

Four Characteristics of a Man of God, part 2

We have been learning how to recognize who is a man of God. The Scriptures have called numerous men a “man of God” about seventy times in the Old Testament. The expression “man of God” refers to a man who spoke for God or represented God. The first time it occurs in the Bible is in Deuteronomy 33:1. In that verse, it refers to Moses. Moses was a “man of God.” Joshua 14:6 also uses the expression “man of God” to refer to Moses. The prophet Samuel was called a “man of God.” It is interesting that 1 Kings 13 refers to a “man of God,” but we are never given the man’s name. He served God without ever being recognized. There were other men called a “man of God.” Some of them were Elijah (1 Kings 17:18), Elisha (2 Kings 5:20), Shemaiah (2 Chronicles 11:2), and King David (Nehemiah 12:36).

In the New Testament, the expression, “man of God,” occurs only two times. It is found in 1 and 2 Timothy and each time the apostle Paul used “man of

God” to refer to Timothy. But the term could have been used of Matthew, Paul, Peter, John, James, Jude, and the other apostles. In fact, anyone who speaks for Christ is a “man of God.” I am not a Moses or a King David, but I want to have the character traits of the man of God. I hope you do too!

In our last study, we started exploring four characteristics of a “man of God.” The first characteristic we discovered was that a man of God must use the money that God has given to him as a tool. The first part of 1 Timothy 6:11 said,

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

The phrase, “These things,” in this verse refers us back to verse 10, which says we are not to love money. That is, the man of God must not love money. He understands that he is only a steward for the money God has given him. He knows that he is not an owner. God gave him the money to meet his financial needs, so that he can buy food, clothes, pay for his housing, and other things. He does not live excessively with the money. He uses the money to serve God.

The second characteristic of a man of God is that he pursues six spiritual qualities. They are given in the last part of verse 11. They are . . .

**. . . pursue
righteousness,
godliness, faith,
love, perseverance
and gentleness.
1 Timothy 6:11b
(NASB)**



Righteousness refers to external behavior, and godliness refers to our inward attitudes and motives. As godliness increases in us, righteousness will increase and our external behavior will change. Faith and love describe our relationship with God. A man of God will trust Him more and love Him more. The last two spiritual qualities are perseverance and gentleness. Perseverance describes a victorious, triumphant, unswerving loyalty to the Lord in the midst of trials. Gentleness means that while a man of God is persevering through a trial, he is gentle toward others. These six spiritual qualities will increase as we faithfully study the

Word of God, confess our sins, and the Holy Spirit makes changes in us (1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 Peter 2:2). Those are the first two spiritual qualities of a “man of God.”

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH. In this study we are going to learn the last two characteristics of a man of God. We will begin with 1 Timothy 6:12. It gives us the third characteristic, which is that he must fight the good fight of faith. Verse 12 says,

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12 (NASB)

When we read, “fight the good fight of faith,” we do not always understand this statement correctly. Paul was not telling Timothy to preach a million sermons or have a campaign against false teachers. He was not telling Timothy to study the Scriptures into the late hours of the night. Nor was Paul telling Timothy to share the gospel everywhere he could. While those things are implied, Paul was referring to something much more important — something deep in Timothy’s heart. So, I want to unpack this verse carefully, and I pray that the Holy Spirit helps you understand the meaning of this verse.

If we look back to verse 11, we are reminded that Paul told us to flee and run. We were told to flee from something and pursue something else. He told us to run away from the love of money and run after six spiritual qualities. We are to avoid one thing and replace it with something else. God does that in Scripture. He tells us to avoid one thing and replace that with something else. This requires self-control, which is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So, as we walk in the Spirit, self-control will grow. Now that was verse 11.

But in verse 12, Paul urged Timothy and us to fight the good fight of faith. Now we need to talk about this word “fight” so that we understand what the Spirit is saying. First, when we think about fights or battles, we think about a fight that ends quickly and ends in success. Maybe the fight is a simple conflict or one that lasts for a few weeks. But the tense of the Greek word for “fight” in this verse does not refer to a quick fight. It refers to a continuous ongoing struggle.

Second, Paul also told Timothy that the fight is extremely

difficult. The Greek word for “fight” is *agonizomai*. We get our English word agonize from it. The word means that the fight is agonizing. That is, any believer who is actively engaged in this fight will become weary. Imagine a boxing match or a tennis match that never ends. It continues for hours, days, weeks, months, and years. It is like a baseball team fighting to win a game that never stops. The game is in extra innings and neither team is scoring enough runs to win. So, the game drags on inning after inning. Both teams struggle and strain even harder to win so they can go home and rest. (If you are curious, the longest professional baseball game on record was between the Rochester Red Wings and the Pawtucket Red Sox. The game was started on April 18, 1981 and was stopped at the end of the thirty-second inning at 4:00 am because everyone was too exhausted. There were 19 fans left in the stadium. The game was finished on June 23, 1981. That game lasted through thirty-three innings). But Paul said the fight about which he is talking never ends and is agonizingly difficult. It lasts throughout a lifetime. You will wish that it would end, but it will never end. So the fight never ends and is agonizing.

Then Paul uses the word “good” to describe the fight of the faith. The word “good” is the reason we should be willing to experience the agony. I remember fighting a neighborhood bully when I was a child. I kept knocking him down, but I lost in the end. I was a nervous wreck. It was a fight that I should have avoided. Some fights are not good, but the fight of the faith is good. The Greek word for “good” is *kalos*. It refers to an excellent or noble fight. It is a mixture of moral goodness and beauty. It is a fight in which a “man of God” will be engaged. The word “faith” in this verse is actually “the faith” in the Greek. It does not refer to our subjective faith. It refers to the content of the faith—the Word of God or the Truth.

Today, it is sad that sermons are preached that are more about counseling advice to comfort and meet emotional needs. Some pulpits are primarily devoted to calls for political action, or calls to moral behavior than actually explaining what God has said in the pages of Scripture. Many believers hear emotionally charged sermons to stimulate and motivate people to action. The sad truth is that emotion is like sugar and candy. It does not last more than a few hours. But the meat of the Word of God causes you grow. In 2 Timothy 4:3-5, Paul described

what is happening in our times. He wrote these words,

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:3-5 (NASB)

Notice that Paul told Timothy to endure hardship. The same command fits us too! Now read verses 7-8. Paul says,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NASB)

Paul says that he had been fighting the good fight of the faith. He had been constantly agonizing in the good fight for the content of the faith. That charge is given to every pastor, church leader, and every believer. There are no exceptions, if you are a Christian. R. C. H. Lenski, the great German theologian, wrote these words,

While verses 11, 12 are addressed to Timothy, they are worded in a form that fits any and every Christian.

Now we can connect all of the pieces. Paul told Timothy that the good fight of the faith never ends. It is agonizing, and it is a good fight to preserve the Word of God—the truth. A man of God will defend it against false teachers. He will teach it, share it, and help spread it so that people are saved and believers understand the truth of the Word of God. People must hear it to be saved. People must be taught it so that their lives are transformed. Hebrews 4:12 says,

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

We just need to unleash it.

TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE. Now Paul commands Timothy in verse 12 to,

... take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12 (NASB)

Paul says to take hold of the eternal life. Now Paul was not telling Timothy to become a believer. He was already a Christian. Notice that Paul then says, “to which you were called.” That refers to an effectual call. That is, the Holy Spirit drew Timothy, and he came to Christ. Paul also adds that Timothy made a good public confession of faith in Jesus Christ in the presence of many witnesses. Even though Timothy was already a believer, Paul reminded him of the eternal life that he possessed. Eternal life is not a wish or a hope. He already had eternal life. It was a reality and Timothy needed to realize that and cling to it! That was a fact. In 1 Peter 1:3-5 we are told,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5 (NASB)

That is, eternal life is real and is promised to every believer. So, Paul said to Timothy, “take hold” of eternal life. The Greek word for “take hold” is a compound word. One word means “to take” and the second word adds great emphasis. So, some have translated the command as “get a grip” or “grasp it.” The Greek tense is an aorist. That is, Timothy needed to finally, once for all, “get a grip” on the reality that he had eternal life. Stop being a lazy Christian! Eternal life should give you motivation to suffer for Jesus, to engage in the good fight.

Apparently, Timothy was not engaged in the “good fight of the faith.” He was not very motivated. Oh, he was the pastor of the church in Ephesus, but he was not fully committed.

It appears that he considered eternal life to be like his other worldly possessions in his house. It was nice to have! It was just one of the things he possessed. But he could have done so much more. Sometimes we lack motivation too! He was not fully willing to sacrifice himself for Christ. Timothy did not consider eternal life to be the great pearl in his life, like Jesus' parable of the costly pearl. He had never gotten a grip on the incredibly costly pearl called eternal life. He was not agonizing in the good fight of the faith.

So, Paul commanded Timothy to "get a grip" on eternal life. He was not going to lose anything! He already had eternal life which would last for forever! We can just hear Paul say, "So, fight the good fight of faith and receive the prize that awaits you, Timothy."

KEEPS THE COMMAND. Verses 13-14 give us the fourth characteristic of a man of God. That is, a man of God keeps the commandment. In verses 13-14, Paul said,

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 6:13-14 (NASB)

Paul is bold. He commands Timothy to keep the commandment. Paul issues the command in the presence of God the Father and Christ Jesus. The idea is that both the Father and Christ Jesus hear the command. God the Father is the One who gives life to everything, that includes the eternal life. Christ Jesus is the One who stood before Pontius Pilate and told the truth even though it meant He would be crucified. So, Paul reminds Timothy that both the Father and Christ were witnesses to what he was telling him. Timothy was being commanded to keep the commandment without any excuse until the second coming of Christ. Paul said until the second coming of Christ because he did not know when Christ was coming! Notice what Paul added in verse 15,

Which He will bring about at the proper time . . . 1 Timothy 6:15a (NASB)

Paul said this because he did not know when the second

coming would occur. But he knew it would occur. It would happen at the right time, at the time that God the Father had planned (Acts 1:7; 2 Peter 3:9).

Next we need to ask, to which commandment was Paul referring? There are many opinions, but the more obvious commandment is the one that Paul had just given him in verse 12. Get a grip on your eternal life and agonize in the good fight of the faith. If he did, he would give it everything that he could. Why not? This world was not his home, and it is not ours either!

CONCLUSION. In verses 15-16 Paul closes with a doxology.

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15b-16 (NASB)

Four attributes of God are described in these verses. The first is: God the Father is the "only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords." He is in total control of everything. As a man of God agonizes in the good fight of the content of the faith, it is encouraging to know that the Father's plan will succeed. He will be victorious.

The second attribute is that God "alone possesses immortality." It is also encouraging to know the Father can never be defeated as a result of the fight. Satan and his demons cannot win since God is sovereign and immortal. The Father will win the fight. That means we are on the winning team. We are following the winner in the good fight of the faith.

The third attribute is that the Father dwells in unapproachable light. This reminds us of His Shekinah glory. That speaks of His glory. Psalm 104:1-2 captures the idea with,

*Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,
Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.
Psalm 104:1-2 (NASB)*

The fourth attribute of God is that no man has seen or can

see Him. Exodus 33:20 records these words to Moses after Moses asked to see God. God said,

But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Exodus 33:20 (NASB)

Just because you cannot see Him does not mean He does not exist and is not helping wage the war. Paul was reminding Timothy and us that we are not alone when we agonize in this "good fight of the faith." Our sovereign and immortal God who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, is with us!

So, every man of God is called to get a grip on the reality of our eternal life and fight the good fight of the faith. The man of God is to engage in the good fight of faith that never ends. He is to teach the Word of God. He is to share it. He is to help spread it so that people are saved and believers understand the truth of the Word of God and grow by it. He is always to desire to be engaged in this good fight of the faith.

Now to Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.