puts it in II Timothy 2:24-26 and listen carefully to what Paul says in that last verse. He wrote, **“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”**

If we don’t contend for the faith, if we don’t hold onto the truth, then how are we going to bring people out of the kingdom of darkness and into the light of God’s Kingdom? We will not be able to because it is the truth that sets you free!

We are in a battle and thus, don’t go ***AWOL*** but continue the good fight.

A good example of this is seen in salmon as they are swimming upstream, against the current, fighting forward, making progress with the goal of finishing the swim in mind.

On the other hand, if they don’t fight, if they don’t work, they will float back downstream and so will Christians if we just give up.

We will become more like the world and less like Christ.

But, since you have made a decision for Christ, now live accordingly as Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-26, “**. . . ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’**”

That is the correct perspective we need to have. That we have everything we need in Christ, He will supply us and thus, be content and live accordingly!

If you find yourself complaining about this and complaining about that, how this world is so evil and what is the use, then you have lost perspective.

J. B. Phillips picked up on the ineffectiveness of Christians and said that “*Your God is too small!*” Exactly.

And A. W. Tozer stated the issue with great force and clarity in his classic work *The Knowledge of the Holy*. This is what he wrote, “*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.*”

He continued on with these remarks, “*The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God . . . For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous [crucial] fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like . . . Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, ‘What comes into your mind when you think about God?’ we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man.*” (A. W. Tozer)



Again, how big is your God will determine how you reflect His nature to a lost and dying world!

For Timothy, we see Paul call upon Timothy to fulfill his duty based upon who his God is.

Now someone may ask, *“Why should we live this way?”*

Paul tells us here in verse 13.

First of all, God the Father, the One who gives us life will hold us accountable for not walking accordingly.

Secondly, Jesus Christ, our ultimate example of how we are to live will also hold us accountable.

And Paul shows us the example of Christ as He stood before Pontius Pilate.

In John 18:37 we are told, **“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”**

Jesus did not back down but stated the truth no matter what the consequences might be and so should we! Our life should match our confession of faith.

And this commandment is not just one specific thing, but it encompasses the entire Word of God.

And the evidence is seen as our life is without some big spot, some big blotch that would dishonor God, we are blameless. Again, our life should match our confession of faith and our life is to be lived this way, we are to fight the good fight of faith until the Lord comes!

It is as John admonishes us in I John 3:2-3, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

Make no mistake about it, having a correct perspective on God is important. We need to understand that He is coming back. We need to understand that He is sovereign, He is in control, He is holy and so much so that our sinful bodies of flesh can't see God and live.

Thus, God has taken the form of a man, Jesus and dwelt among us at one time.

We see Old Testament appearances of God, or Theophanies.

But no one has seen God the Father in full, in all of His glory and lived. But one day we will as we go to be with Him in our new bodies, not made of flesh and blood.

With Jesus, we see Peter, James and John witness His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, but they in no way saw all of His glory!

In fact, Jesus' full glory was veiled by His humanity and won't be unveiled until He lights the sky up with His Second Coming in glory.

Thus, in knowing who God is, His holiness, that He alone deserves our worship and praise, that He is coming back, it motivates us to live lives that are pleasing to Him no matter what we are going through, no matter what comes our way.

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 13:6, **“So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”**

Perspective is everything!

Let me close with this story. We are told,

I grew up in West Texas and there were a lot of Cicada insects.

They're not technically locusts but we called them that.

During the hot summer days, the loud, shrill sound that the males made would fill the air.

You would usually see them in the trees. At times you would come across the lifeless shell they had shed. It was just an empty form of the living creature that had once been there.

If you put the slightest pressure on that empty form, it would crumble.

That's what I think of when I hear the phrase "*a form of godliness.*"

It bears some resemblance to the real thing. But there's no life in it.

Is there a chance that spiritual decline in Israel's history could repeat itself in Christian churches? Is there a chance today that people could be faithfully going through a form of religion that bears resemblance to the real thing; but in reality, is dead and lifeless?

- Richard Tow

It is not time to play church or look like a Christian. We are in a battle for the truth and a battle for the souls of people who don't know Jesus. It is time to give your life totally over to the Lord and say, "*Here I am Lord, send me!*"