

1 Timothy Chapter 6 (vv.11-21)

Duties of the Man of God [vv.11-14]

v.11: 'But thou' sets Timothy in contrast to the false teachers (v.3) and their love of material gain (v.5, 9). Indeed, Timothy was a 'man of God', a well-used designation in the OT for those who represented God in word and deed. The phrase 'man of' often signifies the *character* of that person (e.g. 'man of sorrows', Isaiah 53.3). 'O' is an expression of exclamation and personal appeal to highlight Timothy's responsibility and honour in this regard. He must 'flee these things' referring to different doctrines (v.3), as well as the love of money and all its attendant evils. Believers are also commanded to *daily* and *habitually* flee from fornication, idolatry, and youthful lusts (1 Corinthians 6.18; 10.14; 2 Timothy 2.22). The imagery suggests these sinful practices constantly *chase* the believer.

The ethical appeal has a complementary *negative* (flee) and *positive* (follow) aspect, a combination found frequently in Scripture, e.g. Mark 8.34, Titus 2.12, Colossians 3.8-14. John Stott says, "We run after many things which attract us – pleasure, promotion, fame, wealth and power. Instead, we should concentrate on the pursuit of holiness." To 'follow after' describes the earnest and energetic pursuit of these things. Six qualities are described in two triads:

- **Godward.** 'Righteousness', in this context, is practical, i.e. doing what is right in the sight of God and seeking to obey His commandments (Luke 1.6, 75). 'Godliness' is a deep reverence for God which results in *holy* (godly) conduct. 'Faith' describes a person's personal trust and confidence in God.
- **Manward.** If one's responsibilities are fulfilled Godward, then there will be 'love' (*agape*), a deliberate and unconditional choice to sacrifice self for others. 'Patience' describes *endurance* under trial, one who remains *steadfast* (perseveres) in their service for God despite the (potential) suffering. A 'meek' person is mild and gentle, with a forgiving spirit that refuses retaliation for reproach and suffering and commits one's cause to God.

v.12: The man of God is not merely concerned with the formation of Christ-like character, but also strives to maintain the truth of God. 'Fight (*agonizomai*) the good (*kalos*) fight' is a metaphor drawn from the athletic games (cp. 1.18). The word describes the concentration, discipline and effort of any competing athlete (cf. 2 Timothy 4.7; 1 Corinthians 9.25-27). Thus, Timothy must continue to strive for the promotion and preservation of 'the **faith**' – the entire content of the word of God including the gospel (Jude 3). He must also 'lay hold' or *grasp* (seize) the prize of '**eternal life**'. Clearly Timothy had already received eternal life, but in following the injunctions of vv.11-12 he would more fully *appreciate* and *enjoy* divine life. He was to *live in its power* in the present before its *full realisation* in eternity (cf. John 10.10). By way of encouragement, Paul reminds Timothy of his conversion experience, when the gospel 'called' (summoned) him 'into' eternal life (Romans 8.30; 2 Thessalonians 2.14; 2 Timothy 1.9) – every believer is immersed in the life of eternity; it should be the atmosphere in which we live. At the same time, and in response to the call of the gospel, he publicly '**confessed**' Jesus Christ as Lord in the presence of many witnesses (Romans 10.9-10). This likely took place in conjunction with his baptism. The statement could also refer to his ongoing testimony in subsequent days.

v.13: In the light of his great confession of Christ, and as one who represented God in Ephesus (v.11), Paul re-affirms his '**charge**' (command) to Timothy in the 'sight' of these divine persons. This would no doubt remind him of his responsibility and encourage him to persevere, no matter the cost. This is the God who, as the source of life, '**quickeneth** all things'. Should Timothy be called to martyrdom for the sake of the gospel, this God was able to raise him from the dead. Life belongs to Him. Understanding this truth allows believers to give their lives away in the service of the gospel. Some manuscripts read 'preserveth all things alive' (cf. Exodus 1.17, 22) thus Timothy could also be assured of the *protecting* care of God. As far as Christ is concerned, He '**witnessed** a good confession' in the presence of Pilate. This is a possible reference to his affirmation of kingship, and particularly John 18.37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice". Thus, Timothy must continue to declare and defend the truth of God, after the pattern of His Saviour. **v.14:** His 'charge' concerns *guarding* and *protecting* the precious deposit of the apostles' doctrine (truth) entrusted to him (cf. 6.20; 2 Timothy 1.14; 4.2). Timothy must carry out this **command** in such a way that his conduct will *conform* to and *commend* the truth he teaches. 'Without **spot**' is used of the Lord Jesus (1 Peter 1.19) and signifies unsullied or untainted in character (pure). '**Unrebukenable**' is the word translated 'blameless' (3.2). It describes a person 'above reproach'; one that cannot be 'laid hold upon' by legitimate accusation. Timothy's duty extends 'until the **appearing**' (*epiphaneia*) of the Lord Jesus, a word which refers to the visible manifestation of Christ, whether at His *first* or *second* coming (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2.8; 2 Timothy 1.10). The *epiphaneia* denotes a 'shining forth' and contains the thought of *responsibility* in service and testimony, hence its use here. Timothy's faithfulness will have its (manifested) reward.

Doxology to the Potentate [vv.15-16]

v.15: Continuing the theme of Christ's appearing, JN Darby translates, "*Which in its own time the blessed and only Ruler shall shew...*". The glorious appearing of Christ will be displayed on earth. This appearing will be precise, for the Father will reveal Christ 'in his times', that is, according to divine timing (Acts 1.7; 17.26; Romans 5.6). The Father is described as 'the blessed and only Potentate'. He is '**blessed**' in the sense of possessing within Himself all that is necessary for His complete, contented satisfaction (and untouched by circumstances). He is therefore the source of all blessing and communicates the same to others (Romans 4.7-8). The 'only **Potentate**' describes one possessed of power and authority (Luke 1.52). In the case of God, and as sole Potentate, this is inherent, absolute power and authority – all others are subordinate to Him. The appearing will be public, for the word 'shew' means to 'exhibit' – the one who once walked in obscurity, who then was exhibited to shame and spitting on the cross, will ultimately be exposed to the eyes of all in glory. The person God will display is the '**King of kings and Lord of lords**' – a title used of deity in the OT (Deuteronomy 10.17; Psalm 136.3) but only of Christ in the NT (Revelation 17.14; 19.16). Christ will be "*King over those who rule as kings, and Lord over those who exercise lordship*". Others receive limited sovereignty and lordship from One who is absolute and universal in his. **v.16: 'Immortality'** (lit. 'deathlessness') is an essential and underived attribute of God. He is not liable to, or capable of death – possessing inherent, eternal life (John 5.26). He dwells in '**light**' – the bright shining glory that surrounds his throne and emanates from His essential being (Psalm 104.2; 1 John 1.5). Such a holy splendour is '**unapproachable**' (inaccessible) and would quickly consume mere mortals. God is also invisible, with no man having the capacity (ability) to **see** the essence of deity. *Stott: "We see his 'glory', his back not his face, his appearing as a theophany, or his image in his incarnate Son. Being in himself invisible, we can come to know him only in so far as he has been pleased to make himself known."* To Him belongs 'honour' (reverence) and 'power' (supreme dominion) forever.

Demands upon the Rich [vv.17-19]

v.17: After a lengthy parenthesis (vv.11-16), Paul returns to the subject of material wealth. Having spoken of those who *desire* to be rich, he now charges those that *are* rich – of which there would be many in a wealthy city like Ephesus. The possession of wealth is not condemned but should be used as a stewardship for the glory of God. Riches belong to 'this (present) world' or 'the now age' which stresses the *present* time in contrast to the *future* when earthly wealth will have no value or consequence. The rich must not be '**highminded**', i.e. think themselves superior, or display an arrogant spirit, towards those who are poor (cf. Ezekiel 28.1-5; James 2.1-4). There is also the danger of '**trusting**' in the 'uncertainty' of riches (which is effectively idolatry) rather than 'the God' Himself, 'the living one' – a contrast to *inanimate* possessions. Material prosperity can give the appearance of providing security but cf. Proverbs 23.4-5! How foolish, then, to set one's confidence and hope upon something so transitory (fleeting). Rather, it is the unchanging, dependable God 'who **giveth us richly** all things to enjoy' (James 1.5). He bountifully (abundantly) supplies everything we have 'for (our) enjoyment' (JND). This is clearly not a license for wanton self-indulgence, but an attitude that recognises (and appreciates) that *everything* (including material wealth) is a gift *from* God, and an *expression* of His grace. **v.18:** This verse defines the proper use of wealth. First, riches are to be used to 'do **good**' and benefit others (cf. Acts 14.17). Second, material riches provide a greater freedom to abound in **good works** (Acts 9.36, 39) by being 'ready to **distribute**' (generosity) and 'willing to **communicate**' (sharing with others). There is no thought of patronising charity, rather a practical sharing together in spiritual work. **v.19:** Those who use riches in this way '**store up**' or *accumulate* spiritual riches in heaven! Giving away one's wealth results in the transfer of funds from earth to heaven, cf. Matthew 6.19-20. This provides a 'good (lasting) **foundation**' (cp. 'uncertainty', v.17) that will reap eternal dividends at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. Luke 18.22). This kind of attitude towards riches shows that a believer is living in the light of eternity – such a person enjoys the reality of eternal (or 'true') life now. Those who live for riches only have a merely carnal existence of self-indulgence. Jim Allen: "*As the wealth is properly used for God and His interests, in that measure, treasures are transferred above; and in this same measure eternal life is evidenced, enjoyed, and experienced now.*"

Defence of the Truth [vv.20-21]

v.20: Paul closes with a serious and affectionate appeal to his young friend, summing up the entire letter in one sentence. Timothy must 'guard the deposit' of apostolic truth as a soldier would protect a valuable treasure (cp. v.14). Thus, he must continually '**avoid** (turn away from) profane and vain babblings'. '**Profane**' originally referred to everything outside the sacred grounds of a Greek temple, so Timothy must avoid all that is outside the realm of truth (unholy). '**Vain babblings**' is *empty chatter*, talk that has no real content – useless or vain arguments leading to ungodliness (2 Timothy 2.16). Timothy must also avoid '**oppositions** (a rival thesis) of **science** (knowledge) falsely so called'. This likely refers to the antagonistic arguments of the false teachers, many of which probably claimed to have 'superior' knowledge to that of the apostles. But such 'knowledge' was 'false' (a deception), a Greek word from which is derived *pseudonym* – a fictitious or pen name. **v.21:** Sadly, some had 'professed' (followed) such false 'knowledge' and consequently '**erred**' (swerved away, cf. 1.6) from the path of Christian truth. It is little wonder, therefore, Paul closes his letter with '**grace**'. Both Timothy, and all the saints at Ephesus would need God's sustaining provision for the difficult days ahead.