

Man of God

1 Tim. 6:11ff

Edited from John McArthur, posted by Bob Young

Paul points out four things that mark a man of God.

First, the man of God is known by what he flees from. Notice v. 11, "But flee from these things, you man of God." Flee. This is a Greek verb, fuagay, from which we get fugitive. It paints a vivid picture. It is in the present tense. It means keep on fleeing. You are a fugitive. You are on the run. During your whole life as a man of God, you are on the run. It pictures one running from a plague. That's how the word was used: running from poisonous snakes, having come across them in their den in a field; running from a pursuing, attacking enemy. You are on the run. The man of God is known by his fleeing.

Back in the 1:4, we find some of the things we must flee. "Don't pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, giving rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God, which is by faith." Run away from error and false religion and philosophies and heresies that corrupt the truth. And run (v. 5) toward a goal: love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some who stray from these things have turned aside to fruitless discussions. Flee from error; flee from worldly philosophies.

Chapter 4 :7, "Have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women." These were silly, foolish fables rather than the truth. "Rather discipline yourself for godliness." You are always running, running from error, running from human folly. **2 Timothy 2:22**, "Flee from youthful lusts." You are running. 1 Timothy 6:20: "Avoid worldly, empty chatter, the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith." Stay away from those who assault the Scripture. Stay away from attacks on God's authoritative Word.

We are running, we are fleeing all the time from error. But that is not all. We are fleeing from lust and sin. And that is not all, v. 11, "Flee from these things." We have to ask the question, "What are these things?" What came before, v. 5: "Depraved men...who are deprived of the truth, false teachers, suppose that godliness is a means of gain." People who are false teachers are always in it for the money. "But godliness (v. 6) is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." You never pursue money. You pursue godliness. If you pursue money, you are never content. You pursue godliness, you get contentment.

We do not pursue gain. Why? "We brought nothing into the world (v. 7) and cannot take anything out of it. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root all sorts of evil, and some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many a pang." Show me someone who goes after money and I will show you a compromiser; I will show you someone who can be bought. I will show you some who lacks contentment and whose pursuit of money never gives him enough. I will show you someone who will fall into harmful desires and maybe ruin and destruction.

Those who love money will change their theology, wander from the faith and suffer the pain that comes, often inflicted by God Himself as discipline to those who are disobedient

to the truth. When v. 11 says, "Flee from these things," we know what Paul means. Flee from the love of money. Flee from being in ministry for money, for gain. Flee the evils and the vices associated with loving money. Flee greed and its attendant evils, the strong motivating desire for money and what money can buy, comfort and ease. The man of God runs from that—not toward it. This is a characteristic sin of false teachers. It corrupts. It causes compromise and defection from the truth. They make merchandise of people. They do what they do for filthy lucre, for dirty money. From Balaam to Judas, these are money-grubbing false teachers and defectors. The love of money, the root of all evil, perverts people.

Paul said, "We are not like many. We are not con men. We are not hucksters of the Word of God for money." The word corrupters is used; peddling the Word of God, kapaylos, con men, hucksters. What a description of the materialistic condition of the church in America. God hated the materialistic lust and still does.

Jesus said, "Take no thought for what you eat or drink or what you wear. I will take care of that. You seek first the Kingdom. This does not mean we cannot be blessed, cannot have God's blessings, but it means we are not to pursue that. We pursue the Kingdom, and these things are added. It is God who blesses us with all things richly to be enjoyed. It is at his discretion. He gives them, we hold them lightly not tightly. They are not ours. They are his, everything I have and everything you have is a test, a test of what we really love.

Second, a man of God is known by what he follows after.

Flees and follows; running away but running toward something. V. 11, "But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue...or better, follow after...righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness." We are running away from one thing and running toward something else. We are fugitives from all that is evil, running toward what is righteous.

Again, here is a present tense verb, continuous action: continually running from and continually running toward. This is a life-long pursuit. **Proverbs 15:9**, "The Lord loves them that pursue righteousness." Not success, not fame, not size, not popularity, not esteem, not reputation. We are running after righteousness. Six words are here, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. Righteousness is doing right on the outside. We pursue right conduct. Godliness is right on the inside. That is motivation, the heart. Pursue what is right on the outside and cultivate what is right on the inside. Your motives, your desires, your heart—then your behavior.

You pursue faith, confident trust in God for everything. You put your life and ministry and everything you have in God's hands and you trust Him. You live under His glorious, beneficent, gracious sovereignty.

You pursue love, that is, selflessness. Willful sacrifice—you are characterized by perseverance—endurance in trial and difficulty and trouble and persecution and suffering. And the word gentleness is the word meekness or humility. Could it be clearer?

Are you a man of God? You are if, having been called, you are faithful to the proclamation of the Word of God, and all the while you are running as fast as you can away from the love of money and all the vices that go with it. You are running as fast as you can toward these things: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and humility.

The goal of my life is not primarily related to the size of the church. It's not primarily related to the structure of the church. It's not primarily related to some ambitious agenda

that I have. I haven't created something in my own mind that I want to attain to. Here is the goal: talk to a minister at the beginning of his ministry, the middle of his ministry, or in the later years of his ministry, and ask what is the goal and objective of his life. The goal and objective should be the same through all the years, and that is to run from the things that corrupt and run toward the things that purify...so that he can be a vessel unto honor fit for the Master's use because he belongs to God. He is God's man.

This is the pursuit of a godly heart. This is a pursuit of a godly righteous life. Ps 50: 16-17, "To the wicked God says, 'What right have you to tell of My statutes?'" To a wicked man, God says, "Who do you think you are opening your mouth and speaking My Word? What right have you...he says...to take My covenant into your mouth, for you hate discipline, and you cast My Words behind you." That's some strong indictment, isn't it? "You stand up, and you speak of My statutes? You take My covenant? You talk about My gracious provision for salvation? You put those words in your mouth? And you hate discipline? And you cast My Words behind you? You're wicked...God says."

Psalm 101:6 says, "He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me. He who practices deceit shall not." So the man of God is known by what he flees from and what he follows after. Paul says, in 1 Cor 9:27, "I beat my body to bring it into subjection." Literally used the word translated buffet in the English means to strike with a fist in the face. I give a knockout punch to my body to bring it into subjection, to knock out my human desire, lest in preaching to others I myself would be disqualified. I have to be a running man. I have to pursue these things. People will feel the power of a godly life. Preaching puts the nails of truth in, but example pounds them deep. John Owen wrote, "A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouth of the public, but what he is in secret before Almighty God, that he is and no more. No more."

Jesus says, "If your right hand...offends you...what?...cut it off. If your right eye offends you, pluck it out." What drastic action would you take in the pursuit of holiness? You have to deal dramatically. You have to deal drastically with sin. You can't be a pastor and can't be a man of God unless you're blameless and above reproach. God helps, you know, along the way, brings trials into your life. My life, I mean in the process of...of shaping my life, you know, you go through all kinds of things.

Spurgeon said it like this, "A graceless pastor is a blind man elected to a professorship of optics, philosophizing about light and vision, while he himself is absolutely in the dark. He is a dumb man, elevated to the chair of music, a deaf man fluent on harmonies and symphonies. He is a mole professing to educate eagles. Such is a graceless pastor." You may be a preacher, a pastor, but if you're not running after holiness, you're not a man of God.

Thirdly, the man of God is known by what he flees from, what he follows after, and, thirdly, what he fights for.

V. 12, "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." The man of God is a fighter. He is a boxer, a wrestler, a soldier, a battler, a protagonist. He is engaged in relentless war. 2 Tim 2, Paul says, "He suffers hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, disentangled in the affairs of everyday life. He pleases the One who enlisted him to be a

soldier." We battle the kingdom of darkness which yields its ground very reluctantly. We face many adversaries; we know that the enemy of our souls hates what we do.

In a Greek boxing match, the loser had his eyes gouged out as emblematic of his failure—serious conflict from which you could emerge dead or lifetime blind. The church does not understand that. The preacher at a large seeker friendly church said, "You need to lighten up." I said, "It is hard to do in the middle of war." Fight the good fight. It is a good fight, a noble fight, to fight against the kingdom of darkness with the truth. The only weapon we have is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

One of the problems today is that people do not take the battle as seriously as they should. This text helps: "Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called." What does that mean? Simply this: Get a grip on the fact that you're dealing with eternal issues. How can you treat the ministry in shallow terms? How can you treat it trivially? This is war and eternity is at stake. "You knew that (v. 12) when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. You knew that when you confessed Christ, when we were all there gathered." He is probably referring to His ordination when the elders laid hands on Him and set Him apart from the ministry. "You confessed at that time that this was a matter of eternal issues. You are not just slapping people around with some puffy gloves here. This is a life and death matter. Get a grip on it."

Lighten up? A man of God is called to eternal issues. Having confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, he publicly commits himself to a battle over eternal issues. As long as he lives, he fights the good fight, the noble fight for the souls of men against the kingdom of darkness and against the world, the flesh, and the devil. That is why he has to be sober-minded. That's why he has to be cut off from this world, 'cause the battle is so critical. A man of God is marked by what he flees from, follows after, and fights for.

Fourth, a man of God is marked by what he is faithful to.

In vv. 13-14 we read this, "I charge you in the presence of God...here is a serious preliminary...I charge you in the presence of God...he's saying I...that's the word command actually...I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things...he reminds him that God is the source of all life...to which you were called...the same life that you were called to back in verse 12...I call you...I charge you...I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and has given you eternal life, and I command you before Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate."

This is really a strong preamble to the command. "I command you before the God who gives life to everyone and has given you life and eternal life on top of it, I charge you in front of Christ Jesus, who when He stood before Pontius Pilate never equivocated, never compromised." Pilate said, "Are you a king?" He said, "I am." Jesus stood His ground when it was tough. He held to the truth. I charge you before a faithful God and a faithful Christ Jesus, v. 14, "Keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." You be faithful to the commandment.

What is the commandment? The command is simply this, "Keep the commandment." What commandment? Exegesis of this term will lead you to understand the commandment is all revealed Scripture. The man of God is faithful to truth. He understands spiritual war. He understands that the kingdom of darkness yields its captives very reluctantly. He understands

the lifelong battle; it's not always comfortable, you disconnect from the world, you pay the price of sacrifice of being a soldier.

Paul did, and he's calling on Timothy to do the same, solemnly commanding him before God who gives life and takes it, before God who gave him eternal life, before Jesus Christ who, under unbelievable, unimaginable, incomprehensible duress, never gave up his adherence to the Word of God. He calls upon Timothy to guard the Word until the end of the age.

6:20, "Guard what has been entrusted to you." It's a guardianship here. **2 Tim 1:13-14**, "Retain the standard of sound words. Hold onto the sound words." **2 Timothy 1:14**, "Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you." That is the Scripture.

Application

What do you look for in a minister? Not how interesting, not how clever, not how short his sermons are, not how popular he is, not how cute he is, not how slick he is.

How well does he guard the truth? How faithful to the truth is he? How skilled in understanding the truth? How strong in the proclamation of truth? You may be a minister, but if you do not guard the truth, you're not a man of God. This is a lifelong responsibility. This is all we live for, to know the Word and to make it known. The man of God, called by God, given one responsibility: to proclaim His truth. To do it, he must flee the things that corrupt. He must follow after the things that lead to holiness. He must fight his whole life long, and he must be faithful to the truth to the end of the age.

I close with an illustration from 1 Kings 13.

Here is a man of God. In vv. 1-10, he is an obedient man of God. He does what he is told to do. He is described as the man of God, a faithful man. He's a prophet, and he's faithful.

In vv. 11-19, the man of God is not faithful. He disobeys the Lord. He begins faithfully. He is told to deliver a message; God says, "Here's the message." The man of God is told to be faithful to that message from God. But he caves in; he compromises. V. 20: "Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, the Word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Because you have disobeyed the command of the Lord, you have not observed the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you.'"

Here is a man of God who was disobedient. "But you have done exactly what I told you not to do. You returned. You ate bread. You drank water in the place of which He said to you, 'Eat no bread and drink no water.' Because of that, your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'" You'll not die a natural death. "It came about after he'd eaten bread and after he'd drunk, he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back...and here goes the man of God...When he had gone (v. 24) a lion met him on the way and killed him. His body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body."

Why does it say that? It is a word picture—never forget. Here is the man of God lying dead, a donkey on one side, and a lion on the other. Freeze frame that photo. V. 26, "When the prophet who brought him back from the way heard it, he said, 'It is the man of God, who

disobeyed the command of the Lord; therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the Word of the Lord which He spoke to him."

Being a man of God can be very precarious. Strong judgment falls upon an unfaithful man of God.

Here are some suggestions...for a preacher.

- Fling him into his office, tear the office sign from the door, and nail up a sign, "Study." Take him off the mailing list. Lock him up with his books and his Bible. Slam him down on his knees before texts and broken hearts and the lives of a superficial flock and a holy God. Force him to be the one man in the community who knows about God. Throw him into the ring to box with God until he learns how short his arms are. Engage him to wrestle with God all night long, and let him come out only when he's bruised and beaten into being a blessing. Shut his mouth forever spouting remarks. Stop his tongue forever tripping lightly over every nonessential. Require him to have something to say before he dares break the silence, and bend his knees in the lonesome valley of suffering. Burn his eyes with weary study. Wreck his emotional poise with worry over his life before God. Make him exchange his pious stance for a humble walk with God and man. Make him spend and be spent for the glory of God. Rip out his telephone. Burn up his ecclesiastical success sheets. Put water in this gas tank. Give him a Bible, and tie him to the pulpit, and make him preach the Word of the Living God. Test him. Quiz him. Examine him. Humiliate him for his ignorance of things divine. Shame him for his good comprehension of finances, game scores, and politics. Laugh at his frustrated effort to play psychiatrist.
- Form a choir and raise a chant and haunt him with it night and day. Sir, we would see Jesus. And when, at last, he does enter the pulpit, ask him if he has a Word from God. If he doesn't, then dismiss him. Tell him you can read the morning paper. You can digest the television commentaries. You can think through the day's superficial problems. You can manage the community's weary fund drives. You can bless assorted baked potatoes and green beans ad infinitum better than he can. Command him not to come back until he's read and reread, written and rewritten, until he can stand up worn and forlorn and say, "Thus says the Lord." Break him across the board of his ill-gotten popularity. Smack him hard with his own prestige. Corner him with questions about God. Cover him with demands for celestial wisdom, and give him no escape until he's back against the wall of the Word. Sit down before him and listen to the only word he has left, God's Word. Let him be totally ignorant of the down-street gossip, but give him a chapter, and order him to walk around it, camp on it, sup with it, and come at last to speak it backward and forward until all he says rings with the truth of eternity.
- And when he's burned out by the flaming Word, when he's consumed at last by the fiery grace blazing through him, when he's privileged to translate that truth of God to man, and finally transferred from earth to Heaven, then bear him away gently, and blow a muted trumpet, and lay him down softly, and place a two-edged sword on his coffin, and raise the tomb triumphant, for he was a brave soldier of the Word. And here he died, he had become a man of God.