

1 Timothy 6:11-21 – “Flee, Fight and Finish Well”

Summary Statement:

This passage calls us to live as people of God – fleeing what destroys, pursuing what reflects Christ, enduring in the fight of faith, and investing our lives in what will last forever.

Outline:

1. A Pure Pursuit – 6:11
2. A Persistent Fight – 6:12-16
3. A Prioritized Focus – 6:17-21

1. A Pure Pursuit – 6:11

6:11 - *But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*

Paul has been addressing those who have strayed from the faith due to greed and error. But now he calls to Timothy and makes it clear that he is to stand out from this sort of characterization. He calls him a **man of God**. That would have drawn remembrance back to how many of the Old Testament prophets were referred to. Moses was called a man of God. Timothy, though he may have felt very inferior to these men, was called to carry the same responsibility of living a life that reflected God.

- Timothy had a high calling on his life, and with that come a high responsibility. He was to live like a man of God.

Now as a man of God, there were three things that he was called to do here:

Flee, Follow, and Fight.

If Timothy had any hope he needed to flee the things that Paul has been pointing out in this chapter. Namely not consenting to wholesome words (6:3), pride and being obsessed with disputes and arguments (6:4), and having an unhealthy love of money (6:5, 9-10). These are things that have left people derailed and shipwrecked. So when the enemy comes knocking, when sin is trying to have its way, FLEE!! Run far from it.

- There is a noticeable difference between fleeing something and avoiding it. If I saw a little dog coming my way, I would avoid it. There wouldn't be a lot

of fear towards it, just annoyance. But if I saw a bear coming at me, I would flee!! I would be fighting for my life. That's the idea of fleeing something.

But we're not just to flee, we're also to follow. We need to follow after that which is going to promote growth and health.

- We can live a life of saying no to this and avoiding that, but if we're not feeding ourselves what is good and growing in that which is of the Lord, we're going to be lacking.

Where a person ends up in life and their effectiveness for the kingdom is greatly determined by what it is they flee, and what it is they pursue.

So Paul lists 6 qualities that we're to be pursuing. Interestingly that word for **pursue** is the same Greek word for *persecute*. These are things we're to be going after with an intensity; not to destroy but to seek after with fervency.

- **Righteousness** – this is about doing what is right and just. Often times displayed outwardly and toward our fellow man. This is not about the righteousness toward salvation since that is not something we can earn or pursue; it is imputed to us through faith. And because it is, we want to live rightly.
- **Godliness** – again, this is a favorite word of Paul's in these Pastoral Epistles, and it speaks of Godlikeness. It's a desire to be more like God, honoring and living in reverence before Him.
- **Faith** – this isn't so much about faith in God, or saving faith; it's more about faithfulness. Keep on keeping on in the midst of difficulty and hardship. Don't give up.
- **Love** – as believers we should be growing in love to one another and to God above all. This word *agapē* again is to have high regard for others, to see them better as yourself where you have a genuine care and love for them.
- **Patience** – this is *hypomenē* which speaks of having an endurance that makes you steadfast under adversity.
- **Gentleness** – Timothy was not to come down harshly on people but to exhibit gentleness.

Interestingly, these qualities resemble the fruit of the Spirit. If you're struggling in these things, pray that you become more surrendered to the work of the Spirit in your life.

So, flee what's not of God, and follow after what is of God.

- "Once we see evil as the evil it is, we will want to flee from it, and once we see goodness as the good it is, we will want to pursue it." ¹

2.A Persistent Fight – 6:12-16

6:12 - *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.*

Next Paul calls Timothy to take action as a soldier would in defending his ground. ***Fight the good fight of faith...*** There is indeed a fight worth fighting, and it is the fight of faith. To see others growing in Jesus and removing all things that could potentially compromise that.

- Now in vs. 11 the faith mentioned there was about faithfulness – having faith to continue on in pursuit of holiness. But here, as many translations render, it is about fighting the good fight of ***the*** faith – or the true faith. This is about guarding the Word of God. At this time it speaks of... "the apostolic faith, the body of doctrine to which he alludes throughout the Pastoral Letters as 'the truth' (e.g. 2:4; 3:15; 4:3), 'the teaching' (e.g. 4:6; 6:1; Tit. 1:9; 2:1) or 'the deposit' (6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12, 14, literally). Since some have 'wandered' from it, it is all the more urgent that Timothy should 'fight' for it." ²

Now fighting is not easy, and it's not often fun. It's difficult and there are days where it might seem like too much work just to live for Jesus in this day. But look at what Paul reminds Timothy to do: ***lay hold on eternal life...*** There is something worth fighting for. And regardless of the difficulty we may encounter in the present, there are better days coming!!

- Paul knew this full well. He experienced it and knew that it was a great motivator to get through this life.
- **Romans 8:18**, *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

And here's the thing, eternal life is not just something to look forward to, it is something to be grasped, enjoyed, and lived now!!

¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 155). InterVarsity Press.

² Stott, J. R. W. (1996). *Guard the truth: the message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (p. 156). InterVarsity Press.

- This is the hope and reality we are to be living in. Lay hold of it. Don't let the fight drag you down, don't let sin drag you down, don't let this world drag you down – lay hold on eternal life.
- We lay hold of eternal life as we order our lives according to God's Word and ways. When we walk in godliness we will be experiencing His power and presence and enjoying these blessings of eternal life.
- "Possessing eternal life is one thing, but 'taking hold' of it is another. The former is static; the latter is dynamic. The former depends upon God; the latter depends upon us. The former comes through faith alone; 'taking hold' requires faith plus obedience (6:14)." ³
- Now there is certainly an even greater reality of eternal life to come and that is when we will see Jesus and be like Jesus. When sin is finally removed and these present struggles are done away with. What a day that will be!!

And have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Apparently, Timothy at one point had made a public confession of his commitment to the Lord. Not only was he called by the Lord, but he also willingly submitted himself to the Lord.

Not only was Timothy to look to his own confession, but he was also to be reminded of Christ's great confession and commitment.

6:13-14 - 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,

First of all, Timothy was to continue on fighting the good fight and not back down because God is watching. He sees all that we're doing and all that we're going through, and ultimately, He ***gives life to all things***. He's the giver of life and sustainer of life. So Timothy doesn't need to fear any repercussions in this fight.

He's to consider Jesus who stared down His enemies and spoke with boldness before them, because He knew His life didn't count on it.

- ***John 18:33–37, "Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this***

³ Dillow, Joseph C. (1992). *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (p. 136). Miami Springs, Fla.: Shoettle Publishing Co.

concerning Me?”³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?”³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”³⁷ 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.””

And Timothy was to continue on in this work and fight until the Lord comes! That’s the finish line friends. Too many people have started out strong, they hit that full sprint quickly, but then peetered out. We’re in a long distance run, and I want to finish strong! We fight the good fight until we stand before Jesus – either at our death or at His coming.

And speaking of the Lord’s appearing...

6:15-16 - *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.*

Now, whenever Paul got talking about the goodness of God, and especially being with Jesus one day, he just couldn’t contain himself. I mean, he would often just break out into spontaneous praise over it all.

He says here: ***He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords...***

- Potentate means sovereign. He is the ruler over all things and is in control of all things. There is none that is higher in power, He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

He alone has immortality dwelling in unapproachable light. God alone is eternal, there is none like Him. His beauty and holiness no man can see fully. To this God be honor and everlasting power!

- Remember, Paul is writing to Timothy who’s in Ephesus, an early center of idolatry and Emperor worship. This was kind of the trump card on all of that. You want to worship things made with hands, or a mere mortal? Well, we worship the one true God who holds power over all and is the Creator of every life!

3.A Prioritized Focus – 6:17-21

6:17-19 - *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.*

Now realize here, that Paul doesn't say that riches are wrong. We can get into that thinking sometimes and say, *Oh, you've got money?! Well, you're carnal.* The issue is not having money, it's your attitude towards money. Don't be proud about it, or reliant on it. ...***nor to trust in uncertain riches***... Do you see that? Riches are very unstable. Don't get me wrong, they're nice to have, but if my life is wrapped up in them and dependent on them, they can go as quickly as they came. And then what am I left with? That's why we trust ***in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.***

- Now this is a great balance to have. Don't live for earthly things, but don't be afraid to enjoy the blessings that God brings your way. We have many things we can enjoy in this life. A nice ride on a motorcycle as our Riverside Riders will do this afternoon. A nice ice cream cone at Harrison Lake. These are blessings we can enjoy from a God who gives us all things. Don't live your life for them, but don't refuse things that God puts in your life to enjoy.
- Ultimately, all that we enjoy is that which comes from God. Material things can't produce lasting joy or contentment. It's found in God alone.
- You have the opportunity every day to wake up and start your day with a beautiful sunrise, God's Word, a coffee and some toast, and you're like the richest guy around. Whereas you can have a person vacationing in Europe, experiencing a \$200 meal at a fancy restaurant, but be apart from God. They're lost, and their enjoyment of those things is very superficial.
- I'll take my \$2 morning of coffee and toast, and spending time with God dreaming of eternal life. That is true riches!

Paul tells Timothy in verses 18-19 to remind the rich, *You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.* But how do we do that? By using the things that we have on this earth, our riches or resources, and using them in a way that help and bless others. In a way that furthers the work of God.

In doing so they would be *storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come...* By no means does this mean that they can earn salvation, but they can use their earthly resources and wealth to make a difference eternally.

That they may lay hold on eternal life. We don't get eternal life when we die. It is something we have now. Yet sometimes it's so hard to distinguish because so much of our energy goes into the things of this world. But when we begin to live with an eternal perspective, and we do the things that have eternal value, we're laying hold on eternal life. We're participating in the things that really matter and are truly lasting. It's a much better way to live in the present.

- **Matthew 6:19–21**, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

6:20-21 - *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.*

Timothy is called to guard what was committed to him. What's been committed to him? The gospel, the doctrines passed down by the apostles and the Lord Jesus Himself, the Scriptures. These are God's unchanging word and they need to be defended and preserved. It's not so much that Paul didn't trust Timothy to carry out the work, but rather the deception and seduction was so great. Paul knew how he needed to encourage Timothy to stay the course, even in the midst of opposition. People's lives depended on it, ***for some have strayed concerning the faith***. That's exactly what the enemy wants – to lead people away from the truth.

It's why it is so imperative that we guard what has been committed to our trust as well. We've been given the gospel, salvation, we've been blessed with resources people in some parts of the world have never seen. We need to guard these things and not squander it away. Use everything in a way where we are representing God and making God known.

Flee the things that take away from that, and pursue the things that foster it. And may ***Grace be with you. Amen!*** We began in grace and we must continue to go in God's great grace.

Paul's words to Timothy are not just for a young pastor in Ephesus – they are for every believer who wants their life to count. We are called to run from what destroys, pursue what transforms, fight for what matters, and hold tightly to what is eternal. One day, every lesser thing will fall away – money, status, comfort, even this present world – but what we did for Christ will remain. So don't settle for a distracted, half-hearted life. Lay hold of eternal life now. Live like it's real – because it is. And when you stand before Jesus, you won't regret a single step you took in faith, a single sacrifice you made for His kingdom, or a single truth you faithfully guarded. Finish the race. Fight the good fight. And hold fast—because He is worthy.

Points to Ponder:

1. What am I fleeing and what am I pursuing?
 - What would it look like to pursue the things of God this week?
2. Am I living the reality of eternal life now, or hanging on until heaven?
 - What practical steps can I take to live with an eternal perspective instead of being consumed by temporary things?
3. What has God entrusted to me that I need to guard?
 - The gospel, sound doctrine, my own walk with Christ, and the souls of others are committed to my care. Am I protecting these things from “profane and idle babblings,” or am I allowing compromise to creep in?