

STUDIES IN 1 TIMOTHY

LAW NUMBER FIFTEEN: "Perseverance Is the Price of Leadership"

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Key Verse 6:11: "But as for you, O man of God, be fleeing these things; but be going after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness."

TEXT:

v.11 But as for you, O man of God, be fleeing these things; but be going after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

v.12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

v.13 I am giving you a charge in the presence of God, who causes all things to live, and Christ Jesus, the one who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession;

v.14 to keep the principles stainless, above reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

v.15 which in His own time He shall show forth--the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of those who are reigning as kings and Lord of those who are ruling as lords;

v.16 Who alone is having immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has ever seen nor is able to see, to whom be honor and power forever, Amen.

INTRODUCTION:

HOW COME, GRANPA?

Little Janie was sitting on her grandfather's knee one day and after looking at him intently for some time, she said, "Grandpa, were you in the ark with Noah?"

"Certainly not, my dear," he replied in astonishment.

"Then," asked the child, "why weren't you drowned?"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

NEWS FOR YOU

A five-year-old had one line in a kindergarten Christmas playlet, appearing in an angel's garb to say, "I bring you good tidings!"

After many rehearsals, the lad asked his mother what were "tidings." She explained tidings were news.

The performance began and the little angel became flustered. After a long embarrassing silence, he blurted out, "Hey, I got news for you!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

HAVE IT YOUR OWN WAY, CAT

A little boy decided to make a good Baptist out of the family cat by immersing it in the bathtub. Everything went fine until he sprinkled a few drops of water on the cat's head, at which time the animal started howling and scratching until finally the little boy had to let it go. He was overheard saying in a frustrated tone, "All right--be a Methodist then."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

HER BUSINESS IS PICKING UP

A teacher had just given her class a lesson on magnets. In the follow-up test, one question read, "My name starts with 'M,' has six letters, and I pick up things. What am I?"

She was a bit surprised to find half the class answered the question with the word "Mother."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(You Can Make a Difference by Gary R. Collins)

Every half hour or so, especially during the summer, a tour bus makes its way through a quiet neighborhood in Nashville and turns onto Curtiswood Drive. The curious passengers strain to see two attractions that sit side by side: the opulent governor's mansion and the house next door where a gracious and refined lady named Sarah Cannon has lived for more than twenty years.

Sarah grew up in a small Tennessee community and joined a touring drama company more than fifty years ago. When the group reached a secluded mountain town in north Alabama, far from any motels, Sarah was put up in a tiny cabin with a delightful little lady who told endless hillbilly tales to her fascinated guest.

Sarah came away imitating her hostess, and the people in the touring group roared with good-natured laughter. It wasn't long before Sarah took her act on stage. She played to rave reviews before the local Lion's Club and a banker's convention, but the pay wasn't very good, she didn't have a steady job, and she hadn't realized that show business can be a tough business. At twenty-seven she thought her career was over, but then came her big break. She was invited to audition for a famous country music show and was given the opportunity to perform late one Saturday night. The lady was an immediate show business success.

Shortly after her fiftieth birthday, Sarah began to experience a painful arthritis. Several years later she developed cancer and faced a double mastectomy. Despite these setbacks she kept performing, encouraged by her strong Christian faith and by the man who has been husband for more than forty years.

When asked how she would like to be remembered, Mrs. Cannon quoted from memory: "I shall pass through this world but once. Therefore, if there's any good that I can do, I must do it now, not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Then she added, "If you've had a life-threatening disease, which arthritis isn't but cancer is, you want to be sure that you get the most out of life and do the most you can for others. I feel that I was left here for a reason."

Now in her late seventies, Sarah Cannon is still a difference maker. For half a century she has brought laughter into the lives of millions, including many of those people on the tour buses. They know Sarah Cannon by her stage name:

The Grand Ole Opry's Minnie Pearl.

Difference makers like Minnie Pearl often face resistance. The writer of Hebrews reminds us of the hardships that Jesus faced: "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. . . . Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons."

pp. 109-10

(Over the Edge and Back by Joe White)

His father laughs: "We'd have added another word to his name if we thought of it soon enough," He's looking back over fifteen years as the father of one of America's truly great teenagers: John Wesley Hays White.

Wes, as the boy's friends know him, has what John Wayne called grit. General Patton called it guts. Vince Lombardi called it "the stuff it takes to be a winner." The Bible calls it endurance. Wesley White certainly has 'em all. His life story would make a box office smash hit in a Hollywood movie or a bestselling novel at the bookstore. This story is true.

At age one-and-a-half, a Texas doctor discovered diabetes in Wesley's chemistry imbalance. Taking insulin shots daily for the rest of his life isn't something an 18-month-old wants to dream about. But the insulin seizures that were to come were worse than the needle.

As if that weren't enough for one person to bear, when Wes was two-and-a-half another doctor diagnosed a greater complication: Wesley was an epileptic. The two disorders immediately began to trigger each other. During a six-month period of intense hospitalization, Wesley would have seizures (grand mal--the worst kind, with falls and head bruises) as often as one every minute. He wore a hockey helmet in the hospital to protect himself. The doctors told his parents that Wes would never grow up, that he would always be confined, and that there was probably permanent brain damage.

The doctors couldn't have been further from the truth. The problem was that they didn't measure the size of Wesley's heart. That heart began to drive Wesley to becoming not just "normal," but extraordinary.

In sixth grade he took up boxing for a sport. Wes looks back at the next three years in the ring and smiles: "It was a challenge. I liked to go into the ring alone and have to stand up for a few minutes while another guy tried to take me off my feet. I never wanted to destroy the opponent, I just wanted to win." Win is what Wesley often did. He fought his way to the state championships, where he was first runner-up.

Now that Wes is in high school, football is his sport. Never mind the diabetes and epilepsy (still a nagging problem). Wes is only five-foot-five and he weighs 120 pounds. Guess what position he plays? You guessed wrong. Defensive tackle! This year he started on the junior varsity, and played some with the varsity as a sophomore. Facing a 200-pound opponent was not unusual. Wesley has gotten used to big obstacles.

Want to know more? Wes has been a rodeo clown. With his father he would do a funny act in the arena in front of a 2,000-pound Brahman bull who wasn't in on the joke. "I love to see people laugh and have fun," Wes says.

The medical problems continue. When asked why he doesn't lose heart, Wes says humbly, "I just go on. I don't like to sit. You can have fun if you want to. This disease is mine, and I might as well enjoy it and get the best from life."

This summer he enjoyed life in a kayak on one of America's swiftest and roughest whitewater rivers. Who knows what he'll think of next?

"I believe God loves me," Wes concluded. "I believe He is faithful. He's coming back for me. He's my best friend."

I can see why Wesley White is a winner. Pound for pound, given what he's been given, Wes gets more out of life than any young man I know.

pp. 121-22

(To the End of the Race by George McDaniel Cole)

Foreman was one of the finest dogs in East Texas. He had a wonderful voice; he could run with the lead dogs in any race; he was a good fighter; he never quit a race until it was over; and he had many other fine characteristics. His blood lines were good, and there was much about Foreman which was commendable and fine.

With all of his good characteristics, Foreman lacked something that he needed in order to be the kind of dog he could have been. Foreman would not run at night. When the race was in the daylight, no dog excelled him, but when night came on, he just simply refused to run.

Though this phase of Foreman's life was despised by hunters, it did not prevent them from using him in the daytime. While they all knew that he should run at night, and while he was needed in the race at night, and would not run, it did not prevent them from utilizing him where he could be used.

There are many people like Foreman. They are different from others in some respects, and in aspects of their lives they are a disappointment to the Lord, to God's preachers, and to other Christians who do run "at night as well as in the day." These are they who refuse to run when the night of difficulty comes on, when the night of bad health, when the night of financial reverse gathers around, or just when the night at the end of the day shall fall. It is heartbreaking for the Lord's preacher to be depending on such ones and to find that when they are needed so very badly that they just won't run.

But such ones are not to be despised. The services of such children of God are not to be rejected. We must find a way to utilize such service as we can in the daytime, if they won't run at night.

One of the greatest discoveries of the Christian life is that discovery we make when we learn how true it is that "He giveth a song in the night." He who never learns how to run at night, never learns the greatest joys of the Christian life.
pp. 55-57

(Laugh Again by Charles R. Swindoll)

Robert Ballard was a man with a quest. He wanted to find the Titanic. And on September 1, 1985, he discovered the sunken ship in the North Atlantic, more than 350 miles off the coast of Newfoundland. I get chills when I read his description of the first time he sent down that bright probe light and saw that sight more than two miles below the surface of those cold waters:

My first direct view of Titanic lasted less than two minutes, but the stark sight of her immense black hull towering above the ocean floor will remain forever ingrained in my memory. My lifelong dream was to find this great ship and during the past 13 years the quest for her has dominated my life.

p. 149

(Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times
by Donald T. Phillips)

In one instance, when approached by a general for instructions on how to handle a particularly difficult problem, Lincoln told him to use his own best judgment and then related the story of the old farmer who had the task of ploughing a large field laden with many tree stumps!

It was a terrible place to clear up. But after a while he got a few things growing--here and there a patch of corn, a few hills of beans, and so on. One day a stranger stopped to look at his place and wanted to know how he managed to cultivate so rough a spot. "Well," was the reply, "some of it is pretty rough. The smaller stumps I can generally root out or burn out; but now and then there is [a large one] that bothers me, and there is no other way but to plough around it." Now, General, at such a time as this, troublesome cases are constantly coming up, and the only way to get along at all is to plough around them.

p. 111

(The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted W. Engstrom)

Solid, dependable, loyal, strong leadership is one of the most desperate needs in America and in our world today.

We see the tragedy of weak men in important places--little men in big jobs. Business, industry, government, labor, education, and the church are all starving for effective leadership. So today, perhaps more than ever before, there is such a need for leadership and teamwork to cope with the needs.

p. 12

Hiebert observes:

Paul again turns to Timothy personally with an exhortation to an active life in view of Christ's return. It is the only safe antidote to the perils just pictured. This stirring passage forms the real climax of the Epistle.

p. 115

Barclay says:

So the letter comes to an end with a tremendous challenge to Timothy, a challenge all the greater and all the more solemn because of the deliberate sonorous nobility of the words in which it is clothed.

p. 155

Hendriksen sets the stage by saying:

Over against the vices which Paul has just condemned (see verses 3-10) stand the virtues which Timothy is urged to cultivate. . . .

Timothy is urged to flee away from such things as wickedness, gold-hunger, error, envy, wrangling, reviling; and to run after, pursue or eagerly seek after their opposites, namely, righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. This befits him as a "man of God."

p. 202

Lenski observes:

This paragraph, then, presents the entire positive side of the godliness which shuts out the love of money. Such a vice will be wholly smothered by all that is here presented.

Paul follows the same procedure elsewhere. He bombards some single error with all the guns in his heavy battery and crushes some single vice with the whole avalanche of the virtues and the supreme aim of the Christian life.

p. 712

Demarest says:

I have a feeling that Timothy would have read this part of the letter over and over again. It's like part of a treasured love letter to which you return in times of special need. The "man of God" is contrasted with the false teachers and the lovers of money just confronted.

p. 225

Lock paraphrases the passage under consideration in the following way:

But you, who are God's own prophet with a message from Him, turn your back on all such desires and empty discussions: nay, press forward to gain true righteousness, true piety, loyalty, love, endurance, and a patient forbearing temper. Persevere in the noblest of all contests, that of the faith; lay hold once and for all on that eternal life to which you were called--ay, and there were many who witnessed the noble profession of faith that you then made. So then I charge you as in the sight of that God who is the source and sustainer of life to all that lives, and in the sight of Christ Jesus who Himself when at the bar of the Roman Governor made His noble profession, that you carefully keep the command He gave us free from all stain and all reproach, until the day of the appearing of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which at the right moment He will unveil to the world, who is the blessed, nay, the One only sovereign, the King over all who rule kingdoms, the Lord of all who hold lordship over their fellows, He who alone hath in Himself immortality, who dwelleth in light to which none can approach, whom no eye of man ever looked upon, no nor can look upon--to whom be all honour and sovereignty for ever. Amen.

p. 70

v.11 But as for you, O man of God, be fleeing these things; but be going after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

There are 4 PARTING EXHORTATIONS to Timothy in these remaining verses:

- 1.The first one is here in chapter 6:11, 12,
- 2.the 2nd is verses 13-16,
- 3.the 3rd is verses 17-19,
- 4.verses 20, 21.

The word "YOU" is in the EMPHATIC position.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul begins the concluding section of the epistle by turning directly to Timothy. The words but you are an emphatic contrast with some people of verse 10 who chase after riches. Timothy as a man of God was to do the opposite--to flee from all this, and chase instead after personal virtues that are of eternal value.

Guy King says:

We may be sure Timothy did, both before and after his appointment to take the helm of the See of Ephesus. And for his own personal life--both in private and in public--Paul gives him these guiding rules, the three slogans.
p. 114

Hiebert says:

"But thou" sets Timothy in contrast to those who fall into destructive perils through their desire to get wealth.
p. 115

Wiersbe says:

The phrase "But thou" indicates a contrast between Timothy and the false teachers. They were men of the world, but he was a "man of God." This special designation was also given to Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and David; so Timothy was in good company.
pp. 80-81

Barclay observes:

When the charge is given to Timothy, he is not reminded of his own weakness and his own helplessness and his own inadequacy and his own sin; that might well have reduced him to pessimistic despair; he is rather challenged by the honour which is his, the honour of being God's man. It is the Christian way, not to depress a man by branding him as a lost and helpless sinner, but rather to uplift him by summoning him to be what he has got it in him to be. The Christian way is not to fling a man's humiliating past in his face, but to set before him the majestic splendour of his potential future. The very fact that Timothy was addressed as "Man of God" would make him square his shoulders and throw his head back as one who has received his commission from the King.
p. 155

Lock says:

Here the thought is either that of the prophet with a command to carry out, a message to deliver, or more widely of one who is God's soldier, "The King's Champion," one whose whole life is lifted above worldly aims and devoted to God's service, . . .
pp. 70-71

"BUT AS FOR YOU, O MAN OF GOD, BE FLEEING THESE THINGS."

There are 3 PRESENT IMPERATIVES here in verses 11 and 12:

- 1.BE FLEEING,
- 2.BE FOLLOWING,
- 3.BE FIGHTING.

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe.

Wiersbe says:

The word "flee" that Paul used here did not refer to literal running, but to Timothy's separating himself from the sins of the false teachers. This echoes the admonition in 6:5: "From such withdraw thyself."
p. 81

Hiebert says:

"Flee these things," that is, the love of money and its attendant evils. The tense stresses the continuing duty, "Be ever fleeing," never let them, catch you; the margin of safety can never be too great.
p. 116

Hiebert also says:

"Man of God" is the regular designation for a prophet in the Old Testament. Some think that the application of this Old Testament title to Timothy suggests that he had similar privileges and responsibilities. In II Timothy 3:17, the only other place in the New Testament where the expression occurs, it undoubtedly has a general connotation as indicative of a mature Christian. The epithet can be applied to any mature believer standing in a place of leadership responsibility.
p. 115

One of the things that a man of God, a mature believer in Christ learns is that there is a time and place to flee from that which would lure us into sin and destruction.

Barnes is saying:

These allurements of wealth, and these sad consequences which the love of gold produces.
p. 200

These are the things that the man of God should be fleeing.

Lenski says:

. . . "ever flee these things" like a pestilence, like poisonous serpents, like the devil's snares. One would cease to be a man of God if he did not so flee these things, if he let them catch him. Alas, some only pretend to flee. They often stay near and think they are at a safe distance until they are overtaken and caught. Continue to flee, do nothing but flee, the margin of safety cannot be too great. p. 713

Genesis 39:11, 12

One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

"BUT AS FOR YOU, O MAN OF GOD, BE FLEEING THESE THINGS."

We could actually translate that:

"keep on fleeing these things."

"BUT (in contrast to that) BE GOING AFTER."

Keep on going after 6 THINGS:

1. "RIGHTEOUSNESS, "
2. "GODLINESS, "
3. "FAITH, "
4. "LOVE, "
5. "PATIENCE, "
6. "GENTLENESS. "

Guy King says:

In the Bible, the Christian life is never contemplated as a merely negative thing: it is, in all respects, a fundamentally positive thing. And so Paul lays it down here in his advice to his young pupil and comrade: he gives him six things that he should take pains to pursue--we may, perhaps, not unhelpfully, think of them as a sixfold relationship.
p. 115

Demarest says:

The verbs in verse 11 are dramatic: "flee" and "pursue." He is to be in flight from the false teachings and the love of money, and he is to be in pursuit of "righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] gentleness." Paul was fond of such lists of virtues, as with his list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
p. 225

Flight and pursuit is a vivid way of viewing the life of Christian discipleship. There are things that must be constantly avoided--and not just passively. To flee implies that something is after us. Paul's view of evil was active. He was aware of "principalities and powers" at work in the world. While we may not choose to express our view of sin and the devil with the same language and images of that era, we ignore, at our peril, the active power of evil in the world. Many of us were taught that big boys never run away. But when it comes to active evil, wisdom calls for flight as well as fight. Yes, there are times when we must dig in and resist. There are other times when it is best to flee. True wisdom is choosing the right response.
p. 225

Paul has another list of things that qualified an elder for leadership back in chapter 3:1-7.

WHEN IT'S SMART TO RUN

But thou, O man of God, flee these things.

1 Timothy 6:11

In Proverbs 30 the writer refers to the Palestinian "badger" or "conie." This small animal, resembling a guinea pig, is able to survive in rocky terrain by fleeing at the slightest provocation. It never strays far from home, and swiftly darts into its hole at the first sign of danger. But no one blames this little creature for doing that. Since it's not equipped to defend itself against predators, any attempt to fight would be fatal. To run is the only sensible thing to do.

We as Christians should also choose flight instead of fight whenever it will keep us from temptation to sin. Here are some biblical exhortations: "Flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18); "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14); "Flee also youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22); "But thou, O man of God, flee these things" (1 Tim. 6:11). Since this last admonition follows warnings against pride, quarreling, greed, and discontent, it is obvious that the apostle Paul was advising young Timothy to run away from any occasion that would cause him to become ensnared by these evils.

It follows that a person with a weakness for drink should not go to a tavern for a coke. Nor should we deliberately place ourselves in a situation conducive to sexual sin. True, some temptations cannot be avoided. And when they do come to us, the Lord will give us special help. But He doesn't want us to court them with the idea that we are strong enough to defeat them. That's presumptuous.
It's always smart to run away from sin. --H.V.L.

'Tis wise to flee when tempted,
A fool is one who'd stay;
For those who toy with evil
Soon learn it doesn't pay.

--D.J.D.

THOT: To avoid forbidden fruit, stay out of the devil's orchard.

(From Our Daily Bread, December 30)

CAUGHT IN A FATAL GRIP

But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and
follow after righteousness. 1 Timothy 6:11

The Christian must always be on guard lest worldly things bring about his spiritual defeat. Many "foolish and hurtful lusts" can ruin a believer's testimony and hinder his growth in grace.

I have read of a kind of eagle that will attack a seal as it swims in the water. The bird swoops down and fixes its claws into the mammal's flesh, then pulls its victim ashore and kills it. But sometimes the seal proves much too strong for the eagle. With a mighty lunge, it heads for the deep waters, drawing the helpless bird with it. In spite of the eagle's shriek of horror and its desperate struggle to let go of its prey, disaster comes.

In much the same way the child of God can become so engrossed with the activities of this world that he is dragged down to spiritual ruin. This is not to say that when a believer gets out of God's will he no longer has eternal life. But his fruitfulness in Christ's service and his usefulness to the Lord who bought him is nullified. This was the case with Demas who forsook the apostle Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10).

The things of earth pose no threat to us if we do not grasp them or hold them close. Our Scripture for today gives a twofold plan of safety: "flee" and "follow." We must flee sinful allurements and "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

If you sense in your life an increasing entanglement with worldly lusts, heed Paul's advice. Don't let a fatal grip bring about your downfall. --P.R.V.

It may be you say, "I'll have Christ and the world,"
But this you will find cannot be;
A friend of the world is a foe unto God,
And these two can never agree.

THOT: The closer you live to the world, the more power it has over you.

(From Our Daily Bread, March 28)

Hiebert points out:

The negative was briefly stated, but the positive activity is elaborated in the enumeration of six virtues, named in three pairs, which must be actively and energetically pursued. "Righteousness, godliness" point to the attitude of the soul toward God. The former designates the conformity in character to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action, while the latter denotes the devotion to God in reverence and worship. "Faith, love" are the fountal source of the Christian life. "The one may be termed the hand that lays hold of God's mercy; and the other the mainspring of the Christian's life" (Spence). "Patience, meekness" look outward and set forth the disposition necessary in those who encounter the antagonism of a Christ-rejecting world. The former denotes a steadfast endurance of life's trials and persecutions, while the latter expresses that meekness of disposition which makes no high claims for itself nor strenuously insists upon its own rights.
p. 116

Again, we can translate this phrase, "keep going after," just like we translated the 1st phrase, "keep on fleeing."

Now here, we are saying:

"keep on going after" these 6 THINGS:

1. "RIGHTEOUSNESS, "
2. "GODLINESS, "
3. "FAITH, "
4. "LOVE, "
5. "PATIENCE, "
6. "GENTLENESS. "

Wiersbe says:

"Righteousness" means "personal integrity."
"Godliness" means "practical piety." The first has to do with character; the second, with conduct.
p. 81

Guy King addresses the word "GODLINESS" by saying:

Is His Word our constant study; His Will our earnest endeavour; His Work our happy employment; His Worth our daily theme? Is it our chief ambition that we may please Him? I suppose that, "godliness," means "god-likeness": are there increasing evidences of a growing likeness, such as is contemplated, for example, in II Corinthians iii. 18, "We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit". If our relationship to Him is "right", that sort of transformation will be taking place in our character.
p. 116

The 3RD WORD is:

3.FAITH

Wiersbe says:

"Faith" might better be translated "faithfulness." It has well been said that the greatest ability is dependability.
p. 81

The 4TH WORD is:

4.LOVE

This is the agape love which is produced by the Spirit of God within the hearts of those who walk with Him.

The 5TH WORD is:

5. PATIENCE

It could probably be better translated "PERSEVERANCE."

PATIENCE indicates a PASSIVE STATE,

and PERSEVERANCE an ACTIVE STATE in maintaining a state of victory under stress.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary translates this word:

Steadfastness under adversity.

Barclay says:

Hupomone is victorious endurance, masculine constancy under trial. "It is unswerving constancy to faith and piety in spite of adversity and suffering." Hupomone is the virtue which does not so much accept the experiences of life as it conquers these experiences. Hupomone is the virtue which in spite of all things overcomes the world.
p. 156

Hendriksen says:

It is the grace to bear up under adversities; for example, persecution. It amounts to stedfastness no matter what may be the cost, in the full assurance of future victory.
p. 203

"BUT AS FOR YOU, O MAN OF GOD, BE FLEEING THESE THINGS; BUT KEEP ON GOING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, GODLINESS, FAITH, LOVE, PATIENCE, GENTLENESS."

Guthrie says:

The concluding virtue, meekness, denotes 'gentleness of feeling,' a rarer quality than patience, but a precious target for the man of God.
p. 114

Barclay says:

It is one of these untranslatable words. It describes the spirit which never blazes into anger for its own wrongs, but which can be purely and devastatingly angry for the wrongs of others. It describes the spirit which knows how to forgive and yet knows how to wage the battle of righteousness. It describes the spirit which walks at once in humility and yet in pride of its high calling from God. It describes the virtue by which a man at one and the same time remembers the shame of being a sinner and the glory of being a son of God. It describes the virtue by which at all times a man is enabled rightly to treat his fellow men, and rightly to regard himself.
p. 156

Hendriksen says:

When these virtues are present, gentleness of spirit will certainly result. The word thus translated is found only here in the Greek Bible.
p. 203

Guy King says:

Some people seem to imagine that meekness is weakness. We can only suggest that they try it for a week. That will soon cure them of the delusion. Meekness is, in reality, the response to that challenge of the Lord Jesus, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me", Luke ix. 23: "deny himself", say "No" to his self, cross himself out. It is as Paul has it in Galatians ii. 20, "Not I but Christ". It is the obliteration of self; the subservience of self to others, and especially to Him. Self can be one of our greatest problems--self-righteousness, self-confidence, self-will, self-seeking, self-importance, even self-pity. Meekness is the opposite of all that, the absence of all that.
p. 117

King goes on to say:

Yes, it is so often the case that the Christian's main trouble is not so much sin, as self. The old grammar that we learnt at school said, First Person, I; Second Person, Thou; Third Person, He. The new grammar that we are set to learn, when we enter the School of Christ, is--First Person, He; Second Person, Thou (others); Third Person, I.
p. 117

This is our KEY VERSE in the "LAWS OF LEADERSHIP," LAW #15:

"PERSEVERANCE IS THE PRICE OF LEADERSHIP"

Paul gives a series of 3 PRESENT IMPERATIVES that constitute this law:

IMPERATIVE #1:

KEEP ON FLEEING THESE THINGS.

IMPERATIVE #2:

KEEP ON FOLLOWING RIGHTEOUSNESS, GODLINESS, FAITH, LOVE,
PATIENCE, GENTLENESS.

IMPERATIVE #3 is in verse 12:

KEEP ON FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

This is not the time to grow weak and to let up, but to grow stronger and to be faithful to finish.

Isaiah 40:31

but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

IT TAKES WORK!

But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself rather to godliness. 1 Timothy 4:7

The apostle referred to godliness more in 1 Timothy than in any other epistle (see 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11). This highly prized Christian quality, referred to as a "mystery" (3:16), may be defined as a good and holy life growing out of a deep reverence for God.

But how does it come about in our lives? Are we to pray for godliness and then sit back and wait for God to pour it suddenly into us? No, that's not how we become godly. It takes effort on our part! First Timothy 4:7 says we are to train (exercise) ourselves to be godly. Think of it like this: Suppose a young gymnast wanted to compete in the Olympic Games. How would she reach her goal? First, she would have to be totally committed to that goal. Then, she would have to make tremendous sacrifices of her time. She would have to spend hours every day doing conditioning exercises and practicing her routines. She would work under the skilled eye of a coach who could point out the smallest flaws and correct her technique. She would also follow a strict diet.

So it is with godliness. If we want to become more godly, we must commit ourselves to it. We must see ourselves as "in training," exercising strenuously and vigorously. Through prayer and yieldedness we put ourselves under the guidance of our "coach," the Holy Spirit. We must discipline ourselves to read, study, and obey God's Word. Just praying for godliness won't do. We must realize that it takes work! --D.C.E.

Every day more like my Savior,
Every day my will resign,
Till at last Christ reigns supremely
In this grateful heart of mine.

--Brandt

No pain - no gain.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 11)

What to Do When You're "On Trial"

Samuel F. B. Morse found trials and tests of life everywhere he turned. He was a painter who wanted to make a living by his art work. His art failed to earn him recognition or financial support. Two times he ran for public office, and both times he was defeated. He spent much time attempting to design a new steamboat. It failed. He designed a new fire engine pump, but no one was interested. Then he discovered man could communicate over long distances through a series of clicks and beeps. At first it looked like his attempts to develop a code of communication would be another failure. Because he persevered, he ultimately did succeed at his latest project. He developed the Morse code because he knew what it was to "stick it out," to endure, to not give up.

In many ways we feel like Samuel Morse. It seems that at every turn we have met trials and tests that seem like defeat (failure) to us. It appears that we have spent more time these first 9 months in Africa dealing with the problems and trials of life than we have in ministry.

The words of James 1:2-4 have taken on a special meaning for us. He tells us to "consider it pure joy (not necessarily feel joy), my brothers, whenever (not "if ever", but whenever because trials are an inevitable part of a Christian's life) you face trials of many kinds (the word means various, multi-colored) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance (endurance, "staying power"). Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete" (become like Jesus).

We feel like we've had a crash course on "Trials" these past months in Africa! We have had many kinds of trials (Cathy's bout with typhoid, having to leave Liberia after only 4 months, living as refugees, malaria, accused of being a spy and arrested, etc.). All of us want to "mature and become more complete in Him," so we know we must respond correctly to these situations He has allowed to enter our lives. By God's grace, He has enabled us to persevere. For that we are grateful. We have also experienced joy in the midst of all these tests. Because "we know that we know" He directed us to Africa, we are confident that He is going to work all of this out for our good and His glory.

Perhaps you're going through a trying time now (If not, get ready! Trials are an inevitable part of the Christian's life, remember?). Our encouragement to you is to persevere.

Stick with it, endure, have "staying power," don't give up.

Allow God to take the tests you're going through to make you "more mature and more complete in Christ." Then in a few weeks, or months, or maybe years, you'll be able to look back, thank God that you appropriated His grace to persevere and then see how you have become more like Christ in a certain area of your life. "Consider it pure joy;" you are becoming more like **Him!**

pp. 1-2

(From African Bible College News: "Teaching the Treasures of God's Truth" by Steve & Cathy Sarrett. April 1993)

(You Can Make a Difference by Gary R. Collins)

Perseverance toward worthy goals pleases God. He expects perseverance, knows about it, and rewards it. Perseverance builds character, especially when we persevere in the midst of difficult conditions. Difference makers set goals and persevere in reaching them.

p. 97

(Laugh Again by Charles R. Swindoll)

I like the wry comment Barbara Johnson makes in her book, Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life:

The rain falls on the just and also on the unjust, but chiefly on the just,

Because the unjust steals the just's umbrella.

No problem . . . like I've been saying, it's a mad, bad, sad world. Even if you get wet doing it, keep reaching, and, for sure, keep laughing.

p. 171

(Bold Love by Dan B. Allender & Tremper Longman, III)

Frederick Buechner put it succinctly in his book The Magnificent Defeat, when he wrote, "The birth of righteousness and love in this stern world is always a virgin birth. It is never men nor the nations of men nor all the power and wisdom of men that bring it forth but always God."
p. 179

(Temptations Men Face by Tom L. Eisenman)

But when I drew my path up and around the mountain, I came to see my experience in a new light. I realized that each time I return to an area through which I have previously struggled I return at a higher level. God brings us back for a second and third pass because we have more to learn about how to manage that aspect of our lives. But we are moving steadily upward in our growth. We are making progress with God, and over time we will leave some of those crevices, cliffs and ledges behind for good and discover new challenges at the higher elevations.

The higher we climb, the more quickly we will circle the mountain. As we age, our growth accelerates. We face more and more difficulties and are compelled by life's circumstances to continue to reach more deeply into the resources of God. The final growth experience in our climb is, of course, physical death. Our growth will move ahead in quantum leaps as we meet and live through that final and deeply personal transition from this world to the next.
p. 47

(Success, Motivation, and the Scriptures by William H. Cook)

Faith is operative regardless.

When everything about us seems downright bleak. . .

When the heart is broken almost beyond repair

When others would point us in another direction

When needs are so gigantic as to be unreal

When it seems Satan's whole army is marching against us

When an inner voice says, "What's the use"

When the understanding is unbelievably weak

Faith goes right on.

Things don't change faith. Faith changes things. And the power of God is called on the scene.
p. 147

(Five Cries of Grief by Merton P. Strommen
& A. Irene Strommen)

The hardest lesson of all . . . [is] to accept what one cannot understand and still say, "God, thou art love. I build my faith on that."

--William Barclay

p. 67

(Descending into Greatness by Bill Hybels and Rob Wilkins)

Faith, if we are honest, sometimes seems like a candle in the rain, hissing for air. The more we try to see by this invisible light, the more we seem to stumble. Faith, we begin to feel, might work on another planet, one that contains less chaos and fewer broken dreams. It's not so much that we doubt God's power--we still get an occasional glance or two at a cloudless night sky. It's more a matter of how it works itself out in our lives, in our twenty-four-hour scrapes with reality. We want to believe, really believe, that God wants the best in our lives--His will. But right in the middle of our prayers for power to do it, the baby cries, the thunder claps, the fury breaks. Our good intentions are overwhelmed by complications.

p. 152

"No sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial ever disarm me, no circumstance will ever cause me to fret, for I shall rest in the joy of my Lord."

--from a plaque on Lorrie Shaver's bedroom wall

p. 163

WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?

But you, O man of God, . . . pursue righteousness,
godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

--1 Tim. 6:11

President George Bush has spoken of his desire for a "kinder, gentler nation," but some people are not getting the message. According to a survey by the Roper polling organization, many American men are failing to become kinder and gentler. At least that's the opinion of the women who were questioned.

When polls were taken in 1970, 67 percent of American women said that men were "basically kind, gentle, and thoughtful." But by 1990 the percentage, had dropped to 51 percent.

No matter how much or how little we may trust surveys, we can learn an important lesson from this negative perception about men in the U.S. It should remind us all--especially men--to be concerned about the kind of people we are. And if we call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, we have an added incentive to live as we should.

Jesus exemplified the way a real man should act--with great kindness, gentleness, and thoughtfulness. He was compassionate toward the sick (Mark 1:40-42), gentle to the spiritually needy (Matt. 11:28-30), kind to children (Mark 10:13-16) self-sacrificing to the spiritually lost (Mark 10:45), and thoughtful of the needs of others (John 19:25-27).

What kind of man are you?

--J.D.B.

A PERSONAL POLL

1. Whom do you know who is kind and gentle?
2. In what ways are you kind and gentle?
3. What can you do to become more like Christ?

**NOTHING IS SO STRONG AS GENTLENESS,
NOTHING SO GENTLE AS STRENGTH.** --St. Francis

(From Our Daily Bread, August 24)

DISCOVERING COLUMBUS

"As I stood at the mouth of the harbor in Spain from which Columbus led his three tiny ships, I found myself comparing the qualities of this man with the qualities of effective pastors."

The approach of the 500th anniversary of Columbus' momentous voyage has sparked renewed interest in the famous mariner. "Columbus bashing" may be in style, but the great explorer exemplifies several character qualities needed by today's pastors.

1. Faith. Abundant historical evidence points to the fact that Columbus was a devout man who prayed much and saw his explorations as divinely guided--not a bad example for an effective pastor to follow.

2. Persistence. It took years of trying before he ever got an audience with Queen Isabella. Preoccupied with the war against the Moors, she wasn't interested in Columbus' crazy idea of sailing west to get to the East. When he was finally granted a hearing, the queen referred the matter to a committee. After five years, they recommended the queen not supply money or ships because Columbus' plan was not feasible. Columbus refused to give up. A second committee considered his proposal for a year. They accepted his idea but deemed it too expensive. Columbus persisted until Isabella finally gave him what he wanted just to get rid of him! The way to respond to resistance is persistence.

3. Vision. We know now that Columbus had a clear picture and that those who held the flat-world theory had a distorted perspective, but in that day he was obviously going against what most people believed to be true. This must have caused him to doubt at times and to worry that maybe he and his men would fall off the edge of the earth. Vision may be fragile, but it is crucial for growing a church. It involves both seeing things in ways others cannot and taking risks others are not willing to take.

4. Leadership. Columbus' bold initiative was the beginning of two centuries of world exploration. Many would follow where he had led. Effective church leaders must similarly be ready to launch out toward a better tomorrow rather than passively maintaining the status quo.

"Discovering Columbus" by Win Arn. Growth Report, No. 36 [1992]. Page 1+.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

PERSISTENCE PAYS

A disheartened minister had been serving in a church for some time with seemingly little results. One night he had a dream in which he was trying to break a large granite rock with a pickax. Hour after hour he labored, but with no results. At last he said, "It's no use. I'm going to quit." Suddenly a man appeared by his side and asked, "Were you not appointed to this task? And if so, why are you going to abandon it?" "My work is in vain," said the minister. "I can make no impression on the granite." "That is not your concern; your duty is to keep at it," replied the stranger. "The work is yours." The pastor saw himself taking the ax in hand again, and at his first blow the granite flew into hundreds of pieces. When he awoke, a valuable lesson had been deeply impressed upon his heart.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

WALKING THROUGH DARKNESS

My earthly plans were made,
 I thought my path all clear;
 My heart with song o'erflowed,
 The world seemed full of cheer.
 My Lord I wished to serve,
 To take Him for my guide,
 To keep so close that I could
 Feel Him by my side;
 And so I traveled on.

But suddenly in skies
 So clear and full of light
 The clouds fell thick and fast,
 The days seemed changed to night;
 Instead of paths so clear
 And full of things so sweet,
 Rough things and thorns and stones
 Seemed all about my feet;
 I scarce could travel on.

I bowed my head and asked
 Why now this change should come,
 And murmured, "Lord, is this
 Because of what I've done?
 Has not the past been
 Full enough of pain and care?
 Why should my path again
 Be changed to dark from fair?"
 But still I traveled on.

I listened quietly,
 And then there came a voice--
 "This path is Mine, dear child,
 Not yours, I made the choice;
 'Tis sure this way will be
 The best for you and Me."
 And so we travel on!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The hymn writer has it correct in:

"Higher Ground"

I'm pressing on the upward way,
 New heights I'm gaining ev'ry day;
 Still praying as I'm onward bound,
 "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

My heart has no desire to stay
 Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
 Tho' some may dwell where these abound,
 My prayer, my aim is higher ground."

I want to live above the world,
 Tho' Satan's darts at me are hurled;
 For faith has caught the joyful sound,
 The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height
 And catch a gleam of glory bright;
 But still I'll pray till Heav'n I've found,
 "Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
 By faith, on Heaven's tableland,
 A higher plane that I have found;
 Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

(From The New Church Hymnal, 1976. Lexicon Music Co. #171)

v.12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

Whereas we have 2 PRESENT IMPERATIVES in verse 11,

we have 1 PRESENT IMPERATIVE and an AORIST IMPERATIVE here in this 12th verse.

We could translate "FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH" by saying:

KEEP ON FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH.

This is something that Timothy is already doing. He just needs to keep on and not give up or let up.

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

When we put these 3 PRESENT IMPERATIVES together, we have the apostle telling young Timothy to:

1. KEEP ON FLEEING
2. KEEP ON FOLLOWING AFTER
3. KEEP ON FIGHTING

The Greek word for "fight" here is taken from the athletic realm more than from the military realm.

It is the word agonizo. We get our own word AGONY from it. The word can mean:

- "struggle,"
- "agony,"
- "strain every nerve."

It was Jeanne Sutton who said:

We drench ourselves with the grace of exhaustion and the ecstasy of knowing we are worthy to receive it.

It is the runner who puts the last ounce of effort into the race who feels the glorious satisfaction of having given everything to the moment.

Paul tells Timothy to keep on fighting. Keep on hanging in there.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This is a language of athletic contest. Timothy was to give his best effort to this most worthwhile of struggles--the struggle to further the faith.

THE VALUE OF WORK

It has been wisely said, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

Charles Kingsley admonishes us, "Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being required to work and doing so to the best of your ability will breed in you self-control, diligence, contentment, and a hundred other virtues which the idle never know." Truly, these are words of wisdom!

Adam Clark is reported to have spent 40 years writing his commentary on the Scriptures. Noah Webster labored 36 years forming his dictionary; in fact, he crossed the ocean twice to gather material needed to make the book absolutely accurate. Milton rose at 4 o'clock every morning in order to have sufficient hours to compose and rewrite his poetry which stands among the best of the world's literature. Gibbon spent 26 years on his book The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, but it towers as a monument to careful research and untiring dedication to his task. Bryant rewrote one of his poetic masterpieces 100 times before publication, just to attain complete beauty and perfection of expression. These men enjoyed what they were doing, and each one threw all of his energy into his effort no matter how difficult the job.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

Hendriksen says:

The admonition, "Fight the noble fight of the faith; take hold of that everlasting life to which you were called," does not imply that Timothy was remiss or lax in carrying out his religious duties. Every believer needs this admonition every day. A timid nature like Timothy, confronted with determined and subtle opponents, is especially in need of it.
p. 204

Guthrie observes:

The command to fight (agonizo, 'to contend for a prize') is generally supposed to be an allusion to the Olympic Games and this seems supported by the cognate use of the noun agon. White thinks the expression had by now become stereotyped as an athletic metaphor, but Simpson claims that a military meaning is also present. Whether in contest or in conflict, the verb implies a disciplined struggle (Col. i. 29), and its tense shows that the striving is a continuous process.
p. 115

Colossians 1:29

And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Hiebert says:

The verb "fight" is in the present tense and indicates the continuity of the struggle in this life, while the verb "lay hold" is aorist and takes us to the last supreme moment of the contest when the prize is won.
p. 117

Lenski says:

"Fight the fight" in our versions alters the figure into a battle or a personal clash; it is taken from the athletic arena and refers to striving for a prize in an athletic event: "Keep on straining every muscle and nerve in the noble straining for the faith!" See this same figure amplified in II Tim. 4:7.
pp. 714-15

Barnes says:

As the crown of victory that is held out to you. Seize this as eagerly as the competitors at the Grecian games laid hold on the prize; . . .
p. 200

Lange says:

[This is a] repetition of the favorite image by which St. Paul is wont to describe the Christian life, and especially that of the minister of the Lord. Here, too, Timothy is not addressed merely as a man or as an Evangelist, but in both relations. This fight is called good, not only in regard of its moral excellence, but as a lofty and noble one.
pp. 72-73

J. Vernon McGee says:

"Fight the good fight of faith." This fight may be outward or inward, physical or spiritual.
"Lay hold on eternal life." Let me ask you a question: If you were arrested for being a Christian and were brought into court, would there be enough evidence to convict you? This is what Paul is talking about. "Lay hold on eternal life"--make it clear by your life that you are a child of God.
p. 456

William Bennett has written a book called The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children. He has been involved in both the Reagan and Bush administrations in the areas of education and drugs. In his book, he has a chapter called:

REFLECTIONS ON BEING IN THE FIGHT

Who am I? If you believe what I've been called in print, I am: a medieval knight jousting against an immoral world; Knight of the Right; the Reagan administration's principal breaker of crockery; a bull in a china shop; a black sheep; the Lone Ranger; a loose cannon; a Neanderthal; a bully with a pulpit instead of a leader in a bully pulpit; the man who put the bully back into the pulpit; the cowboy in the capital; a noisy ideologue; a motor-mouth; a pain in the neck; sexist; imperialist; bourgeois; ethnocentric; selfish; solipsistic; secretary of ignorance; secretary of private education; secretary smarty-pants; secretary of religion; heaven-sent to silence the heathen; an ayatollah; Bennett the Hun; propagandist and ideological gangster; an ideological samurai; a divisive fearmonger; elitist; populist; someone who rushes in where politicians fear to tread; a political pimp; a husky brawler; a walking rock and roll encyclopedia; philosopher and tough Irish cop; a pit bull with a brain; a tornado in a wheatfield; someone who combined the ideals of Erasmus with the tactics of an alley fighter; the Cabinet's resident Dennis the Menace.

During ten years in politics, I have been called a lot of things and I've been at the center of some political storms. But I have had a great time, and I have no large regrets.
p. 225

"KEEP ON FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH; TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH YOU WERE CALLED AND CONFESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION BEFORE MANY WITNESSES."

This is the 4TH COMMAND in these 2 verses.

This is in the AORIST TENSE and the other 3 are PRESENT TENSE.

We could translate this:

Get a grip on the eternal life to which you were called, and confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

Although the verb forms are a little different, the main root is the same when Paul speaks of these matters in:

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

"KEEP ON FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH; GET A GRIP ON THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH YOU WERE CALLED AND CONFESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION BEFORE MANY WITNESSES."

Timothy sensed the call when Paul preached in Lystra on the first missionary journey and probably the confession that is referred to here is the confession at his baptism.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It is the good confession before many witnesses by his baptism and by his words.

Romans 10:9, 10

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

(The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted W. Engstrom)

God's plea for stable and effective leadership is probably best epitomized by the prophet Ezekiel, who said, "I sought for a man . . . that should . . . stand in the gap" (Ezek. 22:30).
p. 35

Ezekiel 22:30

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

It is DAVID who makes the good confession in the valley of Elah. In speaking to SAUL, he says in:

1 Samuel 17:37

The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.

Saul then desired for David to wear his armor in the battle and David refused.

(Never Give Up by Don Hawkins)

. . . his refusal of Saul's armor and weaponry (I'm not into heavy metal--just smooth rock) . . . his stunning victory over Goliath, the champion of the mightiest army of the known world of his day, a man who would dwarf most NBA stars of our day.
pp. 134-35

1 Samuel 17:45-47

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

(Sky Edge by W. Phillip Keller)

There has to be that deep grounding of our lives in the very bedrock of Christ's character if we are to endure the blasts of adversity.

Christian leaders speak too easily, too glibly, too romantically of "getting onto higher ground with God." It is almost as if they are inviting their listeners to take a stroll into a summer rose garden.

To get onto a higher life with the Risen Christ demands great discipline from the disciple. It calls for separation from the world's soft and cozy associations. It means strong self-denial, standing alone in noble, lofty living. It entails suffering, sorrow, pain and the drastic endurance of adversity.

p. 84

(Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times
by Donald T. Phillips)

For example, when a delegation of politicians from the West invaded his office making excited demands, he simply shut them off by responding:

Gentlemen, suppose all the property you were worth was in gold and this you had placed in the hands of [one man] to carry across the Niagara River on a rope. Would you shake the cable and keep shouting at him: "Stand up a little straighter; stoop a little more, go a little faster, go a little slower, lean a little more to the south?" No, you would hold your breath, as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he got safely over.

The Government is carrying an enormous weight. Untold treasure is in their hands. Don't badger them. Keep silence and we will get you safely across.

pp. 90-91

(Laugh Again by Charles R. Swindoll)

Reminds me of a cartoon every mother of small children will appreciate. A little freckled-faced boy, five or six years old, is standing in his pajamas outside his parents' bedroom door--which is shut and locked. He looks like the type who would keep six or seven healthy adults jumping. The bottom of his pajamas is unsnapped, his diaper is bagging and soaked, his teddy bear has had its nose torn off and one button-eye is dangling, the other missing. He is staring at a sign, hanging from the doorknob, on which his mom has scribbled

CLOSED FOR BUSINESS!
MOTHERHOOD OUT OF ORDER

There are days I'm tempted to do the same on my study door. Only my sign would read something like:

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH!
MINISTER OUT [OF] ORDER
GONE RIDIN' ON MY HARLEY
BE BACK IN TWO DAYS--MAYBE

pp. 229-30

v.13 I am giving you a charge in the presence of God, who causes all things to live, and Christ Jesus, the one who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession;

Whereas verses 11 and 12 form the 1st parting exhortation to Timothy,

the 2nd one is given here in verses 13-16, the remaining verse in this passage.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Here is Paul's strongest, most solemn charge of all. His 2nd strongest is in 5:21.

5:21

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and the elect angels, that these things you are to guard without showing prejudice, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

"I AM GIVING YOU A CHARGE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, WHO IS CAUSING ALL THINGS TO LIVE."

Hiebert says:

Paul supplements the call to an aggressive Christian life with a solemn charge to Timothy.

The reading "who giveth life to all things" pictures God as the source of all life; it would remind Timothy that should he meet death for the sake of the Gospel God is able to raise him up in the resurrection of the just. But the reading suggested in the margin, "who preserveth all things alive," is better attested. It views God as the Preserver of all, able to preserve His servant faithful even unto death in a courageous defense of the Gospel.

p. 117

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Barnes confesses:

It is not quite clear why the apostle refers to this attribute of God as enforcing the charge which he here makes. Perhaps he means to say that God is the source of life, and that as he had given life to Timothy--natural and spiritual--he had a right to require that it should be employed in his service; and that, if in obedience to this charge and in the performance of his duties, he should be required to lay down his life, he should bear in remembrance that God had power to raise him up again. This is more distinctly urged in 2 Tim. ii 8-10.
pp. 200-1

2 Timothy 2:8-10

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.

Hendriksen says:

He presents two reasons why Timothy should do as he has just been told:

(1) Let him not fear for his life, for the charge is given and received under the very eyes of that God who is the Bestower and Preserver of life, the "life-generating" God.

(2) Let him remember what Christ Jesus did when he was testifying before an enemy of the truth. Before Pontius Pilate he stood firm, and, bearing witness before him by word and deed, thus made the beautiful confession, thereby proving himself to be "the faithful witness."
pp. 204-5

John 18:37

Pilate therefore said to Him, "So You are a king?"
 Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king.
 For this I have been born, and for this I have come into
 the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who
 is of the truth hears My voice."

(The Body by Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn)

Novelist Walker Percy must have had similar thoughts when he wrote his brilliant essay, "The Last Donahue Show," contained in his book entitled Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book.

In Percy's fantasy, Donahue's guest panel one day consists of Bill, a homosexual who engages in sex with strangers in a San Francisco park; Allen, a heterosexual, married businessman who is a "connoisseur of the lunch-hour liaison"; Penny, a pregnant fourteen-year-old; and Dr. Joyce Friday, a well-known talk-show sex therapist.

In the midst of the dialogue about sexual preferences, techniques, choices, and nuggets of secular wisdom from Dr. Friday, the show is suddenly interrupted by three odd-looking strangers striding down the aisle to the front. The first is a tall, bearded man dressed like a sixteenth-century Reformer; indeed, it is John Calvin. The second is a clean-shaven, chivalrous young man who turns out to be Colonel John Pelham, one of Civil War hero Jeb Stuart's gallant officers. The third is a nondescript, 1950s-style person looking a bit like Lowell Thomas or perhaps Harry Truman.

"Holy smoke! Who are these guys?" exclaims Donahue, smacking his head, pushing up his glasses, and swinging around with a comic pan of the audience. Bedlam eventually ensues as John Calvin pronounces that the abominations being discussed merit God's eternal damnation unless those who espouse them cast themselves upon God's mercy.

"Wait a minute, Reverend," says Donahue. "You're entitled to your religious beliefs. But what if others disagree with you . . . what's wrong with two consenting adults expressing their sexual preference in the privacy of their bedroom or, ah, under a bush?"

"Sexual preference?" responds Calvin.

Donahue quizzes Colonel Pelham, who expresses equal consternation and disdain for the hot topics the show has bandied about.

Then the 1950s person speaks, announcing to the puzzled audience that he is an alien who has assumed this shape so they can see him. The entire civilization the show represents is about to be destroyed by a mammoth nuclear device from beyond. He realizes that the idea of such sudden "judgment" will likely not be believed by the audience, lulled as it is by the titillation of the day. But for any who choose to believe the warning, he gives the site of one cave to which they can flee and be saved from the nuclear holocaust.

The essay ends with Donahue announcing that the show is out of time; tomorrow's segment will feature surrogate partners and a Kinsey panel. There is a cut to commercials.

Then a simple question for the reader: If you were in the studio audience, would you heed the cosmic stranger's call to judgment and retreat to the cave? Or would you ignore it?

That is precisely the question for our age . . . for all of those who scoff with disdain, "What is truth?" It is also at the root of the question that Pilate posed to the maddened crowd: "What then will you do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

pp. 181-82

v.14 to keep the principles stainless, above reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We now come to the content of Paul's charge to young Timothy here in verse 14. That CHARGE is:

"TO KEEP THE PRINCIPLES STAINLESS, ABOVE REPROACH UNTIL THE APPEARING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

It is believed by the words "THE PRINCIPLES" Paul made reference to the whole realm of the Christian life.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Verse 14 is the content of Paul's charge. Paul is referring to the entire body of sound teaching that he has been describing throughout the letter. Timothy, by his own godly life and by his faithful ministry, was to preserve this body of truth from stain or reproach.

Hiebert says:

This is the heart of the duty which Paul so solemnly lays upon Timothy. He is to "keep," that is, to preserve intact, "the commandment." The entire truth of the Gospel which he has confessed and which he has been commissioned to preach and to defend is here unified under the singular noun "commandment." It is his duty constantly to be preserving it as a priceless treasure, "without spot, without reproach." "He is to keep the commandment which is in itself spotless, and to keep it so as to expose it to no blame."
p. 118

Lange says:

Paul exhorts Timothy so to keep the law, that it may not be stained and open to reproach, as with the false teachers.
p. 73

J. Vernon McGee gives definition when he says:

"Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable" means to keep the commandments Paul had given him without stain and reproach. My friend, if you are following Christ, you will act like a child of God.
p. 456

(Principle-Centered Leadership by Stephen R. Covey)

The ethic of the principle-centered leader is expressed well in the following plea: "From the cowardice that is afraid of new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truth, from the arrogance that thinks it has all truth, O God of Truth deliver us."
p. 225

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks
by Steve Brown)

For instance, we advertise great power and don't deliver. Jesus delivered great power and never advertised. I once saw a sign in a store that read, "All of the items on display here are not in stock." Unfortunately, that describes our lives far too often. When people find out we're Christians, they have a right to expect certain things. When they don't find them, they file it under false advertising, and rightfully so.
p. 77

(The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted W. Engstrom)

Sometime ago when I was in South Africa, I was a guest one day at the home of Gary Player, the professional champion golfer. He is an exemplary Christian, having come to a knowledge of Christ through the ministry of Billy Graham. In his home near Johannesburg, South Africa, there hangs a plaque that says, "God loathes mediocrity. He says, 'If you're going to keep company with me, don't embarrass me.'" I like that. God does loathe mediocrity.
p. 200

(Who You Are When No One's Looking by Bill Hybels)

At the beginning of every semester, professors say, "On such-and-such a date, your term paper will be due." But it is easy to get sidetracked with different activities, and when the due date is tomorrow, you suddenly realize that your paper is not ready. You go to the teacher's office and say, "Prof, you wouldn't believe what happened to me. My Aunt Ethel took ill, the library lost the one reference book I most needed and the dog ate the final draft of my paper right after I pulled it out of the typewriter." You say anything but the truth, hoping the professor will be merciful and give you a break.

Probably very few of you ever walked into the professor's office and said, "You made an assignment several months ago. It was fair, and I understood it clearly. Unfortunately, I played too many hands of cards and too much racquetball. I neglected to do what I should have done. I was undisciplined, and I procrastinated. Now I don't have the assignment done. I make no excuses; it was my fault. Do whatever you think is right." Why don't people operate that way? Because it is painful to own up to the truth about our behavior. It takes courage.
p. 15

Timothy, my charge to you is:

"TO KEEP THE PRINCIPLES STAINLESS, ABOVE REPROACH,"

and keep on doing this:

"UNTIL THE APPEARING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Titus 2:12, 13

instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

2 Timothy 1:10

but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

2 Timothy 4:1

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Timothy 4:8

in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Then and only then will the struggle be over.

The hymn writer says:

When all my labors and trials are o'er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

O that will be glory for me,
Glory for me, glory for me;
When by His grace I shall look on His face,
That will be glory, be glory for me.

(From The New Church Hymnal, 1976. Lexicon Music Co. #484)

(The Heart of Godly Leadership by Hudson T. Armerding)

In the closing years of his life, therefore, Peter had come to some settled convictions. He would not allow Satan to take advantage of him but would resist him, being steadfast in the faith. He would not permit his fleshly desires to get out of hand and cause his testimony to be compromised, but would keep his body disciplined under the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit. He would not have his behavior influenced by others, but would take his stand and be willing to suffer for Jesus' sake. To me, these are clear indications of spiritual growth.

The Christian leader should carefully examine himself to identify those characteristics in his life that may be interfering with an uncompromising devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he should be ready to learn from the circumstances through which the Lord might put him. Thereafter he should continue to grow in perception and in understanding so that as he comes to the close of life he may be able out of the richness and fullness of experience and conviction to say to others as Peter did in the last verse of his second epistle, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. . . ."

pp. 192-93

Timothy, you are to:

WATCH OVER,

GUARD,

KEEP

"the principles":

STAINLESS,

SPOTLESS,

WITHOUT BLEMISH,

and ABOVE REPROACH.

1 Peter 1:19

but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

James 1:27

This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

The words "ABOVE REPROACH" have occurred earlier in the epistle in the QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDERS in:

1 Timothy 3:2

It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach (give no grounds for accusation), one wife's husband, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,

It also occurs in the context of WIDOWS in:

1 Timothy 5:7

And these things be commanding in order that they may be above reproach.

Timothy, keep on:

FLEEING,

FOLLOWING,

FIGHTING,

and watch over and guard the principles to keep them
stainless and above reproach until the appearing of our Lord
Jesus Christ.

A SIGN OF LEADERSHIP

O Lord God . . . Here we are before You, in our guilt.
--Ezra 9:15

Two rival high school basketball teams were going at it fast and furious. Late in the first half, a guard for one team stole the ball and headed for an easy layup. But before he could shoot, an opponent caught him and sent him crashing to the floor.

For some reason, the referee failed to call this flagrant foul. But the coach of the offending player noticed, and he pulled him out, put his arm around him, and told him that kind of play is unacceptable.

Leadership like that is rare. It takes a person of courage to stand up in a crowd and admit that there's wrongdoing on his side and then take steps to correct it.

Ezra was that kind of leader. When he was told, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves" (9:1), he reacted with deep sorrow. He confronted the wrong and identified with the people, confessing the sin. "O my God," he said as he fell on his knees before the Lord, "I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; . . . our guilt has grown up to the heavens" (v. 6).

Are you looking for someone you can follow with confidence? Look for leaders who will take responsibility even in a bad situation.
--JDB

They lead the best who dare to lead
Where others fear to tread;
They do not cover up their faults
But right their wrongs instead.
--Anon.

**A GOOD LEADER KNOWS THE WAY,
SHOWS THE WAY, AND GOES THE WAY.**

(From Our Daily Bread, May 5)

v.15 which in His own time He shall show forth--the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of those who are reigning as kings and Lord of those who are ruling as lords;

Hiebert says:

This thought draws out of Paul a doxology of praise to the Father. It contains a sevenfold description of God. 1) "The blessed and only Potentate" points to the character and the universal authority of Him who will bring back Christ in open glory. "The first epithet describes the perfection of bliss enjoyed by the First Person of the Trinity; the second, the uniqueness and absoluteness of His power." 2 and 3) "The King of kings, and Lord of lords" is descriptive of His sovereign authority and rule. He is King over all those acting as kings, and Lord over all those acting as lords over others. 4) "Who only hath immortality," that is, immortality as an essential, underived attribute. The word here rendered "immortality" is literally "deathlessness" and speaks of His absolute deathless existence. The adjective in 1:17 translated "immortal" comes from a different word which means "not liable to corruption or decay." His deathless, unchanging existence precludes any decay, corruption, or degeneration in His being. 5) "Dwelling in light unapproachable" speaks of the inaccessibility of God to human senses. He dwells in an atmosphere too glorious for mortal creatures to approach. 6 and 7) The relative clauses, "whom no man hath seen, nor can see" emphasize the essential nature of God as invisible. Finite man never has seen God in His eternal essence, nor can he do so.
p. 119

Barnes says:

The idea here is, that all the sovereigns of the earth are under his sway; that none of them can prevent the accomplishment of his purposes; and that he can direct the winding up of human affairs when he pleases.
p. 202

"WHICH IN HIS OWN TIME" reminds us of:

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

1 Timothy 2:6

who gave himself a ransom on behalf of all, which was to be attested to (the testimony) in its due seasons (at the right time).

Titus 1:3

but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior;

Galatians 6:9

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Early in his ministry, Paul was convinced that Christ would return soon. Now, near the end of his ministry, he showed both an awareness that Christ might not return before he died and a desire to encourage Timothy to leave the timing of this great event up to the Lord.

"WHICH IN HIS OWN TIME HE SHALL SHOW FORTH--THE BLESSED AND ONLY SOVEREIGN, THE KING OF THOSE WHO ARE REIGNING AS KINGS AND LORD OF THOSE WHO ARE RULING AS LORDS."

Make no mistake about it. Jesus Christ is the Supreme Sovereign.

Revelation 17:14

These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.

Revelation 19:16

And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(Jumping Hurdles, Hitting Glitches, Overcoming Setbacks
by Steve Brown)

On the night of Lincoln's death, a crowd of fifty thousand people gathered in front of the Exchange Building in New York City. Emotions were running high, and people were worried. In fact, there was a good chance that the crowd would become a mob and violence would erupt. Then a man in an officer's uniform stepped out on the building's balcony. His voice, clear and sharp, cut through the babble of the crowd: "Fellow citizens! Clouds and darkness are round about Him. His pavilion is dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. Justice and judgment are the establishment of His throne. Mercy and truth go before His face. Fellow citizens, God reigns and the government in Washington still lives." Instantly, the crowd was stilled. That man's name was James A. Garfield. Years later, he became President of the United States, and he, too, was assassinated.
pp. 50-51

v.16 Who alone is having immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has ever seen nor is able to see, to whom be honor and power forever, Amen.

In verse 15 the focus is on the SON, our Savior,
and in verse 16 the focus is on the FATHER.

There are 3 THINGS that are said about the Father here:

1. IMMORTALITY,
2. INSCRUTABILITY (inhabiting light, unapproachable),
3. INVISIBILITY.

He is distinct from all other kings because He is having immortality. All the other kings die.

Isaiah 6:1

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

J. Vernon McGee points out:

Jesus Christ is the only One who has been raised from the dead in a glorified body.
p. 456

It is this same God who has immortality, who raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead.

John 11:25, 26

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

"WHO ALONE IS HAVING IMMORTALITY, DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT,"

This word translated "UNAPPROACHABLE" is only here in the New Testament.

Paul is very much aware of this great light because he was struck down by it on the road to Damascus at the point of his own conversion.

John 1:18

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Here in verse 16 Paul says of the Father:

- 1."WHO ALONE IS HAVING IMMORTALITY,"
- 2.HE IS "DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT,"
- 3."WHOM NO MAN HAS EVER SEEN NOR IS ABLE TO SEE."

1 Timothy 1:17

Now to the king of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul concludes his doxology by saying:

"TO WHOM BE HONOR AND POWER FOREVER, AMEN."

Hendriksen says:

The devout contemplation of this majestic Being, who has wonderful blessings in store for his children, leads to the climax, "to whom be honor and strength eternal. Amen." Truly, such a God is worthy of all honor, reverence, esteem, adoration. He is also worthy of eternal strength, that is, power manifested in action, to the discomfiture of his enemies and to the salvation of his people.
p. 208

Guy King says:

. . . such are His never ending prerogatives; but, even now, we believers recognise that all the power we need, for all we ought to think, and say, and do, and be, comes from Him, and therefore, that for whatever be accomplished for us, in us, or through us, all the honour should be given to Him--just as Paul himself, in speaking of his marvellous conversion, says, "They glorified God in me."
p. 126

(The Existence and Attributes of God by Stephen Charnock)

It follows, then, that the power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he please, whatsoever his infinite wisdom can direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of his will can resolve.
p. 364

His will orders, his wisdom guides, and his power effects.
p. 365

God is wanting in nothing; neither in wisdom to design, nor in will to determine, nor in power to accomplish.
p. 391

CROWN HIM LORD OF ALL

A few years ago, Jack Eckerd, founder of the Eckerd drugstore chain, committed his life to Christ. Shortly afterward as he walked through one of his stores, he noticed the magazine racks with their glossy copies of Playboy and Penthouse. Although Eckerd was retired from active management, he called the president of the company and urged him to get rid of those pornographic magazines. The president protested because substantial profits were gained from their sales. Being the largest stockholder, Eckerd himself stood to lose a lot of money by such a decision. But he remained firm in his objection, and he prevailed. The offensive magazines were removed from all 1700 drugstores. When he was asked what motivated him to take this action, Eckerd replied, "God wouldn't let me off the hook!"

When the apostle Paul surrendered his life to Christ, his first response was a question that would govern his decisions for the rest of his days. He asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" So too, we must seek an answer to that penetrating question--whether in the home, in business, in school, in the community, or in politics.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: There are things that we ought to be constantly fleeing in our lives.

LESSON #2: There are 6 things we ought to be constantly following: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness.

LESSON #3: We need to keep on fighting the good fight of faith.

LESSON #4: It delights the heart of God when He sees His children persevering.

LESSON #5: Perseverance is the price of leadership.

LESSON #6: Let your life and your lip give a good confession for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LESSON #7: Timothy is charged to keep the principles stainless and above reproach until the coming of Christ.

LESSON #8: Jesus Christ is going to come in His own time.

LESSON #9: The Savior is the Supreme Sovereign.

LESSON #10: Immortality, inscrutability, and invisibility characterize the Father.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHANGE

"If you desire to change, and if you are using personal strength to get it done, you will never have enough courage and perseverance to accomplish lasting change."

Even though making positive changes in our personal lives often brings great benefit, very few of us are capable of pulling it off. Radical change is not merely hard to do; it is downright improbable without wholehearted effort. We all face three obstacles to change.

1. Pain. Nobody enjoys pain, and we go to almost any lengths to avoid something that hurts. Yet the process of change always involves pain. So we resist changing. We're willing to put up with a predictable level of ongoing emotional misery instead of going through more intense pain temporarily in order to get beyond a problem. It takes courage to choose to deliberately subject ourselves to pain.

2. Perseverance. As hard as it is to begin making a change, it is even harder to persist and stay with the process to its completion. We lack the stamina to continue the daily struggle of staying on the straight and narrow. We tend to desire beneficial changes in our lives, but we want them to come quickly and painlessly. Resolve that lasts only a few days or weeks isn't enough.

3. Powerlessness. Trying to change by your own will power--the way our culture approaches self-improvement--never succeeds in producing deep, lasting change. The old "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" approach is like trying to get enough energy out of a AA battery to fly a 747. To tackle fundamental personal and life pattern problems we need to plug into the only power source that can bring permanent change: God. We need His power to change, but He needs our cooperation. Without God we can't change, but He "can't" change us unless we submit our wills.

The starting place is to honestly admit your failures and weakness to God. It is easier to listen to the humanistic hogwash that "You can do it!" than it is to be broken and humbled before the Almighty. Merely accepting God as your power source while insisting that He change you on your own terms will not work. If you admit your inability to change yourself, God will supply strength and encouragement through His Word, His people, and His Spirit.

Studying the Bible "academically" doesn't help, but allowing the Scriptures to penetrate your shell and break down your defenses will facilitate change. God will bring other Christians into your life to affirm and to challenge you. The Holy Spirit Himself will support you and intercede on your behalf.

It is discouraging to realize that change is so difficult, that self-reliance can't cut it, and that we must be broken, but the balancing truth is that God loves us deeply, wants to forgive us, and makes His power available to change us into what He wants us to be.

"The truth about change" by Chris Thurman. Today's Better Life, Sum 1992. Pages 38-41.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(When You Can't Come Back by Dave & Jan Dravecky with Ken Gire)

God had stood by me so miraculously in my comeback from cancer, but now he seemed to be withdrawing. What was he doing?

C. S. Lewis once said that God wants his children to learn to walk and must therefore take away his hand.

I don't know why I was so blind to that at the time. When raising our two children, Jan and I did the same thing.

I remember Tiffany and Jonathan, still in diapers and clinging to our hands, trying to steady themselves on their feeble legs. To teach them to walk we would gradually have to withdraw our hand. Time after time they plopped down on their Pampers. But gradually they took a step on their own. Then two. Before long they were walking. Tentatively at first, but they were walking. They got a lot of bumps and bruises during that time, but they learned to walk. I wish I had read Lewis at the time. The rest of the quote would have brought me a lot of comfort: "And if only the will to walk is there He is pleased with their stumbles."

That God could be pleased with my stumbles was so foreign to my mentality as a major league pitcher. If you stumbled on the mound, it resulted in either a balk or a stolen base. Every error you committed went against your record. Every batter you walked sent your manager looking off toward the bull pen for a replacement.

"And if only the will to walk is there He is pleased with their stumbles."

Could he be pleased with me even though I couldn't perform? Even though I stumbled? Could God really love me like that?

pp. 48-49

(The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted W. Engstrom)

Sometime ago I came across an uncopyrighted pamphlet that included the following statement.

THE WORLD NEEDS MEN . . .

who cannot be bought;
 whose word is their bond;
 who put character above wealth;
 who possess opinions and a will;
 who are larger than their vocations;
 who do not hesitate to take chances;
 who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;
 who will be as honest in small things as in great things;
 who will make no compromise with wrong;
 whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish
 desires;
 who will not say they do it "because everybody else does
 it";
 who are true to their friends through good report and evil
 report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;
 who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning and hard-
 headedness are the best qualities for winning
 success;
 who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it
 is unpopular, who can say "no" with emphasis,
 although all the rest of the world says "yes."
 p. 120

(Who You Are When No One's Looking by Bill Hybels)

Or perhaps you have walked with God for many years and are tired of struggling, tired of trying to conform your life to Christ's, and tired of the responsibility and the pain of leadership. How attractive it looks to slip back into automatic pilot and become a spectator instead of a leader or a servant. But do you really want to cash in the influence you have on other people's lives, the opportunities you have to serve for God's glory?
 p. 54

(The Heart of Godly Leadership by Hudson T. Armerding)

Several years ago a dear friend and beloved colleague in Christian higher education, Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin, composed a prayer. I shared this with the student body of Wheaton College just before I left office, and I think it fitting to include it here. I trust you will find this as meaningful as I did and as I continue to do. Perhaps the answer to this prayer will enable us to inscribe over our lives what the great composer Bach put on the music he created: Soli Deo Gloria (only for the glory of God).

Let Me Get Home Before Dark

It's sundown, Lord.
The shadows of my life stretch back
into the dimness of the years long spent.
I fear not death, for the grim foe betrays himself at
thrusting me forever into life:
Life with you, unsoiled and free.

But I do fear.
I fear that dark spectre may come too soon--
or do I mean, too late?
That I should end before I finish or
finish, but not well.
That I should stain your honor, shame your name,
grieve your loving heart.
Few, they tell me, finish well . . .
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The darkness of a spirit
grown mean and small, fruit shriveled on the vine,
bitter to the taste of my companions,
burden to be borne by those brave few who love me
No, Lord. Let the fruit grow lush and sweet,
A joy to all who taste;
Spirit-sign of God at work,
stronger, fuller, brighter at the end.
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The darkness of tattered gifts,
rust-locked, half-spent or ill-spent,
A life that once was used of God
now set aside.
Grief for glories gone or
Fretting for a task God never gave.
Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory;
Gazing on the faded banners of victories long gone.
Cannot I run well into the end?
Lord, let me get home before dark.

The outer me decays--
 I do not fret or ask reprieve.
 The ebbing strength but weans me from mother earth
 and grows me up for heaven.
 I do not cling to shadows cast by immortality.
 I do not patch the scaffold tent to build the real,
 I do not clutch about me my cocoon,
 vainly struggling to hold hostage
 a free spirit pressing to be born.

But will I reach the gate
 in lingering pain, body distorted, grotesque?
 Or will it be a mind
 wandering untethered among light phantasies or grim
 Of your grace, Father, I humbly ask . . .
 Let me get home before dark.

pp. 205-7

STUDY #15 - 1 Timothy 6:11-16

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: There are things that we ought to be constantly fleeing in our lives.

LESSON #2: There are 6 things we ought to be constantly following: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, gentleness.

LESSON #3: We need to keep on fighting the good fight of faith.

LESSON #4: It delights the heart of God when He sees His children persevering.

LESSON #5: Perseverance is the price of leadership.

LESSON #6: Let your life and your lip give a good confession for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LESSON #7: Timothy is charged to keep the principles stainless and above reproach until the coming of Christ.

LESSON #8: Jesus Christ is going to come in His own time.

LESSON #9: The Savior is the Supreme Sovereign.

LESSON #10: Immortality, inscrutability, and invisibility characterize the Father.