

# Flee, Follow, Fight

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## Introduction

We are in a spiritual battle today, the like of which has been duplicated in time but once, and that was in the days prior to the flood. It was then that the Scriptures tells us, *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Genesis 6:5). As was the decadence of that day, so it is in our lifetime, with the evils of all kinds of wickedness that has spread across the face of the world, and more so in our own country.

But the battle is not just against the evil forces around us, but the evil that lies within our very hearts. It is not so much the satanic forces that compel us to fall into sin, although those truly are there. But it is the fact that our own evil nature itself is so willing to succumb to temptations and our compelling drive to bring sin upon ourselves because of our own will.

Our test in First Timothy chapter six tells us, *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* (I Timothy 6:11-12).

We have a battle on our hands, and not just against the devil and his forces of evil, but the evil which lies within each of us. It is my desire that you learn through this simple lesson that you can and do have the victory if you are willing to submit yourself to God and allow Him to be the center and master of your heart and life.

I trust through reading this, you will heed the words of the Scripture and truly see that you can have the victory, if you just learn to flee, follow and fight.

# Flee

*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 (I Timothy 6:11-12).*

We see first of all that we are to *flee these things*. But what *things* was it that the Apostle Paul was referring to in regard to that which we are to flee? In verses one through ten, we are given that example of a Christian life that we are to live and that which we are to avoid. We read:

*1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*

*2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.*

*3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;*

*4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,*

*5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

*6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

*7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

*8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

*9 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.*

*10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

First of all, we find there are those who had believing masters. In our present day, we would speak of this as being the bosses to which we have been blessed with the honor of working under, who know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Far too often, however, a Christian has seen this as an advantage of which they think, because they are also Christians and their employers are Christian, the employer can be taken advantage of. What a blight this must be to those around us who are not saved, to see that because we are Christians, we think we can take advantage of the situation and “goof

off” while the boss is not around, or sometimes even in their presence. “Well, he is a Christian and it would be a reflection against him if he would fire me, because I am a Christian also.” For this very reason we have verse one, which states at its end, ***that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.***

If we are a Christian, and have saved supervisors, we should strive all the harder to please them, as stated in verse two: ***And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.***

Second, we are also told to *flee* those who teach and preach false doctrine. We read in verses three through five, ***If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.***

Far too often we hear the old saying, “Well, we don’t want to discuss any doctrine. It is too narrow a view for **our** church to be teaching.” Well then, my friend, what are you using to teach in your church? If you are teaching anything from the Bible, you **are** teaching doctrine, because Second Timothy 3:16-17 tells us, ***All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*** It is profitable for what? It is profitable for *doctrine*, correction and instruction into that which is righteousness or right living.

This reminds me of the time when the Kansas City newspaper had an advertisement by Youth for Christ, stating they would be holding a Bible study on such and such a night, and then made the statement, “We will not be discussing doctrine.” You can’t teach from the Bible without teaching doctrine, for the entire Bible is doctrine. As one preacher once made the statement, “Wherever you cut the Bible, it bleeds,” the Bible is God’s Word, spoken and written. It is “God breathed.” Perhaps we should say the inspiration of God is the expiration of His Word. It is breathed into man through the Holy Spirit that it may be breathed out into the world through preaching.

We are to *flee* false doctrine. Second John, verses ten and eleven tells us, ***If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*** We are not to even say, “Good bye,” for that is just saying, “God be with you,” and if they are preaching false doctrine, God is surely not with them.

Second Corinthians 6:14-18 tells us, ***Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.***

Third, the Bible tells us that we are to *flee* the lusts of riches. In closing out verse five, Paul stated, ***supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*** I wonder just how many men have gone into the ministry simply because they saw it as a means of gaining riches? Certainly this is true in some of our mainline cults, with their rich, gold laden buildings, huge marble columns and statues.

But there is also the greed by ministers for larger and wealthier church buildings. Some are not satisfied with small congregations, but make the practice of looking for somewhere that they could enrich their own coffers. The tale is told of the preacher who was invited to come to visit a church for deputation. This was a larger church and would surely bring him a much greater salary. He went home to his wife and told her of the offer, and said he was going to go upstairs and pray to the Lord about it. She said, "Wait and I will go pray with you." His reply was, "Oh no, you stay down here and start to pack." He had already made up his mind, without consulting whether or not it was within the will of God.

Verses six through ten of our text tell us what will be the outcome of those who seek riches. ***But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 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 of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*** It is not money that is the evil in itself. It is ***the love of money*** which is ***the root of all evil***. How many have been cast into the outer darkness of Hell, simply because they trusted in their riches and thought that because they prospered, surely it was a sign that God had blessed them?

Then fourth, in First Corinthians 6:18, we are told, ***Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*** We are not to permit the lusts of the body to consume us. Our bodies no longer are our possession if we are a child of God. The text there goes on to say, ***What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.***

Fifth, we read in First Corinthians 10:14, ***Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*** Idolatry is anything that we put in the place of God. Come Super Bowl Sunday, or the baseball playoffs and World Series, there will be many who will suddenly be "sick" and unable to go to church, so they can stay home and watch the games on television. Or it may simply be the weekend hunting warrior who takes the opportunity to go hunting for pheasant, deer or whatever. And their excuse is, "Oh, we can be close to God in the glory of His creation." In the first place, what we see around us is not God's creation. It is His second best, that which is the result of sin and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. And secondly, I readily doubt that anyone is going to be worshiping God while they are tramping through the woods, hunting for game.

While on tour and stationed in Italy in the military, I found it quite amazing, being able to visit various cities and finding their religious buildings surrounded by idolatrous statues with gold, silver and many precious gems that depicted some part of the body that

had supposedly been “healed” by that particular statue. In one city, there was a building called “The church of the bones,” in which, down in its catacombs, there were areas in which we stacked literally thousands upon thousands of bones from various parts of the bodies of those who had been slain during the inquisition and even during the time of earlier persecutions. These areas were cordoned off so that they could be viewed, only after someone would drop a coin into a slot to light up that area for view and of all things, for people to worship those bones. To think that such an insidious cult would take advantage of their evil practice of murder of the righteous by making gain through displaying them for the world to see.

Idolatry can also be anything that we place as priority in our lives. Is it absolutely necessary for work on Sunday? Would not God further bless you if you honored His day instead? Look how He had to punish His children of Israel when they were in the wilderness, and were told not to gather manna on their Sabbath day. Today, we not only are not required to worship on the Sabbath, but don’t even bother to do so on the Lord’s Day, which is remembered as the day Jesus rose from the dead. Could not God make those dollars, those crops and fruit trees prosper so you would not lose those extra dollars on Sunday, and what income you have to be spread further over the remainder of the days you do work?

We find in Second Timothy 2:22 almost a duplication of our text, where there it reads, ***Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with the that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*** Lusts are sensual desires that cause us to not only sin against our own bodies, but also sin against Almighty God. I would presume Joseph’s temptation to give in to Potiphor’s wife was great, but he stated that he could not sin against God.

We find when you ***flee these things***, and resist the devil, the Bible says that the devil will ***flee from you*** (James 4:7). But far too often we flee when we are to resist, and then resist when we should flee. Would God show us when it is appropriate to discern His will for our lives, and when to flee from the temptations of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (I John 2:15). The man, woman or child who can learn to yield their bodies unto the Lord will find that when temptations do come, there is a way of escape (I Corinthians 10:13).

## 2. Follow

Having seen what we must flee, we are then told that which we are to *follow*. Our text tells us to *follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*.

**Righteousness:** We find many definitions for the word righteousness. The term means a piety in the sense of true honor toward God without pride. It is not as the old saying, “I’m proud to be humble,” or “It is hard to be humble when you are as great as I am.” Righteousness is devoutness toward God. It is honoring Him above ourselves or anyone else for that matter. It is “right living.”

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary gives this definition of righteousness: “Noun. Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. Righteousness, as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.

**Godliness:** Godliness is a reverence towards the one whom alone has the authority to direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). Godliness is again piety, a devout love for the one who first loved us, as we read in First John 4:19, *We love him, because he first loved us*. And if we love Him, we will also love one another, as stated in verse eleven, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*.

**Faith:** Faith is defined as a complete trust in someone or something over which we have no control. It is like the small child in a second-story window, with the house ablaze around him, looking down at the waiting arms of his dad. He must trust that his father will catch him or he will perish. Faith is as stated in Hebrews, having a confidence in something we cannot even see or discern. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Hebrews 11:1, 3, 6).

Again in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, faith is described thus: “Noun. To trust; to persuade, to draw towards any thing, to conciliate; to believe, to obey. In the Greek Lexicon of Hederic it is said, the primitive signification of the verb is to bind and draw or lead, as ‘peisa’ signifies a rope or cable, as does ‘peisma.’ But this remark is a little incorrect. The sense of the verb, from which that of a rope and binding is derived, is to strain, to draw, and thus to bind or make fast. A rope or cable is that which makes fast.”

Faith is as the song we sing on Sunday mornings, “Faith is just believing what God says He will do,” or you can state it, “Faith is just believing, what God says, He will do.”

The opposite of faith is doubt, distrust or lack of confidence. It is saying, “I will get to Heaven my own way,” and finding out in the end that our way is the way of destruction. As we read in Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should*

**boast.** It is simply saying, “Lord, I believe,” and leaving everything else up to God. Faith is waiting on God, when we are in a hurry to get our own way.

**Love:** And then there is the often misused and much abused word, *love*. We hear someone saying they “made love” to someone, when in actuality they are talking about a licentious affair out of the bonds of marriage; something that is totally lacking in love, but is merely filling one’s own lustful desires.

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary again defines love as, “Noun. An affection of the mind by beauty and worth of any kind, or by the qualities of an object which communicates pleasure, sensual or intellectual. It is opposed to hatred. Love between the sexes, is a compound affection, consisting of esteem, benevolence, and animal desire. The love of God is the first duty of man and this springs from just views of his attributes or excellencies of character, which afford the highest delight to the sanctified heart.”

As has been mentioned before many times, there are three words today that are translated *love*. One is the word *eros* (air-os), which is the word we use for “erotic” or fleshly lust. It is sexual pleasure simply for the satisfaction of the lusts of the body. Such a term is used to describe pornography at its worse.

There is the word *φιλειω* (fill-e-o), from which we get our word Philadelphia, or “brotherly love.” The word speaks of a kindly affection towards someone; a caring for someone who is a very close friend and dear to our heart, but not an intimate relationship. It is like two boyhood friends who grow apart from each other over the years, only to have their friendship renewed when meeting again.

Then there is the word *αγαπη* (uh-gop-ay), which is the love one has for another, despite whether that love is ever returned. Such a love we find in that which God in His infinite mercy did for us, in sending His only Son, Jesus Christ into the world to suffer and die for our sins.

We read in Romans 5:7-8, ***For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*** One could imagine another person jumping out in front of a speeding vehicle to rescue a small child or maybe even an adult. Men in battle have been known to throw themselves over a live grenade in an effort to save their comrades. But for someone to willingly give his life for a despicable criminal would seem to be incredulous to say the least. Could you imagine a criminal, heading for death row for kidnapping, then raping and murdering a child, then to see a total stranger come up to the Governor and tell him he wanted to die in that person’s place? Then the ultimate of abuse would be when the criminal totally refused to accept this gift of someone else taking his place? My friend, that is exactly what God in His infinite mercy did for you and me. Jesus came into this world to die for ALL our sins. And yet, there are those who shake their fists in the face of God and say, “No, I don’t want your gift of salvation. I’ll get to Heaven my own way.” And yet, God still in His love permitted the ultimate of deaths, in the crucifixion on Calvary, to be placed upon His beloved Son. My friend, that is love.

**Patience:** Patience is forbearance, endurance, and calm dependency in waiting for God to act and move in His own timeframe. The story is told of a preacher who was seen pacing up and down the hallway, outside his office. His secretary approached him and asked, “Is something wrong, pastor?” To which he replied, “Yes! I’m in a hurry and God isn’t.” Is not that like all of us? We are as the man who prays, “Lord, give me

patience and I want it right now.” Be careful what you pray for. God just might send trials and tribulations into your life, the like of which you had never experienced before. The Bible says, ***Tribulation worketh patience***. If you ask for patience, God might just give it to you in a way you had never expected.

And again, Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines patience as, “The primary sense of continuance, holding out, from extending. A calm temper which bears evils without murmuring or discontent. The act or quality of waiting long for justice or expected good without discontent. Not hasty; not over eager or impetuous; waiting or expecting with calmness or without discontent.”

***Meekness***: Again we come upon the word humility, a docile attitude towards others when we would like to raise our fist and plant it on the edge of someone’s nose. Or better yet, take our shoe and throw it at someone, with our foot still inside it.

Meekness is being submissive to the wishes of others. How often in the work place is there the attitude, “Why do I have to do what he says?” You may be in a position where one employee has been placed over you to get a job done and you buck against that person’s authority to tell you what to do. That, my friend, is not meekness, nor is it submission.

Meekness, again as defined in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary is, “Noun. Softness of temper, mildness; gentleness; forbearance under injuries and provocations. In an evangelical sense, humility; resignation; submission to the divine will, without murmuring or peevishness; opposed to pride.”

The prime example of following in the steps of meekness would be that of the statement our Lord made when He said, ***Follow me***. In other words, follow His example. The answer He received is sad to say, the attitude of too many people. Those whom He had addressed returned with a “me first” attitude. Let “me first” do this or that. That is not meekness.

Whatever He would do, that you should do. And whatever He would NOT do, you should refrain from that also. It is like the statement in the book by Charles Shelton, In His Steps. “What would Jesus do?” If you would ask yourself that question, and then follow the advice that the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart, you would find yourself following more closely in your day by day walk with the Lord.

Meekness and humility go hand-in-hand. It is doing what you are required to do without having to be praised. It is the attitude of doing what the Lord requires you to do, simply because you love Him for what He had done for you, and then letting Him have all the praise.

There is a song we sing in Sunday school that states, “Sweetly submitting to authority, leaving to God all the rest.” To walk in this attitude is the spirit of meekness.

### 3. Fight

Finally, we come to the one most misunderstood terms in many Christian circles, and that is of fighting. Far too often we hear the old adage, “Well, a Christian ought not to fight but to turn the other cheek.” But there is sometimes a fight that we have, a warfare that battles against our very souls. Far too often young men use the argument against going into the military, that it is against their religion. If they would only read the Old Testament, they would see that God commanded His nation of Israel to be warriors against the evil nations around them. I would presume that if we could count the total of those slain by Israel in their conquest of the land of Canaan, given them by God, the total would be more than both World War One and Two, the Korean Conflict, the skirmish in Vietnam and those lost in the battle in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.

There is a time when we must fight. The Bible clearly tells us, ***But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*** (I Timothy 5:8). Providing is more than sustaining them with food, clothing and a place to live. It is also providing them with safety against those who would seek to destroy their home, their children or their very lives. When anyone would threaten the safety of your family, it is your responsibility to protect them.

But the ultimate in battle is the fight we have against Satan and his emissaries of evil. We are told in Ephesians 6:11-12, ***Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*** If you are a Christian, being born again through the power of the Holy Spirit, Satan knows he no longer can destroy you in Hell. But he then steps up his attacks against you more fiercely, trying everything imaginable to keep you from serving the Lord Jesus Christ. He will bring the wrong young person into your life to draw you away from serving God. Or he will attempt you to go to the wrong college, then be fed with the filth of the infidels that speak against God and anything that is holy and righteous. Or he will bring a luxurious job into your path to keep you from being willing to go on the mission field to tell others about the Savior.

Our warfare is strong. We are told in Hebrews, ***But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions*** (Hebrews 10:32). When you are saved, there is a constant battle on hand. Far too many so-called radio and television evangelists will tell you, “Something good is going to happen to you today,” when the Scriptures tells us, ***For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*** (Philippians 1:29). Second Timothy 3:12 tells us, ***Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*** First Timothy 6:12 says, ***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.*** We are in a constant battle, not only to stay strong and true to the Word of God, but to keep our faith strong.

Now the question that arises is, will you ***flee, follow and fight*** as God has commanded you? Will you ***flee*** the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? Will you ***follow*** the example given by Jesus Himself, and through righteousness,

faith, charity, and peace and meekness, following in His footsteps? And will you *fight* the good fight of faith? That is our goal in life as a Christian.