

## **MY UTMOST FOR HIS HIGHEST**

Text: “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1: 20, 21)

When Oswald Chambers meditated over these verses he said Paul was saying in this passage, “My determination is to be my utmost for His Highest.”

What is involved in giving God our utmost and receiving in return His highest and best life on earth with the best possible eternal blessings to follow this life?

### **I. Flee**

Let me share with you a portion of two verses, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things...” (I Timothy 6:11a). “Flee also youthful lusts...” (II Timothy 2:22a). Paul is admonishing Timothy in I Timothy 6 to consider the temporariness of life (verse 7), because it is certain whatever we live for in this world will not be carried with us to heaven. Therefore he tells us the danger of falling into many foolish and hurtful lusts which are likened to a man drowning (verse 9). Then he points out that not only does greed fail to satisfy, but it becomes the template to all manner of evil (verse 10). Paul is telling young Timothy to run from these things!

In II Timothy 2, Paul is again telling Timothy to run from the lusts, which are so prevalent to youth (verse 22). This principle is throughout Scripture. For instance, when Potiphar’s wife lured Joseph, he responded by fleeing: “And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Genesis 39:12). Solomon said, “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Proverbs 4:14, 15).

There is a danger in trying to negotiate with temptations. We must flee the very presence of temptation. We often do the opposite, we try to battle temptations in our own power and this will never work. Make no mistake, we are in a war and we must enter the fray. If we are to run, where do we stand ground and fight? That will be answered in this next point.

### **II. Fight**

A. We must fight Satan himself.

I know this may seem audacious, but it is a clear command of Scripture as found in James 4:7: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." First we give ourselves to God in total abandonment, then we resist. "Resist" in Greek (anthistēm) means to stand against or to withstand. The Bible says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Many years ago I preached from this text and after the service I enjoyed a meal with an evangelist who had just returned from extensive crusades in Kenya, Africa. He explained the rite of manhood that the boys would go through at about 12 or 13 years of age. They would go on a lion hunt to fell a lion, clothed only in a loincloth and equipped with only a spear. The old warriors have a saying they pass on to the young warriors-to-be: "Run toward the roar!" The lions, unlike most large cats, travel in a pride. When the old "king of the beasts" has lost much of his power, his speed, his teeth and his eyesight, they do not discard him; he strategically goes to a certain section of the jungle and roars mightily. Although he cannot run, pounce and tear the prey, he may frighten them. And as the prey run, the young lions do the chasing and killing. There are only two times the lion roars: first to frighten and secondly when the prey has been killed, the lion roars to summon the pride to dinner. Here's the point, Satan was stripped of his overpowering strength by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Now we can claim, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). Let us go to the source of our temptation, that old Dragon himself and face him in Jesus' power. God promises that he (Satan) must flee!

#### B. We must fight ourselves.

Paul likened our battle against our base nature to the Olympic and Isthmus games of their day. He said, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air" (I Corinthians 9:26). He was saying I discipline myself and do not let my flesh rise up and take control; instead I bring my flesh under control. This is what the apostle had in mind when he said, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (I Corinthians 6:12). Then he encourages us to do the same, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (body) in sanctification and honour" (I Thessalonians 4:4).

#### C. We must fight for the faith.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (I Timothy 6:12). When the Lord defeated the Devil in the wilderness, do you recall His weaponry? It was the Bible. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our faith is bolstered by the Bible. We are

commanded to take "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

Near the end of Paul's life he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). It's a good fight because we are on the winning side!

### **III. Follow**

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (III John, verse 11).

We are to eliminate the negative by fleeing, but we are to accentuate the positive by following: "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (I Timothy 6:11).

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Timothy 2:22). To follow in the footsteps of Jesus we find these characteristics will reveal to us exactly how we may do so. Let's define these seven qualities that must be adhered to:

A. Righteousness means justice or equity of character. Righteousness is a biblical positional truth of being in a right standing before God through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. Here righteousness is used as a practical admonition. It has been said that righteousness is an attribute that implies that a person's actions are justified.

B. Godliness is holiness or piety. This means we are to be devout in our devotion. It is honoring God in obedience without arguments.

C. Faith means credence, moral conviction, and fidelity.

D. Love or charity means God's kind of benevolent affection, charity.

E. Patience means cheerful endurance. Hebrews 10:36 says we all need patience. It is living without complaints.

F. Meekness means humility. I appreciate this definition: "Meekness has been contrasted with humility as referring to behavior towards others, where humbleness refers to an attitude towards oneself. Meekness means restraining one's own power, so as to allow room for others."

G. Peace. The word "peace" here is not the customary "shalom" that we often hear in the mid-east even to this day. It is from the Greek word "eirene" which comes from a word which means "to join" or to bring together into a quiet and restful place. This is no doubt what Jesus had in mind when He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). The word "peacemakers" comes from this same root word "eirene." I love the phrase found in

Revelation 14:4b that describes what following Jesus means: "...These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth...."

#### **IV. Finish**

This is a goal we should all attempt to obtain. Jesus said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Let it not be said of us, "Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:30). May we instead say, "...I have finished my course..." (II Timothy 4:7b).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.