

I.N.I.

Reformation Sunday  
October 30, 2011  
I Timothy 6:11-16

In Christ Jesus, who testified that He was a King whose kingdom was not of this world and bore witness to the Truth before Pontius Pilate, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One of the most famous stories of Martin Luther's life is when he was called before the Diet in Worms, Germany by Emperor Charles V in 1521. He had ordered this special meeting to solve the problems created by Luther's "new teachings." The Emperor hoped to end the religious differences between the German princes and the Catholic Church. Many of Luther's friends felt that Martin should not go to the meeting, for they feared he would never return alive. They reminded him of how John Huss was burned at the stake about 100 years earlier for what the church called heretical teaching. Huss taught the Word of God. Luther's response was, "If my enemies kindle a fire between Wittenberg and Worms reaching up to heaven, yet will I appear in the name of the Lord, step into the very mouth and between the great teeth of the devil, confess Christ, and let Him have full sway. If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs, yet I would enter it."

And so on April 16, 1521 Luther entered the city of Worms. Early the next morning Luther was summoned to appear before the diet at 4:00 in the afternoon. What an assembly of the mighty was gathered there. The emperor and the German princes, councils, bishops, priests and the powerful from Rome. Some 5,000 people were gathered in the hallways, on the stairs and in the courtyard. Luther was first asked if the books lying on the bench in front of him were his writings and then secondly if he would retract their teachings. Luther carefully examined the titles of all the books present and replied that yes they were his. As to the second question, he declared that he could not answer at once, since it was a matter that concerned faith, salvation, and the Word of God--the greatest treasure in heaven and on earth. Luther had come to the meeting expecting to defend the Bible and his teaching from it. He needed time to reflect on his writings and the Word.

His request was granted and the next day he was again called before the powerful assembly and asked the same question. "Will you defend the teachings of your books and writings or will you recant." Luther replied at length that what he had written and taught was based alone on God's Word and his intent was solely to glorify God and was for the welfare and salvation of Christians. He cited Jesus' words, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil" and said that if they had found anything that he had written that was contrary to God's revealed Word, show it to him, convince him of it and he would at once be ready and willing to retract every error and be the first to cast his own books into the fire.

Harshly the imperial spokesman demanded that all they wanted was a simple answer, recant your writings or stand by them. Luther replied, "Since your imperial Majesty desires a clear, simple, and precise answer I will give you one...Unless you can prove from the Holy Scriptures that I have made wrong statements and have spoken contrary to God's Word, I cannot and will not recant. My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen."

Luther was declared an outlaw by the Emperor which meant anyone could kill him after 20 days.

Luther indeed **FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH**, he **LAID HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE** and he **CONFESSED THE GOOD CONFSSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES**. And that is exactly what God expects of all of us, His children.

From the Apostle Paul's words to the young pastor Timothy we see that God expects of us

## **1. A GODLY LIFE--FLEEING AND PURSUING**

### **2. A FAITHFUL CONFESSION**

### **3. A PREPARATION FOR HIS RETURN**

We read again vs. 11-12 **BUT YOU, O MAN OF GOD, FLEE THESE THINGS AND PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS, GODLINESS, FAITH, LOVE, PATIENCE, GENTLENESS. FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH, LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE, TO WHICH YOU WERE ALSO CALLED, AND HAVE CONFESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES.**

Paul begins this section by saying **FLEE THESE THINGS**. What things is Paul talking about? We find in verses 9-10 Paul wrote **BUT THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE RICH FALL INTO TEMPTATION AND A SNARE, AND INTO MANY FOOLISH AND HARMFUL LUSTS WHICH DROWN MEN IN DESTRUCTION AND PERDITION. FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY IS A ROOT OF ALL KINDS OF EVIL, FOR WHICH SOME HAVE STRAYED FROM THE FAITH IN THEIR GREEDINESS, AND PIERCED THEMSELVES THROUGH WITH MANY SORROWS.** The Lord is saying, "Flee from the desire to be rich and the temptations to which this desire leads--the love of money, greed and all the evils associated with it." In verse 6 Paul had written **BUT GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN** and in vs. 8 he wrote **AND HAVING FOOD AND CLOTHING, WITH THESE WE SHALL BE CONTENT.**

Flee, keep on running away from all of this evil in your heart for more and more, this craving, this desiring for money and the things of this life. These things can only lead to ruin and destruction. For greed is never satisfied, the desire for more and more is a hole that can never be filled. Flee these temptations of the sinful, selfish heart.

Then **O MAN OF GOD PURSUE**, that is: run after, strive for, seek, aspire to **RIGHTEOUSNESS**: not in the sense of justification, for God has already declared us righteous for Christ's sake. Here righteousness is used in the sense of our sanctified life, pursuing after and increasing in living according to God's Will through the power of the Spirit.

**GODLINESS**: another name for the same quality of righteousness, but with an emphasis on reverence toward God.

**FAITH**: the trust, reliance and confidence that a believer has in His Lord and Savior which is created by the Spirit and increased and strengthened by the Holy Spirit through the use of the Means of Grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacraments.

**LOVE**: Agape, the selfless love of giving and committing. The perfect example is Christ's agape love for us. He sacrificed Himself on the cross for us sinners.

**PATIENCE**: the endurance which holds out under adversity, bears up under hardships and afflictions for the sake of the Gospel.

**GENTLENESS**: this Timothy would need in dealing with those under his care and we need in dealing with each other. We need to be firm in the Word, but firmness can easily be turned into harshness when defending one's position. We need to always be concerned about the salvation of those we deal with and show gentleness and love.

In continually doing this we are **FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH**. Many fights are not worth fighting. Many people go to court over a few feet of property, or their rights to do this or that. People within a nation fight each other over customs and culture. One nation fights against another because of hatred and animosity that are hundreds, if not thousands of years old.

This, Paul says, is a **GOOD FIGHT**. It is a fight for your spiritual soul. Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is involved in a fight with Satan. For **THE DEVIL WALKS ABOUT LIKE A**

**ROARING LION, SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR.** The Lord through Peter says, **RESIST HIM, STANDING FIRM IN THE FAITH.** Faith believes the **FAITHFUL SAYING WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTANCE; THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.** Faith trusts that **THERE IS ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, WHO GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL.** Faith puts one's eternal future **IN THE LIVING GOD, WHO IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL MEN.**

This call to **FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH** is not a call to draw from within ourselves, from our own strength and to trust in our own powers to defeat Satan and our sinful flesh. Christians have been tempted to do that and they have failed miserably. You and I included. Christ Jesus earned our salvation for us totally by His perfect life and atoning sacrificial death. The Holy Spirit called us to saving faith in Jesus through the use of the Gospel and now in our daily battle it is the Holy Spirit who again strengthens us through that powerful Gospel to fight the **GOOD FIGHT.**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, that in this fight, in this battle, we are to **PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD,** all the weapons God gives us for this fight--**THE BELT OF TRUTH, THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, THE SHIELD OF FAITH, THE HELMET OF SALVATION, AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD.** When Satan attacks, cut him down with **IT IS WRITTEN.** That is what Jesus did and that is what Luther did in Worms, **MY CONSCIENCE IS BOUND BY THE WORD OF GOD. HERE I STAND. I CANNOT DO OTHERWISE.**

Secondly God expects of His children **A FAITHFUL CONFESSION.** Timothy **CONFESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES** even as Jesus Christ **WITNESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE.** Paul may be talking about Timothy's baptism, or perhaps when he was installed as pastor at Ephesus or when he began his ministry as a companion on Paul's journeys. Whenever it was, it was a **GOOD CONFESSION of FAITH** in Christ Jesus before many people.

We too, have made that kind of profession. When we as instructed members confessed our faith in our Savior Jesus at our confirmation. We made a **GOOD CONFESSION** of faithfulness to the Triune God until death, we confessed a belief in all the books of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, we confessed faithfulness to the use of His Word and Sacraments, faithfulness to renounce the devil and to remain faithful and true in the Lord's Church even suffering death if need be rather than fall away from it. As a pastor I was led to make the **GOOD CONFESSION** to teach and preach God's Word in its truth and purity in your midst. All of these **CONFESSIONS** and **PROMISES** were made seeking the **HELP AND GRACE OF GOD.**

And finally God expects of us His children **TO PREPARE FOR HIS RETURN.** We heard about this last week. Here Paul wrote, **I URGE YOU IN THE SIGHT OF GOD WHO GIVES LIFE TO ALL THINGS, AND BEFORE CHRIST JESUS WHO WITNESSED THE GOOD CONFESSION BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE, THAT YOU KEEP THIS COMMANDMENT WITHOUT SPOT, BLAMELESS UNTIL OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST'S APPEARING, WHICH HE WILL MANIFEST IN HIS OWN TIME, HE WHO IS THE BLESSED AND ONLY POTENTATE, THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO ALONE HAS IMMORTALITY, DWELLING IN UNAPPROACHABLE LIGHT, WHOM NO MAN HAS SEEN OR CAN SEE, TO WHOM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER. AMEN.**

Paul's encouragement for Timothy was to continue doing what he was doing. Continue fleeing from the things of this world and the temptations that would lead him astray and keep pursuing the teaching and preaching of the Word and living for His Savior. In this way he was preparing himself

for the Lord's return. And that is the same encouragement the Lord through Paul gives to us. "Continue living your life as My child by fleeing worldly greed and lusts and pursuing godly virtues. Continue fighting the good fight of faith with a daily use of My Word as your weapon against Satan and self. Ever keeping in mind this thought that some day **IN MY OWN TIME** I, your Lord and Savior, will come again."

The thought of the Lord's return in glory moves Paul to a song of praise. As he considers the wonders of God's work for our salvation, his heart overflows with words of praise. It is as though Paul cannot find enough expressions to show the majesty and uniqueness of our God. He is the **BLESSED** and **ONLY POTENTATE**. All happiness is found only in His presence and comes from Him. He is the All-Powerful Ruler. He is the **KING** of kings and He is the **LORD** of lords. Above and beyond all who have power and might on this earth. He alone is immortal, meaning not only that He will not die, but He is deathless. His very nature is **LIFE**. That is why it is so amazing that the Son of God came into this world to take our place, He who was deathless, died **SO THAT THROUGH HIS DEATH HE MIGHT DESTROY HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OVER DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL**.

God lives in unapproachable light. Moses was told by the LORD God, **YOU CANNOT SEE MY FACE; FOR NO MAN SHALL SEE ME AND LIVE**. Yet, in His grace He has revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son who says, **ANYONE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER** and in John 1:18 we are told, **NO ONE HAS SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME. THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHO IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HAS DECLARED HIM**. The unapproachable God has made Himself approachable through His Son so that we can dare to approach His throne and call Him Father.

As we too reflect on who our God is and what He has done for us on this Reformation Sunday, we cannot but join in with the Apostle Paul and say **TO HIM BE HONOR AND EVERLASTING POWER**.

**AMEN.**