

I went to Goondiwindi for a funeral this week. And the thing with funerals is they remind us of our own mortality. And so every time we go to a funeral, it's supposed to make us think of our own funeral (I haven't had mine yet BTW). I haven't even marked the date on the calendar yet, and I don't want any of you to take this the wrong way, but I'm secretly hoping some of you won't be able to get to it....

But when it comes to **your** funeral, how do you want to be remembered??? Do I want someone to say:

- “Michael was a very religious man...”
I hope they don't say that about me...
- I'd much rather it be said, “He was a man of God”

How would you like to be known? For being “religious”? Or for being a “Man/woman of God?”

There's a very significant difference – A religious person has some level of belief,, While a man/woman of God are serious about their faith, and they actively pursue Godliness.

Last week we were talking about “contentment”, and finding our contentment in Christ. The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, is very different to the Kingdom of this world, and so we value things very differently.

While people of this world crave wealth; and stuff; and achievements; and want more and more and more, we enjoy the contentment of godliness.

V6 summed it up: **6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,**

And in Chapter 6, a key word that keeps coming through, over and over again, is “Godliness”. As a man/woman of God, you will do things very different to what the world does. We pursue Godliness.

Now, to pursue/chase Godliness, means we flee (run away from) worldliness. And that’s what Paul says to Timothy,

11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things....

– What things? What we were talking about last week – Flee from:

- teaching that isn’t Godly;
- teaching that appeals to our fleshly, worldly cravings;
- the love of money;
- controversial teaching that results in all sorts of nasty stuff

You know, I’ve heard people say that we should listen to all manner of teaching and keep the meat & spit out the bones. In other words, you’ll get something good out of it, and just disregard the bad/controversial bits...

No way. He’s saying “**Flee** from these things!”

But, being a Godly man/woman doesn’t mean that we only we run **from** stuff – It also means that we run **to** stuff... A Godly

man/woman pursues **Godliness**... And so Paul says to Timothy, “Pursue:

- righteousness
 - strive to do the right thing at all times;

- Godliness
 - keep God at the centre, and reflect Christ-likeness in everything we do;

- Faith
 - Our faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He did for us on the cross. Let’s never fall into the trap of having some kind of ‘moral religion’, where we tend to think that we’ve earned our own righteousness by being good.
 - Our righteousness comes by faith;
 - Our faith is in the one whom we cannot see.
 - And we know and believe that He’s coming again.
 - And we **pursue** this faith – we keep on in the faith.
 - No matter how much the world may think we’re crazy, the faith that God has given us is so much greater than caring what others think about us.;

- love
 - As Paul said to the Corinthian church, **If I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing!**
 - Love is the bread and butter of being a disciple of Jesus. We love, because He loved us first.
 - And Jesus said to His disciples, “This is how the world will know that you’re my disciples, because of the love that you have for one another.”;

- steadfastness
 - Do not be shaken. Stand fast in God’s word. Hear it; Believe it; do it; and
- gentleness...
 - You know, some Christians can be terrible abrasive sorts of people and harsh and cutting... But those who are Godly, pursue gentleness, because this is the way of the Spirit.

Men and women of God pursue these things.

In 1 Corinthians **and** Hebrews 12, we’re given the image of running a race – we’re racing for the prize – we fix our eyes on Jesus, and we run the race of endurance. In 1 Corinthians, he then goes on to say “We’re not just boxing air”...

And here, he takes up a similar image. It’s an image of a struggle/wrestle/fight – ¹² **Fight the good fight of the faith.**

Sadly, many people start out following Jesus, but they are not prepared for the struggle that it is; They are not prepared for the wrestle or the fight that living the Christian life is, and so they fall away...

Jesus warned us about it. He told us about a paddock, planted with wheat.

Some of the crop ran out of puff because it was on stony ground – and some Christians are not ready to struggle for the

faith. As soon as persecutions and sufferings come their way (because of their faith), they can't handle it. And they fall away. "I never knew that being a disciple of Jesus could make me so unpopular and that I would be so demeaned by others"...

They were hoping for an easy life, and they're not ready to struggle and contend for the faith. They're shallow-rooted, and so they lose faith.

But I praise God that **millions** of Christians who **are** facing persecutions, every day, every week, struggle with that persecution and continue to fight the good fight, which isn't with weapons or strategies of war – it's the **good fight of faith**.

Taking hold of the eternal life that we've been called to, and they're being a witness for Jesus – Telling the world, of the Good News of Jesus (even though their lives are in danger), they tell the world of the Good News of Jesus, because they're not ashamed of Him.

Oh, what a terrible thing it is, for us to ever be ashamed of Jesus... When we are mocked for being Christians, let's stand up for Jesus. And with love and with conviction, let's make the good confession, and praise His Name for the whole world to hear.

Jesus also told us about the weedy ground – the thorny ground. Some hear the word and receive it with joy, ^{Mark} 4:(ESV) 19 **but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other**

things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

But I praise God for:

- the millions of Christians who find their contentment in Christ
- those who turn their face away from worldly wealth that moth and rust will destroy; and
- those who use what worldly possessions they have, for the growing of the Kingdom of God...

Everything belongs to God, so let's use it for the building of His Kingdom.

And let's never get diverted by fruitless desires for other things...

And so, "Fighting the good fight" isn't about taking up arms to fight in battle. Nor is it to be jumping up and down in protest about what others are doing.

"Fighting the good fight" is about:

- holding onto our faith;
- taking hold of eternal life
This physical life may be taken from us, but no one can take our eternity;
- confessing Christ;
- obedience to our Lord – keeping the faith, (free from reproach) until the return of our Lord Jesus...

In v13 & 14, Paul charges Timothy ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Do you know what “the commandment is”? It’s the Christian faith. Keep the faith:

- Don’t pollute it;
- Don’t water it down;
- Don’t be ashamed of it;
- Don’t change it;
- Hold to what Jesus taught;
- Hold to Godly teaching...

As I read this, I’m reminded of Revelation 19. It’s one of my favourite images of the church (not a very blokey one but...). Jesus returns, and the image given, is of a Bridegroom, coming to claim His bride. And some of you ‘blokey’ blokes are going to have to get over this, but we the church, are the bride, keenly waiting for the coming of Jesus...

Revelation 19:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure—

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

It's an image of

¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

That's our mission – Hold onto the faith – keep the faith,,
Unstained... Pure... Holy...

Last week we looked ahead to V13, and we talked about the good confession that Jesus made to Pilate... Do you remember what Jesus told Pilate?

- “My kingdom is not of this world”;
- It's very different to the world;
- Christ was born, to bear witness to the truth; and
- **Everyone who is of truth, listens to Jesus.**

And so we keep the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is so different to what the world would want us to believe....

And we keep holding onto the faith, until Jesus returns.

Jesus said: Luke 18:(ESV)

⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸ I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

You see, this is what we're being charged with. Jesus is coming. He's coming to bring justice. He's coming to bring eternal life. He's coming to those who hold onto the faith, but will He find it when He comes???

How will we answer that today? **Yes, Lord!!! You will find faith when You come. You'll find it in us!!!**

But how long??? When will Jesus come???

As we read the New Testament, in places it seems that the Disciples were expecting it in **their** lifetime... And in every generation, Christians who are longing the coming of Jesus, look at the world events, and the evil in the world, and they say, "It's gotta be soon"...

And I look at the world today, and the **evil** in the world, that the majority claim to be good...

A couple of weeks ago, the US supreme court overturned a previous decision made by that court, which returns legislative power to the individual states, to decide whether abortion is legal in that state or not...

And in the US and even here in Australia, where that ruling has no weight, young women are angry – young women are

crying, because in some states, mothers will not be allowed to kill their babies before they are born...

And I'm just dumbfounded... How could a culture become so evil,,, that it would lament the inability to slay an innocent child...

And I see a situation like this, and I pray, “Come Lord Jesus”... And some would look and say, “Oh, He’s gotta come soon.”

Those who look at geopolitical events, expect Jesus to come at any moment: – the evil Vladimir Putin and his Russian aggression; The rise of China in the east, and its massive military might, increasing by the day; And we wonder, “Is this the army that will march from the east?”

Is Jesus about to return???

I don't know. But what I do know, is that when He **does** return, it will be at just the right time. And when Jesus returns, it's known as “the epiphany”... It'll be a visible appearing.

By His Holy Spirit, Jesus has been active in the world. God is active in this world, right now. God is present and active in this church, today...

But at the proper time – at just the right time, He will appear, for all the world to see. And so, today, we live by faith, but at that time, our faith will be sight. We will see Him...

And at this point of his letter, Paul bursts into praise. How could he not???

– he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

Our call is to Godliness, and when we read this description of our God, “being content with Godliness” is a bit of an understatement.

– he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings

When Jesus appears, every world ruler – every king/parliament/president/prime minister/dictator/elected official, will bow before Jesus, because He is the only true-sovereign.

and Lord of lords

Every powerful person, who have servants who bow to their every whim, will bow before the Lord of lords... The Senate (modelled on the House of Lords of England), will bow before **the** Lord... I’m looking forward to the day when some in the

Senate (who are anti-Jesus) (the Greens), will bow before the Lord)

16 who alone has immortality

There's lots of research going on at the moment, to find the aging gene, so that the rich can live forever... It won't happen. Do you know how I know? It's because He alone has immortality.

who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

Even when Moses wanted to see God, God had to set it up so he couldn't see his face, otherwise he would've died.

God is so awesome – He's so marvellous... When the new heavens and the new earth come, there won't even be a sun – it'll be lit with the glory of God...

To him be honour and eternal dominion.

That simply means His kingdom will never end...

This is what we're looking forward to. This is why we are content with Godliness. This is why we don't pursue worldly stuff that moth and rust destroys...

And we hold onto this faith.

Last week, I was hoping we'd get to the end of the chapter, but we'll have to wait until next week.

Amen.

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 13:2