

## The sermon

### Intro

This morning we have a message from an apostle to his assistant who's trying to steer the Ephesian church in the right direction. And it's Father's Day. We'll seek to understand the passage. Paul's directions to Timothy have something to say to each of us. And particularly I'll charge fathers to follow the spirit of Paul's instruction.

We have fathers with children in the home. We have fathers with children outside the home. We have grandfathers and even great-grandfathers. For those with children outside the home, think of how you can remain a godly influence while allowing them to be adults on their own. Grandfathers, think of how you can remain a godly influence while allowing your children to parent their children.

### READ PASSAGE

### Body

#### Point 1: Flee (6:11)

*But as for you, O man of God, flee these things.*

Paul is addressing Timothy.

*"O man of God"* = Paul's placing Timothy in the category of Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and Elisha. Timothy speaks for God. Timothy acts for God. Timothy leads for God.

#### *"flee these things"*

These include what we find in 6:3-10: (*"puffed up with conceit"*), ignorance (*"understands nothing"*), *"unhealthy craving for controversy,"* love of money.

The word "flee" is used of the angel's instruction to Joseph after the birth of Jesus (Matt 2:13). Get out of town and go to Egypt because Herod's coming to kill Jesus. Flee to escape danger.

Here Paul's talking about spiritual dangers. Flee desires for wealth *"that plunge people into ruin and destruction"* (6:9).

Flee pride (conceit). Be attune to what's going on inside your heart. When you detect pride, confess it to God. When you detect pride, remind yourself of the gospel. We didn't earn salvation. We needed Jesus' obedience to earn our eternal life. We needed Jesus to die on the cross to take away our guilt. We deserved hell.

Sometimes we need to flee ungodly attitudes.

How can we flee craving for controversy? Be attune to your actions and bad fruit they produce. Confess your sin to God. Resolve to pursue peace and unity. Share your struggle with a trusted friend and let them hold you accountable. Get godly counsel on how to have passion for truth without a craving for controversy.

### Application

Fathers, lead your home by fleeing these things.

Confess error and sin with your children when necessary. Model humility. Model repentance. Wisely share your struggles with them.

Be a peace-maker. Strive to handle conflict with your wife well. Model for your children how to handle conflict. Don't unnecessarily provoke your children. Seek God's wisdom on what to correct and how to correct it.

## **Point 2: Follow (6:11)**

*Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.* – 6:11

“**Pursue**” means to follow after someone or something with urgency, in a hurry. To run after something to catch up with it. The movie or TV scene where the police officer or FBI agent is sprinting after a criminal on the run. Interestingly, it's the same word for persecuting Christians: hostile pursuit of believers.

The idea is there's some things to run away from, to get out of your life, attitudes to avoid at all cost. And there's some things we need to chase down.

Fathers, we need spiritual ambitions. Goals that we give our time and energy. Here's six characteristics for every Christian to follow after.

### **Righteousness**

Righteousness is doing what's right. Doing what God says. Conduct that lines up with the Bible.

Fathers, make obeying God goal number one! Show your children what obeying Jesus looks like. We're the model our children follow.

### **Godliness**

Godliness is lived-out devotion to God in accord with the truth. Godliness is rooted in reverence, respect, and love for God. Godliness is practice.

Righteousness highlights conformity to God's commands. Godliness highlights devotion that results in obedience.

Fathers, devote your hearts. Devotion isn't something we do once a day. Yes set times of Bible reading and prayer are great things. But devotion, or godliness, is an every minute thing. Devotion to a person: Jesus Christ.

### **Faith**

Faith is trust. Trusting the Bible is true. Trusting Jesus' promises of eternal life and forgiveness of sins. Looking forward to a “*new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Pet 3:13). Trusting God is good, sovereign, and wise. Trusting God gives good things when we ask (Matt 7:7-11). Trusting God gives wisdom when we ask (Jas 1:5). Trusting God is working all things together for the good of his people (Rom 8:28). Trusting goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives (Ps 23:6). Trusting God wrote and formed every day of our lives before we ever existed (Ps 139:16). Trusting God's thoughts and God's ways are higher than our thoughts and ways (Isa 55:8-9). Trusting that God's grace is

sufficient for whatever hardship we find ourselves in (2 Cor 12:9-10). Trusting we can find contentment and endure any situation through Christ's strength (Phil 4:13).

Fathers, life is hard. Trust God. Know your Bibles. The more we know our Bibles the more we know who God is for us. The more fuel for our trust. Trust God. His mercy. His work inside us. His work around us.

### **Love**

Love is commitment, affection, action. There's love for God. Fleeing sin is loving God. And there's love for people. Church membership is commitment to a group of believers. Love endures. Love feels. Love acts.

Fathers, love your spouse and your children for Jesus' sake. Stay committed. Feel their pain. Share their joys. Deny yourself and act for them. Show your family what loving God looks like.

### **Steadfastness**

Steadfastness is the capacity to continue and not quit in the face of difficult circumstances and trying times. Endurance, perseverance.

Fathers, don't quit on your family. Endure marriage conflict. Endure diapers. Endure tight finances. Endure self-denial. Endure the busyness of children's activities. Endure children squabbling with each other. Endure the repeated need to discipline. Endure your child's ignorance. Endure a child's rebellion. You too were a rebel against God.

Fathers, don't quit on your grown children. Be present, love, model godliness, share the truth when appropriate, and pray daily with fervency for their salvation. Parenting is endurance.

### **Gentleness**

Gentleness is the opposite of overbearing attitude and behavior. It's dealing with people delicately rather than harshly. Spanking a five year old in a calm, controlled, kind manner.

Fathers, your children, if not yet hardened and rebellious, have a tender spirit we can crush. We can provoke rebellion with harshness. We can be overbearing to the point they dread being around us. See your child as a heart to guide rather than a rebel to force into submission by any means necessary. We want their heart, not outward conformity. Gentleness helps.

### **A word of encouragement**

Fathers, if you're tracking with me I've burdened you with duty after duty. Duties I lay on myself. There's a right way to do life. Our actions will affect and influence others. And maybe you're thinking I don't cut the mustard. I can't do all this. And you're right. You can't do it in your own strength. But the good news is God promises he'll never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5). And he's patient with ignorant learners. God's not looking over our shoulders hoping we mess up so he can smack us. God's delight is faith-fueled obedience.

Paul, writer of these instructions, knew his limitations.

When Paul pleaded three times for God to remove his thorn in the flesh, God responded, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*" God's power comes to the weak. Me and you. Fathers, God's grace is sufficient for you to parent well and live out these characteristics.

Later on the distressed Paul found himself strengthened by God.

*At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!  
<sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully  
proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. – 2 Timothy 4:16-  
17*

Fathers, we're not able in our own strength. But as we do our part (Bible intake, learning, prayer, confessing sin, godly counsel, spiritual friendships), God works love, steadfastness, gentleness, etc. in increasing measure inside our hearts. That's good news!

Fathers, be motivated by spiritual ambitions. "*hunger and thirst for righteousness*" (Matt 5:6). "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*" (Matt 6:33). "*whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31). Model for your children the goals and pursuits they should have. These six are a start.

### **Point 3: Fight (6:12)**

*Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. – 6:12*

"Fight" = literally fighting, physical combat and figuratively an intense struggle. Paul toils for the gospel like a gladiator fighting to the death. Like a soldier in battle. He gives his all. He expends himself.

Timothy's fight (church health and personal godliness) is good. It's worth his effort. The church is worth your effort! Personal godliness is worth your effort!

Personally we "*Fight the good fight of the faith*" when we flee sin and follow after these six virtues.

### **Eternal life**

What's eternal life? It's a quality of life today. A new heart set free from the power of sin. Eternal life assumes there's something wrong with us. We're born with a sinful bent whereby we rebel against God's rule and do life our own way.

And eternal life's the future experience of all who believe. A new glorified, imperishable, immortal body fit for dwelling with God in a place where death and sin and suffering are a thing of the past. Eternal life won't be the experience of every human being.

Only those who believe attain eternal life. One day rebellion against God will come to an end. Those who persist in rebellion will go to a place called hell that's characterized by weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But why do those who believe get eternal life? God sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross as a substitute. That whoever believes in Jesus would not face judgment but rather experience forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

How do I believe you ask? Admit your rebellion. Thank God for sending Jesus to die on the cross. Ask for God's forgiveness on the basis of Jesus death. And trust you've been forgiven because God forgives everyone who trusts in Jesus.

How does an already saved person (Timothy) grasp eternal life? We grasp eternal life by making spiritual progress (sanctification). We grasp eternal life when we flee and follow.

In sum, negatively Timothy's called to wage warfare against false teaching and sin in his own life (flee). Positively, Timothy's called to wage warfare by teaching the truth. And by putting on righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

### **Application**

Fathers, we're in a battle. A battle against the lies of our day. A battle against pride. A battle against our own sinful desires. A battle to love God more than money, things, or ourselves. A battle to love the truth. A battle to put truth into practice.

This is the fight of every Christian. This matters for fathers because we steer the ship in our home. What we believe is passed on to our children. We want a pure faith. A robust faith. A faith that connects to life. A faith that helps our children do battle with sin. A faith that rests in God when life is hard. A faith lived out before our children that models righteous, godly responses to life's adversity.

### **Point 4: Free...from reproach (6:13-16)**

*I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, – 6:13*

Paul impresses upon Timothy the weight of his instructions. I'm saying these things in God's presence. You're reading these things in God's presence. Take these things seriously Timothy!

*to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, – 6:14*

"the commandment" isn't clearly specified. It could be to "Fight the good fight of the faith," the last command given. Or maybe it's broader to include flee, pursue, fight, and other commands in the letter.

Unstained means don't spoil the commandment with sin. Like a spaghetti sauce might ruin a new white shirt, failure to flee sin might spoil Timothy's ministry.

"free from reproach" = above criticism, no legitimate charge. Timothy, don't ruin your ministry. Don't kill your credibility. Don't kill your influence. Flee. Follow. Fight. When we do these three we'll be free from reproach.

"the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" = a visible manifestation of the hidden God for all see. Until Jesus appears in the sky, it's time to flee, follow, fight, and be free from reproach. When Jesus appears we won't be fleeing sin anymore. When Jesus appears we won't be fighting against error anymore. When Jesus appears, we'll become sinless so we won't have to worry about being above reproach anymore. We'll still follow, but it won't be the struggle it is today. Until Jesus appears, the spiritual fight lives on.

*which he will display at the proper time- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup> who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. – 6:15-16*

The he is God. Because Jesus has been seen by human eyes. The Father will display the Son for all to see at the appointed time. The time is fixed and certain and known only to God.

I can't do justice to everything said about God here. The point is God is unique: he's the only ruler of the world, he's the only one who doesn't experience death (immortality), he's the only one with a radiant glory, he's the only one who'll rule forever.

The point is Timothy, flee, follow, fight, and be free from reproach until Jesus appears. Because the God we serve is the unrivaled, unequalled ruler of the world. Now and forever.

### **Application**

Fathers, we're urged to flee, follow, fight, and be free from reproach in the sight of God. When we read our Bibles, when we encounter sermons, we do so in the sight of God. When we spank our kids and speak to them and conduct ourselves in the home, we do so in the sight of God.

Being free from reproach, above criticism is critical because we're a model our children follow. What we value, we teach them to value. Our actions have consequences. Here's the problem. We won't always conduct ourselves flawlessly. What do we do then? We model humility and repentance. We confess our sins to our wives and our children. We go back to the gospel. Reminding ourselves our God's forgiveness and empowering presence. We flee sin we've failed to avoid. We fight the good fight of faith. Because we want our children to flee, follow, fight, and be free from reproach.