

# 1 Timothy – The Household of God

*This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare (1 Timothy 1:18 ESV)*

*I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15 ESV)*

## **But As For You, O Man Of God**

**June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**1 Timothy 6:11-16**

**Rev. Levi denBok**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6.

We are in the second last sermon of our Household of God series. I'm not sure if you've noticed but as we have worked our way through this letter – a letter that is essentially an instruction manual on how to build a healthy church – churches across the continent have fallen into scandal and ruin. I can't remember a year like this. And the scandals weren't reserved to one tribe. There were Baptists. Anabaptists. Complementarians. Egalitarians. New movements. Established works.

When the news came out a few weeks ago about the failures of the Southern Baptist Convention, it felt like the straw that broke the camel's back. I wept. For a few days I found myself indulging some hopeless thoughts. I found myself asking, "Is there anything that we can do in the face of this widespread evil? Is there any hope for the church in North America?"

But God wouldn't allow me to indulge those faithless thoughts for long. Have you ever seen the third movie in the Lord of the Rings trilogy? There's a scene where Denethor – the steward of Gondor who thinks himself a King – succumbs to fear and runs through the city shouting, "Flee for your lives!!" Gandalf finds him and promptly smacks him upside the head with his staff. Then Gandalf shouts out, "Hold your positions!!" Well, on Tuesday morning as I sat down to write this sermon, it was as if God were Gandalf, this passage was the staff, and I was Denethor.

Sometimes we all need a smack in the head from God's word. I'm no exception.

Having been struck by the text once again, I am convinced that it is not a coincidence that we find ourselves in *this* letter in a year when churches and their leaders are dropping like flies. The biggest challenge in preaching through a letter like 1 Timothy is that it can be hard for the congregation to see its relevance for *them*. People might be inclined to say, "Well, this is all well and good, but shouldn't you have tackled this letter addressed to church leaders in one your elder meetings? Why do *we* need to hear this?"

You need to hear this because the world is filled with sinful leaders who think that *their* plan for the church is better than *God's* plan. If you didn't believe that before this year, I sure hope you believe it by now. And behind every fallen leader is a church that allowed them to lead. A church that allowed them to play fast and loose with the Bible. A church that often found themselves saying: "Something doesn't seem right here, but who's to say? Who really knows how the church should operate?"

You do! In chapter 3 of this letter, Paul writes:

4	I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, <b>you may know</b> how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:14b-15 ESV
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In this letter, God has given *you*, Christian, the blueprint for the household of God. Steward it well. The leaders in the church only have authority in so far as they are walking in obedience to God's revealed truth. And you have access to that truth! So, hold us to this. Before this church is led by our elders, this church is led by JESUS. Pastors and elders are stewards – not kings.

As this letter nears a close, Paul has some final instructions for leadership in the church. These principles could apply to Christian leaders in every context – fathers, mothers, mentors, employers – all of us will benefit from the application of these truths. But here Paul is speaking specifically to young Timothy – a leader in the church. That is where we will place our emphasis. Look with me to 1 Timothy 6:11-16. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

6	But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:11-16 ESV
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This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Here we find Paul’s closing counsel to a godly leader.

9	<b>Closing Counsel To A Godly Leader</b>
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These instructions are for Timothy specifically, but they ring true for every leader in every church over all time. If you would lead in the household of God then first, you must:

10	<b>1. Flee sin and speculation</b>
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Look again at verse 11:

11	But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. 1 Timothy 6:11a ESV
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This passage begins with the word, “But” and that means that we are meant to hear this command in contrast to what came before it. Paul has just finished describing the sad state of the sinful, fallen leaders in the Ephesian church. These men mishandled the word of God. They bickered and fought over minutia because they were arrogant and prideful. They were only in it for the money. Earlier in the letter, we learned that they were also guilty of sexual sin. In short, they looked just like the wicked leaders that have been exposed in our own day. The devil uses the same old tricks.

After highlighting the greedy, foolish, prideful lifestyle of the fallen leaders in Ephesus, Paul turns to Timothy and says: “Flee these things! Get away from it and have nothing to do with it!” In case

Timothy missed it here, a few verses later Paul concludes the letter with this same command.

Look ahead to verse 20:

13	O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. <b>Avoid the irreverent babble</b> and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 ESV
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You wouldn't store your antique collection in a batting cage, and you wouldn't set up your kid's basketball net on the freeway. You don't put precious things in harm's way. Why then would you ever put *your heart* in a dangerous position? Why would you expose *your mind* to speculative nonsense? Why would you expose *your eyes* to things that are *designed to induce lust*? Why would you give *your focus* to an endless pursuit of money?

Flee these things! Don't play with sin! Don't flirt with temptation! Don't fool yourself into thinking that you're the exception to the rule!

Do you want to be a strong, faithful man of God, Timothy? Do you want to be a leader? Then you need to develop the leadership skill of RUNNING AWAY! Be like Joseph who fled from temptation even as Potiphar's wife seized his cloak. Be like Lot who fled for his life from Sodom and Gomorrah without ever looking back over his shoulder.

Here's a lesson that has been painfully demonstrated over this last year: Sin is stronger than you think it is! It's like we never graduated out of our naïve youth group days. We're still asking the same question: How far can I go before I cross the line? We used to ask it about dating. Now we ask it about our insatiable accumulation of money, and our is-it-really-that-inappropriate relationship with our coworker, and our it's-not-that-bad approach to television.

Brothers and sisters, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Yes, you have been given a new heart. Yes, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. Yes, you are united with Christ and through him you now have the power to obey. Yes, yes and YES! But if THAT knowledge leads you to position yourself and your family in front of an oncoming TRAIN OF SIN, then you've missed something along the way! Paul turns to this godly, faithful, proven leader and he says,

“Man of God, look at what happened to those leaders who went before you. FLEE THESE THINGS!”

But don't run for the hills. Running *away* from sin is only half the battle. What now will you run *towards*? Holiness begins with a directional decision. That brings us to Paul's second instruction:

15	<b>2. Pursue the right things</b>
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Look again at verse 11:

16	But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11 ESV
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Do you want to be used by the Lord? Then flee sin and pursue the right things.

Things like righteousness. Pursue that. Make it your aim to be upright in all that you do. Make it your ambition to respond to every obstacle that you face in a way that pleases the Lord.

Pursue godliness. Resolve today to be *different* from the world. There is no short supply of leaders that resemble the culture. We don't need any more of those. You are called to resemble your God. Pursue THAT, Timothy!

Pursue faith. As you flee from sin, run to the cross! Run to the cross and see again the price that was paid! Run to the cross and see that you are no longer a slave to sin! Run to the cross in faith! As one commentator explains:

18	The cross is a window opened into the very heart of God. Thomas F. Torrance
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Do you know what that church needs, Timothy? They need a leader who is bowing down at the foot of the cross every day praying, “I believe! Help my unbelief!”

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas F. Torrance as quoted by Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker - How Atonement Brings Shalom*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 47.

And pursue love! Only a loveless heart could understand ministry as a means to financial gain. Only a loveless heart could exploit his people to gratify his sinful desires. Only a loveless leader could use his teaching time to give people his opinions rather than God's word. Pursue the love of God in Christ every day. Let it saturate your heart. An empty vessel will never overflow. The great puritan George Muller famously said:

20	The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord. George Muller
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Pursue that, Timothy. And pursue steadfastness. An immature leader is tossed to and fro with each passing wave. He fluctuates, but you must be better! You'll have bad days, Timothy. And you'll have good days. But you're called to be a leader *every* day. Plant your feet. Fix your gaze. Chart the course. Put one foot in front of the next. In a world full of volatility, pursue steadfastness.

And pursue gentleness. One commentator notes of gentleness that:

22	It contains the ideas of consideration for others and a willingness to waive an undoubted right. William D. Mounce
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3

Do you want to run in a different direction than those leaders who fell before you, Timothy? Then you need to learn the art of putting others first. That's the example that our Good Shepherd set. When they're slow to learn, be patient. Teach it again. When they return to the same sin, restore them again. Don't lose your temper. Don't throw a tantrum. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

24	And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, <b>be patient with them all.</b> 1 Thessalonians 5:14 ESV
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Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness; flee from sin and pursue these things, Timothy. You'll find all of them as you daily spend time with the Lord in prayer and in his word. If you want to lead in a way that resembles Christ, then get *away from* the temptation and

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<sup>2</sup> George Muller, [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5825213.George\\_M\\_ller](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5825213.George_M_ller), accessed June 1, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles – World Biblical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 354.

*get into* your Bible. This is needed for all Christians but how much more so for those who lead in the church! Elders, if we are not actively positioning ourselves to be led by the Spirit through the Word – then we are putting God’s people in danger.

A godly leader flees from sin and speculation and pursues righteousness and godliness. Run in the right direction and you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Third, Paul instructs Timothy to:

26	<b>3. Fight the good fight</b>
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We see this in verse 12:

27	Fight the good fight of the faith. 1 Timothy 6:12a ESV
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Perhaps this seems like an odd instruction considering that Paul just finished telling Timothy to pursue gentleness. Can a person simultaneously pursue gentleness while fighting? According to Paul, he can – and he must!

In chapter 1, he used similar language to call Timothy to “wage the good warfare.” Paul frequently uses the imagery of battle and war in his description of Christian leadership and that is not an insignificant detail.

In a few weeks, we are going to appoint two new elders. Before we do that, let’s make sure that we understand what we are signing them up for: Spiritual leadership is war.

You’re not appointing men to sit on a committee. You’re not appointing men to balance the budget. You’re appointing men to stand in the gap and to fight a spiritual fight for the purity and the preservation of this church.

And let’s make sure that we’re clear on who we’re fighting. Some churches have appointed leaders who thought it was their job to fight the politicians, or to fight the culture, or even to fight

each other. But that’s not the “good fight” that Paul is calling for here. In his earlier letter to the Ephesians, he explained:

29	For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12 ESV
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This is a *spiritual battle*, and the church needs leaders who will fight the good fight. As the elders gather to pray every Monday night, we are praying over every member by name. We pray over every marriage. We prayer over every child. Because we know that there is an enemy that is actively working to bring you and your family down. Do *you* know that? Are *you* watching for the subtle ways that he is trying to undermine the faith of your family? I fear that too many Christians today take this threat lightly. The puritan Thomas Brooks would have us pay attention. He warns:

31	Beloved, Satan being fallen from light to darkness, from felicity to misery, from heaven to hell, from angel to devil, is so full of malice and envy that he will leave no means unattempted, whereby he may make all others eternally miserable with himself; he being shut out of heaven, and shut up "under the chains of darkness until the judgement of the great day" (Jude 6), makes use of all his power and skill to bring all the sons of men into the same condition and condemnation with himself. Thomas Brooks
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The enemy of the Ephesian church wasn’t ultimately a group of bad leaders, or a lack of good church polity, or a doctrinal curiosity – the enemy of the Ephesian church, and of our church, and of EVERY church is the devil himself! Therefore, godly leaders are called to fight the good fight! Put on the armour of God, pick up the sword of truth, petition the God of angel armies, and wage war on behalf of the church! That’s what leadership in the household of God requires.

But the godly leader is not simply waging war for the church. He must also fight the good fight for his own faith. This leads us to Paul’s fourth command:

34	<b>4. Take hold of the eternal life</b>
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Look with me again at verse 12:

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Brooks as quoted in Graham A. Cole, *Against The Darkness* (Wheaton, IL. Crossway, 2019), 108.

35	Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12b ESV
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What does Paul mean when he calls Timothy to take hold of eternal life? When Paul previously wrote to the church in Ephesus, he explained:

36	For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV
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Grace – by its very nature – is a gift! It’s not a result of works. Paul said that!

And yet, the Bible simultaneously calls us to *take hold of that gift*. That’s why the second half of Paul’s letters are always dedication to ethical teaching. In the first half, we are taught what God has done – what He has *already accomplished* – for us in Christ, but then the second half of those letters call upon us to *act in response*. So, for example, Paul could write to the Philippians:

38	Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, <b>but I press on</b> to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Philippians 3:12 ESV
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The life of a Christian is a life of pressing on. That is true for all of us, but it is particularly true for those who would lead in Christ’s church. If you are not moving forward, then you will slip backward. Every day, your life should be growing to look more and more like Christ. Is there a habit that is holding you back? By the grace of God, break it! Are you lacking discipline? By the grace of God, grow in it! Be learning. Be growing. Be fighting.

And finally, Paul gives one last command.

40	<b>5. Steward the message you’ve received</b>
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Look with me to verses 13-16:

41	I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to <b>keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach</b> until the appearing of our Lord Jesus
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	Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:13-16 ESV
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“In the presence of God and Christ Jesus, you have *received* something infinitely valuable, Timothy. Your job now is to steward that message. Pass it on without stain or reproach.”

What is it that Timothy has received? I would argue that “the commandment” includes *the entirety of the gospel message* that Paul has passed on to Timothy! I argue this because, just a few verses later, Paul concludes with the command:

44	O Timothy, <b>guard the deposit</b> entrusted to you. 1 Timothy 6:20a ESV
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Timothy is like a runner in a relay race. He has received the baton from Paul, and now he is called to pass that baton on to the next generation.

He is to pass it on unstained. Timothy – trusted as he was – had no authority to change the message. He had no authority to stand up and say, “God’s word says this, but *that* doesn’t apply anymore. And look at *this* embarrassing verse! Talk about outdated! Let me just pull out my editing pencil here...” No, no, 1000 times no! Too many Christian leaders have given themselves editing permission, and they have *stained* the gospel as a result. They have distorted the message to conform to their preferences, or perhaps the preferences of their congregation, but they had NO AUTHORITY to do so! If you would lead in the household of God, then you must see yourself as a STEWARD, not a KING! This is HIS message, not yours. These are HIS people. This is HIS church. HE has given them a message. Your job, Timothy, is to pass it on unstained.

And your job is to keep it free from reproach. This is where we have witnessed so much failure in our day. Your waiter might be carrying a delicious meal, but if that same waiter is covered in filth, then you might think twice about eating what you’ve received. So it is with the gospel. Timothy is to live his life in such a way that it will *commend* the message that he is preaching! If you say one thing on Sunday but live another life Monday – Saturday, then you add reproach to the message. This was the problem in Ephesus. The sinful, godless leaders were hardening the hearts of the

Ephesians to the gospel because their lives were so opposite to their message. The same problem persists in the church today. This is why Paul warned:

46	Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:16 ESV
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The messenger matters. Too many leaders have opted not to keep a close watch on their lives and they have permanently wounded their hearers. Not so with you, Timothy. Guard the deposit that you have received. Keep it unstained. Keep it free from reproach. Watch yourself. Watch your message. Steward it with faithfulness.

Because the King is returning soon.

48	<b>The King Is Returning Soon</b>
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Look again at verses 13-16 as we conclude:

49	I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach <b>until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ</b> , which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:13-16 ESV
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Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords is going to return, Timothy. He who alone has immortality is coming soon. He who dwells in unapproachable light – a light that will expose and expel the darkness – is coming soon. The one who is so glorious that *you couldn't even behold him without dying* is going to return! The only Sovereign who is worthy of all honor and eternal dominion is coming to reclaim his bride! The One who gave of himself completely to redeem his church from death and hell – He who bled and died and rose and REIGNS is coming again!

Behold your God, Timothy! And lead the church accordingly!

Behold your God, church! And choose your leaders accordingly!

No more self-proclaimed kings! No more self-appointed editors! No more self-gratifying predators! No more self-absorbed celebrities!

What the church needs now is what the church needed 2,000 years ago and what the church will need until Christ returns! The church needs leaders who will flee from sin, and who will pursue the right things, and who will fight the good fight, and who will take hold of the everlasting life, and who will steward the message that they have received. The church needs leaders who tremble before the King of kings and the Lord of lords and who lead with a constant awareness of the reality that HE IS GOING TO RETURN FOR HIS BRIDE!

To that end, let's pray together.