

Letters From My Father
Week 19
1 Timothy 6:11-15
“Take Hold of Eternal Life”

Introduction

For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ — which is far better — but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Since I am persuade of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that, because of my coming to you again, your boasting in Christ may abound.

Philippians 1:21-26

I saw a video this week of a little girl who was four years old and dying of cancer. As she lay on her death bed she told her parents that she “was going to get better”. For they had explained to her that she was about to go to heaven to be with Jesus and would soon be healed. I was struck by this little one's bravery as she told her mommy that she would miss her and asked her to hug her one last time as she passed. Of course, I cried for quite a while after watching this video, but I was also reminded that this life is not all there is. And for those who know Christ there is something far better that awaits on the other side of The Jordan.

Jesus often described His followers as a crop destined to be harvested at the appointed time. He explained that unless a kernel of wheat dies, it will only remain a single seed. Meaning that a life lived solely unto itself has nothing to show for it in the end. But when a kernel of wheat dies (is planted in the ground and germinates), it produces many seeds (**John 12:24-26**). In order to have an abundant and meaningful life, we must not live for this world, but rather, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves in order to bear fruit that will live on in the kingdom of heaven.

Wheat is a most interesting crop. You can tell that it is mature as it begins to die. When wheat is first planted it takes root deep in the soil and is green and virile. But as it begins to mature something amazing happens. Its roots begin to loosen their grip upon the earth, as it offers up its fruit on top of the stalk stretching toward heaven. As the fruit ripens, the wheat stalk dies, and it is just barely attached to the ground from whence it came. So it is, with the child of God. He begins with an attachment to the things of this world. But as he matures in Christ, his mind becomes less and less concerned with worldly things, and more focused upon the fruit that he bears for The Father. When the harvest time has come, the child of God is dead to self in order to bear fruit for the greater good.

This is what spiritual maturity looks like. To loosen our grip from this world and reach for the world that is to come. We live only for the glory of God, until we enter into the glory of God! In other words, **“To live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** You cannot hold firmly to this world and follow after Christ, my friend. At some point you must choose between the two. You cannot stay where you are and go with God.

As Paul was about to conclude his first letter to Timothy in Ephesus, he reiterated the difference between His young son in the faith, and all the false teachers that had infiltrated the church. They lived for this world, but Timothy was to live for the next. Paul charged the young man to **“Take hold of eternal life” (vs.12)**, meaning that his focus should be upon the next life, rather than the present. The false preacher spews his demonic doctrines in order to have material gain in this world. But the man of God is distinguished by the way that he stores up treasure for himself in heaven. The difference is both stark and powerful. Everything that we store up in this life is fleeting, but the fruit that we bear for eternity's sake will endure.

Paul charges Timothy *To Flee* from worldly pursuits, *To Follow* after the things of God, and *To Fight* for the Faith, for we are called to a much higher purpose than just existing in this world. We are called to be the children of The Living God. And our untarnished testimony is to bring Him all glory and praise. So, in all things, we must be willing to lay down our lives in order to “take hold of eternal life”.

Flee (vs. 11a)**But you, man of God, flee from these things....****1 Timothy 6:11a**

There are times that The Word of God tells us to take a stand, and then there other times when it tells us to run. When it comes to the temptations for the pleasures of this world, we are called to flee from them. We are commanded to flee from sexual immorality, (**2 Timothy 2:22**); to flee from idolatry (**1 Corinthians 10:14**), and here we see Timothy being commanded to flee from the pursuit of worldly wealth (**vs. 11**), which is also considered to be a form of idolatry (**Colossians 3:5**).

Timothy was commanded to have nothing in common with the false teachers in Ephesus, who were using their platforms in pursuit of worldly wealth. You cannot live for the flesh and please God. And He, above all, knows a person's motives. For he looks upon the heart rather than outward appearances (**1 Samuel 16:7**).

The LORD knows that when the devil tempts with worldly things, it is a means to ensnare us and render us ineffective in the battle. Every good soldiers knows that it is imperative to avoid the land-mines that have been planted by the enemy. The gospel is not for sale, and one cannot purchase the things of God. I am reminded here of Simon the Sorcerer in the book of Acts, who saw Peter and John lay hands upon the Samaritan converts, so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw this great power, he desired it for himself and offered money to the apostles.

When Simon saw that The Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also so that anyone I lay hands on may receive The Holy Spirit." But Peter told him, "May your silver be destroyed with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to The LORD that, if possible, your heart's intent may be forgiven. For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by wickedness."
Acts 8:18-23

You cannot serve both God, and money (**Matthew 6:24**). Peter knew this all too well, for he had heard it from The LORD in person. Therefore, he did not allow himself to be tempted, but rather, he distanced himself from the wicked sorcerer. This is what God means when He tells us to flee from such things. If we have faith, then we know that He will supply our needs. And this is enough for us. For **"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6)**.

I believe that often times Believers struggle with the concept of walking away from such people. We are commanded in Scripture to do everything that we can to reach lost people. But what do The Scriptures say about people who *claim* to be Believers, but yet love this world? It might surprise some of you to learn the truth in regards to this matter.

I wrote you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. I did not mean the immoral people of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave this world. But actually, I wrote you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister and is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or verbally abusive, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Don't you judge those who are on the inside? God judges outsiders. Remove the evil person from among you.
1 Corinthians 5:9-13

So there you have it. Just as Timothy was to distance himself from the false teachers who promised material wealth, we are commanded to distance ourselves from those who call themselves "Christian", but live just like the world. Do not try and resist their charms... run away from them!

Follow (vs. 11b)**...and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.****1 Timothy 6:11:b**

One thing that I have noticed about the modern day church; Christians today seem to be awfully proud of the things that they do not do. You can often hear them listing all the sinful behaviors that they have abandoned for the sake of Christ. And this is not, in and of itself, a bad thing. We are called to be separate from the world and live holy lives. However, when God calls us to run away from something, He fully intends for us to run toward something else. So being a Believer isn't just about what you don't do. It is more about what you do! Paul instructed Timothy to run away from ungodliness in order to pursue godliness. We don't just give stuff up to be idle. We give stuff up to make room for better stuff!

Paul lists five things (and this list is not exhaustive by any means) that a person of faith should follow after. When we die to self, we abandon self-serving and begin to serve Christ and His people. We pursue (follow) after The LORD and His endeavors. No one has ever been saved just to sit around and be "decorative". We are saved for a purpose.

Paul began by telling Timothy to "pursue righteousness". The word (*dikaioisynē* pronounced dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay) simply means, *doing what is right*, and in this particular case, it means to do the will of God. We are commanded to obey the teachings of Christ. And after this, we see once again the word *Eusebeia* (godliness) meaning, *right worship*. We live in such a way to be obedient to Christ in order to worship Him in truth and in Spirit.

Some *Bible* teachers have pointed out that these two words relate to the "Royal Law" of Scripture: **"Love The LORD for God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself."** I tend to agree. For to be righteous and godly is to love God and love others above all else. This has always been what The LORD has required of His people. And now, by the power of The Spirit, we can live by this standard, if we flee from the things of this world to run after the things of God.

Next, Paul tells Timothy to pursue faith (*Pistis* in The Greek), which simply means, *to believe God in all things*. The reason that true Believers are not consumed with gaining riches is that they are trusting in God, rather than their own flesh. They learn to be content in all things, for they have the assurance that God will provide. Therefore, they are able to have peace in all circumstances. Faith is essential to peace of mind. And **without faith, it is impossible to please God.** As King David so eloquently stated before going off to battle:

Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in The Name of The LORD our God. **Psalm 20:7**

After faith, Paul charges Timothy to pursue love (agape). To love God and to love others. Agape is not just a casual love, but a love that puts the needs of others ahead of one's own. Agape is the selfless love that comes from God. It is the kind of love that is willing to be nailed to a cross and die, so that others might live. The world knows no such love. But this love is the very nature of our God.

Next comes endurance (*hypomone* in the Greek), the word means, *a patient enduring of suffering or perseverance through difficulty*. The child of God does not walk away from his faith during hard times, but rather, he embraces it. For we have within us the hope of Christ, Who cannot lie (**Hebrews 6:18**). We endure, because we have the assurance that everything that God has promised us will be fulfilled. There is nothing to fear, for God is with us. So we endure.

What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?**Romans 8:31**

And finally, Paul tells Timothy to pursue gentleness (*praiothes* in the Greek), meaning *meekness*. Meekness is not "weakness" as some would argue, but rather, it is the yielding up of one's strength to another's control. Just as a horse that has been broken is no less strong, but simply has surrendered his strength to the control of its master. We, as followers of Christ, have yielded up all that we are in order to be controlled by The Spirit of God. We no longer strive to enrich ourselves, to defend ourselves, nor to avenge ourselves. We are trusting in God to guide, provide, and protect us. These as a whole are the pursuits of the child of God. We run *from* this world and run *to* godliness. Our "roots", as it were, are no longer attached to the soil of this world, but rather, we are content to die to ourselves in order to offer up a fruitful harvest to our God. Our treasures are not of this world, and therefore, they will stand the test of time.

Fight for The Faith (vs 12-15)

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, Who gives life to all, and of Christ Jesus, Who gave a good confession before Pontius Pilate, I charge you to keep this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our LORD Jesus Christ. God will bring this about in His Own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, The King of kings, and The LORD of lords, Who alone is immortal and Who lives in unapproachable light, Whom no one has seen or can see, to Him be honor and eternal power. Amen.
1 Timothy 6:12-15

The only thing, as Christians, that we are to fight for is the faith. Just as Paul commanded Timothy to take a stand for the faith in Ephesus and to put an end to the false doctrine of the materialistic false teachers, we too are called to be pillars of the truth (**1 Timothy 3:15**). We are to be unrelenting and unwavering as we take our stand for the faith. And why are we to do this?

By standing in defense of the faith, we demonstrate that we are taking hold of eternal life. In other words, we are living proof that this life is not all there is. And our motivation is based upon the fact that we know for certain that our LORD Jesus is coming back to take us home. We are living for that day. It is said that the Quakers used to start each day with the prayer, "Maybe today Lord." And each night, they would pray "Maybe tomorrow." The child of God lives with the expectant hope of the return of Christ Jesus. And this hope compels us to let go of this life, in fervant expectation of the life to come. We live for that life, and all of our striving down here is toward that which is to come.

And when will this grand event take place? Only God knows. And He will bring it to pass in His own good and predetermined time. But in the meantime, we make our "good confession" living a life of testimony to the coming of our LORD. Just as Christ stood before Pilate and refused to waiver from the truth, even at the expense of His very life. He contended for the faith to the very end, knowing that His life was in the hands of The Father, the Giver of all life. Just listen to how He respond to Pilates inquiries.

So Pilate said to Him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify You?" "You would have no authority over Me at all," Jesus answered him, "if it hadn't been given you from above..."
John 19:10-11a

Those who belong to God rest in the knowledge that *only* God has any say in their lives. Their destiny has been predetermined by The One Who is the giver of life. The One True and Sovereign God of the universe, Who lives in unapproachable light. He is in control, and therefore, we can boldly stand in defense of the faith, even though the very gates of hell be arrayed against us. This is our charge, and we do not have to stand in our own strength, but His. And He shall prevail.

So, we must run from the things that will dissuade us from this great calling and run to the things of God. We must stand and fight for the faith, because this world, now more than ever, is in need of the gospel. Do not fear what others can do to you, but go out in the power of The Spirit of The Living God. He is our strength.

God is our refuge and strength, a helper Who is always found in trouble. Therefore we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas, though its water roars and foams and the mountains quake with turmoil.
Psalms 46:1-3

So run from evil and cling to what is good. Contend for the faith, because in the end, our King will reign over all the earth. **And those who trust in Him will not be ashamed (1 Peter 2:6).**

TRUTH!!!