

Man of God

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1 Tim. 6:11ff

Introduction

Question: What do diets, exercise programs, marriage, and the Christian life have in common? Answer: It's fairly easy and even fun to begin, but it's not so easy to hang in over the long haul.

Eugene Peterson, in his book, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, writes, *One aspect of world that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by thirty-second commercials. Our sense of reality has been flattened by thirty-page abridgments.*

It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terrifically difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to be born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.

The Christian life is not a hundred-yard dash; it's a marathon, a "long obedience in the same direction." Starting well is easy; finishing well is another matter. We all will encounter numerous hindrances.

But, like Bunyan's Christian, those whose burden has been lifted at Calvary will persevere.

In our text, Paul tells Timothy (and us) how to go the distance. Timothy was in a difficult situation not suited for his timid personality. He had to confront false teachers who had arisen among the Ephesian leaders by refuting their errors and teaching the truth. No doubt he was catching flak from many in the church who had been led astray by these men and their errors. Paul, like a coach at half time in a rough game, reminds Timothy of the game plan and challenges him to hang in there, even though it's not easy. In vv. 11-12 are 4 commands--pillars for perseverance: flee; pursue; fight; and, take hold.

To persevere, a man of God will (1) flee worldliness, (2) pursue godliness, (3) fight for the faith, and (4) take hold of eternal life.

The Greek text of verse 11 begins with the emphatic contrast, "But you, O man of God, flee these things." In contrast to the false teachers and those who follow them in the love of money, Christians run in the opposite direction. The title, "man of God" is used in the Old Testament of men like Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and David. It means a man who belongs wholly to God, who follows God's Word in every aspect of life. A man of God has dignity and an aura about him. When you are with him, you sense the presence of God because his life is so entwined with God. There is no greater title that any Christian can wear than to be called a man or woman of God.

It doesn't happen automatically! "Some (v. 10) ... but you (v. 11)"! To be a man or woman of God, you must resolve to stand against the tide. You must flee worldliness, pursue godliness, fight for the faith, and take hold of eternal life.

How know a good Christian?

What he flees, what he runs from

What he follows, what he runs to

What he fights, what will be fight for, what he stands up to

What he is faithful to...; what he stands for

How learn this? v. 15