

Living as the subjects of God's grace (Quality: Average)

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- [0 : 00] In dependence upon the Lord for all needed help, I venture to draw your prayerful attention to the first epistle to Timothy, chapter 6, verses 11 and 12.
- The first epistle to Timothy, chapter 6, verses 11 and 12.
- But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.
- 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.
- The first word of our text is but, and it marks out a very solemn distinction.
- [1 : 42] Three times in a few verses in this chapter, we have this word.
- In the apostle here, writing to his son in the faith of these false teachers so proud, and these that are full of envy and strife, railing and evil survisings and so forth, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself.
- But, here's the distinction, here's the contrast. Godliness, godliness, with contentment is great gain.
- And then he goes on to speak that having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.
- And then comes another but, going back again the other way, to those that would be rich, that is, at all costs, it's their idol, it's their god, that will be rich.
- [3 : 01] And I do just remember, as I name that, a very solemn scene of a man dying, and they noticed his hand was going round and round, and they asked what it meant, and he was thinking he was counting out his money.
- A dying man with eternity before him, and that's all he lived for. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.
- For the love, must remember that, not money, that's needful, but the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after they've heard from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows, possession of ill-gotten gain, to bring to such piercing of many sorrows.
- Now we come to our text another turn, as it were, another contrast, but we come to the second word, thou.
- You will say, and rightly so, that this is addressed to Timothy. You will also say he was a minister of the gospel, and right you are.
- [4 : 37] But also, surely, this word is left on record for all God's dear people, but thou.
- And again, we emphasize how personal this word is, and as I have very briefly, in this introduction, set out a little of the solemn contrasts and comparison between the worldling and those who fear God, we ask ourselves, where do we stand?

But thou. We come now to the title here, O man of God.

Truly, a word spoken of those in the scriptures, such as Moses, Elijah, and others, and yet it is a word true of all God's people.

So, we would seek that examination. I say self-examination. That's right in measure, but surely we would seek, as the psalmist, that God will search us, try us, test us all to be right.

[6 : 13] Now, the apostle John, in writing his epistle, speaks of the children of God, and the children of the devil.

And there's no in-between. I do not say that legally. I say it with great concern, as to where do we stand?

What is this mark of this one that is a man of God? He's no longer a man of the world.

No longer, as it were, under the full control of Satan, of sin, and of self.

Grace has wrought a change. Here is one manifest, as chosen in eternity past, one redeemed by the blood of Christ, one who is called by God's grace, born again, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.

[7 : 32] Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. This one no longer is his own.

Ye are not your own. Ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his.

And that God might be magnified in my body, whether for life or for death or to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Oh, not that we can say, alas, it is so sadly true that we live up at all times to that standard.

But, oh, there'll be a great desire thus to do. We're not our own. We thought we were, and once we were, master as it were, as we thought of our life, of our destiny.

[8 : 39] But, oh, when the Lord, by his spirit, begins this work of grace, what a change is wrought in heart and in life.

Oh, man of God. It's like we've read in that first part of our reading tonight, and I go back just for a moment to the contrast between those that are of the world and evil and error.

It's in a great house that not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth, some to honor and some to dishonor.

And if a man therefore purge himself from these, and he should be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and made meet for the master's use.

Oh, friend, what a mercy. Were we not speaking of being emptied from vessel to vessel quite recently? The work of God's grace in the heart.

[9 : 52] Oh, man of God. And, oh, this will be distinct from those in the world.

We are still in the world, but, pray God, we may not be of it, though we know painfully, and I hope it is painfully, that there is so much of the world in us that, as it were, controls our life, and yet this principle of grace, this fear of the Lord, that brings a distinction and a difference.

But thou, oh, man of God, flee from these things, that which we have just named in our opening remarks.

And, you see, the expression here is flee. And that, surely, is a very strong word. It doesn't mean just casually, slowly, turn away from them, but run, as it were, for your very life.

Get right away from them, as far as you can. Let them not, these things, that are so dear to our fallen nature, let them not entangle us, ensnare us, or take possession of us, but to seek to flee from them, and to turn right away from them.

[11 : 34] But not only is there this aspect, but we've also got an exhortation here, and that is to follow. So we are to flee, that is, turn from these things, which are so harmful to us and robbers of our spiritual enjoyment of his love, and yet we are to follow.

And these, the apostle here, names righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, follow after.

We, and I speak for myself, feel to come so sadly short, like Peter, but are far off.

But surely, if we are this one named in our text, O man of God, we shall seek by the grace of God to deny self, take up the cross and to follow him.

And I'm reminded here of the words of the apostle Paul, not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after.

[13 : 03] It's a great mercy. and this following after is with desire in the soul, with longing, and with love, and with hope.

I follow after that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus, that I may lay hold upon what the Lord in his infinite mercy and wonderful grace and amazing love has done for me a poor, vile, lost, hell-deserving sinner.

I follow after. I want to know more of it. And he says, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. I do not feel as yet that I have fully laid hold, and we should come to this word laid hold in our decks in a moment if we are helped and able to come to it.

But he says, I count not myself to have apprehended, not in a full sense, but he would seek, as he says, this one thing I do, he says, forgetting those things which are behind, not that he forgets or forgot at any time what he was before he was called by grace.

Never did he forget the amazing grace and mercy of God to him, the blasphemer and so forth, the one that, well, with all his religion was so opposed to Jesus Christ.

[14 : 43] He didn't forget that, but what he means is this, he does not dwell on his sufferings for Christ's sake, but he now presses for his life, the runner in the race, he doesn't look back to see how far he's come so much, but he's pressing on, he's looking as we have here, the mark of the prize, but he says, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I press to warn, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, is the picture of earnest, stretching forth, and ambition, and determination, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press, and this would tell me that there's something in the way, there's obstacles, there's difficulties, there's perplexities, there's temptations, but I'm trying to go forward, I say, yes, run, but often it's a walk, it's slow, but it's still forward, as enabled, sometimes we feel to come to a stand, so it's a great mercy not to turn back, and last we turn aside, there's backsliding, and times when we seem to lose,

I was going to say, spiritual stamina, in the race, but oh may there be that reviving, and looking forward, and that patience, as we shall come to in a moment, to run this race, looking unto Jesus, so follow after righteousness, now we remember here that these words are addressed to a believer, righteousness, and I believe that this word here, righteousness, that sacrifice our walk, our dealings, as a Christian, as a believer, one with another, and with the world, in other words, an upright walk, right judgment, holding fast to truth, one might say, does it not also speak, does it not also refer to justification, that robe of righteousness, yes,

I believe that, we name that as the experience already of a believer, not that I say we have the full assurance of it, but in God's purpose, yes, a born again sinner is a pardoned sinner, you can't separate it, a born again sinner is a believer, you can't separate it, a born again sinner is a justified sinner, there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, but here I see this word more particularly to follow after righteousness, now what kind of a life am I living, what kind of an example am I setting, is it right, is it true, is it honest, is it upright, is it in line with the word of God, and follow after it, seek grace to walk uprightly before thy God, and to walk in the fear of the

Lord, and this will give, and it should do, much heart searching, and I hope we know something, very often at the end of the day, to look back and say, I failed there, I faltered there, I shouldn't have done that, I shouldn't have spoken that, I wasn't fair in my judgment, I was prejudiced, and here we have been to follow after righteousness, to walk in the fear of the Lord, separate from evil, cleaving to the truth, follow after righteousness, and then godliness, but that is that spiritual work of grace within the soul,

I like to think of it as the root within, and the fruit that is seen, really as we might speak of godliness as the root, and righteousness as the fruit, so, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, all things are become new, godliness, well, what can we say, blemish, failings, defilement, sinfulness, pride, oh, so much, almost seems to wonder, can ever god dwell here, in such a heart as mine, such a den of iniquity as we feel it to be at times, when we turn again, and we know something of it, to see greater abominations than these, we say, can it be, can I be, a true child of god, godliness, and oh, how our hearts, sometimes,

[20 : 33] I hope we can say it, are filled with shame, smitten, I hope broken, contrite, at our failings, when we think of what he, when we say he, god the father, god the son, god the holy spirit, has done for us, and the life that we should live, the example that we should set, and all that there may be that within us, first looking at the root, that reviving, that growth in grace, that deeper knowledge of the lord jesus christ, and that we might be made more lively in spirit, more fervent, more prayerful, but blessed with repentance, and godly sorrow, godliness, or god likeness,

I say that with great caution, but really, when we do look at it, you see, that they took knowledge of them, that they had been with jesus, there was something there that they could see, that spake of jesus, and that's what is needful in the world today, we hear much about outreach, and so forth, right in his place, but the witness must be first in the life of the believer, that is the greatest witness of all, and it often is this more by our life, than even by our word, and when I say that, I do not mean that we should not speak, there's a time to be silent, there's a time to speak, but surely the greatest preaching, if I may so put it, or the witness in our life of inward godliness will be that which will be seen as so distinct and separate from all of the world, so follow after righteousness and godliness, and oh, you know,

I'll just name this, it just came to my mind and filled my heart with grief as I think of it, and amazed that the Lord did not deal with me for my foolishness, but I don't know if I've told you before, but it was years ago, I was preaching away in Bedfordshire, and I was due there the next week in another cause, and a dear young friend said, I'm very sorry, I shall better come because you be on duty, well, I quite and then foolishly, I said, oh, I shall come then, ah, friend, what I went through, the agony before God, a minister speaking like that, you see, well, perhaps I shouldn't say anymore, and that's only one thing, isn't it?

When our hearts are searched through and through, what we said, well, I had to beg of the Lord to forgive me. I believe I knew a little of repentance there.

I felt if the Lord laid me aside and didn't permit me to go, he would be just, but I believe he forgave my sin, and I was permitted to fulfill that next engagement.

[24 : 04] I just name it, a small example, a little detail, but it's left a mark, it's left a mark, friend. I go back to it and think, and do you do that sometimes?

I don't want to be too dwelling on stuff, but you know, well, doesn't the psalmist say, oh, remember not the sins of my youth. I go back sometimes, suddenly, there it is, right in front of me.

And what about the present? You have a hope that you've been a seeker. you have a sweet hope that you've been called by grace. You've come and made an open profession of faith.

You've been made a deacon. You're a minister of the gospel. And as it seems, higher and higher, and the older we grow, the higher the standard and what should be seen in our life.

And oh, how I'm searched through and through with it. Godliness. Follow after it. Seek after it. And there's so much to attack it today.

[25 : 09] We might come to that in a moment with the word fight. But let's just continue a little word. Follow after godliness. Faith. And I believe here I shall speak of this more as the exercise of faith, the grace of faith.

That faith which is the gift of God, which is the possession of all that are born again. Now, pray for the increase of faith.

And truly, we need, and I don't want to promote doubts, but we do need the confirming of faith.

Why? Well, those that are true believers are those that will find their faith, though it is so small at times and you are so trying concerning it, but will be attacked.

The devil will do all he can to overthrow, not that he can, but he will do all he can to oppose that faith.

[26 : 28] and then we come and it's painful into, yes, I would say backsliding. Oh, what have you done?

You've gone right back into the world, you indulging in those things that, no, not necessarily, and that's a mercy, but you know we can be a record in the house of God, right that we should be, but we could be in a backsliding state and condition, heart of heart, indifferent of spirit, and I say where is the moving of our faith, but I know this, that the Lord will revive that work, and he will bring us into such a place where we shall be brought into some depth of experience and extremity, perhaps is the better word, where under a sense of sinfulness and failure and unworthiness and weakness that we turn afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ, where we've been stripped of this, robbed of the other, turned from the other, and we come cleaving, clinging to the

Lord Jesus Christ, looking with all our fresh accumulation of sin, and it's every moment in our life, isn't it?

And to pray that the Lord in his mercy will have mercy, and what can you do? Ah, you say, I can, oh, that my poor ears will hear afresh the gospel, oh, that my eyes may be turned away from all my failings, not that I think lightly of them, they're grief to me, they're painful to me, but I turn to the cross, I turn afresh to the Savior that died, I turn afresh to the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin, the exercise of this faith, follow after it, and then again, we might also name, as we think of the 11th of Hebrews, for example, that these all died in faith, follow after that great cloud of witnesses, it's the same path, they walk by faith, not always triumphs in it, not always were they victorious, in the sense that they were failings, but oh, friend, follow them, follow that great cloud of witnesses, now the next word is love, follow after that, well, what can we say about that?

care, I want to speak with care, as I always do pray to be kept reverent, but you know, if we're ill, our temperature can be taken, it gives a little indication of the health of the body, and what we might say is the, perhaps I wouldn't use the word taking a temperature for an illness, shall we say the thermometer in the garden, and there, if it's warm, it rises, if it's cold, it goes back, I think that would be a better illustration, where is it, is it on zero tonight, is it cold, our heart hard, where is the love to Jesus, where is the love to the glorious gospel, is it not a confession of us, how weak and cold our love often is, but Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, follow after love, now this love must be spiritual, this love must be that which is set before us in the word of

[30 : 32] God, and the example set in the word of God, in this way, that if we say yes, I love Jesus Christ, I would serve him and love him with all my heart, well, is there the evidence of it in my life, does this love flow out to the brethren, does this love flow out in compassion, even to those that we may find hard to live with or to get on with, that may sometimes seem, some people do seem to have a way of perhaps rubbing us up the wrong way, I want to speak that carefully, and you need perhaps patience as the next word is, love and patience, but my friend, may there be that love, the love as seen of Jesus, that love that constrains us, that love that controls us, that love that will influence us and direct us, and that love that does not compromise with error, and love, the love of the

Lord Jesus Christ, and that love one to the other, let brotherly love continue, and patience, well I feel to lack it so much, it means really enduring, it means that again, this following after this race that is set before us, it's a patient, it is enduring unto the end, seeing him who is the invisible, all for this patience, and we can get, yes it's surprising, perhaps sometimes we are amazed, yes I believe I was patient there, I was patient under that heavy burden, I was patient under that particular cross, because the Lord drew near and blessed me, but some little irritation in our life comes along, some small detail, and oh, where's our patience there, it's like a thorn in the flesh, just a prickly thing, and it gets on top of us, and we seem to have no patience whatsoever, and what grace is needed to therefore be patient in enduring what the

Lord sees fit to bring us into and through it, the tribulation of the way, but what need we have a patience one with the other, because you see we're not all ways in a spiritual frame of mind, not always do we speak the right word, not always do we have a right understanding, and we need that grace of patience, and I turned in my meditation to that word of James, who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you, let him show out of a good conversation, that word is very embraces, very, embraces much as you know, not only just word of mouth, but walk, our conversation, our life, let him show his works, what he's doing, what he's saying, what with?

With meekness of wisdom, so here we come to this word meekness, patience, and meekness, what grace is needed, now as we've often said, meekness is not weakness, it is not being, giving way on points of truth, but a meek and lowly spirit, yet holding fast to the truth, and there we see the, as it were, the balance, a meek spirit, and yet it is fight, it means we've got to go to battle, and we've been talking about running the race, now we've got a battle to fight, and I thought we could sum up the words fleeing, following, and fighting, and that's what he said before us and fight the good fight of faith, now what are we to understand here by this word faith,

I believe, that is to contend earnestly for the face once delivered unto the saints, to take the whole armor of God, by to stand firm, thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, because there are powerful enemies, subtle enemies of the truth that error abounds on every hand, and increasingly so today.

[35 : 53] Friend, we've sometimes said it, and again, those of us that are older now never thought we would witness in this land what we do today.

Oh, the division, oh, the sad state that we are in, and what a need be there is for the alarm to be sounded forth, the trumpet of God's word to be blown, and the warning note to be sounded, a rallying cry to believers, to stand firm unitedly, to fight this good fight of faith, and to hold fast to it, stand firm in it, and to lay hold on eternal life.

This eternal life is expressive of heaven itself, the end of the journey. You see, here these words are spoken to those that are born again, new creature in Christ.

Now, lay hold on eternal life. That is, seek by the spirit's witness in your soul of the of a clear evidence and assurance that you are in that right path, that you are pressing toward that mark, that it is well with your soul, so that when you reach, as you will reach the end of your life, the end of your days, you may be brought at last into glory to lay hold on eternal life.

Now, to lay hold would speak to me in the simplicity of my mind that I can't hang on to something else, can I?

[38 : 02] If I'm going to lay hold onto a particular object, I must have my hands free and emptied and to lay hold.

And I think, as I name that, a word now comes to confirm us and to help us as we use scripture to unlock the scripture.

As the apostle Paul later says in writing to the Hebrews, that by two mutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, what for?

To lay hold upon the hope set before us, that good hope through grace, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entres within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.

That laying hold of that good hope, that as it were to be an anchor when we are tossed and tempted and tried and fear, full of fears that we shall sink in the storm and have that which holds us fast and keeps us firm.

[39 : 32] And this is what I see, oh friend, what a wonderful place to be in, in life's journey, to see, yes, I believe it's well with my soul, I believe when I come to die, I shall enter by God's grace into glory, and to lay hold of it, to have that title clear to mansions in the sky, the sealing of the Holy Spirit of God, that Paul writes about in the epistle to the Ephesians, where he says, in whom also ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Now, we know that the mark of the seal is there at the new birth, and that seal can never be erased. It is assurance of heaven, and the mark of that seal stands forever, but as I also see in this, are the sweet confirmings of the seal, or if you like, the seal so often seems to be covered over, and the Lord to appear, and the light of his truth to shine upon that seal, and to shine it into our heart, and to confirm our soul, enabling us to say, I know whom I have believed and am persuaded, that is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

And that seal, as the apostle here says, is the earnest of our inheritance, that means it's a foretaste, it is a clear title to, it's a clear assurance of, a foretaste, an earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, the coming of Jesus, to receive to himself all his dear children forever and ever in glory, where the spirit and the body, that body change in a moment, will be reunited in heaven.

Whereunto thou art also called, called by grace, an effectual calling, a powerful calling, a personal calling, a calling out, and a calling in, as we read, and he referred to in prayer on Monday night, of the children of Israel being brought out to be brought in, and that is true, called, called by grace, and has professed, a good profession, before many witnesses, that one's life may be seen as a clear witness of the profession of our faith, and all that grace may be given us thus to walk, that we may hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful, the promise.

And I close with these words, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.

[43 : 05] Amen.