

“BUT YOU”

*“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.”
James 3:13*

If today’s lesson seems like a continuation of Shirley’s lesson from last week, that’s because it is. It’s all about clinging to the things of God and avoiding those things that can be stumbling blocks for us. Paul made this very personal for Timothy; if Timothy was going to be a leader, he had to lead by example. That’s why he begins our scripture today with the words *“but you”*. You, Timothy, take hold of what I’m telling you ... you are a *“man of God”*, as he reminds him in this first verse. In the previous lesson, Paul had warned him about those things which bring dishonor to the Lord, such as being disobedient to those in authority, about false teachings and about the love of money being the root of all evil. In today’s scripture he says to flee those things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. These are all good things, but if we are to pursue them, we must go after them, we must be in daily pursuit of them and implement them into our daily lives. This is not an easy thing in today’s society that screams at us, *“watch out for yourselves”* ... *“every man (or woman) for himself.”* It’s a *“me first”* society. This is not so for the believer, though. As a matter of fact, it’s quite the opposite. Philippians 4:8 tells us, *“Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.”* These are the things we dwell on; not on any wrongs or hurts that may have been inflicted on us, not on any pity parties that our flesh may be inviting us to attend. Those are the things we flee from, and, instead, we look for, chase after, pursue the things of God. In pursuing righteousness and godliness, our lives are going to reflect faith, love, patience and gentleness, which are mentioned by Paul in these verses. These are known as the *“fruit of the spirit”* that we read about in Galatians 5:22.

Next, Paul tells Timothy in v. 12 to *“fight the good fight of faith”*. Ever thought of yourself as a boxer or a fighter? There has always been a battle between good and evil. As imperfect human beings, we must constantly be on guard and ready to protect ourselves from the temptation of evil. That’s why we’re told in the sixth chapter of the book of Ephesians that we must *“put on the whole armor of God”*, because there is conflict all around us. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”* (Ephesians 6:12) God has given us the armor of God as our protection against these things, and we need to be prepared.

It is interesting that Paul tells Timothy twice in today’s scripture to *“lay hold on eternal life”*. The phrase appears in v. 12 and again in v. 19. The greatest gift we have from God is His promise of eternal life. So what Paul is telling him here is hang on to this promise; remember that you are bound for heaven! What a wonderful reminder to us, as well. In Revelation 3:11, Jesus says, *“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”* That’s why we’re told to *“fight the good fight of faith”*; that crown is far too precious for us to lose!

At this point in vv. 13 & 14, Paul reminds Timothy of his calling to which he has professed before witnesses. He is referring, of course, to Timothy's call to ministry. He exhorts Timothy "*in the sight of God who gives life to all things,*" and reminds him that Jesus gave a good confession when he was brought before Pontius Pilate and said, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" (John 18:36) This is why, as believers, we are constantly reminding ourselves that we are merely sojourners in this world ... IN this world, but not OF it!

Paul also reminds Timothy of Jesus' second coming and again exhorts Timothy in v. 14 to, "*keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing ...*" Paul takes the opportunity in v. 15 & 16 to remind Timothy of exactly Who Christ is:

"the blessed and only Potentate"

This is the only place in the bible where this word "potentate" is used to describe Jesus. The biblical meaning is: "mighty one"; a person who possesses great power and authority." Another meaning translates to: "I am able." God is the one and only Potentate. There is no one mightier than Him, and none possesses greater power or authority.

"King of kings and Lord of lords"

He has sovereign dominion over all kings and lords. (Notice the small k and l.) There is none greater than our Lord. In Revelation 19:16, we read: "*And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*"

Paul finishes his description by saying that Jesus "*alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see,*" and then he's inspired to end with a doxology, "*to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*"

In last week's lesson, Shirley gave a wonderful teaching on the pitfalls of greed and money, but, here again, in these verses 17 – 19, Paul tells Timothy to warn the rich not to be proud and not to trust in the uncertainty of wealth. I'm sure that in those days, as it is today, it was easy for those with money to become proud and think themselves better than others. It's the same today. With wealth comes favor; everyone wants to be your friend! You may gain the favor of the world, but look what Psalm 101:5 says about how God feels about it: "*The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.*" And wealth can be fleeting ... it is not something that is certain. But the living God, Paul says, He is the one, the only one who gives us the certainty of eternal life. So, the rich are to strive to also be rich in good works, ready to share their wealth and to lay up for themselves a good foundation. Remember the parable Jesus spoke of in Luke, Chapter 12 about the rich man who was worried about where he was going to store all of his goods. "*But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided.'*" (Luke 12:19) You cannot leave this world with anything but a soul worthy of returning to the Lord!

Paul concludes this chapter and this letter by giving Timothy one last warning. In v. 20, he says, "*Guard what has been committed to your trust ...*" In other words, much had been entrusted to him, and he had the responsibility that every minister of the word has ... to teach the truth of God's written word, to promote the gospel of Jesus Christ and not be swayed by what some might deem as

“knowledge”. He tells him to avoid *“idle babblings”*. Any ideology or teachings of science that come against the truth of God’s word is to be considered *“profane.”* Those who commit to this kind of false teaching are trying to place reason above faith, and that’s because they usually have no understanding of faith themselves. That’s why Paul says in v. 21 that they *“have strayed concerning the faith.”*

Paul ends with the words *“Grace be with you. Amen.”* A simple, yet profound blessing. We all need God’s grace in our lives. It’s a gift from God, something that we did not earn and that we do not deserve, and yet He gives it to us freely. Without grace, we probably wouldn’t have the strength to navigate through life’s storms and trials, or the wisdom and ability to resist the temptations of the evil one. Thank God for His unmerited and undeserved GRACE!

*“Great and marvelous are Your works,
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your way,
O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord,
And glorify Your Name?
For You alone are holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested.”*
Revelation 15:3-4

