

1 TIMOTHY 6:11

RESPONDING TO THREATS

“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”¹

The people of God live under constant threat even to their lives. Jesus warned His people, “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” [MATTHEW 10:16-22].

Threats to spiritual well-being are quite real for the child of God; yet, no believer lives under more severe threats than does an elder. Those opposed to righteousness are enemies of the Faith; and enemies of the Faith threaten the spiritual health of the faithful. The undershepherd has received appointment to guard the flock of God. “I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” [1 PETER 5:1-3].

The Big Fisherman’s words echo those delivered by Paul to the elders of Ephesus. “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock that the Holy Spirit has appointed you to as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And men will rise up from your own number with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears”² [ACTS 20:28-31].

The man of God is charged with mounting an aggressive defence against spiritual assault. “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” [JUDE 3, 4].

If the overseer fails to guard his own heart, he jeopardises not only his spiritual standing with the Master and he imperils the spiritual health of the flock for which he accepted responsibility. Should the man of God succumb to the temptation to treat his service as a mere job, or should he begin to compromise with the wicked attitudes of this fallen world, the spiritual health of the congregation and the advance of the work of Christ through that assembly will be endangered. Thus, the warnings of the Word directed to the elder are essential.

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² **The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2009)

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We have witnessed the Apostle providing instructions for the general conduct of the elders as they provide oversight of the congregation. Paul has implemented a measure of order that was lacking in the assembly. Suddenly, precipitously, he shifts attention to Timothy. Paul writes, “*Sû dé*,” thrusting the second person singular personal pronoun to the front of the sentence for emphasis. The false teachers are left behind—they have been addressed and he assumes Timothy will shortly take care of their pernicious efforts to wreak havoc of the church. From this point to the end of the book, the Apostle is addressing Timothy—and indirectly, every elder until the Master returns.

The first verse of this final portion of the missive is the foundation for our study this day. Paul will provide quite personal instruction that each one who occupies the sacred desk must take to heart. Focus with me that together we may learn, holding those who provide oversight accountable to the Word of the Living God.

O MAN OF GOD — “But as for you, O man of God...” It is distressingly easy to pass over some gems that are included in the Word because we have grown familiar with the language. For instance, the Apostle addresses Timothy as the “man of God.” It is at once a word of supreme confidence and high expectation. Applied to Timothy, it is high commendation, indeed. However, I am prepared to argue that this designation should apply to each pastor. The elder is to be a “man of God.”

It is a statement of ownership. This concept of divine ownership is important to the people of God. It reminds us that no church hires a preacher; pastors are appointed by God. The congregation of the Lord receives from the hand of the Lord that one whom God deigns to appoint. Jesus contrasted shepherds and hirelings. It will be beneficial for us to refresh our memories concerning what He said concerning this matter.

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” [JOHN 10:11b-13].

I am fully aware that Jesus was speaking specifically about Himself. He said, “I am the Good Shepherd” [JOHN 10:11a]. However, since He is the chief Shepherd [see 1 PETER 5:4], those who are appointed to this service are required to “shepherd the flock of God that is among” them [1 PETER 5:2]. The elder looks to the Master for direction concerning the service he is to render. Overseers are to model their service on the Son of God who sacrificed Himself for His own people.

What is important for each of us to know is that no church can say that it hires a preacher. Christ the Head of the Church appoints to holy office; any other relationship is at best presumptuous, and at worst it is fraudulent. Whenever a congregation begins to assume that it is in control of hiring and firing, they will shortly destroy the flock of the Lord. The reason they will destroy is precisely as Jesus warned when he said the hired hand sees danger and flees, leaving the sheep to be ravaged by wolves. Now, as gently as I know how, I point you to the words of the Master who informs us that “He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep” [JOHN 10:13].

I draw great comfort from the vision of the Risen Son of God presented by the Revelator in the opening verses of the Apocalypse. John heard a voice, and upon turning to see the voice that spoke with him, he saw the Son of God. Note one particular aspect of the One whom He saw. “In his right hand he held seven stars” [REVELATION 1:16a].

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Soon after describing the Person whom he saw, John was informed of the significance of all that was shown to him. I want you to note what the Son of God said concerning the stars held in His hand. “The secret meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lamp stands is this: the seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches”³ [REVELATION 1:20]. The Son of God stands in the midst of His churches, and He holds the messengers—the pastors—of the churches in His hand.

Undoubtedly, Paul could speak with great confidence concerning the divine appointment he had received. Testifying before Agrippa, Paul boldly recalled the words which He heard when Jesus appeared to him. “The Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you’” [ACTS 26:15, 16].

Thus, he opens his letters with an assertion of divine appointment. “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures” [ROMANS 1:1, 2].

The First Corinthians Letter begins with this same confident assertion, “Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus” [1 CORINTHIANS 1:1].

It is with the same certainty that he begins his letter to the Churches of Galatia: “Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” [GALATIANS 1:1].

No less can any overseer speak with confidence that God has appointed him to service. Candidly, if there is no sense of call, no confidence in the appointment of Christ the Lord, no man can long survive in the pastorate. Christ calls and Christ appoints. I pity those sorry individuals who see the pastorate as a job, always finagling for a better salary or a better position or a larger congregation. If that is all it is, then we should never again approach this sacred desk.

I know quite well that the words Isaiah penned were directed to Israel. However, I am unapologetic in appropriating some of those words to this office. Comforting His people, the LORD God spoke at one point, saying,

“But now thus says the LORD,
He who created you, O Jacob,
He who formed you, O Israel:
‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.’”

[ISAIAH 43:1]

I see that final strophe and draw courage that God spoke those as surely for His undershepherd as He did for His ancient people.

I am adamant in insisting that Christ has appointed me to His service; and so long as I declare the message that He has given, ensuring that I declare the Word which is printed for all to see, that He will stand with me. Those who dare attempt to remove God’s appointed servant are setting themselves against no mere mortal—they are opposed to God Himself.

When we speak of one as a “man of God,” it is acknowledgement that that man belongs to the Lord God. With the Psalmist, in a powerful manner, that man can say, “My times are in His hands” [cf. PSALM 31:15].

³ **International Standard Version** (ISV Foundation, Yorba Linda, CA 2011)

It is a statement of position. Paul called Timothy “man of God.” Throughout the Old Testament, the term “man of God” is applied specifically to the prophets or the anointed leaders. Whenever we read of a prophet in the pages of the Old Covenant, “man of God” is a common designation. For instance, the one bearing the awful prophecy delivered to Eli was not named, though he is identified as “a man of God.” “There came a man of God to Eli and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Did I indeed reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt subject to the house of Pharaoh?”’” [1 SAMUEL 2:27]?

What a powerful statement is made by Elijah when the king endeavoured to hale him into court. The first group of armed men came to Elijah, and the captain of the fifty spoke, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” Elijah’s answer is simple, stunning and shocking. “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” The same thing happened a second time as a captain of fifty demanded, “O man of God, this is the king’s order, ‘Come down quickly!’” Again, Elijah’s answer was to the point and enforced with divine fire. “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Again, the divine text relates what happened, “Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.”⁴

Samuel is said to have been a “man of God” [2 SAMUEL 9:6 ff.]. Shemaiah, the prophet who rebuked Rehoboam, is identified as “the man of God” [1 KINGS 12:22]. The prophets who rebuked Jeroboam [1 KINGS 13:1 ff.] and Amaziah [2 CHRONICLES 25:7] are identified as “men of God.” Igdaliah, a contemporary of Jeremiah, is spoken of as “the man of God” [JEREMIAH 35:4]. Of course, Elisha [2 KINGS 4:7 ff.] and David [NEHEMIAH 12:24, 36] are identified as “men of God” because of their prophetic ministries.

The elder conducts a prophetic ministry as he declares the mind of God to his generation. His message reaches far beyond the immediate congregation if he indeed speaks for God, for he reveals the will of God to those who listen. They, in turn, incorporate those truths into their lives by the power of the Spirit and as lights shining in the darkness point others to life in the Beloved Son. I suggest that this is a pointed reminder to the pastor that his will be a prophetic ministry, including standing alone on many occasions. Though he will seek the welfare of the flock, he knows he will be resisted; and he knows that those ensnared by the coils of error will resist his message because they imagine it to be too harsh and too negative. As was true of the prophets, the man of God will stand with God against error and the errant. Surely, the pastor is expected to be for the people whom he shepherds “the man of God.” He is to walk with the Master, listening for His voice and revealing the glorious truths of His holy Word to the people of God.

The designation speaks of the prophetic position occupied by the preacher; and it also speaks of his appointment in pointed fashion. David is identified as “the man of God,” as was noted only moments ago. I said that it was because of his prophetic ministry in providing the Psalms. However, it is likely true that he received this designation also because of his appointment as the ruler over God’s people. Those anointed to holy service were identified as “men of God.”

In a similar fashion, throughout the pages of the Old Covenant Moses is identified as “the man of God” because of his position as a leader over Israel. Listen as he is identified with the blessing of God’s people in the closing portion of the Book of Deuteronomy. “This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death.”⁵

⁴ The full account is given in 2 KINGS 1:9-16

⁵ See also JOSHUA 14:6; 1 CHRONICLES 23:14; 2 CHRONICLES 30:16; EZRA 3:2; PSALM 90 (TITLE)

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Just so, if the elder is appointed by Christ, and if he conducts his service in the power of the Spirit, he acts as one anointed for holy service. In the truest sense of the Word, he will know that he is “the man of God.” And whether the people receive the gift God has given or whether they resist his message, they will know in their heart that he is “the man of God.”

Though it is undoubtedly a hard service to which an elder is appointed, it is conducted with precedence revealed in the life of the prophets. Speaking to His servant Ezekiel, God cautioned, “As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, ‘Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.’ And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. When this comes—and come it will!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them” [EZEKIEL 33:30-33].

It is a statement of expectation. The term “man of God” creates expectation in those who hear the term. “[The term] connotes one who is in God’s service, represents God and speaks in His Name, and admirably fits one who is pastor.”⁶ Those who listen week-by-week to the message drawn from the Word have every expectation that they will hear from God. No one comes to the House of the Lord to hear an economic treatise. Political statements have no place in the message of life. If you wish to hear a sociological discourse, attend some lecture in the halls of high learning. Those attending the preaching of the Word expect to hear certainty that begins with “Thus saith the Lord!”

I am aware that in our text the Apostle specifically addresses Timothy as the “man of God.” However, in a later letter, Paul would use that term in a more general sense as he applies it to all who occupy holy office. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” [2 TIMOTHY 3:16, 17].

Let me say quite plainly, the Word of God equips the preacher to be “complete, equipped for every good work.” All who stand in the sacred desk stand in a rich and powerful lineage stretching back through the ages to Moses. In the words of John Bunyan, each of these men is qualified to be known as “the King’s champion.”⁷ They are lifted above worldly aims and utterly devoted to proclaiming God’s Word. With the Apostle I confess, “I magnify my ministry” [ROMANS 11:13].

FLEE THESE THINGS — “But as for you, O man of God, flee these things.” Paul will issue in these final words six commands. They are vital for the health of the congregation, and the minister of Christ is the one receiving the command. He must “guard the deposit entrusted” to him [1 TIMOTHY 6:20]. He must “charge” the rich not to trust in their wealth [1 TIMOTHY 6:17]. He must not show favouritism, but act with integrity in an even-handed manner. He must “take hold of the eternal life to which” he has been called [1 TIMOTHY 6:12b]. He must “fight the good fight of the faith” [1 TIMOTHY 6:12a]. Each of these commands will be considered in their turn during messages that will be delivered in coming days. Today, however, we are focused on the first two imperatives the Apostle issues to the shepherd of the congregation in Ephesus.

⁶ J. N. D. Kelly, **Black’s New Testament Commentary: The Pastoral Epistles** (Continuum, London 1963) 139

⁷ John Bunyan, **The Pilgrim’s Progress: From This World to That Which is to Come** (Logos Research Systems, Inc., Oak Harbor, WA 1995)

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The first of those commands is that Timothy is to flee. This seems odd in light of Paul's earlier command to the Ephesians to stand. Recall the words that Paul has written in the Ephesian Letter. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak" [EPHESIANS 6:10-20].

Take special note of the command to stand. "Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore" [EPHESIANS 6:13, 14]. The Christian is to stand firm against the enemy. However, here we witness the Apostle commanding the man of God to flee!

The man of God is not fleeing conflict. Conflict will come and the man of God must stand firm against wickedness. However, not every path is straight forward. When the field of advance is strewn with mines designed to wound and cripple, the man of God must avoid those traps—he must flee. The Greek verb translated "flee" is *phéugo*; we obtain our English word "fugitive" from this Greek word.

Flight as a spiritual strategy was crucial to Paul's ministry. Among those snares from which the man of God is to flee is everything that characterises the false teachers. Especially is he to flee those aspects of their lives that the Apostle has just described in the preceding verses. The man of God must flee teaching that marginalises Christ and His teaching. This is what Paul warned against in verses three and four. "If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing" [1 TIMOTHY 6:3, 4a].

The man of God must not degrade his office by entering into petty controversies and quarrels about words [see 1 TIMOTHY 6:4b]. The man of God must flee divisive talk. "[The false teachers are] puffed up with conceit and understand[] nothing. [They have] an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth" [1 TIMOTHY 6:4, 5]. The man of God must not stumble into the error and religious delusion that imagines godliness to be "a means of gain" [1 TIMOTHY 6:5b]. And of course, the man of God must flee from "the love of money" [1 TIMOTHY 6:10].

In his later letter, Paul will insist that flight is a defence against sensuality. "Flee youthful passions" [2 TIMOTHY 2:22]. The admonition is akin to his command to flee sexual immorality. "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" [1 CORINTHIANS 6:18]. Associated with the need to flee from sexual immorality and youthful passions is the need to "flee from idolatry" [1 CORINTHIANS 10:14].

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Let me take a moment to caution against the spirit of this age, a spirit that exalts our own desires above holiness. For many years the philosophy of this darkened, dying age appears to have been, “If it feels good, do it.” Man is central to his worship. Personal ethics are focused almost exclusively on the individual. It is as though we are witnessing the revival of the ancient concept, “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” [JUDGES 17:6; 21:25]. Thus, we have arrived at a day in which sexual gratification, wherever that may lead and however it may be achieved, has become the summum bonum of life. Marriage is for convenience—a transient contract that can be dissolved when it is no longer personally satisfying. In fact, we are quite prepared to define marriage as whatever we want it to be, as we define deviancy down. In such an age, the man of God must not only declare the standard of the Word, he must live that standard in such a way that those who know him know that he does not deviate to the right or to the left as he pursues the will of God.

We are a fallen people, and I must address what I fear can be a serious problem for some people listening today. We are not trained to identify what is evil. Consequently, we run toward things that ultimately threaten us—pleasure, position, power, fame, wealth, power. However, we should flee from these things, and especially when we are unable to resist them displacing the Holy One from our lives. I fear that some will hear my words as permission to run from responsibility or to run from issues that must be faced. However, I have not advocated escapism; I have urged us to face our fears. I have counselled believers to avoid that which is displeasing to God, turning to that which honours Him. And especially have I advocated that each of us who are known as overseers must ensure that we walk in this manner.

PURSUE THESE THINGS — “But as for you, O man of God . . . Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.” If Timothy will honour God and fulfil the service to which he has been appointed, he must cultivate some characteristics. Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness do not magically appear because someone is called Reverend. Because a man has been appointed to holy office does not mean that these characteristics are divinely conferred at the point of his being set apart to this holy service; he must labour to secure these virtues in his life. Moreover, it will be a lifelong pursuit as the virtues will never be absolutely and fully secured in his life until the Master returns.

God never calls us to remove that which hinders and corrupts without replacing those things with that which is better. Timothy is to flee from that which dishonours the Master. He is to flee from that which threatens the spiritual welfare of the people of God. However, Timothy’s flight is not to be a panic-stricken rush that careens from pillar to post; he is to flee in a positive direction. Just as fast as he is to flee from that which is evil, he is to rush toward that which is holy and good. He is to replace what some might imagine to be sacrifice with that which is of true worth. The man of God is to jettison that which corrupts as he rushes toward spiritual virtue. This concept is taught in the Letter to Hebrew Christians. “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” [HEBREWS 12:1, 2].

The man of God is to pursue a course defined by the use of six nouns named in three pairs. These pairs define the balanced spirituality of the Christian leader. These virtues must be pursued, cultivated and embraced so that the man of God may move toward being conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.

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The virtues listed seem to be so familiar that we almost turn off our hearing when the preacher begins to speak of these graces. However, few of us have ever fully secured the virtues. The first pair of graces is righteousness and godliness. I suppose we need to identify what is in view, if only to ensure that no one mistakes what is presented for some quality that differs significantly.

The man of God is to pursue righteous and godliness. When we speak of *righteousness*, we mean that one is to do what is right, in relation both to God and to man. What is in view is not the righteousness of Christ imputed to us at salvation; rather, Paul is speaking of holiness of life. The man of God must be known for doing what is right. His lifestyle is to be marked by obedience to God's commands. This quality is observable; and the people of God will know if their elder is righteous, whether he is conformed to the image of Christ the Lord.

The internal counterpart to righteousness is *godliness*. Righteousness speaks of one's outward behaviour, but godliness deals with attitudes and motives. These two character traits are associated because right behaviour grows out of right motives. The concept behind godliness is that of a reverence for God that flows out of a heart that holds Him in awe; godliness points to the outward evidences of a genuine faith and reverence for the Lord God. True worship eventuates in godliness, and godliness leads to righteousness. Truly, the two aspects cannot be separated in life. Perhaps it would be appropriate to speak of godliness as "Godlikeness." The concept is that one acts in such a manner that it is evident that the consciousness of God is always uppermost in his mind.

John MacArthur cites a variety of Puritan writers to address these two graces.⁸ Here are a couple of those citations that are worthy of consideration. "The Puritan John Flavel pointedly observed, 'Brethren, it is easier to declaim against a thousand sins of others, than to mortify one sin in ourselves' (Cited in I. D. E. Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 191).

"John Owen added, 'A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more' (Cited in Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, 192)."

Then we are presented with a familiar duet of graces—faith and love. *Faith* in this instance speaks of the individual's personal trust in God. Faith is not the hopeful chant of uncertainty as timid people gingerly tiptoe past the terrors of this world. Faith is the genuine confidence that leads the child of God to walk, not knowing where he is going but knowing the One who carries him. Faith is not presumption; faith is confidence.

After listing those whose names are inscribed on the divine Hall of Faith, the author of the Letter to Hebrew Christians provides this sobering assessment. "All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised" [HEBREWS 11:39]. In this past week, Lynda and I have reviewed on several occasions the steps we took that led us to this place and this time. We were quite comfortable in Dallas, serving in a secure situation when we became convinced that God was leading us to Canada. We left behind a wonderful church of 24,000 members to assume the pastorate of a congregation with five members. Promised support from the denomination in which I served evaporated before we had even finished packing. Mount Saint Helens blew her top as we were nearing Wyoming. Everything seemed against continuing on, except for an undefined confidence that God was directing our way. As was true of Abraham, we "went out, not knowing where [we were] going" [HEBREWS 11:8].

⁸ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Timothy* (Moody Press, Chicago, IL 1995) 259-262

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I had a lot of desires for my service before the Lord; but looking back, I can speak with confidence when I say that we walked by faith. God was faithful; and He graciously directed our steps. We are where we should be, and I have served where He appointed me to serve. He stood with me in every instance. And I fulfilled the ministry He assigned through the strength that He provided. God was faithful and we arrived at this place.

Paul frequently unites faith with love, and he does so here. When he speaks of *love*, he speaks of that self-sacrificing love that we received from the Master. This love is unnatural because it is supernatural. There may be no warm feelings about those we are to love; but love is the hallmark of the man of God. The elder will have received love [see **1 TIMOTHY 1:13, 14**]. Now he is to express love, especially in divisive situations. “Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” [**2 TIMOTHY 1:8-13**].

Timothy had a model for this love in Paul. “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, *my love*, my steadfastness” [**2 TIMOTHY 3:10**]. Now, Timothy was responsible to provide the same example to others. “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” [**1 TIMOTHY 4:12**].

I must make an observation concerning love. We speak frequently of love without understanding how unnatural that quality is in the life of a fallen creature such as ourselves. Jesus spoke of two Great Commandments. You may recall the passage. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” [**MATTHEW 22:37-39**]. Until I love God with my whole being, it is impossible to love my neighbour as myself. In loving God fully, I reflect His love toward others. It can never be otherwise.

Finally, the man of God is to pursue steadfastness and gentleness. *Steadfastness* speaks of victorious, triumphant, unswerving loyalty to the Master in the midst of all trials. Paul had exemplified steadfastness. “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, *my steadfastness*” [**2 TIMOTHY 3:10**]. This quality should be witnessed in increasing measure in older men. Paul wrote Titus, “Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in *steadfastness*” [**TITUS 2:2**]. This virtue means one will stay at the task until it is completed and regardless of the cost.

Paired with steadfastness is *gentleness*. The word is a hapax legomenon, occurring only here in the New Testament. The emphasis of the word appears to be upon controlling one’s emotions when facing wrong. In short, the man of God not only is steady under pressure, his steadiness exhibits the right attitude. Gentleness is perhaps best defined as that virtue that ensures the man of God is tender, exhibiting patient self-control when dealing with people during the press of ministry. It is, if you will, strength under control.

1 TIMOTHY 6:11
RESPONDING TO THREATS

Timothy is enjoined to pursue a balanced spiritual lifestyle in his ministry. We may have various ideas concerning spirituality, but Paul teaches that spirituality is active, involving things that must be done. We are to flee from evil as we would run from danger, just as we are to run after goodness as we would run after success. If we do this, we will take giant steps toward becoming a man of God.

The focus of the Apostle's teaching has been the inner life and character of the Christian leader. While these virtues are identified with the inner life of the man of God, character is reflected in how that man lives. The people of God witness the work of God in the life of the man of God. They hear his teaching, and that teaching should have an impact. However, if the manner in which the Christian leader lives out his inner life fails to reflect the reality of his profession, the people of God will stumble.

Surely, the words that I've spoken today are directed toward myself and my brother elders. We must take heed, for we are charged with the care of souls. However, the people of God must heed what has been reviewed so that you act with discretion in your dealings with the elders. You must hold the elders accountable to the Word, watching your own souls lest you stumble into error. Likewise, you must encourage and commend the elders to become men of God as outlined in this Word. In doing this, we honour the Master, strengthen the fellowship of believers and enhance the doctrine of Christ the Lord.

May God be glorified by giving us men of God. Amen.