

February 25, 2018

**ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON
FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH**

MINISTRY INVOCATION

“O God: You have spoken to us with power in your Words. We receive those words as law to our being. In Jesus’ Name... Amen.”

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND

**Explore the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace and avoid;
Value personally the attitudes and actions Paul charged Timothy to embrace;
and Identify personal actions and attitudes that need to be changed.**

THE APPLIED FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVE

We believe in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost for all believers and that the Holy Ghost verifies and validate the Believer as part of the Body of Christ.

Key Verse –

Lesson Scripture –

1 Timothy 6:11–21 (NKJV)

The Good Confession

¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, ¹⁴ that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, ¹⁵ which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Instructions to the Rich

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Guard the Faith

²⁰ O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—²¹ by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Grace *be* with you. Amen.

COMMENTARY

Paul had earlier referred to the false teachers in 1:3–7; 1:18–20; and 4:1–5. He normally linked indictments of the teachers with a personal admonition to Timothy (1:3; 1:18–19; 4:6–16). The admonitions frequently included an appeal to an earlier point in Timothy’s spiritual life (1:18; 4:14). After warning the false teachers in 6:3–10 against word battles and godless greed, Paul added another persuasive reminder to Timothy (6:11–16). He followed this reminder with a warning to the wealthy, this time to those who already had wealth (6:17–19). In a concluding word to Timothy, Paul directed him to guard the gospel and avoid foolish discussions about silly speculations (6:20–21).

(1) A Program for Godliness (6:11–16)

Paul’s statements in these verses consist of a series of commands (vv. 11–12), a solemn charge (vv. 13–14), and an outpouring of praise to God (vv. 15–16). He called Timothy to complete the ministry for which God had placed him in Ephesus. This was more than an appeal to deepen his personal commitment to Christ. Timothy was to finish a job.

6:11 The beginning words, “But you,” show that Timothy’s behavior was to provide an utter contrast to that of the false teachers mentioned in vv. 3–10. Bernard states that Paul’s appeal to Timothy as a “man of God” reminded Timothy that he had received a divine message just as had the Old Testament prophets. It pictured Timothy as one with a special calling for God’s service. The twin commands of v. 11 contain a warning and a challenge. Timothy was warned to flee the heresy, divisiveness, and greed that Paul had denounced in vv. 3–10. He was challenged to “pursue” (“constantly strive for,” Williams) six virtues mentioned in three pairs. Each trait represents a must to insure Timothy’s effectiveness in his ministry. The term “righteousness” refers primarily to upright conduct before human beings, and “godliness” describes an open and obedient relationship before God. The words “faith” and “love” reflect trust in God and benevolence and goodwill toward others. Timothy would need “endurance” (*hypomonē*) in order to guarantee staying power for his difficult task. He needed “gentleness” in order to deal effectively with cantankerous heretics and wavering believers.

6:12 Having urged Timothy to avoid the false vagaries of the heretics and to develop needed Christian graces, Paul gave directives for perseverance. First, he borrowed an image from the athletic sphere to urge Timothy to “keep up the good fight for the faith”. The metaphor can imply either running or boxing or wrestling. To fight for “the faith” includes at least a struggle for the truth of the gospel, but it may also refer “in a broader way to the whole of his Christian life as a great contest requiring discipline and purpose.” The use of the present tense for “fight” suggests a continuous struggle.

Second, Paul used a command focusing on eschatology urging “Timothy ... to continue in the contest until it consummates in triumphant conclusion.” Depending on the context, Paul could present eternal life as a blessing to be realized at the end (here and in Rom 6:22) or as a present experience (2 Cor 4:10–12, though the expression differs in this passage). The fact that God had “called” Timothy to eternal life suggests that it was already in his grasp but not completely held.

Timothy made his “good confession” at his public profession of faith through baptism. Paul frequently used the term “called” to show God’s initiative in salvation and service. Sometimes it refers to a vocation of service or to the Christian life seen as a vocation. In 1 Tim 6:12 the reference has more to do with the experience of salvation. Paul’s command was intended to stir up Timothy to renewed vigor, but it does not imply that Timothy earned eternal life by self-effort. It suggests that “eternal life” is more of a goal toward which Timothy was to orient his efforts rather than a prize that God would give him as a reward for that effort. The fact that God had called him was an incentive for his response.

6:13–14 To drape his commands with seriousness, Paul summoned Timothy to stand in the presence of the all-seeing Father and Son. He described the Father as one “who gives life to everything” (“maintains all life,”). This can suggest either that God is the source of all life or that he can protect his own in the face of all danger. Perhaps an element of both truths lies in the reminder. God had given Timothy life through the gospel and provided him stamina for service. Concerning the Son, Paul spotlighted his “good confession” made in the presence of Pilate, a testimony that was not merely verbal but that also included his suffering and death.

Paul charged Timothy to keep the “command” until Jesus returns. The command may refer to directives given to Timothy at his baptism or during the laying on of hands (see 4:14), or it may be “a commandment to Timothy to persevere in his own faith and ministry.” This last option fits better in the context. The term “without spot or blame” describes how Timothy was to maintain the command. The keeping of the command was to be unspotted by

the contaminations of the heretics and was to be a type of obedience not exposing God's commands to fault or blame. The "appearing" (epiphaneia) of Jesus employs a term frequently used in the LXX to describe manifestations of divine glory. Paul frequently used it in reference to the second coming in the Pastorals (see 2 Tim 4:1, 8), but he also used it to refer to the incarnation. Paul commonly used the Greek term parousia in reference to Christ's return, but both terms occur together in 2 Thess 2:8. Paul's words about Christ's return contribute a sense of urgency to Christian commitment.

6:15–16 In vv. 15–16 Paul expressed seven statements of majestic praise to God in a moving doxology. In v. 15 he used three names in a description of God. The phrases are Jewish in style and praise the unique sovereignty of God. As the "blessed and only Ruler" God has the universal authority to decide the precise time of Christ's return. The terms "King of kings and Lord of lords" show God's sovereign authority over all powers, both human and divine (see Deut 10:17; Ps 136:2–3). These two titles refer to Christ in Rev 17:14 and 19:16. All three titles fit well with the emphasis that the return of Christ is certain ("God will bring [it] about") and sovereignly in his hands ("in his own time"). Paul's certainty of Christ's return did not cause him arbitrarily to set a date.

In v. 16 Paul affirmed traits of God that focus on his divine essence. The immortality of God is his deathlessness and self-existence. God alone possesses this immortality. Observe the discussion of "immortal" in 1:17, where a different Greek word is used. The blinding glory of God renders him unapproachable both metaphysically and morally (Exod 24:15–17). God is so infinitely holy that no human being can see him and live (Exod 33:20), but the pure in heart have the vision of God (Matt 5:8). The emphasis here more reflects a Jewish understanding than a Greek emphasis that no mortal can know God. The fact of human sin makes it impossible for us to know a God of impeccable purity. "Honor" refers to God's worthiness in receiving esteem and reverence. "Might" is the power of God expressed in sovereign acts. Paul collected these expressions of praise to emphasize God's majesty and kingship.

Two questions emerge from the study of this doxology. First, what was its source? Kelly has suggested that "it may well be a gem from the devotional treasury of the Hellenistic synagogue which converts had naturalized in the Christian Church." His idea has merit because of Paul's Jewish background and his familiarity with the ways of Hellenistic Jews. Second, why did Paul use this doxology? Paul may have emphasized this moving doxology in order to show that the strength of this omnipotent God could enable Timothy to persevere. He may also have placed the statement here for the benefit of the

Ephesian believers, who lived in a center of pagan worship for both Artemis and the emperor. Paul may have given a final reminder to his readers that the God of the church was the supreme Lord of the universe.

(2) A Promise for the Prosperous (6:17–19)

Paul turned from a series of admonitions to Timothy to give advice to those already rich. The preceding words on wealth in vv. 6–10 were spoken to those who aspired to wealth. As a final thought Paul spoke a word to those who already had it. The constructive advice here balances the more extreme prohibitions of the earlier passage. He did not condemn wealth, but he showed the added temptations the wealthy face. He was vitally concerned that Christians have the right attitude toward their wealth and make the proper use of it (cf. Luke 12:13–21; Ps 52:7).

6:17 Paul's beginning reference to the "present world" suggests that the wealthy can have their wealth only in this age. It is good for this present world, but it does not convert automatically into blessedness in the world beyond.

In this verse Paul contrasted right and wrong responses to the possession of wealth. A wrong response involves an arrogant attitude ("haughty,") and the making of wealth as the "hope" of one's life. As a deterrent to trusting in riches, Paul mentioned the transitory, uncertain nature of wealth. The word "uncertain" contains a reminder that it is by no means clear that riches will continue with the one who has them. The right response is to hope in a God who lavishes on his people all their needs. The statement implies that God does not give wealth to promote pride but that we might use and enjoy it in his will.

Paul's sound advice walks the straight line between a world-denying asceticism and a self-centered indulgence. The advice promotes gratitude toward God for the benefits he bestows. We can express Paul's theology of wealth with the words: "God supplies everything, his purpose is beneficent, and it entails obligation."

6:18 Paul mentioned four ways to use wealth wisely. "To do good" involves using wealth in a positive way instead of letting it feed a life of personal luxury. "To be rich in good deeds" pointed the wealthy in the direction in which they were to be truly rich, in the doing of good deeds. These two verbs probably include more than benevolence. The need for benevolence is emphasized in the next pair of terms. "To be generous" demands a liberal sharing of wealth with others. One who is "willing to share" shows that the generous act of giving is to spring from internal generosity.

Paul was suggesting that genuine wealth is found in what we give, not what we have.

6:19 Paul outlined the outcome of such generosity by stressing two truths. First, he stressed that giving generously to the needy stores for the giver a future treasure. The phrase “for themselves” emphasizes that generous givers may imagine that they are helping others, but they also are storing up significant personal benefits. Paul was not advocating that the giver could earn salvation or favors from God. Good works are solid evidence of salvation and assure us that we have eternal life. Paul may have based these thoughts on such words as contained in Matt 6:19–21. The godless, on the other hand, lay up treasures for themselves of a different kind (Jas 5:1–5).

Second, Paul stressed that generous actions allow the giver to lay hold of eternal life in the here and now. Paul had urged Timothy to lay hold of this in v. 12. Paul expressed that taking hold of eternal life is a goal of the unselfish giving he had commanded. Christians who enter the life of love by unselfish behavior will enter gloriously into God’s presence in the life to come.

(3) A Concluding Caution (6:20–21)

In later centuries, a false teaching known as Gnosticism infiltrated and led astray some Christian churches. Gnostics felt that a hierarchy of spiritual beings related humanity to God, and they emphasized that salvation came from mastering the “knowledge” of the escape of the soul from the world of matter. Some interpreters have seized upon the word “knowledge” (v. 20) as evidence that Paul was opposing a form of Gnosticism. However, the essential elements of Gnosticism mentioned above are absent from the Pastorals.

6:20 Paul gave two final commands to Timothy. First, he directed Timothy to “guard what has been entrusted” to him, literally “guard the deposit.” The “deposit” (parathēkē) is a banking term denoting a sum deposited to the responsibility of a bank (cf. the same word in 2 Tim 1:12, 14). Fee suggests that the deposit Paul had entrusted to Timothy was the task of resisting the false teachers. This also included keeping his life pure and faithfully proclaiming the truth.

Second, Timothy was to “turn away from godless chatter” and avoid the pseudointellectual jargon of the heretics. “Godless chatter” (see 2 Tim 2:16 for the same word) characterizes the prating of the heretics as futile nonsense. Paul did not want Timothy to waste time in refuting these erroneous ideas. He was to ignore them. The “knowledge” of the heretics included empty discussions about fables, genealogies, and asceticism. Paul avowed that what the heretics espoused was knowledge, but he named it “false knowledge.”

There was such a commodity as genuine knowledge (2 Cor 4:6; Phil 3:8), but these heretics did not possess it.

6:21 Paul warned those who professed the false teaching of the heretics that they would miss the mark of the Christian faith. The false teachers pretended to teach what ought to be believed, and they “shot far wide of the faith” (NEB) with their false knowledge.

Two features of the closing greeting are unusual. First, it is brief (see 2 Cor 13:14 for a lengthy greeting). Second, the pronoun for “you” is plural, suggesting that Paul intended that the letter be read to the assembled congregation.

Some commentators think that the lack of extensive final greetings is evidence against Pauline authorship. If this feature is used as a criterion of authorship, a comparison with the more lengthy final greetings in 2 Timothy and Titus would suggest a different author for these writings. This is an unlikely inference.

The KJV ends with a final “amen,” but this word is not in the best manuscripts. It was added at a time when the letter was read in church as Scripture and represented the completion of the reading.

Paul thus concluded 1 Timothy, absent from the scene of battle but concerned enough about the presence of heresy to write an entire letter of directives to his young colleague Timothy. Timothy was to guard the trust committed to him, avoid the pseudointellectual pretensions of the heretics, and stop the advance of this cancerous heresy in the church at Ephesus.

Summary. In 6:11–16 Paul provided positive action for Timothy to undertake after he warned him to flee the evil desire for wealth. Paul’s practice was wise and sensible. Often those who prohibit one action fail to provide a substitute. Paul prohibited Timothy’s pursuit of wealth, but he urged him to follow hard after the traits of righteousness and godliness and to continue the struggle for the truth of the gospel in the Christian life.

In 6:17–19 Paul made a final statement on a positive use of wealth. It is vain to denounce wealth to those already wealthy. It would be better to instruct them in its positive use. Paul did that here, urging that the wealthy enrich their lives with all types of good deeds. He particularly urged them to use their wealth to share with the needy

RELATED DISCUSSION TOPICS

CLOSING PRAYER

My God: I am grateful to have found You and kept You in the forefront of my being. Bless us continually with Your grace and mercy. They represent bountiful blessings for all of us. Amen.