

"Flee These Things ..."

"But thou O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal" (1 Tim. 6:11).

The expression "*man of God*" appears in Paul's letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17). It is not found, so far as I can determine, in any other of his letters; nor, for that matter, in other of the epistles. The expression "*man of God*" frequently appears in the Old Testament and by its use, refers to one who was a prophet or a bearer of a message from God. It seems that the same significance is to be attached to its appearance here in 1 Timothy 6:11. Timothy, as a messenger of God's word, was to have his life and demeanor in such a way that his life would not reflect adversely on the message he spoke. In 2 Timothy 3:17, he is promised that the Scriptures furnish the "*man of God*" with everything which is necessary in its proclamation and defense.

"Flee these things ..." In this section, after having giving instructions to servants in their duties to their masters, Paul has warned against those who are puffed up, who are "sick" about questionings and dispute of words; from which things come envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings. He has warned against being inordinately concerned about riches; against allowing them to become a temptation and snare to him through his being "*minged to be rich.*" He was to flee these things, as are all of those who would be servants of Christ. Fleeing "*these things*" we are rather to "*follow after*" several items.

"Righteousness and godliness." These two words often appear coupled together -- in the same company. When so found, they take on a more limited meaning, with "*righteousness*" conveying the thought of the right attitudes and behavior in the sight of men; "*godliness*" suggesting the right behavior and attitude toward the Lord. A similar appeal is found in Titus 2:11 where Christians are urged to live "*soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*"

"Faith and love." Since later Timothy is urged to "*fight the good fight of faith,*" "*faith*" here is an appeal that Timothy keep his faith intact. In Hebrews, brethren were urged to "*lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us*" (Heb. 12:1f) which besetting sin, as the letter repeatedly shows, is the sin of unbelief. Timothy (and we) must "hold on to our faith," but while doing so, we are to remember that no matter how strong our faith is, even strong enough to "*move mountains,*" if that faith does not have love intermingled in it, such a faith is worthless (1 Cor. 13:2).

The importance of exercising love is underscored by John who wrote, "*But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth*" (1 John 3:17f).

"*Patience and meekness.*" Patience is used so often to describe steadfastness. We are to "*run with patience the race set before us*" (Heb. 12:1). James tells us that the "*trying of your faith worketh patience, and let patience have its perfect work*" (James 1:3f). Paul adds to James' word, explaining that the "*perfect work of patience*" is "*approvedness*" (Rom. 5:4). Jesus told those of His day that in view of the impending doom of the city of Jerusalem: "*with patience, possess ye your souls*" (Lk. 21:19). He had earlier explained that the seed in the good ground "*brought forth fruit with patience*" (Lk. 8:15). Little wonder that Peter urges that we must add to our faith, patience (2 Pet. 1:16). Timothy was also to "*follow after*" meekness. The "*man of God,*" in the work he does, must do all things with "*meekness.*" Restoration of those in error must be done in "*the spirit of meekness*" (Gal. 6:1). We must show meekness toward all men (Ti. 3:2). With meekness we must receive the "*implanted word*" (James 1:21).

Jim McDonald