

Christian Contentment

by Mark Turner

True contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not wealth in our hands.

Duration: 55:43

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:3

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of fleeing from certain things and pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. He uses the example of Joseph fleeing from temptation as a mark of wisdom and victory. The preacher also highlights the danger of being consumed by material possessions and the need to be content with the basic necessities of life. He encourages the congregation to focus on the eternal rather than the temporal and to value relationships and compassion for others. The sermon references Bible verses such as 1 Timothy 6:11 and 1 Timothy 6:8 to support these teachings.

Transcript

How refreshing to be in worship this morning. Amen? Open your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6 if you would. 1 Timothy chapter 6. We're looking at verses 3 through 12 today.

If you want to read along with me. 1 Timothy 6.3 The Apostle Paul is speaking to Timothy, young Pastor Timothy. And Paul said here, If anyone teaches otherwise, and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and are certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and clothing with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But you, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness and godliness and faith, love, patience and gentleness, and fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, to which you are also called, and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for this time to be in your word. Teach us, instruct us, encourage us, exhort us. And again, we thank you that your word is a lamp unto our feet, and it is a light unto our path.

And thank you that it's the sword of the spirit. It's the discerner of the thoughts and intents of our heart, Lord. And we thank you that it was written to us personally, your love letter to us.

Thank you so much. We love you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now Paul had opened this letter with a warning to young pastor Timothy. And I do appreciate Paul as an older man in the Lord, writing an encouraging letter to Timothy. You can imagine how Timothy felt when he received this incredible encouragement from Paul.

And Paul had such a heart for Timothy, his son in the faith, that he had led to Christ, helped nurture in Christ. But he opened the letter really with a warning, urging Timothy to charge and really to command the false teachers in the local churches to stop teaching false doctrine, to cease and desist from teaching doctrine that did not line up with the true gospel of Jesus Christ, that did not line up with the apostolic teaching. And really there's nothing more dangerous to Christian contentment and unity in the church today than troubling the calm waters of the spirit and the sound teaching of the word of God with false teaching and with false doctrine.

This Timothy had not only to be aware of, but he was also to expose it and also to rebuke it. These false teachers had infiltrated the churches and they were acting like, you've heard the expression, like wolves in sheep's clothing. Wolves in sheep's clothing, that's what was going on here.

They were fleecing the flock, you've heard that term before. They were really using their religious profession as a means to make money off of the people. And they were really kind of running a religious business, not truly ministering to the needs of the people, but more concerned with how they could pad their own wallets.

Really this was an ongoing problem with the leaders that went all the way back to the time of the prophet Ezekiel who warned the irresponsible leaders of Israel in chapter 34, woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed, not fleece the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with wool. You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock.

The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who are sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost. Now that was Jesus' own ministry, wasn't it? As the good shepherd and as the great shepherd, to seek and to save that which was lost, not to rip people off. But this the false prophets and teachers were doing.

They were ripping off not only the people's joy, but they were ripping off their resources as well. Jesus said in Matthew 7, 15, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Jesus also said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23, the woe chapter, woe to you hypocrites, you pretenders, you phonies.

For you devour widows' houses, you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you're full of extortion and self-indulgence. So instead of loving the people, they were lording over the people and making money off of the people, oftentimes. Now not only do false teachers refuse to adhere to sound doctrine, but they're full of pride, 1 Timothy 6, 4 tells us.

Instead of being humble, a false teacher is often proud and conceited, and that's a danger to look for. When you see pride and conceit in someone who's teaching up in the pulpit, that can be a very dangerous thing. There needs to be the fragrance of humility coming from those who would stand in the pulpit and tremble before the Lord, knowing that it's God working in them and through them and nothing in and of themselves.

And this was a problem with the false teachers, pride and conceit. And Paul's telling Timothy here that really, that's showing that they really know nothing, but they're obsessed with disputes and arguments, literally with word battles. The false teacher obsesses over terminology and information and maybe lots of head knowledge, but they have a heart that's far from God.

As Jesus warned, you prophesy with your lips, but your heart is far from me. All this will lead those who are being swayed by this false teaching into envy and strife and reviling and evil suspicions and useless wranglings, and that's better translated there, constant friction, verse 5 says, constant friction. It's sad, but still true today, that sometimes the reason why a particular church seems to be in constant friction is because of the upheaval and the undermining that the false teachers are bringing with these teachings.

The reason could be gossip, it could be immorality, but oftentimes it's due to false teaching as well. You know, all it takes is for one half-truth or a lie to worm its way into the church, and it could be the death blow to that fellowship, right? One half-truth, one lie. I know the church that Pastor Pat and I came from up in Walnut started off as a wonderful church, started off with just a few folks, ended up with about 5,000 people, maybe more, and the pastor went up to northern California, met some Christian counselors, and got caught up in the primal scream therapy movement and got convinced that it was the right thing to do to take his staff and some of the people in the church through the primal scream under hypnosis to bring them back to their birth event and just scream it all out, and that would take care of all your problems.

And it got so bad that people in the church were standing up in the congregation rebuking the pastor during his teachings, and Pastor Pat and I had come down here to Escondido, right, when everything broke loose and hit the fan, but it didn't take long for that man to get off into something false and error, ruin the church. He lost his wife through divorce. His son died tragically.

It was just a horrible set of events, and it was due to the false teaching, a lot of it, that he willingly brought into the church as he was deceived. Many churches in our own area have fallen due to self-seeking false teachers as well here in North County, and Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, verse 30 that also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking misleading things to draw away disciples after themselves. Therefore watch.

Watch out for their methods, for often behind their methods are their motives, and often their motives are for, not all the time, but a lot of the times it's for money. So don't discard your minds from them. Guard your wallets as well.

Verse 5 goes on to clearly expose one of these primary dangerous motives that we're talking about. Supposing, supposing that godliness is a means of gain. Literally, it says that they were teaching that

godliness was a way of financial gain.

Hey, you know, I can pretend to be outwardly godly and know the Bible and then mix in some error with truth and voila, I can get an audience, I can get their trust, start receiving offerings, get a big following, and then fund oftentimes a lavish and outrageous lifestyle for myself. Sound familiar? So almost always behind the efforts of the hypocritical lying false teachers of Paul and Timothy's day, and really our day, is the driving motivation for monetary gain. Why? Why is that? Because unfortunately the false teachers have learned over the years that God's people are often very gullible.

That many believers do not first check out their teaching against the word of God. It's often carte blanche Christianity for the undiscerning believer. We are to come and hear anyone who teaches the Bible with a discerning heart, not just with an open mind though, right? We're to be like the Bereans of Acts chapter 17 who searched the scriptures daily to find out whether Paul and Silas brought the truth or not.

You've heard the term sola scriptura. In the Latin it means scripture only. Let the scriptures interpret the scriptures, especially in the area of money.

Check it out before you write a check out. Amen? The Apostle Peter also warned the church of his day by giving them an example of this in the Old Testament. In 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 15, in speaking of the depravity of false teachers, Peter said, they have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages, the wages of unrighteousness.

Remember Balaam, Old Testament prophet, a compromiser, a compromiser. He was really for sale. He had a sign on him, I am for sale, for sale to whomever would pay me.

And really he preferred wealth and popularity over obedience to the Lord. That was his problem. Of course the Lord rebuked him through a talking donkey, right? From cursing Israel.

I wonder how many pastors of the churches today would reconsider and rework their messages if they knew a donkey was going to be sitting in the front row. But going back to 1 Timothy 6.5, Paul warned young Timothy not to fall into this trap as Balaam, but what did he say there to Timothy? Withdraw yourself from them. There is a time to withdraw yourself.

It's biblical and righteous to do. Because these men were not coveting God's glory, they were not after the sign of the cross, but instead they were glorying in their lust, and they were glorying in the dollar sign, not the sign of the cross. Paul also warned the church of these men in Philippians 3.18 where he said, For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, listen carefully, who set their mind on earthly things.

That equates to covetousness. Covetousness is a huge danger to any and every Christian today, whether you're a minister or not. The lustful desire to have more than God gives us to meet our daily needs, to delight after something in a lustful way often at the expense of others.

Covetousness, it really destroys Christian contentment. Now, the 10th commandment is what in Exodus 20.17? Anybody know what the 10th commandment is? It's about covetousness. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's. Translation to us in 2004, don't lust after what your neighbor has, whether it be his house, whether it be his wife, or anything he may have, his Mercedes, his boat, his high-priced mate, his overpriced dog, his giant-screen plasma TV, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Remembering the thoughts and desires of our heart, do not escape the attention of God.

You may appear outwardly that you're not longing for these things, but inwardly you are, and God sees it. God knows all. God sees all.

You can't hide a thing from the Lord. He knows if you're hiding covetousness in your heart. If you're longing for them inwardly, he sees that.

It's wrong, and it's sin. But verse 6 of 1 Timothy 6 tells us the proper and pleasing attitude to God that we're to have instead. What does verse 6 say? Now, godliness with contentment is what? That is great gain.

Godliness with contentment. Now, the Greek word for contentment here means an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of our outward circumstances. An inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of our outward circumstances.

A person who is unflappable and unmoved by his or her external circumstances. So, what application is Paul giving to young Timothy here? Be satisfied and be sufficient in the Lord. Don't seek for more than what God has already given you, Timothy.

That God and God alone must be your source of true contentment. That I would be content. That I would be joyful.

That I would be happy, satisfied and fulfilled with my relationship with God alone. It's not the things that God gives me that fulfill me. But it is God himself and my love for him and his love for me that is what truly satisfies me.

As King David prayed, I love this verse. As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul longs after you. As that deer knows it needs to drink from the water and the stream to keep it alive and to nourish it, so the Christian comes regularly into God's presence to nourish himself there and to keep his walk alive and living with his living Lord.

Where David said, in your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. That's where contentment is found. It's by spending time with the one who loves you and died for you.

That's where true contentment is found. So, wealth does not bring contentment. That's what Paul is trying to tell Timothy here.

Wealth does not bring contentment. It's a huge lie being perpetrated by the media today and the mastermind behind much of our media today who is the devil himself. True contentment comes from godliness in the heart, not wealth in our hands.

True contentment comes when I can look in the mirror in the morning and see that I have grown more in Christ-likeness than the day before. We all have to look in the mirror every day, whether we like to or not, but what are we seeing? But more importantly, who are we seeing? Are we seeing the Lord, the fruit of

Christ in our life? We should be content with that. Paul also said in Philippians 4.11, For I have learned in whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content.

I know how to be abased, or to live humbly, and I know how to abound, or to live in prosperity. Paul knew both ends of the spectrum. But he went on to say, Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need, but I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

Now, another danger to Christian contentment is that wealth is not lasting either. Let's read verse 7. For we brought nothing into this world, and as certain we can carry nothing out. Let me ask you a question.

What did you bring with you when you came into this world? Clothes, a car, a bank account? No. We brought nothing in with us. Nothing.

And Paul reminds us, we're going out of this world. What we came in with? Nothing. And whatever we amass while we're here is going to go to someone else anyways, right? So, our children, our heirs, the government, the church.

Give it to the church before you give it to the government. We're going to leave it all behind, right? Left behind, the true story. So, we're really called to be a good steward over the things that God gives us, the things we accumulate.

But we're not to get too attached to them. That's the danger. The danger of attachment.

Keep a loose grip on the material things of this life. And store up your treasures where? Store them up in heaven, Jesus said. Where what? Where moth and rust do not corrupt.

Where thieves do not break in and steal. That sounds and looks like my neighborhood lately. Lots of rusty cars and stolen tools.

I keep telling my neighbors, keep your garage door shut at night. They complain that they're getting ripped off all the time. Well, shut your garage door.

But that shiny car that you have, that you wash and you wax, and then of course it rains this weekend. It's just going to fade in time. And you can't take it to heaven with you.

Be a good steward over it, but don't be possessed by it. Don't be consumed by it. Be a good steward with it.

And maybe someone else has more need of it than you. Are you willing to give it away? Boy, that's a real test, isn't it? If possessions possess you, that's a test. Are you willing to give it away at any given time? Yes, Lord, it's yours.

Or it's yours, brother. Or it's yours, sister. God bless you with that.

Jesus also said in Luke 12, 15, that one's life does not consist in what? In the abundance of the things he possesses. So really, money and material things start getting dangerous when we begin to use the word what? Mine. Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine.

It's mine. Get away. You know, we take too much ownership over things sometimes, and really, God owns it all, doesn't he? He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and he owns everything that we have.

We need to remember that. We're just the stewards. We're not the owners.

That's what can really trap us. To illustrate that wealth is not lasting, Pastor E.V. Hill was invited to speak in a suburban church of a large city in the South. In the introduction to his message, Pastor Hill commented on the difference between the affluent suburb and the poor urban area where he ministered.

I know what's missing, he said. You folks don't have any graffiti anywhere. I'd like to volunteer to provide some for you.

I'll get a bucket of paint and walk through your neighborhood writing this one word on your million dollar homes and expensive European cars. Temporary. That's it.

Temporary. None of it will last. Good illustration.

Maybe we need some paint brushes and paint buckets after church today and we need to paint that on some of the things that we have. Temporal. It's going to be here one minute and gone the next.

Don't get too attached to it. Get attached to the Lord, right? Detach from things and attach yourself more to Him. That's the key.

We enjoy and we take care of what we have, right? And that's as it should be. But Jesus said we shouldn't be, again, possessed by our possessions because they won't last into eternity. A house is just a box, isn't it, in which to stay warm and dry.

A car is a way to get us from one place to another, usually. And since we can't take them again with us when we die, we're far better off to view them as Jesus did. And again, that's as temporary.

Remembering that the temporal can be the enemy of the eternal, can't it? The temporal can be the enemy of the eternal if you're not careful. Materialism is really sucking the life out of many a Christian today, especially here in affluent Southern California. We really need to be on guard to keep up with the Jones mentality.

We've really got to be on guard that, no, Lord, that's not what you've called me to do. Help me to be content with what you've given me. And be ready to give it away if necessary, remembering that all is temporal, Lord.

Keep my mind on the eternal as I live in the temporal. Verse 8. Here's a good verse. In having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

How many of you today are content with food and clothing? Okay, a few of you. That's a start. What's Paul saying here? The basic necessities of life are what ought to make the Christian content.

Thank you, Lord, for the food you've provided for us at this dinner table tonight. We as a family are thankful and content with it. It may not be steak and lobster, but instead soup and crackers, but it will meet our need of hunger tonight.

Thank you, Lord, for the new shirt. I was able to buy at Target today. Yes, Lord, it is not from Macy's or Bloomingdale's, but it will meet my need for warmth and covering today.

Our basic needs. These are what God has promised to meet and provide for us. Not what we think we need, but what God thinks we need.

Big difference, right? You may think you have need of a new Suburban, but God knows instead you have need for something smaller and more economical. Don't fight him on it. You'll be miserable.

Take the smaller economy car. Quit whining about the Suburban. Be content with the basics.

Warren Wiersbe was reminded of the simple living Quaker who was watching his neighbor move in with all of the furnishings and expensive toys that successful people collect. The Quaker finally went over to his new neighbor and said, Neighbor, if ever thou dost need anything, come to see me, and I will tell thee how to get along without it. How true.

Could we get by today without our cell phones? A few groans. Would our lives fall apart without the use of our laptops? High-speed Internet? Shall we go on? Too many of us today know the price of everything, but the value of nothing, it seems. We have acquired so many luxuries compared to most in the world today that we've forgotten how to enjoy the value of our basic necessities that God has so graciously given to us.

And you know, most of all, in this fast-paced society in which we live today, I think many of us have forgotten the value of one another. Isn't that the greater value? The value of one another. We've forgotten the value of friendship, forgotten the value of love and kindness and compassion and concern for others.

It's the longing for more material things that puts this kind of wedge between us, and it can be deadly. We're so busy trying to keep up with the Joneses that we forget about the Joneses in a sense, about the people, about the person, about your neighbor. When was the last time you took a visit to your neighbor's house just to say, hi, how are you doing? And introduce yourself and your family to them.

And put value on them and not on their stuff. Well, I like them because they have these nice things. No, like them for who they are and who they are in God's eyes, not for the stuff that they have, but for who they are as a person.

Value what's important today. Value friendships, value people. Of course, Jesus did say in Matthew 6, Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather in the barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you of not more what? Value than they.

What did he put the value on? Those things were important, but he put the value on us. We are the apple of his eye. We are important to the Lord.

People, right? Ministry is people, not paperwork. People. Seek first the kingdom of God who is righteous and all these things shall be added to you.

Application there. Be content in first seeking God's kingdom and rule in your life. Don't seek after things, seek after God.

And he will provide the things and the stuff you will need in this life. So God should still be, again, our most valuable possession. Next to people, God should be our most valuable possession.

Our relationship with him. Our friendship with him. The incredible gift of himself to us.

Not even the gift of eternal life to us, but the giver of that eternal life. He is my reward. Not eternal life in a sense, but himself.

He is my reward. Not even where I'm going, but to the one I am going to. That should be my one and greatest desire.

Amen? As David cried out in Psalm 27, I love this verse. One thing, David said, one thing I have desired of the Lord, and that will I seek. Here it is.

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. That was his primary thing that he desired. To behold the beauty of the Lord.

Does this describe you and I at the beginning of the day? Beholding and fixated on his beauty? In the middle of the day? At the end of the day? Is my quest the pursuit of God? Or is my quest in things? Am I content with Christ and Christ alone? If everything I had was taken and stripped away from me, would I still be desiring that one thing as David did? I'd still be content more because I have you. You can take away all that I have. Job said, Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Right? Can we say that? That's a tough one, but that's God's desire for us. Verse 9 and 10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

This is a picture here of a man who's drowning, right? He's going under, he's going down, he's drowning, sailing along, having the good life, all that this life has to offer, but missing out on the abundant life and maybe even the everlasting life that God has to offer in Jesus Christ. And then suddenly, what happens? A storm comes, his sails burst, and he sinks. Likewise, the person who has to have more and more material things in order to be happy and feel successful sailing into a trap, sailing into possible bondage and destruction, and notice there it says, his desire to be rich, not God's desire for him, but his desire to be rich is his constant temptation and snare.

Greed has become his God. Greed has become his God. How many of our dear friends lately have been shipwrecked by greed at the gambling casinos? Too many.

Too many. And I want to encourage you today and exhort you that if you're involved in gambling at any of these casinos that you flee and run away now. It's not of God, it doesn't honor him, you're throwing away his money to the world, you're not being a good steward of what he's given you and you're going to fall into sin and it's going to shipwreck your faith.

Stay away from them, they're not from the Lord. But notice it's their love for money, not money in and of itself, right? Since money is a gift from God, isn't it? But the love of money that brings them down and still brings countless millions down today. The love of money.

You can't serve God and mammon, Jesus said, you can't serve both, right? You have to choose one or the other. You're going to serve God or mammon. You're going to serve one of the two.

Proverbs 23.5 warns those who would be rich in this world that riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven. Riches are flighty and fleeting.

Here in one minute and gone the next. We should be like Solomon though, who instead worked to be rich in wisdom, not rich with riches. So, you know, rather than wearing yourself out pursuing wealth, instead pursue the wisdom of God.

That's wisdom, isn't it? Pursue the wisdom of God and what glorifies Him, and He will bless you with prosperity as He chooses. Remember too that Jesus warned in Mark 8.36 What shall it profit a man? What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul? Application. To have all that the world has to offer yet not have Jesus Christ is to be bankrupt eternally.

All the world's goods will not compensate for losing one soul eternally. You can have everything the world has to offer and it still will not get you to heaven. Better to be rich in God's forgiveness.

Better to be rich in God's love. Better than to be rich with riches. And even then, somebody will always be lusting after what you have and trying to figure out a way to get what you have, right? You know, all it takes today is one stumble into sin and a corresponding lawsuit and you can go from prince to pauper overnight in this country.

One look at Hollywood today reminds us of that. Hollywood, though, should be reminded of Jesus' words in Luke 18.25 that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Translation? That's next to impossible, isn't it? It's next to impossible for a rich man to go to heaven because those who are rich delude themselves into thinking they have no need of God.

Money is their God. Things are their God. That temporal satisfaction that those things bring is their God.

They're self-sufficient, self-made men and women. Yet deep inside, they're what? They're miserable and they're empty. Many Hollywood stars, many sports superstars have confessed to this after years of indulgence that something is still missing, right? You've heard the interviews.

They're miserable after living a sinful, wicked, perverted, polluted life and they go, what is missing? We know what's missing. His name is Jesus Christ. He can satisfy the soul.

Jesus meets man's most deepest needs and desires for love and for acceptance and for forgiveness. It's found in a person, not in a program. There are no substitutes to Jesus Christ.

James 1 says of the rich man, as a flower of the field, he will pass away for no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass. Its flower falls and its beautiful appearance perishes so the rich man will also fade away in his pursuits. You know, let's pray for Hollywood.

Let's pray for the salvation of those in Hollywood who are lost in the colors of green and of gold and of silver. And I pray that they instead would find the joy and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through the color red. Right? Through the shed blood of Jesus for them.

That's the blood. That's the color that we glory in because it was his blood that gave us the opportunity to be saved. The shedding of his blood.

The color red. The color red for that whosoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life. Verse 11 Okay, Timothy, but you, O man of God, flee these things.

What things? All the things we were just talking about. Flee those things and pursue these things. Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Fight that good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life to which you were also called. And then also be faithful.

The four F's of this passage. Flee, follow, fight, and be faithful. If you're taking notes.

Let's talk about these very briefly. Flee. There are times when running away is a mark of cowardice.

Right? But there are other times when fleeing is a mark of wisdom and a means of victory. A good example of that was with Joseph. Remember Joseph fled when he was tempted by his master's wife, Potiphar? In Genesis 39, for you men in particular today, remember it says that so it was as she spoke to Joseph day by day that he did not heed her to lie with her or to be with her.

When she finally pounced on Joseph and grabbed him, it goes on to say that he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran outside. His method of victory, men, and your method of victory today over sexual temptation and sin which is all around you, run away. Run away as fast as you can.

You are not strong enough to stand up to it on your own. Flee. Run.

You got two feet? That's why God gave them to you. Run as fast as you can. What was Joseph's motive for victory? Because men, let me tell you this.

Your feet will run when honor is in your heart. Your feet will run when honor is in your heart. Your heart for God will move your feet to victory.

Your heart for God and for his glory will move those feet to victory. Joseph's motive was, how can I do this thing and sin against God? That should be embedded in our hearts and minds, men, especially. How can I do this thing and sin against my Lord who died for me? His love for God was preeminent, first and foremost over any lust for women.

And men, if Jesus Christ is the love of your life here today, if Jesus Christ is the love of your life, you'll have no problem loving your wife. And the victory comes for you because it says in the Bible that a three-fold cord is not easily broken. Right? A three-fold cord is not easily broken.

Nurture, maintain your personal walk with God and with your wife. Be a man of prayer. Be a man of the word.

Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. Be satisfied with the wife of your youth. These are the hedges of protection in this sexually perverted world in which we live in today.

Amen, men? We're also told to flee fornication in 1 Corinthians 6.18. We're also told in 2 Timothy 2.22 to flee youthful lusts. We're also told in 1 Corinthians 10.14 to flee from idolatry. There are things the Bible specifically states you are to flee from.

From fornication, from lust, from idolatry. Remembering that an idol is anything in your life that takes the place of God. What's an idol? Anything in your life that takes the place of God.

Now, you may not bow down and worship a stone idol or a stone image, but you may be bowing down to keeping up your self-image or your self-esteem and to what others think about you more than what God thinks about you, right? Sometimes what the idols in our life are self-esteem, self-righteousness. Anything doing with self and protecting our self can often be idolatry. We're often our greatest idols.

We worship ourselves. We love ourselves too much. I'm often my greatest idol.

I idolize me. I'm too much in love with me and that's why I can't love thee as well and you because I'm too concerned about me. Me, me, me.

Mine, mine, mine. I, I, I. I have an eye problem. You've heard that before.

I didn't make that up. Do you have an eye problem today? Think about it. But any possession, any person we put our hope in to bring us fulfillment, any goal or aspiration even that becomes more important to us than God.

Even if it's a goal or an aspiration these are the little gods that attract our daily allegiance and subtly control our lives. Our idols often set up their homes in the hidden places of our heart, right? So where nobody can see them. That's why we always need the light and conviction of the Holy Spirit, don't we? And we need to pray daily.

Search me, O God. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Idolize God if you're going to idolize anybody. Worship Him and Him alone. As the commandment says, Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

And that includes you and me. There can't be two people on the throne at the same time of your life. So Paul warned young Timothy to flee.

And really he's talking about separating himself. Separate yourself, Timothy, from these false teachers. Flee from those who don't consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Flee from those teachers who are full of pride and conceit. Flee from those teachers who dispute and argue over words and silly semantics. Flee from those false teachers who stir up envy and strife.

Flee from those greedy false teachers who say that godliness is a means of gain. Flee from those who desire to be rich. Flee from the love of money.

1 Timothy 6.5 Withdraw yourself, Timothy. Flee. Run away.

Let me say this, too. If you find yourself supporting any false teacher, any false teaching today, don't support them any longer. Separate yourselves from them.

Stop supporting them financially. Stop watching them on TV. Stop receiving their tapes and videos and destructive literature.

And get back to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who never ever taught the present day false teaching of health, wealth, and prosperity. Our precious Lord, who had nowhere to lay his head. Our precious Lord, who didn't ride into Jerusalem on a chariot, but instead used a lowly donkey.

Our precious Lord, who chose to drink the full cup of suffering for sinners like ourselves, who humbled himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, who chose a crown of thorns instead of a crown of gold. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8, that for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich. But not rich primarily in material things and stuff, but primarily in spiritual things.

Some would teach otherwise, falsely. That it's your godly inheritance and divine right to be rich and wealthy and to prosper. It's a false teaching.

But we become spiritually rich in salvation, rich in forgiveness, rich in joy, rich in peace. We become joint heirs with Christ when we get saved. We are rich beyond measure in the Lord.

Now yes, some Christians are blessed with wealth and riches. That's not necessarily a sin. But they're not ruled by those riches.

But they're ruled by Christ. And they give away their riches and wealth, just as Jesus temporarily gave up the riches of heaven to bring to earth the riches of redemption for sinners as ourselves to promote the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of self. Rich Christians who love the Lord are promoting the kingdom of God and giving away a lot of their wealth to build and establish God's kingdom here on earth.

They're not controlled by their possessions and their riches. They're still controlled by the Lord. Now after we flee, we're to follow, verse 11 tells us.

We're to pursue and follow six important things as we wind down here. What are they? Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. And really all that's a description of Jesus there, wouldn't you say? Jesus is my righteousness.

Jesus is my godliness. Jesus is the object, the author, finisher, perfecter of my faith. Jesus is loving.

Jesus is patient. Jesus is gentle. Therefore, I want to follow his example.

I want to follow him. If I hang out with him, he's going to make me more like himself, right? How do you get to know somebody? By spending time with them. And the more time you spend with Jesus, the more he makes you like himself because you're following him.

You're pursuing him and him alone. Your prayer closet, your private time of worship and prayer and devotion with him, that's where he's conforming you into the image of himself. But where am I falling short in these areas? If I'm consistently falling, failing in these areas, it means maybe I'm not following the master.

Maybe I'm being mastered by my own selfish passions and desires. Paul is telling Timothy here that we must pursue. Are you a pursuer? We must pursue.

We must cultivate and develop these things in our lives to remain content in Christ. This is our part in the sanctification process, right? That I follow, then God forms. Forms me more and more into the image of his son.

But here's the key. Again, he only forms as I follow. It's a two-way street, not a one-way street to sanctification and a practical holiness.

Yes, there is God's part in this lifelong process of making me more Christ-like, but there is my part as well, right? My part is to yield and to surrender my will to him on a daily basis. I'm not getting born again and again. I'm simply stepping off the throne, because when I wake up in the morning, I know about you, I'm typically on the throne of my life.

And so I have to consciously step down and invite Christ to step on that throne and be the Lord over my thoughts, the Lord over my words, the Lord over my actions, the Lord over my attitudes. Jesus, rule and reign afresh in me today. But we have not because we ask not, Jesus said.

It's not some magical process where you just wake up and, oh, I'm more like Jesus today. No, you've got to yield. You've got to surrender.

It says, he is the potter and I am the clay, that he will, what, mold me and make me after his will while I am waiting, yielded and still as the song goes. So there's that justification. That's the past work of God in your life.

God declared you innocent, not guilty of all the charges against you and granted you forgiveness and redemption. But then when justification and his sanctification began, and that's that lifelong process whereby God conforms you into the image of his son. You were predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, it says in Romans.

And some of us will be further along in that process than others when glorification comes, right? Justification, sanctification, the present work of God, and then glorification, the future work of God. When we see him, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Then at that point, I will be fully like my Lord.

I won't be my Lord, I'll be like my Lord. What a glorious day that's going to be. So you're following him.

As you follow, he begins to form more of himself in these following six areas. Righteousness. That means to do what's right in relation to both God and man.

What is your relationship like with God today? What is your relationship like with others today? Whatever's not right, make it right. Don't put off till tomorrow what you need to do today. Don't be the hopeless procrastinator that can get you into grave trouble.

Secondly, godliness. That refers to one's reverence for God and can be translated godlikeness. Faith might better be translated faithfulness.

Are you a faithful Christian here today? Love, the sacrificial love, selfless love, giving love. Patience. God's love is patient.

God's love is kind, it says. Be patient with those around you who frustrate the living daylight out of you, right? Patience carries the idea of endurance. I'm just not putting up with them.

I'm loving them along the way because God is patient with me. Gentleness. You know, gentleness is so lacking in our culture today.

We live in such a rude society it has become. What happened to gentleness? Kindness. Just general respect for one another and honoring one another, higher and better than yourself.

And then we're not only to flee, but we're also to fight. That word for fight there means agonize. It was used both in the military as well as in an athletic way to describe the concentration, discipline, and extreme effort needed to win.

It described a person straining and giving his best to win the prize or win the battle. You're giving your best in this battle that we're in. You know, we're in a battleground.

Christianity is not a playground. It's a battleground. You're in a war.

The flesh wars against the spirit. The spirit's warring against the flesh. We're in a battle, folks.

But Paul said at the end of his life, he wrote these words to Timothy. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith. Can you say that today in your own life? Fought the good fight. Finished the race.

Kept the faith. And let's remember, folks, that we're not in a fight against one another. Let's remember who the enemy is.

Too many Christians in the church are at war with one another. You're at war with the wrong person. We're at war with the devil, who wrestles not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, it says in the word.

In Ephesians 6 in the spiritual warfare chapter. Remember who your enemy is. And if you're at war with someone else in the church today, be a peacemaker and go get it right today.

And get back into the battle fighting against the devil and his minions with the help of the Lord. You know, let's let our church be known for love and acceptance and forgiveness. That won't give the enemy a foothold here at Calvary Chapel.

He's trying to take this work down, folks. And he's looking for any little foothold he can get. And he'll use you and me to do it, if we're not careful, right? We can't just be bebopping along, thinking that, okay, everything's fine and dandy today.

If you've got ought against somebody, or you're at war with somebody, you need to get that right, because the destroyer's going to come along and try to wipe out our fellowship. And there's no false teaching going on here. We know that because Pastor Pat's teaching the word, okay? But he can work in more subtle ways.

Wolves in sheep's clothing may come in, sit in the audience and try to draw you away after the service with something false. Be careful. There may be a young man in here just here to hit up on young women.

You're a wolf in sheep's clothing. Okay? Well, God exposed you, if you're here today. And don't come back here again, because we're going to find out who you are, and we're going to ask you to leave in love.

You stay away from the young ladies of this church. They belong to God. Look at your bulletin.

There's a shepherd with his staff watching over a sheep, and there's a wolf in the distance, right? We have that on our bulletin for a reason, because that's one of our jobs here, to watch over you, and for you. We love to shake your hand and say, hello, and God bless you, but out of the other eye, we're looking for and being discerning here at Calvert Chapel. It is a warfare, folks.

Pastor Pat, you know, when he gets up here to teach, there should be intercessory prayer going on constantly for our pastor, because God is wanting to speak and move in these services, and he's God's man for this church, and you think he's not coming under great assault and attack right now with what he's going through with his wife? He is. We need to be lifting him up like we never have before, and for him to still get up here and preach in this church with his wife having cancer is an awesome testimony to his love for God and his love for you, and his love for the Word. So you've got the best you can get.

So, I don't know why I'm saying all that, but just don't give Pat the tape of this particular service. But the bottom line is, in closing, we're to flee, to follow, fight, and then to be faithful, because the appearing of Jesus is soon. Jesus is coming back.

Matthew 24, 30. The Son of Man is coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Jude 14.

Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints. Revelation 1, 7. Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him. So nothing, nothing should spur us on more holiness and godly teaching and godly living and faithfulness than the imminent, any day return of our King of Kings and Lord of Courts.

He is coming, but as we sang in that song, is your prayer, come, Lord Jesus, come. He's coming no matter what we say or do or think, but is your prayer, is my prayer, yes Lord, come. I want you to come because I am living my life full on for you.

Let's finish well this year in 2004 and live as if Jesus Christ is coming back today. And if you will live your life every day like that, you will turn this world upside down for Jesus Christ. And if you believe that, we say it, but do we believe that Jesus is coming? It's not that he might be, he is coming back to this earth, and we're going to be with him forever.

But will, can we hear, well done, thou good and faithful servant. You want to be great in God's kingdom, learn to be the servant of all. Let's pray.

Lord, we surely love you this morning, and it is our desire, Lord, to not compromise in any area, Lord, and if materialism has crept into our lives in any way, Lord, just forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, Lord, and get us back to loving you and not the things that you give us, Lord. That we love you and you alone, Lord. And we want to thank you for the things you've blessed us with, Lord.

We are a blessed people, Lord. And help us to be content again, Lord. I just have sensed that some of us are not very content lately, but you promised us true contentment, Lord, if we just keep looking to you, living for you, and spending time with you, Lord.

Make us a contented people. And let the world see that and want that, Lord. And I just thank you for this body of believers here.

Bless them, give them a great week in you. Give them victory, Lord. And we love you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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