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To Whom Be Honor

1229-B
Series: I Timothy



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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To Whom Be Honor

Father, we thank You for Your presence, Your power, and Your preciousness. We thank You for Your love, Your compassion and Your righteousness. We thank You, Father, that You are omnipotent; there is nothing You cannot do. We thank You, Father, that You are omnipresent; there is nowhere that You are not. We thank You, Father, that You are omniscient; You know all things even before they happen. We thank You, Father, that Your Word is immutable and infallible, and we can base the whole of our lives upon it.

Grant us as we spend time in Your Word, supernatural power in spite of the teacher, because of Your Spirit, who is the real teacher. May this time honor You and change our lives.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The curtain is about to come down. The finale is at hand. The last act is drawing to a close. The Apostle Paul has dictated a letter to his secretary from his temporary quarters in Macedonia and sent it by IPS (the Israeli Postal System) to his protege, a young man in faraway Ephesus named Timothy. Tim has been struggling with a serious problem in that once thriving church: the problem of false doctrine.

So Paul has decided to write a letter explaining God's perspective of a variety of issues—issues we have found to be both controversial and practical. Now he has come to the end of the letter. He appeared to pause just prior to his concluding remarks to cover a variety of topics that had been omitted in the body of the document, such topics as honoring widows, paying preachers, disciplining elders, exalting young men to office too soon, covert and overt sins, and the incredible problem of temporal values, which he concluded would lead men to “destruction and perdition”.

Now it is time for him to sign-off. He is about to wrap it all

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up with some concluding comments, seal the letter, and run it down to the Macedonian Post Office just before it closes for the night. But we must not overlook those final words. Wrapped up in them are some of the most intense instructions and one of the most beautiful anthems of worship recorded in Scripture. At first glance, you cannot help but wonder how they fit together, but they do. They fold the one inside the other until they demonstrate the balance of the Christian message with clarity and excitement.

Our title for this closing lesson in I Timothy is “To Whom Be Honor”. Our outline:

- I- On Guard (The Christian life in the active tense)
- II- To Whom Be Honor (An Anthem of Praise to the King of kings)

Once we get a grasp on the Christian life (or think we do), we often begin to move into one “camp” or another.

ON GUARD: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE ACTIVE TENSE

On the one hand, there are the “doers” in the Body of Christ who determine that if we are to serve as believers we must get out there where the action is and do a work for God. There are others who quickly tune into the surrendered Christian life and are certain that the way to victory is by yielding and the way to rewards is rest.

The enemy has a field day in both cases, because both are right and both are wrong. We can’t “do a work for God” because we can’t do anything for God. God is self-sufficient. But neither can we refuse to honor the laborers in the vineyard. The achieving of that balance is what this lesson is all about (and what the Christian life is all about for that matter). I believe it was what Paul was about as he brought to a beautiful conclusion this somewhat controversial epistle to a somewhat confused congregation.

Remember, false doctrine was the reason for this letter. There were teachers in the church at Ephesus who were seriously damaging the concept of grace by adding legalistic, man-made requirements to the gospel. They were being told not to marry, not to eat certain foods, not to do certain things which the gospel did not say were evil of themselves. These false teachers had built quite a following. On the other hand, there were teachers who were indicating that now that grace was at hand, all the Christian had to do was sit back and wait for Jesus to return.

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He had no responsibilities but that of keeping himself unspotted from the world and ready for Christ's return. Both were satanic deceptions, using the real truth as the basis for a lie.

So as the letter concludes, Paul addresses the responsibility of the believer through the use of active verbs, and then balances that with the awesomeness of the person of God and His capacity to be Who He Is. The sum of it all is that we must choose deliberately to be all God requires that we be, while at the same time recognizing that it is not we who are doing or being, it is Christ.

The apostle has been dealing with the dangers of covetousness and temporal values. And he stops to warn Timothy that these things must not become snares to him. Here are Paul's words:

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,

that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

(I Timothy 6:11-14 NKJV)

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust,

(I Timothy 6:20a NKJV)

Beloved, that's the Gospel in the active tense. That's the Word of God about the responsibility of man. He is to place the maintaining of a right relationship with God as the number one, two, three, and four priorities of the Christian's life. If you believe that the believer's walk is totally passive, you haven't read this passage.

Look at the verbs God uses to describe Tim's responsibility: "flee", "pursue", "fight", "lay hold", "keep", "guard". The Christian life was not going to just happen. God would do it, but Tim had some choices to make. Those choices involved some intense personal commitment on his part. While most of this letter is directed at the whole church, and at how Timothy would go about leading that flock, this passage also has to do with the young man's personal choices and personal priorities.

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It might be interesting for us to take this passage personally. It was written to those who wanted to be called a “man of God” (verse 11), and this is how he addressed Tim. It might do well for some of us to review these verbs and see just how active they are in our own lives. We live in an age where the world we live in is intense, committed, and single-minded about its pursuits. But when it comes to spiritual things, there suddenly develops a kind of apathy that simply refuses to take up its cross and follow Him. Perhaps it is because the rewards are not immediate and not tangible. Perhaps it is because we are so caught up in what the world considers primary. I do not know. But to find men and women even in our evangelical churches with the kind of intensity that Paul is describing here is almost impossible.

This is the kind of life Jesus called us to. We were to “deny ourselves”. We were to take up our cross daily. We were to “not become entangled in the affairs of this world that we might please Him who has called us to be soldiers.” And yet most of us are so entangled we don’t have time to be soldiers. We keep promising to show up at the barracks for training, and we promise God that if there’s ever a real war to call us and we’ll show up. But day by day, we don’t have the mindset of soldiers. Soldiers expect warfare. Soldiers expect hard training. Soldiers expect to be denied certain privileges in order to stay in readiness for the battle. If they don’t, they’re not real soldiers.

And real soldiers are what God is looking for! Let’s take those verbs quickly and see just what it was Paul was demanding of young Timothy. For if we want to be men and women of God, those verbs are demanded of us as well. As we conclude this study of this intense letter of instruction, may we take inventory, along with Tim, and be certain that we have a grasp on just what God is after in His children.

The first word is *flee*. The Greek word is pheugo. It is pronounced “fyoo-go”. It literally means to “take flight”; “to escape”. It is used in such passages as Matthew 10:23, where Jesus said, “but I tell you, when they persecute you in this city, *flee* to another.” In Matthew 24, He said,

“then let those who are in Judea *flee* to the mountains.”
(Matthew 24:16 NKJV)

It is a word that indicates immediate danger and instant evacuation. The inference is that when these situations arise,

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you don't stop and deliberate, you *flee*.

In that context, the word is used specifically of fleeing sin again and again. Look at I Corinthians 6:18. It says, “flee fornication.” I Corinthians 10:14 adds, “flee from idolatry.” In II Timothy 2:22, we are told to “flee youthful lusts.” In John 10:5 we are reminded that the sheep will not follow a stranger, but will “flee from him” And finally in James 4:7, we are told to “resist the devil and he will flee from us.”

Unless the Christian wears track shoes, he's going to get stuck in the mud of sin. Unless you and I are so afraid of the consequences of sin that we are willing to be virtually paranoid about allowing it, we'll never find the heart of God. And that's the first active verb that Paul warns Timothy to invoke. He has described the dangers of temporal values, and the loss of spiritual power that accompanies it. He has described the scenario in which some men have fallen into that trap and “strayed from the faith”.

He says, “Timothy, flee these things.” When you see your life being captivated by “things”, get in your Honda and floorboard it. Spin the tires. Get out of town. Don't hang around and toy with it anymore than you would wash your eyes out with acid to see what happens. You know what will happen if you persist in looking for pleasure in possessions. You will “stray from the faith in your greediness and pierce yourself through with many sorrows.”

The use of the word “flee” in those other passages affirms that the believer's role in regard to whatever things he knows are temptations to him is to immediately take flight when they appear on the scene. And the quickness with which we take flight, Paul seems to indicate is a measuring stick that indicates how serious we are about remaining pure.

The second word is *pursue*. It is the opposite of flee. We are to run from the things that would cause us to stray, and we are to *pursue* the things that would give us the Mind of God. The Greek word is dioko. It is pronounced, “dee-o-ko”. And its literal meaning is to “flee towards” or to “put to flight” or “to chase with the intention of overtaking”. It is used in I Corinthians 14:1, where Paul admonishes us to *pursue love*. In Romans 14:9, Paul reminds us “to *pursue* the things which make for peace.” In our passage here in I Timothy 6:11, he tells us to “flee these things

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and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness."

He is telling you to chase after godliness the way you would run after your favorite pet if he got away from the house, or the way you would run after a thief who had just stolen your most valuable possession. The character of God in you is available to you, but not without your wanting to release it badly enough to chase after it with all your energy.

That means you run after spiritual growth with the same intensity with which you run from temptation. You don't just wait for it to happen. You allow your spirit to pursue the heart of God with every ounce of energy you possess. Therein lies the secret. We live in an age of pathetically unmotivated Christians. We think inactivity equals spiritual rest. We think doing nothing to maintain growth is an evidence of maturity. We think that faith, patience, gentleness, and love just happen. Paul says, "Timothy, pretend you're in a track meet and godliness is the prize. Run as fast as you can until you overtake the Mind of Christ. Make it your aim in life to grow into His likeness." It won't just happen. You must *pursue godliness*.

The third word is *fight*. The Greek word is "agonizomai", and it means "to contend with an adversary or to compete for a prize". It means the recognition that you are in a conflict wherein the goal is absolute victory and only one can win. It was used in two contexts in that day, a) when one was engaged in battle, or b) when one was engaged in competition in the public games or sporting events. The believer was to fight the fight of faith. Never at any time could we visualize the Christian walk as anything less than a conflict of the spirit world. Whether we walk by faith and live for eternity or we walk after the desires of this world by sight, it would ever be a battle, and there would ever be a crown. The crown would be in Heaven, but the battle would be on earth. And the believer who minimizes the spiritual struggles going on in the heavenlies and attributes the crises of life to less than an eternal conflict will lose the fight.

You can't stay in the ring with a champion without your gloves on. You can't win a fight unless you admit you're in one. You can't win a track meet without admitting that either you reach that goal first or you lose.

Yes, the victory belongs to God, but, Beloved, the choices

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belong to us. That's what Paul is saying. And unless we "gird up the loins of our minds" and recognize that we are involved in an active conflict with Satan for the souls of men and for control of our own lives, we will lose the battle. We must flee temptation. We must pursue godliness. We must fight the fight of faith. Otherwise, we will be "also rans" in the race of life. This is life in the active tense. It is the Christian life from God's perspective. And some of us who, either as we have grown older, or as we have grown lazier, have become so spiritually complacent that we think doing nothing equals spirituality. We are, according to Paul, fools.

Paul's last words to Tim were key. He says "Timothy, guard what was committed to your trust." The Greek word is "phulasso" pronounced, "foo-lasso". In the King James Bible the word is "keep". It means to "isolate; to keep in constant vision; to preserve at any cost". It means that when God pours Christ into your life, you are henceforth accountable to guard that relationship with your very life.

The more of Himself He gives you, and the more of His Word you are taught, and the more of His Mind He communicates to you through the circumstances of life, the more accountable you are to guard your spirit with your very life. God isn't playing games. Eternity is at stake. And if He has spared you for some work, or if He has chosen to teach you in some way that is meaningful, or if He has allowed you to be tested to equip you for a ministry, you must guard, protect, keep watch over those truths with every fiber of your being. You are not to revel in your knowledge; you are to guard the truth so that it might be used as it was intended. We are to guard the words given to us against false doctrine and the intrusion of satanic lies that would subtly draw us away from that which has stood the test of time.

But Paul doesn't leave us with no more than a list of active verbs and words of warning. He balances those instructions with worship. He reminds us that though we are responsible to make the choices required of us in the Christian life, the essence of that life is still Christ Himself. And he brings us to our knees in praise and adoration as he concludes this letter and sends it filled with the love of Christ to all who would walk in His steps in the decades to come. Listen to these words of worship:

that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless,
until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,

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which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. (I Timothy 6:14-16 NKJV)

Paul has given us marching orders for our stay on planet earth. We are to flee, pursue, fight, and guard. Those are indeed active verbs. But that is all for a reason and all for a season. The reason is that we are laying up for another time, for another place, for another life, and the season is until then. The battle is fierce, but the battle is temporary. The trials are real, but the trials will pass.

It is all a challenge to obedience that will come to its fruition at a certain time in history. It is until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing. Beloved, when He comes, the battle's over. There will be nothing to flee from; nothing to pursue and overtake; no more conflicts with Satan to endure; no more need to guard what has been entrusted to us. Then the curtain will be lifted; the trumpet will call; the cloud of His Glory will engulf us, and we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Oh, dear Christian, I remind you one more time...this life with all its pain and all its sorrow and all its conflict is just the foreword to the story. It's just the prelude to the symphony. It's just the canvas on which the final portrait will be painted. All of this is just "until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing". If you don't believe that, you have no basis for fleeing and pursuing and fighting and guarding. It's an exercise in futility if this world is where it is.

Paul is saying, "No, no, no. He is coming soon!" The curtains will part, the trumpet will sound, and He will appear first for us and then with us. And as he closes, Paul gives us a clear reminder of His sovereignty. He will appear "in His own time" (His time—not ours). At the precise, perfect time in history, He will appear. Not one second sooner. Not one second later.

And Paul reminds us, "He is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." The word literally means. "All the earth's kings will bow before Him; all at His presence and admit they are nothing," and the things we thought were so crucial will fade into insignificance as the awesomeness of His glory surrounds us and the majesty of Holiness engulfs us. He alone has immortality. He alone dwells in unapproachable light whom

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no man has seen or can see.

Therefore, to Him alone belongs honor, and to Him alone belongs everlasting power. What we do on this earth as He enables us by fleeing, pursuing, fighting and guarding the spiritual treasure entrusted to us, is only for one purpose. We are only storing up trophies the more with which to worship Him. On that day, nothing we have done will matter. Nothing will matter but Him.

It was He who framed the worlds and set them in place “as the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy”. It was He who painted the rainbow of mercy in the sky when the waters subsided and life began anew. It was He who looked down upon the debris that sin had left on this earth and, overwhelmed with a broken heart, it was He who laid aside His crown for a season and came to earth for a reason—to die for our sins.

And it is He who even now sits at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for us. Thus, it is He, and He alone, for which we are to live and move and have our being. It is for that day when we shall see Him as He is that we are living today.

Everything else is passing away. Everything. Thus, Paul reminds us we are to keep the commandment without spot, blameless. We are to live without compromise, guarding, fighting, fleeing, pursuing, “till He comes”. Then it will be over. He will manifest Himself at that time—His time. And we will, at last, see

...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, the Lord of lords,

who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, which no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen. (I Timothy 6:15,16 NKJV)

He is coming! And He is coming soon. Until then, and forever, to Him be honor, and to Him alone.

And all the people said, “Amen”.

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God, we get so caught up in this world in which we live, that we forget why we are living in this world. We just pray, our Father, in the quiet of this moment, that somehow, those of us who have failed to do

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so, will begin to take seriously once again, the reality of the Christian life. We can't toy with sin anymore. We must flee as fast as we can from the very presence of those things which defile us. There is no more time to play games.

You have called us to pursue righteousness with every breath within us. You have called us to fight the fight of faith; to make choices regardless of what the world tells us to do. You have called us to guard our hearts with everything we have. And You have done it with only one purpose, because the day is soon-coming when You are coming. When You come, nothing else will matter ever again. Pain will be gone, heartache will be over, sin will be gone, death will be past, and joy will be present forever.

*Dear Lord Jesus, we worship You. Come soon...come soon.
Amen.*

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