

TOTAL COMMITMENT!

I Tim. 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called

Being a Christian is not for the fainthearted, the feeble or the faint. Contrary to popular opinion, it has never been easy standing up for Christ, - the world makes it difficult being a Christian. *That* is the reason why early Church was persecuted, Christians down through the centuries were put to death for their faith, and even today there is more persecution against the Church than ever before. Our young people today, - who want to maintain a faithful witness before their friends, - have to contend with such a barrage of opposition that is increasing all the time.

In these modern times in our evangelical churches there is a deluge of spurious material for those with itching ears (I Tim. 4:3,4) and wandering eyes. Satan used to do the main bulk of his work outside the church; nowadays, however, the door has been flung so widely open that he now confidently and blatantly spreads his seeds of error and deception among the people of God.

As a consequence, we *must* take heed of the warnings of Scripture. Error has been following the truth since the dawn of time, since the serpent tempted Eve in the garden. Paul warned Timothy, 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies ... v.6 From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling [*i.e. meaningless talk*]; 7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.... 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

These false preachers were coming into the assemblies and were asking questions and giving no answers, - they were raising doubts and as a consequence they some were faltering on the foundational issues of the faith and of God's Word. The people listening to them did not know what to believe!

Paul told Timothy to be ready, ... it is not a matter *if* these things come ..., it is a matter *when*! It is going to happen, and Timothy you need to be diligent and firm and prepared! ... 1:18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, ... that thou by them mightest war a good warfare ... 4:5 sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. ... 16 Take heed

unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

In chapter six Paul gave four injunctions to Timothy that he would need to abide by to achieve Godly success, and also a consistent continued ministry as “a man of God”.

In v.11 he tells him to **flee these things**. Have nothing to do with them! There is nothing wrong with running away, - common sense sometimes dictates it. If you walk into a farmyard and two barking dogs come running at you, the wisest to do is get back the car! .. Joseph fled when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him (Gen. 39:12), and David fled when Saul tried to kill him (I Sam. 19:10). When Paul told him to **flee these things**, he meant for Timothy to flee them! He did not say go and have discussions with them and see what you might have in common and try to move forward together! He was telling him to flee! He was referring to those who coveted after money, and who have **erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows** (v.10). Paul was instructing Timothy to separate himself from the sins of the false teachers ... he had previously given the same counsel, **from such withdraw thyself** (v.5).

Not all unity is good, and not all division is bad. There are times when it is necessary to take a stand against false doctrine and ungodly practices! Biblical separation is a clear command God has always expected His people to maintain.

I have heard of evangelicals in the past who became involved in ecumenical activities, - with clergy who do not believe in the Gospel of saving grace, or in the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and in the doctrines of eternal reward and punishment. They involved themselves with good, - albeit naive – intentions, “how can we expect these church leaders to change if we don’t go in and tell them where they are wrong?” Ah, but the problem is twofold: firstly, God’s Word tells you to stay out, and secondly, if God tells you to do a thing and you don’t do it, how can you expect Him to reward your disobedience? These evangelicals end up being changed ... and not for the better of God’s glory because they wilfully made shipwreck of their faith and in doing so have led many astray, - God does not bless disobedience ... not when His Word firmly and uncompromisingly commands, **flee these things** (v.11) ... **from such withdraw thyself** (v.5).

Paul's second injunction to Timothy is to **follow** after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (v.11). These are characteristics of being a Christian, - they are the evidences of the Holy Spirit working in the believer. A true believer has his mind set on achieving these qualities.

Flee ... Follow ... The third injunction is **Fight** the good fight of faith (v.12). It is a command, an imperative. The word is ἀγωνίζομαι, from which we get our word 'agony'. Keep on fighting ... not amongst ourselves, though ... it means to keep straining and giving more than our best, - never relaxing, never 'dropping our guard', - against the enemy. It is fighting to defend the truth because we hold it so precious. The prize at the end of the battle is nothing less than God's gift of eternal life and standing alongside others who have been faithful in the faith.

... And in v.20, - after instructing Timothy to **flee, follow** and **fight**, - he tells him to be **faithful**, *keep that which is committed to thy trust*. From the commencement of my own personal ministry these words have been of the utmost importance to me. When Dr. Ivor Oakley preached at my ordination service almost twenty-two years ago, he preached from a very similar passage, - indeed, an extension of these words in v.20; he set before me the words of Paul to Timothy, II Tim. 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

He charged me, - *before God*, - to carry out the work of a pastor, - in keeping with God's criteria, - to the best of my ability, with the Lord's help, and to the Lord's glory ... because there is coming a day when I shall give an account of myself for that over which He has given me responsibility. I'm grateful for the encouragements of God's people, and I also know that along with the encouragements inevitably comes the opposition ... but at the end of the day, none of *that* matters ... what matters is how God has found me faithful.

So I understand Paul's words here in I Tim. 6:20 are primarily within the context of encouragement to a fellow-pastor, but surely this instruction is relevant to each child of God, *keep that which is committed to thy trust*. Beyond any shadow of a doubt, it is a Christian virtue to be fully committed to the Lord. We are not doing Him a favour giving Him an extra hour or two, or an extra thought in the day ... Surely the Lord saves us to be fully committed, - not half-hearted, not whenever it suits ... but *fully committed*.

What happens when there is *not* full commitment?

* There are two very obvious consequences, - **DISSENSION** and **DECEIT**. There comes 'conflict into the camp', in among God's people.

* Men like Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20) are a continuous blight within the fellowship of believers. How many good fellowships have suffered and even closed because of Christian warfare ... *against each other!* Christians fighting among themselves while an unbelieving world rubs their hands in glee!

* In every church Paul wrote to there was dissension ... and there are all types of reasons that breed dissension.

* Sometimes it is simply personalities ... and nothing to do with doctrine or practice. One personality must get his/her way over another ... and it has nothing particularly to do with doctrine. It is obstinacy/crookedness!

* I have seen believing families 'fall out' with each other, and go off and form their own fellowship!

* Often it is over a point of such outright insignificance that beggars belief! ... At the end of the day, - the church is not my church, or your church ... *it is Christ's Church!*

* I do not have the freedom to do anything I would like in this church, - and neither do you. It's not a matter of 'running it past the deacons' or bringing it to a church business meeting. It is Christ's seal of approval we need!

* Maybe we have heard of something that is 'working' in another church, - "let's try that". "Let's try this other thing ... maybe it will work ... or here is another idea, let's try it!"

* ... But it doesn't matter whether the church 'down the road' used it or the church on the other side of the world and it 'worked' ... what makes it *truly* work in our context is if it has God's seal of approval!

* If God is not leading in a certain direction, it will not succeed.

* But these characters were coming into the fellowship on the Lord's Day morning, and they were going up 'to their seats' in the front of the church, and they were making sure everyone was watching to notice how holy they were ... but the worst came when they opened their mouths.

* They were experts at 'vain jangling' (1:6). They were so articulate and so up-to-date with matters in society, and they knew how society was 'progressing' and how it would be 'a good idea' to bring some of society's ideas into the church ... and they could put it all into good words, - 'vain janglers'.

* And previously the people of God in that congregation met for Bible Study, for the preaching of the Gospel, for the fellowship round the Lord's Table, and for prayer. And before these characters came in the people knew and loved the Lord *together* ... and they had a good witness.

* But these characters brought in that which was not sanctioned by God's Word and by the teachings of the apostles. As a consequence, confusion began to reign, debates developed into arguments and fallouts ... and soon there was disruption ... and the whole town and the surrounding areas heard what these 'Christians' were up to!

* Anything was permissible with them, - *fables and genealogies*, 1:4, i.e. speaking fancy words, simply to be heard and admired, talking about things they knew nothing about, v.7, ... they just sounded good.

* Once upon a time they were familiar with the truth ... and that was how they became accepted, but they have since departed from it (4:1). They have chosen to chase after new doctrines, *and doctrines of devils*.

* They unsettle God's people, and bring in confusion (4:3). They preach an 'easy believism' that has no Biblical grounding, and therefore Paul told Timothy, *4:7 exercise thyself rather unto godliness*. ... Stay away from it, and don't get caught up in it!

* And then they would come at Timothy, and they would cast doubt upon his ability to be a pastor, - "You are too young!" they would say.

* They would try all the nasty tricks, but Paul told the young pastor, Pay no heed to them, v.12 *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* 13 *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

* The enemy is cruel and the enemy is clever ... and Paul told Timothy, Concentrate on serving Christ faithfully, Biblically and to the best of your ability.

* Yes, of course, beware of the enemy 'in the camp' ... just as Jude described, *3 Beloved*, ... *it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort*

you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares ...

* The Lord Jesus had the enemy in the form of Judas Iscariot, Paul had the enemy in his camp also ... so the enemy is still busy among God's people to this very day ... and he will become increasingly more active and more subtle as the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ approaches.

* There is a gospel today being preached that offers something for everyone, - it has a little bit of this, and little piece of that ... and it will suit you no matter who you are, and no matter what you want. ... Just you come along and we'll see what we can do. It is a gospel that limits Christ, a Gospel that does not have God as its Author ...

* It is so serious that Paul warned the Galatians, 1:8 though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ... Because it was so important for the believers to grasp, he said the same thing twice!

* **Dissension** and **deceit** are two mighty weapons the enemy fires his bullets from ... and they can be fatal!

* You need to know about the believer's armoury and to make sure you keep it on, - the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the Gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer (cf. Eph. 6:14-18).

* We are at war, we are fighting the Lord's cause and we need to fight it together. It calls for **total commitment** ... and a **dedication** to the Lord and what He commands in His Word.

* I am no longer my own, - He purchased me and now I belong to Him.

* I have no rights. The moment I became a soldier in His army I have no choice but to serve Him the way He sets out before me

* I am here for God's glory ... I don't manipulate Him or tell Him He has to fit in with what I think.

* We are not working *only* for the church, - we are working for the Christ of the Church ... and God has a particular word for me as pastor, - for which He holds me responsible, 4:6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

* Jude tells us to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (v.3), ... and Paul tells us, keep that which is committed to thy trust, ... and *that* tells me I am not to make it up, or develop it in keeping with how the world is progressing, ... but it tells me to serve the Lord the same way men like Elijah served Him, - and Elijah was 'out of step' with his society ... and it tells me to serve the Lord the same way Amos served Him, - and Amos was lambasted in Bethel by Amaziah the priest who told him, 7:12 O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there ... Get away out of here! ... Or like Jeremiah who confronted the apostate priests who were telling the people only what they wanted to hear.

CONCLUSION

* You probably can detect I feel very strongly about this verse, I Tim. 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, ... and I do hold these words close to my heart. It is so personal.

* I must be careful to do that which the Lord has called me to do, ... to do that which He has set in front of me to do.

* I am not to be a 'showman' or an entertainer. I am not to 'tickle' people's fancies. You are not sharing in the work with me to search out some new gospel for the twenty-first century, - God does not command us to change the Gospel He has already given us, - He expects us to serve Him with **total commitment** in the way our forefathers in the faith has done it for centuries and millennia.

* It is not ours to change or adjust because we would ultimately distort it. It is God's work, and only in accordance with His Will can we ever hope to achieve the results acceptable to Him.

* For the time-being, - in our present circumstances, - I believe the Lord has a very definite work for us to do here.

* Yes, I would love to have a great big tent in the middle of Ravenscraig Park, and have a large choir and beautiful music, and rows and rows of those folding chairs ... and the place packed! I would love to see that. The Gospel would be preached through the loudspeakers, and not only would the people in their seats hear it but the people in their homes along Dysart Road would hear it too. Men and women, boys and girls would be invited to come and place their faith in Christ for salvation. I would love for the Lord to come and do something like that.

* But what if we hired the tent, and arranged all the seating? What if we had beautiful and attractive invitations printed out?

- * What if we got the choir and the music to perfection? Unless the Lord was in it ... no matter how good it all looked, even our best efforts would achieve little.
- * We are in the Lord's work, aren't we? We are in the place He has for us to be. It is in the midst of a largely disinterested people, with gospels galore coming from religious pulpits around us.
- * In the midst of all this, God's Word calls upon His people here for **total commitment** ... commitment that involves more than 100%! Who? Us? ... Yes, even us!
- * Timothy, you are a young pastor, sometimes you don't be too well, you have awkward people to contend with, and awkward situations, and you live in a society indifferent to their need of salvation.
- * Did Timothy ever become a great preacher like Paul? How many books of the Bible did Timothy write? Well, he didn't become a preacher to the stature of Paul, but he preached faithfully amongst that small number of people to whom the Lord called him. Neither did he write any books of the Bible ... but the Lord used him nevertheless.
- * What was his secret? It is no real secret at all, he just simply 'got on with what the Lord had for him to do' ... **total commitment** to the Lord ... seeking to do the Lord's work the Lord's way to the Lord's glory!
- * In these days when the love of many professing believers is waxing cold, let's press on and be faithful.
- * It is the responsibility of us all in this place, - both to those who heed it and those who don't; the message continues to be, *keep that which is committed to thy trust*. ... The **Christian virtue** of **total commitment**.